



**Christopher  
Columbus**

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TRUE STORIES OF GREAT AMERICANS

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

BY

MILDRED STAPLEY

Whatever can be known of earth we know,  
Sneered Europe's wise men, in their snail shells curled;  
No! said one man in Genoa, and that No  
Out of the dark created the New World.

—JAMES RUSSELL LOWELL

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## **CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS**

# CHAPTER I

## COLUMBUS BEFRIENDED BY ROYALTY

Spain, as every one knows, was the country behind the discovery of America. Few people know, however, what an important part the beautiful city of Granada played in that famous event. It was in October, 1492, that Columbus first set foot on the New World and claimed it for Spain. In January of that same year another territory had been added to that same crown; for the brave soldier-sovereigns, Ferdinand and Isabella, had conquered the Moorish kingdom of Granada in the south and made it part of their own country.

Nearly eight hundred years before, the dark-skinned Moors had come over from Africa and invaded the European peninsula which lies closest to the Straits of Gibraltar, and the people of that peninsula had been battling fiercely ever since to drive them back to where they came from. True, the Moor had brought Arabian art and learning with him, but he had brought also the Mohammedan religion, and *that* was intolerable not only to the Spaniards but to all Europeans. No Christian country could brook the thought of this Asiatic creed flourishing on her soil,

so Spain soon set to work to get rid of it.

This war between the two religions began in the north near the Bay of Biscay whither the Christians were finally pushed by the invaders. Each century saw the Moors driven a little farther south toward the Mediterranean, until Granada, where the lovely Sierra Nevadas rise, was the last stronghold left them. Small wonder, then, that when Granada was finally taken the Spanish nation was supremely happy. Small wonder that they held a magnificent fete in their newly-won city in the “Snowy Mountains.” The vanquished Moorish king rode down from his mountain citadel and handed its keys to Ferdinand and Isabella. Bells pealed, banners waved, and the people cheered wildly as their victorious sovereigns rode by.

And yet, so we are told by a writer who was present, in the midst of all this rejoicing one man stood aside, sad and solitary. While all the others felt that their uttermost desire had been granted in acquiring the Moorish kingdom, *he* knew that he could present them with a far greater territory than Granada if only they would give him the chance. What were these olive and orange groves beside the tropic fertility of the shores he longed to reach, and which he would have

reached long ere this, he told himself regretfully, if only they had helped him! What was the Christianizing of the few Moors who remained in Spain compared with the Christianizing of all the undiscovered heathen across the Atlantic!

And so on that eventful January 2, 1492, when a whole city was delirious with joy,

“There was crying in Granada  
when the sun was going down,  
Some calling on the Trinity—  
some calling on Mahoun.  
Here passed away the Koran—there  
in the Cross was borne—  
And here was heard the Christian bell—  
and there the Moorish horn.”

On that great day of jubilee one man, a stranger, but as devout a Christian as any of the conquerors, stood apart downcast, melancholy, saddened by years of fruitless waiting for a few ships. That man was Christopher Columbus.

When you know that Columbus was present by special invitation, that a friend of the queen's had secured him the promise of an interview with full consideration of his plans just as soon as the city surrendered, you may think he should have looked happy and hopeful with the rest; but the fact was, that for nearly seven years the monarchs had been holding out promises, only to put him off, until his faith in princes had dwindled to almost nothing.

But, as it happened, they really meant it this time. Moreover, it is only fair to Ferdinand and Isabella to believe that they had always meant it, but they had been so preoccupied with the enormous task of welding poor Spain, long harassed by misrule and war, into a prosperous nation, that they had neither time nor money for outside ventures.

Certain it is that when Granada was really conquered and they had their first respite from worry, the man who was known at court as the "mad Genoese" was summoned to expound his plan of sailing far out into the west where he was certain of finding new lands.

Where this meeting took place is not known positively, but probably it was in the palace called the Alhambra, a marvelous monument of Arabian

art which may be visited to-day. Columbus stood long in the exquisite audience chamber, pleading and arguing fervently; then he came out dejected, mounted his mule, and rode wearily away from Spain's new city; for Spain, after listening attentively to his proposals, had most emphatically refused to aid him. It was surely a sorry reward, you will say, for his six years' waiting. And yet the man's courage was not crushed; he started off for France, to try his luck with the French king.

This is what had happened at the Spanish court. The great navigator talked clearly and convincingly about the earth being round instead of flat as most people still supposed; and how, since Europe, Asia, and Africa covered about six sevenths of the globe's surface, and the Atlantic Ocean the remaining seventh (here he quoted the prophet Esdras), [Footnote: "Upon the third day thou didst command that the waters should be gathered in the seventh part of the earth. Six parts hast thou dried up and kept them to the intent that of these some being planted of God and tilled might serve thee.... Upon the fifth day thou saidst unto the seventh part where the waters were gathered that it should bring forth living creatures, fowls and fishes, and so it came to pass." Apocrypha, 2 Esdras vi. 42, 47.] any one by sailing due west must



surely come to land. So clear was his own vision of this land that he almost saw it as he spoke; and his eloquence made his hearers almost see it too. One after another they nodded their approval, and approval had never before been won when he addressed a Spanish audience. But when Archbishop Talavera, who was spokesman for King Ferdinand, asked the would-be discoverer what reward he expected in case his voyage was successful, the answer was so unexpected that nearly every man in the room was indignant.

This answer is worth looking into carefully if one is to understand why the Spanish nobility thought that Columbus drove a hard bargain. He demanded of their Highnesses,

*First:* That he should be made Admiral over all seas and territories he might discover, the office to continue for life and to descend to his heirs forever, with all its dignities and salaries.

*Second:* That he should be made Viceroy and Governor-General of all new territories, and should name the officers under him.

*Third:* That he should have one tenth part of all merchandise,

pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, or spices acquired by trade, discovery, or any other method.

*Fourth:* That if any controversy or lawsuit should arise over such goods, he or his officer should be the only judge in the matter.

*Fifth:* That in fitting out all expeditions for trade or discovery he should be allowed to furnish one eighth of the cost and receive one eighth of the profit.

On these conditions and no others would Christopher Columbus undertake his perilous journey into unknown seas; and the grandees of Spain walked indignantly away from him.

“Lord High Admiral!” murmured one. “An office second only to royalty! This foreigner demands promotion over us who have been fighting and draining our veins and our purses for Spain this many a year!”

“Governor-General with power to select his own deputies!” murmured another. “Why, he would be monarch absolute! What proof has he ever given that he knows how to govern!” “One tenth of all goods acquired by trade *or any other method,*” protested still another. “What other

method has he in mind?—robbery, piracy, murder, forsooth? And then, when complaints of his ‘other method’ are made, he alone is to judge the case! A sorry state of justice, indeed!”

Now, when you see this from the Spaniards’ point of view, can you not understand their indignation? Yet Columbus, too, had cause for indignation. True, these soldiers of Spain had risked much, but on land, and aided by powerful troops. *He* was offering to go with a few men on a small ship across a vast unexplored sea; and that seemed to him a far greater undertaking than a campaign against the Moors. His position was much like that of the modern inventor who resents having the greater part of the profits of his invention given to those who promote it. Columbus’s friends, the few men who had encouraged him and believed in him ever since he came to Spain, begged him to accept less, but he was inflexible. He was prepared to make the biggest journey man had ever dreamed of, and not one iota less would he take for it. But no such rewards would Talavera promise, and thus ended the interview for which Columbus had waited nearly seven years!

And so he rode away from the lovely Moorish city, weary and dejected, yet hoping for better treatment when he should lay his plans before the

French king. His ride took him across the fertile Vega (plain) of Granada and into a narrow mountain pass where the bleak Elvira Range towers three thousand feet above the road. But smiling plain and frowning mountain were alike to the brooding traveler. He noticed neither; nor, when he started across the ancient stone bridge of Pinos, did he notice that horsemen were galloping after him. They were Queen Isabella's messengers sent to bid the bold navigator return. They overtook him in the middle of the bridge, and then and there his trip to France ended.

The queen, they told him, would accept his terms unconditionally. And Isabella kept her word. The next time Christopher Columbus rode forth from Granada it was not with bowed head and heavy heart, but with his whole soul rejoicing. We may be sure that he turned back for a last affectionate look at the lovely mountain city; for it had given him what historians now call "the most important paper that ever sovereign put pen to, "—a royal order for the long-desired ships and men with which to discover "lands in the west."

## CHAPTER II

### THE YOUTH OF COLUMBUS

Having seen how that great event in Spanish history, the fall of Granada, set the date for the discovery of America, let us see how it was that a humble Italian sailor came to be present among all those noble Spanish soldiers and statesmen. Let us see why he had brought to Spain the idea of a round world, when most Spaniards still believed in a flat one; and why his round world was perfectly safe to travel over, even to its farthest point, while their flat one was edged with monsters so terrible that no man had ever sought their evil acquaintance.

[Illustration: From “The Story of Columbus” by Elizabeth L. Seelys, courtesy of D. Appleton and Company. THE GENOA HOME]

The amount of really reliable information which we possess concerning the childhood of Christopher Columbus could be written in a few lines. We do not know accurately the date of his birth, though it was probably 1451. Sixteen Italian cities have claimed him as a native; and of these Genoa in northern Italy offers the best proofs. Papers still exist

showing that his father owned a little house there. Men who have studied the life of Columbus, and who have written much about him, say that he was born in the province, not the city, of Genoa; but Columbus himself says in his diary that he was a native of Genoa city; and present-day Genoese have even identified the very street where he was born and where he played as a child—the Vico Dritto di Ponticello. In the wall of the house in which he is believed to have lived is placed an iron tablet containing an inscription in Latin. It tells us that “no house is more to be honored than this, in which Christopher Columbus spent his boyhood and his early youth.”

More important than the exact spot of his birth would be a knowledge of the sort of childhood he passed and of the forces that molded his character. To learn this we must look into the condition of civilization, and particularly of Italian civilization, in the middle sixteenth century.

Columbus was born in a brilliant period known now as the Renaissance—a French word meaning re-birth—which marks the beginning of modern history. It followed a long, painful period known to us as the Dark Ages, or Middle Ages, namely, the period between ancient and modern

times. In the Middle Ages humanity was very ignorant, hampered by all sorts of evil superstitions; while the daily life of the people was miserable and without comforts, lacking many things which we consider necessities. Yet even in those far-away days things were improving, because man has always felt the desire to make his lot better; and the constant effort of these people of the Middle Ages led to that beautiful awakening which we call the Renaissance.

One of the first glimmers of this new life may be said to have come from the Crusades. The Europeans who had journeyed down into Asia to drive the Mohammedans, or Saracens, out of the Holy Land, came back impressed with the fact that these infidel Asiatics had more refinement and courtesy than Christian Europe knew. The returning Crusaders introduced some of this refinement into their own countries, and it caused people to abandon some of their rude ways. Of course there were many more influences working toward the great awakening, principally the growth of commerce. All Europe became alive with the desire for progress; many new things were invented, many old ones perfected; and before the Renaissance ended it had given us some wonderful discoveries and achievements—paper and printing; the mariner's compass; an understanding of the solar system; oil painting, music, and literature;

and lastly, the New World.

Why, then, if it brought all these arts and inventions and discoveries, do we not call it the birth, instead of the *re*-birth? Because many of the beautiful elements of the Renaissance, such as art, science, and poetry, enjoyment of life, freedom to investigate and study nature—all these had existed in the days of ancient Greece and Rome; but after the fall of Roman civilization it took the barbarian peoples of other portions of Europe a long, long time to grow civilized, and to establish some sort of order out of their jumbled affairs; and while they were slowly learning lessons of government and nationality, the culture of the antique world was lost sight of. When it was found again, when young men wished to learn Latin and Greek so that they could read the long-neglected books and poetry of the ancients, human life was made much richer and happier.

This desire came first to the people of Italy. It was very natural, for ancient Rome, where great learning had last flourished, was in Italy; furthermore, the Italian peninsula, jutting out into the much-navigated Mediterranean, was full of seaports, to which came vessels with the merchandise, the language, and the legends of other countries; and when



we learn of other countries, we broaden our ideas.

Add to Italy's favorable geographical position the fact that her people were unusually quick of intellect, and were gifted with great imagination, and you will see how natural it was that the Renaissance should have started there. Also, you will see why the great discoverer was a very natural product of Italy and its Renaissance.

\*

Genoa, like other large Italian cities, was teeming with this new spirit of investigation and adventure when Cristoforo Colombo (in his native land his name was pronounced Cristof'oro Colom'bo) was born there or first came there to live. Long before, Genoa had taken an active part in the Crusades, and every Genoese child knew its story. It had carried on victorious wars with other Italian seaports. It had an enormous commerce. It had grown rich, it was so full of marble palaces and churches, and it had such a glorious history, that its own people loved to call it *Genova la Superba* (Superb Genoa).

Although Cristoforo's family were humble people of little or no

education, the lad must have had, or made, many opportunities for acquiring knowledge. Probably he *made* them; for, as a boy in those days generally followed his father's trade, Cristoforo must have spent a good deal of time in "combing" wool; that is, in making the tangled raw wool ready for weaving. Perhaps he was sent to school, the school supported by the "Weavers' Guild." But between working at home and going to school, he evidently made many little trips down to the busy wharves.

Was there ever any spot more fascinating than the wharves in olden days—in that far-off time when there were no books to read, and when a boy's only chance of hearing about other countries was to go and talk to the crew of each vessel that came into port? The men to whom our lad talked had sailed the whole length and breadth of the biggest body of explored water, the Mediterranean. Some had gone farther east, into the Black Sea; and still others—bravest of all—had passed beyond the Straits of Gibraltar and out on to the great unknown ocean. It was to these last, we may be sure, that the adventurous boy listened most eagerly.

Those hardy sailors were the best possible professors for a boy who intended to follow the sea. They were, doubtless, practical men who

never talked much about the sea-monsters and other nonsense that many landsmen believed in; nor did they talk of the world being flat, with a jumping-off place where the sun set. That belief was probably cherished by men of book-learning only, who lived in convents and who never risked their lives on the waves. Good men these monks were, and we are grateful to them for keeping alive a little spark of learning during those long, rude Middle Ages; but their ideas about the universe were not to be compared in accuracy with the ideas of the practical mariners to whom young Cristoforo talked on the gay, lively wharves of \_Genova la Superba\_.

Many years after Columbus's death, his son Fernando wrote that his father had studied geography (which was then called *cosmogony*) at the University of Pavia. Columbus himself never referred to Pavia nor to any other school; nor was it likely that poor parents could afford to send the eldest of five children to spend a year at a far-off university. Certain it is that he never went there after his seafaring life began, for from then on his doings are quite clearly known; so we must admit that while he may have had some teaching in childhood, what little knowledge he possessed of geography and science were self-taught in later years. The belief in a sphere-world was already very ancient,

but people who accepted it were generally pronounced either mad or wicked. Long before, in the Greek and Roman days, certain teachers had believed it without being called mad or wicked. As far back as the fourth century B.C. a philosopher named Pythagoras had written that the world was round. Later Plato, and next Aristotle, two very learned Greeks, did the same; and still later, the Romans taught it. But Greece and Rome fell; and during the Dark Ages, when the Greek and Roman ideas were lost sight of, most people took it for granted that the world was flat. After many centuries the “sphere” idea was resurrected and talked about by a few landsmen, and believed in by many practical seamen; and it is quite possible that the young Cristoforo had learned of the theory of a sphere-world from Genoese navigators even before he went to sea. Wherever the idea originated is insignificant compared with the fact that, of all the men who held the same belief, Columbus alone had the superb courage to sail forth and prove it true.

Columbus, writing bits of autobiography later, says that he took to the sea at fourteen. If true, he did not remain a seafarer constantly, for in 1472-73 he was again helping his father in the weaving or wool-combing business in Genoa. Until he started on his famous voyage, Columbus never kept a journal, and in his journal we find very little

about those early days in Genoa. While mentioning in this journal a trip made when he was fourteen, Columbus neglects to state that he did not definitely give up his father's trade to become a sailor until 1475.

Meanwhile he had worked as clerk in a Genoese bookshop. We know he must have turned this last opportunity to good account. Printing was still a very young art, but a few books had already found their way to Genoa, and the young clerk must have pored over them eagerly and tried to decipher the Latin in which they were printed.

At any rate, it is certain that in 1474 or 1475 Cristoforo hired out as an ordinary sailor on a Mediterranean ship going to Chios, an island east of Greece. In 1476 we find him among the sailors on some galleys bound for England and attacked by pirates off the Portuguese Cape St. Vincent.

About Columbus's connection with these pirates much romance has been written,—so much, indeed, that the simple truth appears tame by comparison. One of these two pirates was named Colombo, a name common enough in Italy and France. Both pirates were of noble birth, but very desperate characters, who terrorized the whole Mediterranean, and even preyed on ships along the Atlantic coast. Columbus's son, Fernando, in

writing about his father, foolishly pretended that the discoverer and the noble-born corsairs were of the same family; but the truth is, one of the corsairs was French and the other Greek; they were not Italians at all. Fernando further says that his father was sailing under them when the battle off Cape St. Vincent was fought; that when the vessels caught fire, his father clung to a piece of wreckage and was washed ashore. Thus does Fernando explain the advent of Columbus into Portugal. But all this took place years before Fernando was born.

What really appears to have happened is that Columbus was in much more respectable, though less aristocratic, company. It was not on the side of the pirates that he was fighting, but on the side of the shipowner under whom he had hired, and whose merchandise he was bound to protect, for the Genoese galleys were bound for England for trading purposes. Some of the galleys were destroyed by the lawless Colombo, but our Colombo appears to have been on one that escaped and put back into Cadiz, in southern Spain, from which it later proceeded to England, stopping first at Lisbon. This is a less picturesque version, perhaps, than Fernando's, but certainly it shows Columbus in a more favorable light. Late the next year, 1477, or early in 1478, Cristoforo went back to Lisbon with a view to making it his home.

Besides this battle with corsairs, Columbus had many and varied experiences during his sea trips, not gentle experiences either. Even on the huge, palatial steamships of to-day the details of the common seaman's life are harsh and rough; and we may be sure that on the tiny, rudely furnished, poorly equipped sailboats of the fifteenth century it was a thousand times harsher and rougher. Then, too, the work to be done in and around the Mediterranean was no occupation for children; it quickly turned lads into men. Carrying cargo was the least of a shipowner's business; he was more often hiring out vessels and crews to warring kings, to Portuguese who carried on a slave trade, or to fight pirates, the dread of the Mediterranean. Slaves rowed the Mediterranean galleys, and in the bow stood a man with a long lash to whip the slaves into subjection. With all these matters did Christopher Columbus become acquainted in the course of time, for they were everyday matters in the maritime life of the fifteenth century; but stern though such experiences were, they must have developed great personal courage in Christopher, a quality he could have none too much of if he was to lead unwilling, frightened sailors across the wide unknown sea.

## CHAPTER III

### “LANDS IN THE WEST”

By moving from Genoa to Lisbon, Columbus found himself in a much better atmosphere for developing into a discoverer. The genius of a discoverer lies in the fact that he yearns for the unknown; and Portugal faced the Atlantic Ocean, that immense unexplored “Sea of Darkness” as it was then called. Italy, as we know, was the greater country, but it faced the Mediterranean, and every nook and corner of the Mediterranean were known and explored.

For any man thirsting to learn more about geography and exploration, there was no more vital spot in Europe than Lisbon in the fifteenth century. Why it was so is such an interesting story that it must be told. We have read how zealously the Spaniards had been striving for centuries to drive out the Moors, whom they considered the arch enemies of Christian Europe. Portugal, being equally near to Africa, was also overrun by Moors, and for ages the Portuguese had been at war with them, finally vanquishing them early in Columbus’s century. A wise Portuguese prince then decided on a scheme for breaking their power utterly; and



that was to wrest from them their enormous trade with Arabia and India; for their trade made their wealth and their wealth was their power.

This trade was known as the Indian trade, and was carried on by overland caravans up through Asia and Northern Africa to the Mediterranean coasts. The goods brought into Europe by this means—gold, pearls, spices, rare woods—naturally set Europe to thinking that the lands producing them must be the most favored part of the world, and “the Indies” stood for wealth of all kinds. No one knew precisely where “the Indies” lay; no one knew about the Indian Ocean or the shape of Southern Africa; “the Indies” was simply an indefinite term for the rich and mysterious regions from which the caravans came.

The old maps of the fifteenth century show three different countries of this name—Far India, beyond the Ganges River; Middle India, between the Ganges and the Indus; and Lesser India, including both sides of the Red Sea. On the African side of the Red Sea was located the legendary kingdom of a great monarch known as Prester John. *Prester* is a shortening of Presbyter, for this John was a Christian priest as well as a king. Ever since the twelfth century there had been stories circulated through Europe about the enormously wealthy monarch who ruled over a

vast number of Christians “in the Indies.” At first Prester John’s domain was supposed to be in Asia; later the legends shifted it over to Africa, Abyssinia probably; and it was with this division of “India” that the Portuguese Prince Henry hoped to establish a trade; not, at first, by rounding Africa and sailing up its east coast to Abyssinia, but by merely cruising down the coast of Western Africa till Abyssinia’s Atlantic shores were reached; for so vague was the geography of that far-away day that Abyssinia was supposed to stretch from Ethiopia to the Atlantic. “If,” reasoned Prince Henry, “my sailors can feel their way down Africa till they come to Prester John’s territory, not only could our nation secure the rich trade which now goes to the Moors, but we could form a treaty with the African Christians and ask them to come to Europe and help us should the Moors ever again advance against us.” This plan was approved by Pope Nicholas V., who sanctioned Prince Henry’s enterprise in the hope of “bringing the people of India, who are reputed to honor Christ, to the aid of European Christians against Saracens and other enemies.” This projected exploration of the African coast by “Henry the Navigator” was the whole foundation for the \_mistaken statements that Christopher Columbus was trying to find “a sea route to India\_.” Prince Henry was trying to find a sea route to an African India which he supposed lay about where Guinea lies; and as for

Christopher, he never undertook to find either this African India, nor the true Asiatic India; \_he only promised the Spanish sovereigns that he would find “lands in the west\_.”

Having straightened out the long-lived confusion about “the short route to India,” let us see how Prince Henry went to work. Northern or Mediterranean Africa was well known to Europe, but not the Atlantic coast. There was an ancient belief that ships could not enter tropic seas because the intensely hot sun drew up all the water and left only the slimy ooze of the bottom of the ocean. Cape Nun, of Morocco, was the most southerly point of Africa yet reached; and about it there was a discouraging saying,

“Who pass Cape Nun  
Must turn again or else be gone.”

Prince Henry, who was called the “Protector of Studies in Portugal,” did not believe that rhyme, and determined to show how foolish and untrue it was. His first step was to establish an observatory and a school for navigation at Cape St. Vincent, the most westerly point of Europe and the most southwesterly point of Portugal. To this observatory the prince

invited the most learned astronomers, geographers, and instrument-makers then living, that they might all work together with him; and from the little fishing village of Sagres, close to his great observatory, he sent out sailors who, according to an old writer, “were well taught in all rules which sailors ought to know, and provided with the best instruments for navigation.”

These expeditions began fifty years before Columbus came to Lisbon. Most of them sailed south; out there had always been legends of lands in the west, so westward some of them sailed and found the Azores and the Madeira Islands. These last had been known to English navigators more than a century before, but as England sent no people to occupy and claim them, Portugal took possession of them.

How the ownership of all newly-found portions of the globe came to be determined is worth looking into. Ever since the time of the Crusades it was recognized as right that any European Christian ruler might seize the land and property of any Asiatic infidel. If two or three Christian rulers united to seize Mohammedan territory and were victorious, the Pope was to decide which one should own it. But the Crusades were unsuccessful, and so the question of ownership of land outside of Europe

never came up until Prince Henry sent out his discoverers. Then, in order to make Portugal's claim very sure to whatever she might find, Pope Martin V. issued an order that all land which might be discovered between Cape Bojador (on the most southerly point of the Morocco coast) and the Indies should belong to Portugal, no matter what navigator discovered it. This was in 1479. Naturally, when his turn came to navigate, Columbus would not be interested in taking the Portuguese path, since, by papal order, he would have to turn over to Portugal whatever he might discover.

But to return to Prince Henry. His successes began in 1422 when a Portuguese captain pushed past the high promontory of Cape Nun and did not "turn again" till he had gone far enough to see that the Southern Atlantic was as full of water as the Northern. After that these brave people kept sailing farther and farther south, down past Guinea and the mouth of the Congo, always asking for the India of Prester John; but the savage blacks at whose coasts they touched had never heard of it.

Finally Bartholomew Dias rounded the Cape of Good Hope and proved that the African India had no Atlantic coast; and he also proved that there existed a southern hemisphere of great possibilities. Then the question of reaching Asiatic India by sea loomed large in the Portuguese mind.

Vasco da Gama, following Dias around the Cape of Good Hope, crossed the Indian Ocean and at last cast anchor in the dazzlingly rich city of Calcutta, the real India.

This last did not happen, however, till 1498, six years after Columbus discovered America. Long before this time the good Prince Henry had died; and though he did not live to learn of this sea route to India, he died knowing that the Madeiras and the Azores existed out in the open sea, while Africa stretched far south of the Equator. His devotion to navigation had imbued his countrymen with great enthusiasm, and placed little Portugal at the head of European nations in maritime matters. Not only did she discover how to sail to India, but to Siam, Java, China, and Japan as well.

From Prince Henry's day, Lisbon became the city where all men interested in the fascinating study of geography wished to dwell, in order that they might exchange ideas with navigators and get employment under the Crown. We can readily understand why Lisbon was a magnet to the ambitious Christopher Columbus; and we may feel sure that had the brave, intelligent "Protector of Studies in Portugal" been still alive when Columbus formed his plan for discovery, the intrepid discoverer would

have been spared those weary years of waiting. He would have found America ten years sooner, and it would have been the Portuguese, and not the Spanish, flag that he would have carried westward to the New World.

Our young Genoese is supposed to have sailed to Iceland and even farther into the Polar regions, probably after continuing that trip to Bristol which the pirates interrupted off Cape St. Vincent. Many writers consider that it was in Iceland where he heard rumors of “land in the west.” If the Iceland trip really was made, Christopher may indeed have heard the story; for long before, Icelanders, and Norsemen also, had discovered America.

These discoveries, as we now believe, took place in the far-away eleventh century; but they made no impression on Europeans of that time, because Iceland and Scandinavia were not in touch with other European countries. Civilization then had the Mediterranean for its center, and no one in Southern Europe ever heard of what the Icelanders or the Norsemen were doing. But these northern peoples did not entirely lose sight of their discoveries, for they sang about them from century to century in quaint and beautiful ballads called sagas. It was not until after Columbus revealed the west to European eyes that these sagas were

published; nevertheless, it is not improbable that, if Columbus landed in Iceland, some inhabitant who knew the story of the far western country told it to him. He never refers to it in his writings, however, and one cannot help thinking that, if it really was true, he would have mentioned it, at least to those whom he was trying to persuade to help him. The only reference he ever made to the northern voyage is when writing his journal in 1492, where he states,

“I have seen all the Levant (where the sun rises); and the Ponent (where the sun sets); I have seen what is called The Northern Way, and England; and I have sailed to Guinea.”

Columbus's elder brother, Bartholomew, who was a map-maker and a serious student of geography, also settled in Lisbon. The two either opened a book-and-map shop, or at least they worked in one at odd times, Christopher acting as a draftsman; for, as he himself quaintly expressed it, “God had endowed me with ingenuity and manual skill in designing spheres, and inscribing upon them in the proper places cities, rivers and mountains, isles and ports.” He appears to have tried to earn a little money by commerce as well as by map-making. We have no exact record of this, but it is thought that he borrowed capital for trading



purposes from rich Genoese merchants settled in Lisbon, and lost it.

This we conclude because, in his will, he ordered certain sums to be paid to these merchants, without mentioning why. That he tried to add to the small profits of map-making by trading with sea captains is not surprising. We can only be sorry that he did not make a handsome profit out of his ventures, enough for himself and for those who lent him capital.

We have mentioned that all the men who had a scientific interest in navigation tried to get to Lisbon. Among those whom Columbus may have met there, was the great German cosmographer from Nuremburg, Martin Behaim. Martin helped to improve the old-fashioned astrolabe, an instrument for taking the altitude of the sun; more important still, toward the end of 1492 he made the first globe, and indicated on it how one might sail west and reach Asiatic India. This is the first record of that idea which was later attributed to Columbus, but which Columbus himself, until his return from his first voyage of discovery, never even mentioned. Whether he and Martin Behaim talked together about the route to India we shall never know. Probably they did not; for when Christopher importuned later for ships, it was only for the purpose of discovering "lands in the west" and not for finding a short route to

India. Columbus, though he knew how to draw maps and design spheres, really possessed but little scientific knowledge. Intuition, plus tenacity, always did more for him than science; and so it is likely that he talked more with sailors than with scientists. While he may have known the learned Behaim, certain it is that, from his earliest days in Lisbon, he sought the society of men who had been out to the Azores or to Madeira; men who told him the legends, plentiful enough on these islands, of lands still farther out toward the setting sun, that no one had yet ventured to visit.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE SOJOURN IN MADEIRA

Columbus had not been very long in Lisbon when he met, at church, a girl named Felipa Monez Perestrello. Felipa was of noble birth; Christopher was not; but he was handsome—tall, fair-haired, dignified,—and full of earnestness in his views of life. Felipa consented to marry him.

Felipa must have been a most interesting companion for a man who loved voyaging, for she had been born in the Madeiras. Her father, now dead, had been appointed governor, by Prince Henry, of a little island called Porto Santo, and Felipa and her mother (with whom the young couple went to live) had many a tale to tell about that far outpost of the Atlantic.

This is probably what set Christopher yearning for the sea; and so, about 1479, he and his wife and her mother, Senora Perestrello, all sailed off for Porto Santo. The Senora must have liked her new son-in-law's enthusiasm for the sea, for she gave him the charts and instruments that had belonged to her husband; but as Governor Perestrello had never been a navigator, these could not have been either very numerous or very helpful.

From Porto Santo, Columbus made a voyage to Guinea and back; and after that he and his family went to live on the larger island of Madeira.

There, according to many men who knew Columbus well, the following event happened.

One day a storm-tossed little caravel, holding four sick, battered, Portuguese sailors and a Spanish pilot, all of them little more than living skeletons, was blown on the Madeira shore near where Christopher dwelt. Their tale was a harrowing one. They had started, they said, months before from the Canaries for the Madeiras, but had been blown far, far, far, to the west; and then, when the wind quieted down so that they could try to get back, their ship became disabled and their food gave out. Starvation and exposure had nearly finished them; four, in fact, died within a day or two; but the Spanish pilot, the one who had kept his strength long enough to steer toward Madeira, lived longer. The kind-hearted Christopher, who was devoured with curiosity, had had the poor fellow carried to his own home. He and Felipa did all they could for him, but their nursing could not restore him. The pilot, seeing that he would never be able to make another voyage, added a last detail to the story he first told; namely, that his ship had actually visited a

new land hundreds of miles out in the Atlantic Ocean! A proof of Christopher's own suspicions! Can you not see him, the evening after his talk with the pilot, standing at sunset on some high point of Madeira, and looking wistfully out over the western water, saying, "I *must* sail out there and find those lands. I know I can do it!" So he went back to Lisbon to try.

Certain it is that Columbus's absorbing interest in the unknown, mysterious west dates from his returning to Lisbon to live. Not only did he talk earnestly with men who had interests in the Atlantic isles, he studied all the available geographical works. Before the time came to leave for Spain he had read the wonderful "Relation" (or Narrative) of Marco Polo; the "Imago Mundi" (Image of the World) by Cardinal d'Ailly; the "Historia Rerum" (History of Things) by Pope Pius II.; and he had studied Ptolemy's "Geography." From this small library came all the scientific knowledge, true and false, that Christopher ever had. From these he built up whatever theories of the universe he may have laid before the sovereigns of Spain.

Marco Polo, the Venetian, had traveled, as every one knows, across Asia to Cathay (China) in the thirteenth century and had visited the Great

Khan or Emperor. On his return he wrote the "Relation," a most exaggerated but fascinating account of the wealth of that remote land and of Cipango (Japan) also, which the Chinese had told him about. The "Imago Mundi" was certainly better reading for him, because less exaggerated; whatever myths and fables it contained, it was not the sort of book to turn a young man's thoughts toward amassing wealth. Instead, its author had gathered together all that was known or seriously argued concerning this world. On this curious old volume Christopher pinned his entire faith. It became his bedside companion; and his copy of it, full of notes in his own handwriting and in that of his brother Bartholomew as well, may be seen to-day in the Columbian Library in Sevilla.

For centuries it has been asserted by men who have written about Columbus that the most important event during his Lisbon days was his correspondence with a learned astronomer named Paolo Toscanelli. Columbus, they argue, having formed the plan of sailing west to discover a route to the Indies (which Columbus never thought of doing at that early day), wrote to ask Toscanelli's advice, and the wise Florentine approved most heartily. It appears from the astronomer's letter that he never dreamed, any more than did Columbus, that a whole continent lay far off in the unexplored western ocean. He supposed the world to be

much smaller than it really is, with the ocean occupying only a seventh of it; and that if one sailed three or four thousand miles west, he would surely come to the islands of Cipango (pronounced in Italian Tchi-pango), or Japan, lying off the mainland of Cathay or China. Toscanelli, like Columbus, had read all about the Far East in Marco Polo's book, and was convinced that if the Venetian had reached it by going east overland, some one else might reach it by going west oversea. Accordingly he encouraged the aspiring young explorer. He told Columbus, furthermore, that he had talked with an ambassador from the Far East who came to the court of Pope Eugenius IV. "I was often in the Ambassador's company," he wrote, "and he told me of the immense rivers in his country, and of two hundred cities with marble bridges upon the banks of a single river." Of Cipango he wrote, "This island contains such an abundance of precious stones and metals that the temples and royal palaces are covered with plates of gold!"

The Toscanelli letter is dated 1474, and begins: "To Christopher Columbus, Paul the Physician, health: I see thy noble and great desire to go there where grow the spices." But the strange thing is that Columbus never made use of it in pleading before kings, nor did he even mention Toscanelli and the route to India. Neither in all his writings

can the name of Toscanelli be found; and it was not till after Columbus's death (and Toscanelli's), when others began to write history, that the document was made public. Most Columbian scholars therefore doubt its genuineness, and think it was not written by Toscanelli in 1474, but by some one in Lisbon long after Columbus had actually made his discovery.

In any case, the pilot's story was a far more likely factor in sending Christopher west. Nor is it to his discredit that he was willing to risk his life on a dying sailor's wild, improbable tale, rather than on an astronomer's carefully worked out theory. Whether our navigator had theories or not is of little consequence compared to the fact that he had boldness, tenacity, and the spirit of adventure.

“The King of Portugal refused with blindness to second me in my projects of maritime discovery.”

So Christopher declares in his Journal; but in spite of his way of putting it, King John did not blindly refuse to listen to him. Let us see what, according to two Portuguese historians, really happened when, on his return from Madeira about 1483, he solicited aid.



Columbus told the monarch, who himself knew a great deal about navigation, but who was not nearly as intelligent as his uncle, Prince Henry, how the persistent rumors he had heard at Madeira concerning land in the west made him eager to undertake a western voyage of discovery; and how, if only the king would give him a fleet and some sailors, he would lead them out until they found “lands.” The king, who was really not so blind as Columbus thought, did not refuse, but said he must first submit the idea to his Council for Geographical Affairs. This Council consisted of two Jewish doctors and a bishop. The doctors were noted students of geography, yet they declared the scheme to be impossible, and Columbus to be a “visionary.”

That such an answer could have been made by men whose nation had been so bold on the sea for fifty years past is at first glance surprising. But one must remember that the Portuguese had been merely feeling their way along Africa. They had perfect confidence in a southern route that hugged the shore. South was safe; but west beyond the Azores, where there was no shore to hug, was quite another matter; they felt that their own navigators, in finding the Azores, had reached the ultimate limits in that direction. Their disagreement may not have been caused by

fear, but by realizing that the instruments and ships of the day were not sufficient for such hazardous undertakings. This fact Columbus realized too, and hence his greater bravery. Besides, argued the Portuguese, would there be any profit at the end of the enterprise? They felt sure that at the end of their own southern expeditions lay those same rich (but vague) Indies which Arab merchants reached by going overland southeast through Asia or south through Egypt; it was all “the Indies” to them, and their navigators were sure to come in touch with it. But who could possibly predict what would be reached far off in the vast west! Why, they wondered, was this Italian so sure of himself (for the story of the shipwrecked pilot had not yet come to their ears); and why, they further wondered, should he ask such large rewards for finding islands that would probably be nothing more than rocky points in the ocean, like the Azores. No, they concluded, the Italian was a “visionary,” and the Council for Geographical Affairs advised the king accordingly.

Seeing that nothing was to be gained by remaining in Portugal, and having become involved soon after in some political trouble, Columbus decided to leave for Spain, and offer to Ferdinand and Isabella the western lands which King John of Portugal had refused.

## CHAPTER V

### A SEASON OF WAITING

Columbus by this time was about thirty-five. His reddish-brown hair had turned white. He had no money; on the contrary, he was in debt. His good wife Felipa had died, and he had to find some place where he could leave his little son Diego while he went to court to ask for ships. Felipa had a sister married to a Spaniard and living in Huelva. With this lady Columbus decided to leave the boy.

They left Lisbon by ship, it is supposed; but instead of taking a ship bound direct for Huelva, Christopher picked out one bound for Palos, a port not far from Huelva; moreover, on landing, instead of conducting the child at once to his aunt, he trudged a few miles back of Palos with him to a lonely old convent among the sand dunes, called La Rabida (pronounced Ra'bida). About his haste to reach this spot Christopher had not breathed a word in the town where he had just landed; in fact, he always remained silent about it; but it appears that he went there to question a Portuguese monk named Marchena whom he had known in Portugal. This monk was an excellent cartographer, or map-maker, and Christopher

wished to talk with him about the western lands.

This good monk may have already heard in Portugal about the pilot. At any rate he was much interested in his visitor, and ordered that the monks should feed the hungry little Diego while he and Diego's father held council in one of the cool little cells of the convent.

“Tarry with us a while, Senor,” said the monk, “and I will send for the learned Doctor Fernandez of Palos, who has read much science, and for the brave Captain Martin Alonzo Pinzon, who has made many voyages. Let us hear what they have to say about the possibility of finding this island which you believe to lie off in the western sea.”

So a messenger was sent back over the dusty road to Palos, and soon Doctor Garcia Fernandez, mounted on his mule, appeared at the gate of La Rabida. The monks showed him in and made him acquainted with their visitor. The doctor was at once impressed and saw that this was no ordinary traveler. White hair surmounting a highly intelligent face, dreaming eyes, inspired voice—this combination did not come every day to La Rabida. He knew that the foreigner would prove interesting and he proceeded to explain that his friend Martin Alonzo Pinzon could not

come, as he was at that moment away on a voyage.

“But you must remain with us till he comes back,” declared the monk Marchena, “for no man in all Spain is more experienced in matters of navigation. You must tell him about this island you propose to discover.” And Fernandez, when he heard Christopher’s tale, said the same thing. Thus it was that little Diego never got to his aunt in Huelva; for by the time Martin Alonzo had returned, the monks had grown so fond of the child, and were so impressed with the great future that lay before his inspired father, that they offered to keep him and educate him free of all expense. This offer Columbus was glad to accept.

The man whose return Columbus awaited in the hospitable monastery of La Rabida belonged to the most influential family of Palos. For generations the Pinzons had all been sailor-merchants and had amassed considerable wealth. The head of the family still sailed the seas; and as, in Palos and in near-by Huelva, many Portuguese lived who boasted about the discoveries their country had made, his interest had been much piqued by their talk. He was educated and open-minded. Moreover, he was considered the best navigator of all who sailed from that important maritime region of Huelva.

When Pinzon got back to Palos, he learned that the monks of La Rabida had been eagerly awaiting him, in order that he might meet their interesting visitor. Off he hastened; and from the moment he and Columbus met, each recognized in the other a master spirit. Whether or not Columbus and Marchena told Pinzon at that time the story of the pilot is not known; but certainly he heard it later. We only know that they talked of lands to be discovered in the west, and that Pinzon offered to go on the expedition as captain in case Columbus should be successful in getting permission and help from the Spanish sovereigns.

From La Rabida Columbus went to the large and important city of Sevilla, carrying letters of introduction from the monk Marchena. In Sevilla he had an interview with the powerful Duke of Medina Sidonia who was much interested in his project at first, but soon gave it up. Next he met the Duke of Medina Celi, who was even more powerful, and with whom Columbus spent a year while waiting for a favorable opportunity to lay his plans before the court. When the proper moment came, the duke acquainted the queen with Columbus's matter, and she in answer invited the would-be explorer to come to Cordova. This was in January, 1486.

It has often been stated that Columbus, while still in Lisbon, had applied both to Genoa and to Venice for aid. This is no longer believed, as no proofs can be found. There is, however, some reason for believing that he sent his brother Bartholomew to England and France to urge the matter. Columbus himself nowhere gives the details of these missions, though he does say, in a letter to the Spanish monarchs, "In order to serve your Highnesses, I listened neither to England nor France, whose princes wrote me letters." Another bit of evidence regarding the French appeal is a letter, written after the discovery, by the Duke of Medina Celi to Cardinal Mendoza. Cardinal Mendoza was King Ferdinand's prime minister, and the duke, having befriended Columbus soon after his arrival from Portugal, and again some years afterward, asked a favor of the cardinal, saying, "You must remember that I prevented Columbus from going into the service of France and held him here in Spain."

Perhaps some scholar may some day unearth the correspondence between Columbus and the French king; but at present we have only the hints given above, along with the fact that Columbus, when finally dismissed from Granada in 1492, started for France.

In describing Columbus's suit in Spain the names of great churchmen—

cardinals, bishops, priests, monks,—will frequently appear, and it will be well to understand why his fate so often lay in their hands. During the Dark Ages the only people who received any education were the clergy. Their education gave them great power over the ignorant; and even after the dawn of the Renaissance, when other classes began to demand education, the clergy were still looked up to as possessing the bulk of the world's wisdom.

Thus every king's counselors were mostly churchmen. If those ecclesiastics had always tried to deserve their reputation for wisdom, it might have been a good arrangement. Unfortunately, some were narrow-minded and gave their king bad advice; happily, some were wise and good as well as powerful, and a few of this sort in Spain helped Christopher Columbus to make his dreams come true.

Many writers speak bitterly of the way in which King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella temporized with Columbus. It was hard, indeed, for a man burning up with a great and glorious plan to be kept so long from executing it; but a glance into Spanish affairs at the moment when the man brought his idea into Spain will show that its rulers were not so culpable after all. We have already seen how long and how vigorously the



sovereigns were pushing the Moorish war; but this was not their only anxiety. Spain's finances, owing to the misrule of previous kings, were in a very bad way. To get money, taxes were raised; and high taxes, as we know, always cause dissatisfaction among the people. Then, too, a death-dealing pestilence swept over the land and claimed thousands of victims.

This is only a partial account of Spain's woes at the time when the man with the idea arrived; but it shows clearly how the king and queen may have been too busy and too worried to give much time or money to a "dreaming foreigner." They gave him just enough of each to keep up his hopes and prevent him from going elsewhere. Columbus himself must have realized that he had not come at a fortunate time, and that there was nothing to do but to wait patiently.

Spain in those days had no capital. Both Ferdinand and Isabella led the army and established themselves in whatever city was most convenient for their military operations. At the time they heard, through the Duke of Medina Celi, of the Genoese navigator who had a great plan for discovery to unfold to them, they were in the ancient city of Cordova; but, even after requesting that Columbus be sent to Cordova, they could not give

much heed to him because they had to hasten to the Moorish frontier and open their campaign against the kingdom of Granada. After a time they returned to Cordova, but only to start immediately for the north, where one of their nobles had raised a rebellion. During these months, all that Columbus could do to further his cause was to make the acquaintance of a favorite of the king named Alonzo de Quintanilla. This gentleman proved friendly, and invited Columbus to accompany him to the city of Salamanca. The court was to pass the winter there, and Quintanilla hoped to secure an audience for his new friend.

He was successful. Columbus spoke to King Ferdinand, and spoke eloquently. He himself has described his enthusiasm by saying he felt “kindled with fire from on high.” This fire, unfortunately, did not spread to his listener. The man to whom Columbus spoke was not given to warm impulses. On the contrary, he was cold and shrewd. He never decided matters hastily; least of all a matter that involved expenses. We do not know exactly what answer Ferdinand made to the impassioned pleader, but we do know that he first sought the opinions of the learned men of Salamanca.

Concerning these opinions there are contradictory reports, just as there

are about all of Columbus's actions in Spain. Some say that the ecclesiastics (who were also professors at the renowned university in Salamanca) and a few scientific men besides met in the Convent of San Esteban (St. Stephen) to discuss Columbus's project. To-day the monks in San Esteban show tourists the very room in which the meeting was held; yet there is not an atom of real proof that any such meeting took place there. We only know that an informal gathering was called, and that whoever the professors and churchmen were who listened to Columbus's story, they were mostly narrow-minded; they had no imagination. Instead of trying to see the bigness and the wonder of his belief, they looked at Columbus suspiciously and said that they could find no mention of a *round* world in the Bible, and it was heresy to believe anything that could not be found in the Bible. Others, believing in the sphere, still could not find in Christopher's reference to the rumors current in Madeira sufficient reason for giving him ships to test the truth of those rumors.

Certainly the majority looked upon him as either a heretic or a foolish dreamer, or perhaps a bold adventurer trying to get money from their king; but happily a few believed in him, argued on his side, and became his steadfast friends. The most noted of these was the learned monk,

Diego de Deza. He was intelligent, broad-minded, and generous; and though he was not able to prevail upon the other professors nor upon the king, still it must have helped Columbus's cause to have such a distinguished churchman for his friend.

In the spring of 1487 the monarchs left Salamanca without giving a definite answer to the anxious man. They were about to begin a campaign against the Moors in Malaga, down on the Mediterranean coast, and thither Columbus followed them. Once, when there was a lull in the siege, he was summoned to the royal tent. Again no definite answer was given, but again he made a powerful friend. This time it was the Marchioness of Moya, the queen's dearest companion; and when, soon after, this lady was wounded by a Moorish assassin who mistook her for the queen, we may be sure that Isabella's affection deepened; and that, in gratitude, she listened readily when the kind-hearted marchioness praised the Genoese navigator.

From the surrender of Malaga until that of Granada, the last Moorish city, Ferdinand and Isabella were ever busy,—sometimes in the south with their armies, sometimes attending to general government affairs in various cities of the north. All this time they were having hard work to

raise war funds. It would not be strange, therefore, if they felt unable to spend money on Columbus's doubtful scheme, or if they told him that it would be impossible further to consider his project until the Moorish war should terminate.

# CHAPTER VI

## A RAY OF HOPE

Until the Moorish war should end!

Imagine the disappointment of this man who had been trying for years to prove that lands lay far across the Atlantic, yet no one cared enough about his grand idea to give him a few ships! Who could tell when the Moorish war would end? And who could tell whether it would end in favor of the Spanish? Why, he must have asked himself, should he, no longer young, wait to see?

Accordingly, in the spring of 1488 he wrote, so he says, to the king of Portugal asking permission to return. King John not only invited him to come back, but promised that no one should be allowed to bring any lawsuit against him. This refers, perhaps, to the sums Columbus had borrowed for trading purposes and had lost. About the same time came a message from the English king, whom Bartholomew Columbus had visited. Neither letter contained any definite promise of assistance; but the mere fact that other countries were interested caused Ferdinand and

Isabella some anxiety. They must have considered how humiliating it would be for them to turn away this opportunity that was knocking at their door, and send it to rival kingdoms. They decided, war or no war, to have all the learned men of Spain come together and listen to the Italian's project. If a majority of these wise men thought the voyage might prove profitable, then they would immediately give Columbus the necessary ships and men. Accordingly they issued three important orders: one, bidding Columbus to appear before a learned council in Sevilla; another, commanding every town through which he might pass in reaching Sevilla to give him hospitality; a third, commanding Sevilla itself to give him lodging and to treat him as if he were a government official. All this must have looked so promising, so much in earnest, that Columbus willingly put off his return to Portugal. In spite of the narrow-mindedness he had encountered in the learned men of Salamanca, he started off, full of hope, to talk to the same sort of learned men of Sevilla. But it all came to naught. For some reason now unknown the meeting was postponed; and the summer campaign starting soon after, the government had other matters to consider.

In August of that year, 1488, Columbus's younger son Fernando, whose mother was a Spanish woman, was born in Cordova, and soon after the

father appears to have returned to Lisbon.

Here again we do not know what happened; the only proof we have that he made the journey at all is a memorandum written by him in his copy of the “Imago Mundi.” It is dated Lisbon, December, 1488, and states that Bartholomew Dias had just rounded southern Africa—the Cape of Good Hope. Whether Columbus made another fruitless appeal to Portugal we shall never know. We only know that, instead of going from Lisbon to England, he went back to procrastinating Spain. That he came back by King Ferdinand’s summons is almost positive, for another royal decree was issued for every city through which he passed to furnish him with board and lodging at the king’s expense. This was in May, 1489, which means that another summer campaign was in progress when Columbus entered Spain. The monarchs who took the trouble to bring him back had no time for his project after he reached Spain.

For almost two years, that is, till the end of 1491, the waiting navigator again resided with the Duke of Medina Celi who still had faith in his proposed explorations.

The duke was by far the most powerful friend Columbus had made in Spain,



for he possessed and governed a large principality that was practically independent of the Crown. He lived in royal splendor and held court like a king. When Spain went to war, the duke could fit out a whole army from his own dominions and send them forth under his own banner to fight for the king. Columbus must have felt greatly encouraged over retaining the good will of such a mighty personage; indeed, the duke himself was quite rich enough to give the necessary ships.

But, somehow, he failed to do so; probably because he feared that the sovereigns might object to having a private individual steal away the glory they themselves had no time to reap. Our navigator, again disheartened because the years were slipping away, announced to his host that he would start for France. At this the duke wrote to the queen personally, telling her what a pity it would be to let France have the profits of such a discovery. Also, he wrote a very kind letter of commendation for Columbus to take to her Majesty, a letter which is still preserved; but even with this powerful backing Columbus got no help, as we shall see.

The monarchs, having conquered most of the Moorish cities, were preparing to lay siege to the last stronghold, Granada. Columbus craved

an answer from them before the siege began. They requested Bishop Talavera to immediately obtain opinions from the wisest men he could reach, and report their verdict. The majority of wise men, it is sad to relate, again pronounced Columbus's enterprise vain and impossible; the Atlantic Ocean could not be crossed; but the minority, headed by the wise monk, Diego de Deza of Salamanca, who was now tutor to young Prince John, upheld it vigorously, and told the queen that the plan was perfectly feasible. The poor sovereigns, who were neither scientists nor churchmen, but merely hard-working soldiers and governors, did not know which view to take. Again they evaded a positive answer, making the war their excuse; and again Columbus, indignant at their evasion, determined to go to France.

Right here we come to one of the most picturesque incidents in this checkered life,—an incident that takes us again to that hot, dusty, southwestern corner where we saw him first enter Spain with the child trudging by his side.

Columbus appears to have decided that, before starting for France, it would be well to remove Diego from La Rabida and place him with the baby step-brother Fernando in Cordova, so that Fernando's mother might bring

up the two lads together. With this end in view, he again presented himself (and again afoot, for he was far too poor to ride a mule) before the gate of the low, white monastery near Palos. The first time he had rung that bell it was with hope in his heart; this time he was dejected. He had no hope, so far as Spain was concerned. The good monk Marchena had certainly done his best, but it had come to naught. There was nothing left but to thank them all and get to France as soon as possible. So mused Christopher sadly as he waited for the gate to open.

But Christopher did not know that there had recently come to La Rabida a new prior or chief monk. This prior, whose name was Juan Perez (pronounced Hwan Pair'eth), possessed, fortunately, an imagination and a certain amount of influence at court. Having imagination, he loved an occasional bit of news from the outside world. Therefore, when he heard a stranger talking to the monks in the outer courtyard, he listened.

“That man is no ordinary beggar asking alms,” said the sympathetic prior to himself. “He seems to be a foreigner, and he is talking about the king and queen, and the conquest of Malaga; and now he is asking for our little pupil Diego—why, it is the child’s father!—I must go and speak to him myself!” and out he went and joined the group in the courtyard.

And so it came about that as soon as Christopher had greeted his boy, now grown into a tall, intelligent lad of ten or eleven, he repaired to the cell of Juan Perez and told all that had happened to him during his various sojourns at court. At last (for Christopher was very wordy) he came to his final dismissal. "They say the Atlantic cannot be crossed," he cried desperately, "but I say it can! Aye, and I shall do it, too!"

Never had such stirring words rung out in that peaceful little cell. The prior himself caught their electricity and became quite excited.

Although the monk Marchena appears to have left the convent before Christopher's second coming, the prior had learned all about the Italian navigator from the other brothers. The story had interested him greatly, for he too had studied geography; and now, as the Italian stood before him, declaring that he would find those western lands, the prior realized that it would be a pity for Spain to allow the man to carry his idea off to France.

"Linger yet a few days with us, senior," he urged, "that I may learn from Pinzon and Doctor Fernandez what they think of your scheme. If they still regard it favorably, I myself will go to the queen, in your

behalf.”

Perhaps just here the senor shook his head sadly and said, “No, no; it is not worth the trouble. The queen is interested only in the Moorish war. Not even the great Diego de Deza, nor the Marchioness of Moya, nor the Duke of Medina Celi, have been able to prevail on her.”

And perhaps just here the good prior smiled knowingly and replied modestly, “I once had the honor of being Queen Isabella’s confessor, and had great influence with her. If”—and here he leaned close to Christopher and whispered something—“I think I might persuade her.”

We did not catch that whispered sentence quite clearly, but we believe it to have been, “If I tell her the story of the shipwrecked pilot.” Up to this time Christopher had not referred to it in his pleadings, for fear, perhaps, that it would sound too improbable; but down in this corner of Spain, where all men followed the sea, the story had got about (whether through the monk Marchena, or through sailors who had been to Madeira, is uncertain) and nearly everybody believed it. So now Juan Perez appears to have persuaded Christopher to use it as a last argument. This we may reasonably conclude, since the Rabida monk’s

intercession with the queen succeeded where all previous efforts had failed.

Martin Alonzo Pinzon, it turns out, is in Rome; so Christopher has to wait until his return. Another delay, but he is well used to that.

Meanwhile he turns it to profit by making trips to Palos, Huelva, Moguer, and other ports where he can question sailors newly returned from the west. For half a dozen years he has been out of touch with mariners and their doings, and these trips must have given him deep pleasure. For this is his true place,—among men who have known the rough hardships of seafaring life, and not among grandees and courtiers. He breathes in the salt air and chats with every man he meets. A pilot of Palos, Pedro de Velasco by name, tells him that he too once thought of going into the west, but after sailing one hundred and fifty leagues southwest of Fayal (one of the Azores), and seeing nothing but banks of seaweed, he turned north and then northwest, only to again turn back; but he is sure, he adds, that *if only he had kept on* he would have found land.

Christopher, also, as we know, is quite sure of it, and says so. Another day, in a seaport near Cadiz, he meets another pilot who tells him that

he sailed far west from the Irish coast and saw the shores of Tartary!  
Christopher probably has some doubts of this, so he merely shrugs his shoulders and walks off. He is impatient for Martin Alonzo Pinzon to return. It is disturbing to learn that other men have been getting nearer and nearer to *his* land.

At last Pinzon comes and announces, to add to Christopher's uneasiness, that he has been searching in the Pope's library, in Rome, for information regarding that enormously rich Asiatic island called Cipango. As they all sit in the little cell at La Rabida, talking about the proposed western voyage of discovery, Pinzon cannot help throwing in a word occasionally about Cipango. He has been reading Marco Polo, and Japan, or Cipango, is very much on his mind. Perhaps on Christopher's, also, but *he* is content to stick to his "western lands." About this scheme the two men of Palos, Pinzon and Doctor Fernandez, are as enthusiastic as ever; Martin Alonzo Pinzon repeats his offer to sail as captain of one of the ships; he even goes further, for he offers to advance money for the venture in case the Crown is unwilling or unable to provide the entire sum necessary. All this sounds very promising to the good prior, who vows that he is willing to speak with the queen if Christopher will give up forever his idea of going to France. It is a

last ray of hope to the discouraged man, and he agrees.

And so that very day a courier started out from the white monastery among the dark pine trees to find the queen at Granada, and give her Friar Juan's letter craving an interview on "an important matter." In those days it took two weeks, at least, for a courier to ride from Palos to Granada and back. On the fourteenth day, we may be sure, the prior and his guest kept scanning the eastern horizon anxiously. That very evening the man returned. He brought a royal letter granting the monk's request.

"Splendid!" cried the old monk. "I shall start this very night! Find me a mule, some one."

So everybody scurried around the neighborhood to see who would lend the prior a mule; and finally a man of Moguer said he would spare his beast awhile, though he never would have lent him to any other man than the good prior of La Rabida! Then he ventured to hope that the prior would not ride him too hard; as if any one, even an enthusiast helping to discover America, could ride a mule "too hard"!



By midnight the mule was brought up, and off started the prior, followed by the good wishes of everybody who was in the secret. Queen Isabella received him the moment he arrived at her camp of Santa Fe (Holy Faith) below the walls of Granada. With intense fervor he pleaded Columbus's cause. The Marchioness of Moya—the lady who had been wounded by the Moor at Malaga in mistake for the queen—was present, and she added her persuasions. The result was that Isabella not only commanded Columbus to appear before her, but she sent him money to buy suitable court raiment and to travel to Granada in comfort. How happy Friar Juan must have been when he sent the following letter back by royal courier to the waiting guest in La Rabida:—

“All has turned out well. Far from despising your project, the queen has adopted it from this time. My heart swims in a sea of comfort and my spirit leaps with joy in the Lord. Start at once, for the queen waits for you, and I more than she. Commend me to the prayers of my good brethren and of your little boy Diego.”

What a dear, human, lovable old gentleman was that Rabida prior! May his spirit still “leap with joy in the Lord!”

Columbus was buoyed up again. To be sure the queen promised nothing definite; but she had always told him that she would give him more attention when the war was over, and the courier declared that things were going very badly for the beleaguered Moorish city of Granada. It was the enemy's last citadel and, said he, it could not hold out much longer. Columbus, perhaps, took the news with moderation, for he was used to having things go wrong; but if only for the sake of the good brethren, he must have tried to look happy as he put on his new garments and rode out of La Rabida for Granada.

## CHAPTER VII

### ISABELLA DECIDES

We have now come to that famous Granada interview described in the first chapter,—a moment so important that Columbus, when he decided to keep a journal, opened it with this paragraph:—

“In the present year, 1492, after Your Highnesses had concluded that warfare in the great city of Granada where I saw the royal banners of Your Highnesses placed by force of arms on the towers of the Alhambra, and where I beheld the Moorish King go forth from the gates of his city....”

How Columbus arrived during the surrender we have already seen; how everybody of importance at the Spanish court—priests, military leaders, and government officials—gathered to hear him speak; and how, for the first time, the majority of his listeners were won over to his unpopular ideas. We know, too, how their admiration turned to distrust when he demanded large rewards should his voyage of discovery be successful; and we know how he was obstinate, and rode away, only to be overtaken by the

queen's messenger at Pinos bridge below the high Elvira Mountains and brought back. And this is how Queen Isabella happened to recall him.

Those friends who had been encouraging him for the last few years were deeply distressed over his departure and over the bad impression he had left at court. They felt that their beloved country was losing a wonderful opportunity of becoming the foremost power in Europe. England, France, Italy, all were greater than Spain because they had been forging ahead while Spain had been hampered by Moorish wars. Even Portugal, Spain's very small neighbor, had forged ahead by reason of her unequaled maritime enterprise. One of these countries was sure to grow even more important through giving Columbus a few ships and a few titles. Said this little group to each other, "No matter what the man's price, Spain will have to pay it!"

Luis de Santangel, treasurer of King Ferdinand's realm of Aragon, determined to go and talk it over with the queen who, apparently, had not been present at the recent hearing of Columbus. To apply further to Ferdinand would have been useless, for he had vowed he would have nothing more to do with the matter. Isabella possessed more imagination than her husband, and to this imagination Santangel thought he could

appeal.

First he pointed out that Columbus's very stubbornness about rewards might be taken as proof that he was certain to find whatever he promised to find; then he reminded her that the navigator was a very devout man, and that in his enterprise there was a strong religious motive; should he discover new lands, not only would their heathen population be converted to Christianity, but their commerce would make Spain so wealthy that she could undertake a new crusade and conquer the infidels who held the Holy Sepulchre. This possibility impressed Isabella profoundly, for she and her husband were the staunchest defenders of Christianity in all Europe. Now that Santangel had roused her imagination, he proceeded to make the whole matter clear by a practical suggestion as to ways and means. He reminded his royal listener that Columbus had offered to raise one eighth of the expense of the expedition (Columbus having repeated the offer made at La Rabida by Pinzon); and as for the remainder, he, Santangel, would be responsible for it. Either he would lend it himself (he belonged to one of the rich Jewish families that had become Christian) or he would induce King Ferdinand to allow it to be taken from the Aragon treasury and repaid later. (Ferdinand, apparently, was not such an unmanageable person,

after all.)

Right here is where the story of Isabella pledging her jewels would come in if there were sufficient reasons for believing it, but there is little proof of it; indeed, rather more against it. Not only did Santangel show the queen how the money could be obtained otherwise, but, as she had already pledged much of her jewelry in Valencia and Barcelona in order to aid the Moorish war, her husband's treasurer would surely have deterred her from parting with more. However, she was now so enthusiastic over Columbus's affair that she undoubtedly would have made some such offer had no other means of raising the money been found.

The queen knew that her husband disapproved of the would-be discoverer's high terms; she knew that all the grandees of the kingdom disapproved; she knew that the expedition might end in failure and bring down ridicule on her head; and yet she rose and cried in ringing tones, "Bring the man back! I will undertake this thing for my own crown of Castile."

Isabella, we must remember, was queen of Castile and Leon, and Ferdinand was king of Aragon, each still ruling his own portion, although their

marriage had united these portions into one kingdom. Hence, though Ferdinand had lost interest in Columbus's affair, Isabella was quite free to aid him. It was to commemorate her personal venture that later, after they had allowed Columbus to adopt a coat of arms, some poet wrote on its reverse side the famous couplet which excluded Aragon from a share in the discovery:—

A Castilla y a Leon

Nuevo mundo dio Colon.

To Castile and to Leon

Columbus gave a new world.

The great moment having come when a Spanish sovereign cried out, "Bring the man back! The thing shall be done!" it was done. Columbus, on hearing these things from the messengers, turned his mule back to Granada. The necessary papers were drawn up to provide ships and men; also, an order creating Christopher Columbus, or Cristobal Colon as he was called in Spain, Admiral and Viceroy, and granting all the other demands he had made in the event of his voyage being successful. Even the reluctant Ferdinand now fell in with his wife's schemes and signed

the order along with her.

The preparing of these papers took some time. Columbus had returned to Granada in late December, 1491, and it was not until April 17 the following year that “the greatest paper monarch ever put pen to” was signed. The fact that it refers to discoveries *already made* and discoveries to be made in the Ocean Sea is our strongest reason for believing that the pilot’s story had been laid before the sovereigns. Christopher’s long years of uncertainty were ended; the man’s great perseverance had won out at last; and the weary petitioner who, some months before, had ridden doubtingly forth from La Rabida now rode back, bursting with joy, to fall on the good prior’s neck and weep out his gratitude.



## CHAPTER VIII

OFF AT LAST!

Oddly enough, the ships Columbus was to take on his voyage were, according to royal command, to be supplied by that very seaport of Palos by which he is supposed to have entered Spain. Palos, Huelva, and Moguer, all thriving maritime cities in Columbus's day, are grouped at the mouth of the Rio Tinto. *Tinto* means deep-colored, like wine; and as this river flows through the richest copper region in the whole world, it is not surprising that its waters are reddish, nor that the copper trade enriched the neighboring towns. How the now unimportant Palos at the mouth of the Rio Tinto came to be chosen as the seaport from which Columbus should embark is an amusing story.

Some time before, its inhabitants had, through disobedience or some other offense, incurred the displeasure of their sovereigns. By way of punishment, the Crown ordered that Palos should fit out two caravels at its own expense and lend them to the government for a year whenever the government should call for them. The royal intention was, no doubt, to use the boats against Naples and Sicily, which they hoped to conquer

after finishing the Moorish war. But when they decided finally to help Columbus, they remembered the punishment due Palos, and called upon it to give the two caravels to “Cristobal Colon, our captain, going into certain parts of the Ocean Sea on matters pertaining to our service.”

Thus while Ferdinand and Isabella meant to punish the little town, they instead conferred a great honor upon it. Little did Columbus dream, the day on which he and his boy approached it so empty-handed five years before, that he was to make it forever famous. Palos to-day is a miserably poor, humble little place; but its people, especially the Pinzon family who still live there, are very proud that it was the starting-point of the momentous voyage of discovery; and hundreds of tourists visit it who never know that the sovereigns had intended punishing, instead of glorifying, the port.

In May, 1492, however, when Columbus returned from Granada, the Palos inhabitants did not see any glory at all! They saw nothing but the heavy penalty. Not only did this royal command mean that every citizen of Palos must furnish money to buy the ships and pay the crew, it meant that the ships and crew would never come back again from the “Sea of Darkness”! An expedition through the well-known Mediterranean to Sicily

or Naples would have seemed like a pleasure trip compared with the terrifying one now contemplated! They were handing over the equipment to a madman! Poor little Palos was filled with misgiving, and we may be sure that Columbus, as he passed through the streets, was looked upon as the common enemy.

The royal decree ordered Palos to have its contribution ready in ten days; meanwhile, a third caravel was to be bought; but so violently were the people of Palos opposed to the enterprise that not a single shipowner would sell his vessel. Another difficulty was to get a crew of experienced seamen. With very few exceptions, sailors were afraid to go out on the unexplored Atlantic Ocean beyond the Azores. Spanish sailors had not had the excellent schooling of those in Portugal, where, for seventy years or more, expeditions had been going out to discover new lands and coming back safely.

Columbus, therefore, found it difficult to induce the sea-going men of Palos to share his enthusiasm. This difficulty of getting a crew together must have been foreseen at court, for the royal secretary issued an order intended to help Columbus, but which instead hurt his cause and proved most unwise. The curious order in question was to the

effect that all criminals who would sign for the expedition would be “privileged from arrest or further imprisonment for any offense or crime committed by them up to this date, and during the time they might be on the voyage, and for two months after their return from the voyage.”

To criminals, apparently, being devoured by monsters rimming the western Atlantic appeared a better fate than languishing in a cruel Spanish prison, for the first men who enlisted were from this class. A more unfortunate method of recruiting a crew could hardly be imagined. Such men were undesirable, not only because of their lawless character, but also because they had never before sailed on a ship; and the more this class rallied to the front, the more the respectable sailors of Palos, Moguer, Huelva, and other adjacent towns hung back. To go forth into the unknown was bad enough; to go there in the society of malefactors was even worse.

Here again Juan Perez, the good priest of La Rabida, and Pinzon, the friendly navigator of Palos, came forward and helped. Friar Juan went among the population exhorting them to have faith in Columbus as *he* had faith in him; he explained to them all that he understood of geography, and how, according to his understanding, the Italian was

sure to succeed. As we know, a priest was often the only educated man in an entire community, and was looked up to accordingly; and so Friar Juan was able to persuade several respectable men to enter Columbus's service. As for Pinzon, both his moral and his practical support were so great that it is doubtful whether the expedition could have been arranged without him. Long before, at the Rabida conference, he had offered to go as captain; now he induced his two brothers to sign also. Palos, seeing three members of its most important family ready to go, took heart. Pinzon next helped to find the three vessels needed, and put them in order. One of these ships belonged to Juan de la Cosa, a well-known pilot, and Juan himself was prevailed upon to sail with it. (Later this Juan became a great explorer and made the first map of the New World.) Another and less fortunate purchase was of a vessel whose owners regretted the sale the moment they had parted with her; so down they went to where the calkers and painters were making her seaworthy for the voyage, and tried to persuade them to do everything just as badly as it could be done. One can readily see that these were hard days for Christopher Columbus. The preparations that Queen Isabella expected would take only ten days took ten long weeks.

[Illustration: THE THREE CARAVELS OF COLUMBUS.]

When finally ready, Columbus's little fleet consisted of three caravels —the *Santa Maria*, the *Pinta*, and the *Nina* (pronounced Neen'ya). A caravel was a small, roundish, stubby sort of craft, galley-rigged, with a double tower at the stern and a single one in the bow. It was much used in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries for the herring fisheries which took men far from the coast; and when the Portuguese tried to find far-off India, they too used the caravel form of vessel.

The largest vessel of the "Discovery Fleet" was only sixty-five or seventy feet long by about twenty feet in breadth, and of one hundred tons' burden; Columbus having purposely chosen small ships because they would be better adapted for going close to shore and up rivers. Only the *Santa Maria* was decked amidships, the others had their cabins at either end. The cross was painted on all the sails. Columbus commanded the *Santa Maria*, with Juan de la Cosa as pilot; Martin Alonzo Pinzon took the *Pinta*, and his brother Vincente (pronounced Vin-then'tay) took the *Nina*.

All told, one hundred men went forth on the famous voyage (although some

writers put it at one hundred and twenty) and a number of these had never been to sea before. Among the hundred was a notary to draw up all papers of ownership (when it came to dividing Columbus's tenth part of the gold, precious stones, etc., that should be found); a historian, to keep an official record of all that should occur; a metallurgist, to examine ores; and an orientalist, learned in foreign tongues, who would interpret what the western peoples might say to the newcomers who claimed the heathen lands for Spain. Besides these, there were two other learned men—a physician and a surgeon. Columbus himself was to act as map-maker and chart-maker. Strange to say, there is no record of a priest accompanying the expedition.

The great seriousness of the undertaking was felt more and more in Palos as work on the little caravels progressed. People spoke of it in awed tones and shook their heads dismally. Every day during the last week or two all the crew went religiously and faithfully to church. Columbus, being a religious man, no doubt approved of this; yet it surely would have sent him forth in better spirits if his crew had looked upon his venture more light-heartedly, and less as if they were foredoomed to destruction.

Now that we know the sort of men and ships that were to take part in this mighty enterprise, let us see the sort of charts and maps and instruments our navigator carried along; for until one understands these somewhat, one cannot realize the bravery it took to set out across the Atlantic in 1492. First, as to maps. Now that this world of ours has been so thoroughly explored that every bit of land and water is named and accurately noted, it is difficult for us to understand how the inaccurate, incomplete, fifteenth-century map could have been of any use whatever to an explorer. But we must always remember that our Genoese had a rich imagination. Our maps leave nothing to the imagination, either of the man who makes them or of us who look at them. Fifteenth-century maps, on the contrary, were a positive feast for the fifteenth-century imagination! Their wild beasts and queer legends fascinated as well as terrified. Their three distinct Indies, two in Asia and one in Africa, offered every sailor who was intrepid enough a chance to reach that region of wealth. The latest and most accurate map, marking the Portuguese discoveries, would really have been helpful to any one who had not the "Go West" idea so firmly fixed in his mind; but in that one direction it marked no routes farther than the Madeiras and the Azores. All beyond these islands was wholly imagination.

It was the same with the sea-charts; no soundings or currents were



marked. As to instruments, there were the lodestone and the compass, which had been known and used for several centuries; and the astrolabe, a recent improvement on the primitive quadrant for taking the altitude of the sun. The hourglass was the time measurer. In short, in that wonderful fifteenth century, when the surface of the world was doubled, there was nothing scientific about navigation.

Beyond these slight aids, Christopher Columbus had to rely on an imperfect knowledge of astronomy and on those practical observations of wind and weather and water that he had made during his own voyages. Such slender equipment, plus the tub-like little caravels, would not have invited many men to try unknown waters, unless such men had Christopher's blessed gifts of imagination and persistency.

At last the solemn hour has come to those quaking Palos souls. It is early dawn of August 3, and a Friday at that! The *Santa Maria* and the *Pinta* and the *Nina* are moored out in the copper-colored river, ready to go with the tide. Last night the last sack of flour and the last barrel of wine came aboard; likewise, the last straggler of the crew, for they must be ready for the early tide. It is still quite dark, and on the shore all Palos appears to be running about

with lanterns. Friar Juan is there to wring the hands of the one-time wanderer who came to his gate, and to assure him that one of the Rabida monks will conduct Columbus's little son Diego safely to Cordova. Columbus is rowed out to the largest ship. He gives the command and those ashore hear the pulling up of anchors, the hoisting of sails, and the cutting of moorings. Then the flags are raised—the Admiral's with a great cross in the center—and down the murky Tinto go the three little caravels with their unwilling, frightened, human freight. Those on shore turn tearfully into church to pray; and those aboard watch the dim outline of Palos fade away; by and by they notice that the reddish Tinto has become the blue ocean sparkling in the early sunshine; but no sparkle enters their timid souls. They can only keep looking longingly backward till the last tawny rocks of Spain and Portugal are left behind, and then there is nothing to do but sigh and mutter a dismal prayer. But Christopher's prayer is one of thankfulness.

## CHAPTER IX

“LAND! LAND!”

On the fourth day out from Palos the *Pinta*'s rudder became loose, and unless the damage could be speedily repaired the ship would soon be a prey to current and wind. The *Pinta* was the vessel whose owners repented having sold her. No wonder then that Columbus suspected the rascals of having bribed the crew to tamper with the rudder, in the hope of forcing their ship to put back into Palos. But he would not put back, he declared. Martin Pinzon was commanding the *Pinta*, and Martin knew what to do with perverse rudders and perverse men. He immediately set to work to have the damage repaired. The ship's carpenter must have done his work very badly, however, for the following day the rudder was again disabled. Still Columbus would not turn back and risk the chance of all his crew deserting him. Instead, he continued sailing southwest to the Canaries—the point from which the shipwrecked pilot was supposed to have started on his unexpected trip across the Atlantic. These beautiful islands, from which the imposing peak of Teneriffe rises, had been known to the ancients as “The Fortunate Isles”; Spain now owned them and had colonized them, and after the great discovery they became a

regular stopping-place for western-bound vessels.

When Columbus came to repair the rudder, he found the entire ship to be in even worse order than he had supposed. She was full of leaks, and her poor sails were not of the right shape to respond to heavy ocean breezes. He would have given her up altogether could he have found another boat to take her place; but the sparsely settled Canaries of 1492 were not the much-visited winter resort that they are to-day; no big ships were then in the harbors; and so there was nothing to do but patch up the *Pinta* and change the shape of her sails.

While this was being done, Columbus's waiting crew became acquainted with the Spanish colonists, and with very good results; for these islanders had a curious delusion to the effect that every year, at a certain season, they saw land far off to the west. Men were very credulous in those days. It is probable that their "land" was nothing more than clouds which, owing to certain winds of that particular region, lie low on the horizon for a long time; but the people of the Canaries, and of the Madeiras too, all firmly believed they saw Antilla and the other "western lands" of legend; and Columbus, nodding his head wisely, told how the king of Portugal had shown him some reeds, as large

as those of India, that had been washed up on the western shore of the Azores. "We shall find land seven hundred and fifty leagues from here," he repeated over and over, for that was the distance the pilot said he had gone. So sure was Columbus that, on leaving the islands, he handed each pilot sealed instructions to cease navigating during the night after they had gone seven hundred leagues.

The tales and delusions that flourished in the Canaries put heart into the crew, so when the little squadron again set forth on September 6 the men were less hostile to the expedition.

Some excitement was given to this fresh start by a rumor, brought from one of the islands, that Portuguese ships were seeking the Spanish fleet, in order to punish Columbus for having sailed in the service of Spain instead of Portugal. As the pursuers never were seen by the Spanish ships, that story, too, may have been some islander's delusion; but it made the crew believe that Columbus's undertaking must look promising to the great navigating Portuguese nation, or they would not be jealous of Spain's enterprise.

More than a month had now passed since Columbus had left Palos, and only

a hundred miles out from the African coast were accomplished! Was ever a man subjected to more delays than our patient discoverer! And now, when at last he was ready to start due west, a strong head sea prevailed for two days and would not let them push forward. So that it was actually not until September 8 that the voyage toward the “western lands” may be said to have begun.

We have mentioned that Columbus kept a diary on this voyage. He was, in fact, a prodigious writer, having left behind him when he died a vast quantity of memoirs, letters, and even good verse; and besides these, maps and charts in great numbers. No matter how trying the day had been, with fractious crews and boisterous ocean, no matter how little sleep the anxious commander had had the night before, no matter how much the ill-smelling swinging lamp in his cabin rocked about, he never failed to write in his journal.

This precious manuscript was long in the possession of Columbus’s friend Bartolome de las Casas, who borrowed it because he was writing a history of Columbus and wished to get all the information, possible in the navigator’s own words.

Las Casas was a monk who spent his life in befriending the Indians. When quite old, he ceased journeying to the New World and stayed at home writing history. He copied a great deal of Columbus's diary word for word, and what he did not actually copy he put into other words. In this way, although the original log of the *Santa Maria* no longer exists, its contents have been saved for us, and we know the daily happenings on that first trip across the Atlantic.

Nearly every day some little phenomenon was observed which kept up the spirits of the crew. On September 13 one of them saw a bright-colored bird, and the sight encouraged everybody; for instead of thinking that it had flown unusually far out from its African home, they thought it belonged to the new land they were soon to see. Three days later they saw large patches of seaweed and judged they would soon see at least a tiny island. On the 18th the mended *Pinta*, which had run ahead of the other two boats, reported that a large flock of birds had flown past; next day two pelicans hovered around, and all the sailors declared that a pelican never flew more than sixty or seventy miles from home. On September 21 a whale was seen—"an indication of land," wrote the commander, "as whales always keep near the coast." The next day there was a strong head wind, and though it kept them back from the promised

land, Columbus was glad it blew. “This head wind was very necessary for me,” he wrote, “because the crew dreaded that they might never meet in these seas with a fair wind to drive them back to Spain.”

Soon they were passing through the Sargasso Sea (named from the Portuguese word meaning “floating seaweed”). Its thick masses of drifting vegetation reassured them, for the silly legend that it could surround and embed a ship had not then found believers. Many years after it was discovered that several undercurrents met there and died down, leaving all their seaweed to linger on the calm, currentless surface. But back in 1492 the thicker the seaweed, the surer were those sailors that it indicated land.

Birds and seaweed, seaweed and birds, for over two weeks. Then on September 25 the monotony was broken. Captain Martin Pinzon called out from the *Pinta* that he saw land. Columbus says that when he heard this shout, he fell on his knees and thanked God. Scanning the horizon, he too thought he saw land; all of the next day they sailed with every eye fixed on a far-off line of mountains which never appeared any nearer. At last the supposed mountains literally rose and rolled away! It was nothing but lowlying clouds, such as those the Canary Islanders



had mistaken for *terra firma*.

Christopher's heart must have sunk, for they had come over seven hundred leagues, and for two days he had supposed he was gazing on the island of his search.

In spite of this disappointment they kept on, for a plant floated by that had roots which had grown in the earth; also a piece of wood that had been rudely carved by man; and the number of birds kept increasing. One can readily see how even the most skeptical man on the expedition should have felt sure by this time that the man whom he used to consider a mild maniac was in truth a very wise person. And perhaps the crew did feel it; but also they felt angry at those signs that mocked them day after day by never coming true. They grumbled; and the more the signs increased the more they grumbled; till finally one morning Columbus came on deck and found that his own helmsman had turned the *Santa Maria* eastward, and all the crew were standing by in menacing attitudes.

The other two ships, as we have seen, were commanded by the Pinzon brothers; and they, being natives of Palos, had secured all the

respectable Palos men who were willing to enlist; but Columbus had only the worst element—the jail-birds and loafers from other towns. And here they stood, saying plainly by their manner, “We are going back! What are you going to do about it?”

We don’t know exactly what he did do about it; Martin Alonzo Pinzon sent him advice to “hang a few of the rebels; and if you can’t manage to hang them, I and my brothers will row to your ship and do it.” But Christopher appears to have handled the situation without their help, and without hanging any one; for soon the helmsman swung the \_Santa Maria\_ around again. On October 10 trouble broke out afresh, and Columbus makes this entry in his diary:—

“The crew, not being able to stand the length of the voyage, complained to me, but I reanimated them.”

By October 10 the voyage had lasted some seventy days! No wonder the crew needed to be “reanimated.” Yet, there were the birds flying out to them, bringing their message of hope, if only the poor frightened men could have had more faith! The Pinzons meanwhile were having less trouble; for when their sailors wished to turn back because nothing had

been found seven hundred and fifty leagues west of the Canaries, Martin Alonzo told them all the absurd tales he had read about Cipango, and promised them, if only they went ahead, that its wealth would make their fortune. This appears to have hushed their murmuring; but Christopher had no such flowery promises to hold forth.

Martin Pinzon, having observed a few days before that most of the birds flew from the southwest rather than the exact west, suggested to Columbus that land probably lay nearer in that direction; and Columbus, to please him, changed his course. It is interesting to speculate on what might have happened had Pinzon not interfered, for the fleet, by continuing due west, would have shortly entered the Gulf Stream, and this strong current would surely have borne them northward to a landing on the coast of the future United States. But this was not to be. On Pinzon's advice the rudders were set for the southwest, and nothing happened for several days except that same passing of birds. On October 11 a fresh green branch floated by; and Columbus, after dark had fallen, declared he saw a light moving at a distance.

Calling two of his sailors, he pointed it out to them. One agreed that there was certainly a light bobbing up and down, but the other insisted

that he could see nothing. Columbus did not feel sure enough of his “light” to claim that it meant land, so he called the ships together and reminded the crews that their sovereigns had offered to the one who should first see the shore a pension of ten thousand maravedis (about twenty-five dollars) a year. In addition, he himself would give a further reward of a silk doublet. This caused them all to keep a sharp watch; but land it surely meant, that fitful light which Columbus saw, for that very night—or about two o’clock in the morning of October 12—Rodrigo de Triana, a sailor on the *Pinta*, shouted “\_Tierra! Tierra!\_” and sure enough, as the dawn grew brighter, there lay a lovely little green island stretched before their sea-weary eyes!

Who can imagine the tremendous emotions of that famous October morning! Here were a hundred men who had just demonstrated that the world was round; for by sailing west they had reached the east—if, as many were ready to believe, they had come to Martin Alonzo’s Cipango! The world really *was* a sphere! and at no point in rounding it had they been in danger of falling off! Here they stood, that marvelous morning of October 12, on Cipango or some other island off Asia, as they supposed, with the soles of their feet against the feet of those back in Palos, and the fact did not even make them feel dizzy. We who have always known

that the earth is a sphere with a marvelous force in its center drawing toward it all objects on the surface; we who have always known that ships by the thousands cross the great oceans from one continent to another; we who have always known that the whole inhabited earth has long since been explored,—we who were born to such an accumulation of knowledge can never realize what was the amazement, the joy, of that little handful of men who, after three lonely months on the unknown ocean, at last reached unsuspected land.

And the humble Genoese sailor man,—what were his emotions on the great morning that transformed him into Don Cristobal Colon, Admiral and Viceroy under their Highnesses, the king and queen of Spain. Let us hope that he did not think too much about these titles, for we ourselves don't think about them at all. We are only trying to grasp the joy it must have given him to know that he had been true to his grand purpose; that he had waited and suffered for it; and that now, after declaring he could find lands in the unknown ocean, he had found them. Quite right was he to put on his scarlet cloak for going ashore, for he had conquered the terrors of the deep!

How eagerly they all clambered into the small boats and rowed toward the

shore, Columbus and the Pinzon brothers and the notary in the first boat load. The new Admiral carried the royal standard, and when they leaped ashore, he planted it in the ground and took possession of the island for Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. Then on a little hill they put up a wooden cross and all knelt before it and poured out their gratitude to God.

## CHAPTER X

### NATIVES OF THE NEW LAND

Columbus christened his little coral island San Salvador. The natives called it Guanahani; but should you look for it on your map you may not find it under either its native or its Spanish name, for there was no way, at that early date, of making an accurate map of the whole Bahama group, and the name San Salvador somehow became shifted in time to another island. Thus was the original landfall long lost sight of, and no two writers could agree on the subject. Recently, however, the most careful students have decided upon the reef now called Watling's Island, to-day an English possession, as Columbus's first landing-place.

When you see that it is but a tiny dot in the ocean, you may think it an insignificant spot to have been the scene of the most momentous event of the Renaissance; you may feel inclined to scold at that well-meaning Martin Pinzon for asking to have the rudders changed in order to find his Cipango. But it must be remembered that to have found anything at all was an unparalleled feat; and furthermore, that wee San Salvador was not the end of Columbus's expedition; it was merely the beginning,

merely the lighting of that great torch of enterprise and investigation which was not to be extinguished till the whole American continent and the whole Pacific Ocean had been explored and mapped out. Columbus that day started an electric current through the brain of every European mariner. To discover something across the Atlantic was henceforth in the very air, and the results were tremendous.

But to return to those happy Spanish sailors who on that October morn of 1492 at last planted their feet on *terra firma*. To explore the little island did not take long. They found it to be full of green trees and strange luscious fruits. There were no beasts, large or small, only gay parrots. The natives, guiltless of clothing, were gentle creatures who supposed their strange visitors had come from Heaven and revered them accordingly. As the two groups stood looking at each other for the first time, the natives must have been by far the more astonished.

Spanish eyes were used to races other than the white; they all knew the brownish Moor; and alas, many of them knew the black Ethiopian too; for, once the Portuguese started slave-snatching down the African coast, the Spaniards became their customers, so that by this time, 1492, there were a good many African slaves in Spain. But the Bahama natives knew of no race but their own; so what could these undreamed-of visitors be but



divine? Here is Columbus's own description of what happened when the white man and the red man had scraped acquaintance with each other:—

“As I saw that they were very friendly to us, and perceived that they could be much more easily converted to our holy faith by gentle means than by force, I presented them with some red caps and strings of beads to wear upon the neck, and many other trifles of small value, wherewith they were much delighted and became greatly attached to us. Afterwards they came swimming to the boats, bringing parrots, balls of cotton thread, javelins, and many other things which they exchanged for glass beads and hawks' bells, which trade was carried on with the utmost good will. But they seemed on the whole a very poor people. They all were completely naked. All whom I saw were young, not above thirty years of age, well made and with fine shapes and faces; their hair short and coarse like that of a horse's tail, combed towards the forehead except a small portion which they suffer to hang down behind and never cut. Some paint themselves with black, others with white, others with red, others with such colors as they can find. Some paint the face, some the whole body. Others only the eyes, others only the nose. Weapons they have none; nor are they acquainted with them. For I showed them swords which they grasped by the blades and cut themselves through ignorance. They

have no iron, their javelins being without it, and no thing more than sticks with fishbones or other thing at the ends. I saw some men with scars of wounds upon their bodies and inquired by signs the cause of these. They answered me by signs that other people came from islands in the neighborhood and tried to make prisoners of them and they defended themselves. ....It appears to me that these people are ingenious and would make very good servants, and I am of the opinion that they would readily become Christians as they appear to have no religion. They very quickly learn such words as are spoken to them. If it please our Lord, I intend at my return to carry home six of them to your Highnesses that they may learn our language.”

In this brief entry in the Admiral’s diary there is a whole volume to those who can read between the lines, and a painful volume too, as much history is. Glass beads and little tinkling bells, you see, were all ready to be distributed from the caravels; a proof that Columbus had not expected to reach the Asiatic Indies, for those Indians were known to be sharp and experienced traders. How did Columbus happen to know that it would be wise to carry rubbish along with him? Ah, that was something found out when he left Porto Santo to accompany the Portuguese expedition to Guinea; had he not seen the Portuguese commander exchange

ounces of bright beads for pounds of ivory and gold?

And so he, Christopher Columbus, came prepared for similar trade in his western lands; the world, we see, was hunting for bargains, trying to get much for little in the fifteenth century, just as it still is in the twentieth! Then again, look at the Admiral's innocent remark, "I think they would make excellent servants." That is still the rule to-day; the trained man sees in the untrained only a servant. It was perfectly natural that the Spanish eye should instantly see that little island converted into a Spanish plantation with those simple, gentle creatures who "learn easily" working it. And lastly, let us look into this sentence: "I intend taking some of them home to show your Majesties." It never occurred to the Admiral to add, "if they are willing to come with me." Indeed, it seldom occurred to any Christian of Christopher Columbus's day that a non-Christian, and especially a savage one, had the same human instincts as a Christian, and that he would have preferred staying in his own land and with his own family. Out of that horrible but common mistake grew up the whole miserable business of kidnapping, buying, and selling human beings. Let us not be too greatly shocked at our fifteenth-century hero for talking so unfeelingly. Remember, it was only about fifty years ago that we saw the last of

slavery in these United States, and even then it died hard. Christopher was, on most moral questions, merely a man of his time, a fact to be kept in mind as we read of his later voyages.

“They answered me by signs,” wrote Columbus. In other words, the linguist of the expedition, the man learned in Asiatic tongues, had not been able to make himself understood on San Salvador; and neither was he when they sailed on among the other islands. Clearly, these little specks of land in the ocean were not the large and extravagantly rich island of Japan which Martin Alonzo Pinzon had hoped to find. When Columbus asked these friendly people for “Cipango,” they looked blank and shook their heads; so did all the other islanders he met during his three months’ cruise among the West Indies. All of the new-found people were of the same race, spoke the same language, and were equally ignorant of Cipango and Cathay and India,—lands of rich cities and temples and marble bridges, and pearls and gold. Columbus had found only “a poor people,” with no clothes and hardly a sign of a golden ornament. True, when he “inquired by signs” where their few golden trinkets came from, they pointed vaguely to the south as if some richer land lay there. And so the Admiral, as we must now call him, never gave up hope. If, as Pinzon still believed, they had discovered Asiatic islands,

somewhere on the mainland he must surely come upon those treasures which the Moors had been bringing overland by caravan for centuries past. He could not go for the treasure this trip; this was nothing more than a simple voyage of discovery; but he would come and find the wealth that would enable the Spanish monarchs to undertake a new crusade to the Holy Land.

October ran into November and November into December, and the Admiral was still finding islands. He had come, on October 21, to such a far-reaching coast that he agreed with Martin Pinzon that it must be the mainland, or Cathay, and started eagerly to follow it west. But the natives near the shore were timid and fled at the approach of the strangers. No splendid cities of marble palaces, nor even any mean little villages of huts, were in sight; so two of the sailors were sent inland to explore and find the capital of the country. After three days the explorers returned and reported that all they had seen were many, many naked savages who dwelt in tiny huts of wood and straw, and who had the curious custom of rolling up a large dry leaf called tobago, lighting it at one end, and drawing the smoke up through their nostrils. Obviously, another “poor people” like those of San Salvador; they were not the rich and civilized Chinese that Marco Polo had written about.

Neither capital nor king had they, and their land, they told the explorers, was surrounded by water. They called it Colba. It was, in fact, the modern Cuba which Columbus had discovered.

Instead of continuing west along Cuba's northern shore till he came to the end of it, the Admiral preferred to turn east and see what lay in that direction. It was one of the few times when Columbus's good judgment in navigation deserted him; for had he kept west he might have learned from the natives that what we call Florida lay beyond, and Florida was the continent; or, even if the natives had nothing to communicate, west would have been the logical direction for him to take after leaving the extremity of Cuba, had he fully shared Pinzon's belief that Asia lay beyond the islands. But no, without waiting to get to the extremity of Cuba, Columbus retraced his course east, as if expecting to find there the one, definite thing which, according to his friend, Las Casas, he had come to find.

On November 12 he writes: "A canoe came out to the ship with sixteen young men; five of them climbed aboard, whom I ordered to be kept so as to have them with us; I then sent ashore to one of the houses and took seven women and three children; this I did in order that the five men

might tolerate their captivity better with company.” No doubt he treated the natives kindly, but one can readily understand that their families and friends back on the island must have felt outraged at this conduct on the white man’s part.

The strange thing is that Columbus, so wise in many ways, did not understand it too, in spite of the miserably mean ideas which prevailed in his day regarding the heathen. But the very fact that he notes so frankly how he captured the natives shows that neither he, nor those who were to read his journal, had any scruples on the subject. All moral considerations aside, it was tactless indeed to treat the natives thus in islands where he hoped to have his own men kindly received.

On Cuba the boats were calked and scraped, and the Admiral superintended the operations. He was always a busy, busy man, on land or sea. Being a great lover of nature, he left this nautical business for a while and traveled a few days inland; and of every native he met he asked that same question that he had been asking among all these lovely islands, “Is there any gold or pearls or spices?” No, that land lies west, far west; thus Columbus understood the sign answer; but after following a native in that direction for a long time, he had to give it up, for the

time being. When he returned to the beach, Martin Pinzon showed him a big stick of cinnamon wood for which, in his absence, one of the sailors had traded a handful of beads.

“The native had quantities of it,” Martin assured his Admiral.

“Then why didn’t the sailor get it all?”

“Because,” and here Martin grew malicious, “you ordered that they could trade only a little, so that you could do most of it yourself!”

And now the native had gone, and the rueful Admiral never saw him nor his cinnamon again!

At last, sailing along Cuba, he came to its end; and from there he could see another island eighteen leagues off. This was what we call Haiti, or San Domingo. The ships sailed over to Haiti, and the Admiral was so pleased with its aspect that he christened it Hispaniola, or little Hispania, which is Latin for Spain; but as Spain is called by its own people Espana, Hispaniola soon became Espanola.



# CHAPTER XI

## THE RETURN IN THE NINA

Espanola, or Haiti, the name we know it by, evidently corresponded to all of the Admiral's preconceived notions of what he was to find in the western waters. He describes it in his diary as the loveliest island they had yet seen; its thousands of trees "seemed to reach to Heaven." Any one who had lived long in Spain, where trees are few and small, must have taken great delight in the sight of a real forest, and so Columbus wrote much on the beauties of Haiti. Scratch away with your pen, good Admiral, and tell us about the trees, and the lovely nights that are like May in Cordova, and the gold mine which the natives say is on the island. Enjoy the spot while you may, for bitter days are coming when its very name will sadden you. Could you but see into the unknown future as clearly as you saw into the unknown west, you would hurry away from lovely "little Spain" as fast as your rickety caravel would take you! Troubles in plenty are awaiting you!

But the skillfulest mariner cannot know what to-morrow may bring forth. How was even an "Admiral of the Ocean Seas" to know that when he went to

bed on Christmas Eve, his helmsman would soon sneak from his post and hand the rudder to a little cabin-boy. The night was calm and warm, as December generally is in those southern waters. The Admiral had been up night and day when cruising along the Cuban coast, and now thought he might safely take a few hours' repose. Few hours, indeed, for soon after midnight he hears the cabin-boy screaming "danger!" A strong, unsuspected current has carried the tiller out of his weak hands, and the *Santa Maria* is scraping on a sandy bottom. Instantly the Admiral is on deck, and the disobedient helmsman is roused from his sleep. At once Columbus sees that their only possible salvation is to launch the ship's boat and lay out an anchor well astern; he orders the helmsman and another sailor—for they are all rushing on deck now—to do so. But the minute they touch water the frightened, contemptible creatures row quickly away and ask the *Nina* to take them aboard. The *Santa Maria* grates a little farther down into the sand bar and swings sidewise. Columbus orders them to cut the mainmast away, hoping to steady her some, but it proves useless; the ship's seams are opening; the water is rushing in; they must abandon her to her fate. So they all follow that cur of a helmsman and crowd on to the *Nina*. Did ever a Christmas morning dawn more dismally?

The island of Haiti had several kings or caciques. The one who lived near the Admiral's landing place had been extremely friendly to his strange visitors, and when in the morning he saw their sad plight, he sent all the people of the town out in large canoes to unload the ship. He himself came down to the shore and took every precaution that the goods should be brought safely to land and cared for. The next day, Wednesday, December 26, the diary recorded:—

“At sunrise the king visited the Admiral on board the *Nina* and entreated him not to indulge in grief, for he would give him all he had; that he had already assigned the wrecked Spaniards on shore two large houses, and if necessary would grant others and as many canoes as could be used in bringing the goods and crews to land—which in fact he had been doing all the day before without the slightest trifle being purloined.”

Nor did his aid end here; when Columbus decided to build a fort and storehouse out of the *Santa Maria*'s timbers, the natives helped in that too.

In the fort it was decided to leave about forty men “with a provision of

bread and wine for more than a year, seed for planting, the long boat of the ship, a calker, a carpenter, a gunner, and many other persons who have earnestly desired to serve your Highnesses and oblige me by remaining here and searching for the gold mine.”

Columbus was, in short, planting the first settlement in the New World. As the disaster had occurred on Christmas morning, he called the town “La Navidad” (the Nativity). To govern it he left a trusty friend, Diego de Arana, whose sister was little Fernando’s mother. Columbus drew up a few excellent rules for the conduct of his colonists, and made them a wise address besides. Then he loaded a gun and fired it into the hull of his stranded ship, just “to strike terror into the natives and make them friendly to the Spaniards left behind.” This done, he said good-bye to the colony, telling them how he hoped to find, on his return from Castile, a ton of gold and spices collected by them in their trade with the natives; and “in such abundance that before three years the king and queen may undertake the recovery of the Holy Sepulchre.”

On January 4, 1493, just a year after Columbus had been dismissed from Granada for asking to be made Admiral and Viceroy of the undiscovered lands in the west, he turned his back on those lands now discovered and

started home. Not, however, with three ships, for we have learned what happened to the *Santa Maria*; not even with two ships, for we have *not* yet learned what happened to the *Pinta*, which Martin Pinzon commanded. Martin had deserted a month before the shipwreck. Yes, that good and capable navigator, who had helped so much to get the expedition started, had struck off with his picked Palos men on a different course, without asking leave from his Admiral. Nor was this all; for according to the Journal, Martin had “by his language and actions occasioned many other troubles.” Columbus professes that Pinzon’s conduct mystified him. It was on November 21 that the *Pinta* started off. Columbus could not believe his eyes, he says. Thinking that the ship must soon come back, all that night he “burned a torch, because the night was clear and there was a nice little breeze by which Martin could have come had he wished.” But Martin did not wish. He still had hopes, perhaps, of finding Cipango before returning to Spain.

And so, on January 4, when Columbus gave the pilot orders to set the rudder for home, there was left only the smallest caravel of all, the *Nina*. They kept on among the islands, frequently landing, and had many more adventures before they struck the open sea. Always they asked for gold, and sometimes they learned that it could be procured by

journeying “eastward,” but more often, “west.” In one place they had a new experience—a shower of unfriendly arrows. In another island the soil and trees so nearly corresponded to what Columbus and Pinzon had read of Cipango that Columbus believed for a moment that he had reached Martin’s cherished goal; to be sure, there were no golden temples to be seen, but Columbus, always hopeful, was willing to believe that these lay farther inland, near the gold mines. Resolved to investigate on his next voyage, he made accurate notes so as to find this same beautiful harbor again. But the natives who gathered around explained, by signs, that the island was small, and that there were no palaces or bridges. While lingering here, the most remarkable thing happened; for another European caravel led by another explorer entered! Of course it was the *Pinta* whose captain had been trying to find either Cipango or the mainland. There was nothing for Martin to do but to appear friendly and pretend that his ship had drifted away and got lost. Columbus accepted the excuse, and both ships started direct for home. The last of the Bahamas faded from sight that same day, January 16, and the two tiny caravels were again the only moving objects on the vast, but no longer unknown, Atlantic Ocean.

For nearly a month, that is, until February 13, the passage was calm and

monotonous; and as the *Pinta* was in bad shape again every one was relieved to find the weather so quiet; but on the 13th the wind rose and rose till it lashed the sea into a fury. All day the sailors labored with the angry waves that kept dashing over the decks; and all that night the two lonely little ships kept signaling to each other until they were swept too far apart. When day broke, the *Pinta* was nowhere to be seen and was sorrowfully given up for lost. But there was no time to mourn; this day was even worse than yesterday, and the Admiral and his sailors, after the custom of their time, made vows that if only the Virgin would intercede with Heaven and save them, they would make a pilgrimage to her shrine of Guadalupe, far north of Sevilla, or go as penitents in procession to the first church they came to after reaching land.

In spite of these appeals, the danger increased every minute, and we may well imagine the agony of the little crew. The intrepid Columbus, who had accomplished a marvelous thing, a feat which would stagger all Europe, seemed destined to go down in mid-ocean with his great discovery! Here was the *Pinta* sunk and the *Nina* likely to follow her any minute! Europe would never know that land lay west of her across the Atlantic! And all those timid, doubting men in Spain, who had

opposed the expedition from the very first, would shake their heads and say, “Poor men, the sea monsters on the ocean’s rim have gobbled them up!” It must have taken every bit of heart out of the brave Admiral to think that Spain would never know how gloriously he had succeeded.

Down into his dark cabin he went, and there, while the little *Nina* staggered and pitched on the mountainous waves, he steadied his swinging lantern with one hand, and with the other hastily wrote on a parchment what he had done. This he tied in waterproofed cloth, placed it in a wooden cask, and threw it overboard. Then, for fear it might never be washed ashore, he hurriedly prepared a second cask and lashed it to the deck, hoping that the little caravel, even if he and all his men perished, might toss about till it reached the Azores, which he judged must be near. And sure enough, next morning land was in sight, and the sailors shouted for joy though the storm still raged. It was not until the 18th that the sea had subsided sufficiently for them to approach the rocky coast. When finally they were able to cast anchor, they found they were at Santa Maria, one of the Azores group.

The Azores, you will remember, were inhabited by Portuguese. Columbus, knowing there would surely be a church there dedicated to the Virgin,



sent half the crew ashore to make the penitential procession they had vowed; but this first boat load were promptly made prisoners by the Portuguese. What a sad reward for religious men who were trying to keep a vow! The governor of the island then ordered Columbus to come ashore and be made prisoner also, which you may be sure he did not do. There was much angry arguing back and forth, for Spain and Portugal were old enemies; but finally the Portuguese governor dropped his high-handedness, sent back the prisoners, and the poor storm-tossed little *Nina* bravely set out again to cover the many remaining miles between her and Spain.

Even after all their hardships and their sorrow over the loss of their friends on the *Pinta*, the unhappy mariners were not to be left in peace. After a few days another violent storm beat against them and buffeted them for days, while a terrific wind came and tore their sails away. The poor little *Nina*, bare-poled, was now driven helpless before the gale. And yet, marvelous to relate, she did not founder, but kept afloat, and on the morning of March 4, sailors and Admiral saw land not far away.

“The Madeiras!” cried some, just as they had cried before when off the

Azores.

“Spain!” cried others, more hopefully.

“The Rock of Cintra, near Lisbon!” cried their Admiral, whose power of gauging distances, considering his lack of instruments, was little short of marvelous. And Cintra it was. Again chance brought him to an unfriendly coast, and gave him no choice but to run into the mouth of the Portuguese river Tagus for shelter.

Like wildfire the report ran up and down the coast that a ship had just returned across the Atlantic from the Indies (for the Spanish sailors called the new islands the Indies of Antilla) and of course the ship was full of treasure! In command of this ship was Christopher Columbus, the very man whom King John of Portugal had refused to aid years before! Hundreds of small boats surrounded the little caravel, and the curious Portuguese clambered aboard and asked, among their many eager questions, to be shown the treasures and “Los Indios.” The commander of a Portuguese man-of-war anchored near assumed a bullying attitude and ordered Columbus to come aboard the warship and explain why he had dared to cruise among Portugal’s possessions. Columbus, more tactful than

usual, replied that, being now an Admiral of Spain, it was his duty to remain on his vessel. Meanwhile, he dispatched a courier to the monarchs of Spain with the great tidings; while from the king of Portugal he begged permission to land, and sent word, *not* that he had, as people were saying, discovered an Atlantic route to the Indies, but that he had sailed to the fabled islands of Antilla in the far Atlantic.

In answer, the king gave permission to land at Lisbon, and invited Columbus to court. Columbus may not have wished to go there, but a royal invitation was a command. On entering the king's presence, the great explorer saw many of the noblemen who, years before, had advised their monarch not to aid him. Our Admiral is not to be blamed, therefore, if he took a deep delight in painting his new world in the rosiest colors possible. His story made king and courtiers feel uncomfortably foolish for not having been willing to take the risk Spain had taken. It was a bitter pill for poor King John to swallow, and straightway his scheming old brain began to hatch a pretext for getting the new lands for himself.

“Pope Martin V.,” he reminded his visitor, “conceded to the Crown of Portugal all lands that might be discovered between Cape Bojador and the

Indies, and your new discovery therefore belongs to me rather than to Spain.”

“Quite right,” murmured his courtiers. Then, when Columbus declared he had sailed west and not south, that Spain herself had warned him to keep clear of Portugal’s possessions, and that the lands he had discovered were merely Atlantic islands, they all insisted that “the Indies were the Indies, and belonged by papal authority to Portugal!”

Oh, those shifting, indiscriminate, fifteenth-century Indies which Europe invented to explain the unknown world! What misunderstandings resulted from the vague term! Columbus, again tactful, stopped boasting now, and merely observed that he had never heard of this papal treaty, and that the monarchs would have to settle it between themselves. Then he took his departure, with every show of kindness from the king, including a royal escort. The minute he was gone those courtly, crafty heads all got together and told the king that most likely the man was merely a boaster, but, lest he might have discovered territory for Spain, why not hurriedly send out a Portuguese fleet to seize the new islands ere Spain could make good her claim? Some even whispered something about assassination.

Let us hope that King John turned a deaf ear to them. At any rate, Columbus was not assassinated, perhaps because he thought it safer to trust to his battered little *Nina* than to cross Portugal by land. Hurrying aboard, he hoisted anchor and started for Palos.

It was on a Friday that Columbus had left Palos; it was likewise on Friday that he had left the Canaries after mending the *Pinta's* rudder; on Friday he had taken leave of the little settlement of La Navidad away back in Haiti, and now it was on Friday, the 15th of March, that he dropped anchor in the friendly port of Palos.

For the astounded population it was as if the dead had come to life. Every family whose relations had accompanied the expedition had given the sailors up for lost; and lo! here was the man who had led them to their death, bringing a caravel into port. True, forty of the men had been left across the water, and as many more perhaps were under it. Only one ship had come back; but it brought with it the amazing proof that the Atlantic could be crossed! Shops were closed, everybody went to church and rendered praise; bells pealed forth, and the "mad Genoese" was the greatest hero that ever lived; then, as if to give the scene a

happy ending, just before sunset of that same famous day, the *Pinta*, which had *not* been shipwrecked off the Azores at all, also sailed into the Rio Tinto. Thus did the punishment of Palos end in her witnessing the greatest day of the fifteenth century.

## CHAPTER XII

### DAYS OF TRIUMPH

Before following our happy Admiral into the presence of the king and queen, let us remain in Palos a little moment with that other courageous navigator, Martin Alonzo Pinzon. Poor Martin was not happy; in fact, he was very miserable. He had slunk from his storm-battered caravel and into his house without saying a word to any one. His wife, overjoyed at seeing him, threw her arms around him.

“Oh, my good Martin!” she exclaimed, “we were mourning you as dead! Cristobal Colon believed that you and your *Pinta* had gone to the bottom off the Azores!”

“I only wish I had!” groaned Martin, dejectedly. “I only wish I had!”

Perhaps you think he was repenting too deeply of that insubordination off the coast of Cuba, ‘way back in November. No, it was not that; Martin had another matter to regret now, more’s the pity; for he was a good sailor and a brave, energetic man, ready to risk his life and his

money in the discovery. He knew that, next to Columbus, he had played the most important part in the discovery, and he now realized that he was not to share the honor in what he considered the right proportion. He felt illused; moreover his health was shattered.

When the two vessels became separated in the storm off the Azores, he concluded just what the Admiral concluded—that the other ship had gone down. He considered it a miracle that even one of those mere scraps of wood, lashed about in a furious sea, should have stayed afloat; but both of them,—no! two miracles could never happen in one night!

And so when he scanned the horizon next morning and saw no *Nina*, and when he kept peering all that day through the storm and the little *Nina* never came in sight, a mean idea made its way into Captain Pinzon's brain; and it grew and grew until it became a definite, well-arranged plan.

“The Admiral has gone down with all aboard,” he reasoned to himself.

“Now, if my ship ever reaches Spain, why shouldn't I say that when Columbus failed to find land seven hundred leagues west of the Canaries, where he expected to find it, I persuaded him to accompany me still



farther, and led him to Cipango.”

Martin kept nursing this plan of robbing the dead Admiral of glory, until one morning he found himself off the Spanish coast just north of the Portuguese border. Into the little port of Bayona he put, and wrote a letter, and hired a courier to deliver it; that done, he sailed south along Portugal for Palos, probably passing the mouth of the Tagus only a few hours after Columbus, bound for the same port, had turned out into the Atlantic. Martin Pinzon may thank his luck that the Nina started home before him. Imagine his utter shame and confusion had *he* been the first to enter Palos with his perverted news!

As it was, things were bad enough. He heard the Palos bells ringing, and saw the people thronging along the shore to look at the wonderful little boat that had traveled in such far waters; his heart sank. The Admiral was home, and he, Martin Pinzon, *he* had sent from Bayona to their Majesties a letter in which were certain false statements. No wonder he sneaked off of his ship in the dusk and wrapped his cape high around his face and hurried to his house. No wonder he felt no happiness in seeing his good wife again, and could only groan and groan.

Martin went to bed—his spirits were very low, and the stormy passage had racked his old body as well; so he lay down; and the next day he could not get up, nor the next; and when, in due time, a royal letter came, thanking him for the aid he had given Columbus, but reproaching him for statements he had made which did not agree with those of the Admiral concerning the voyage, then Martin never wanted to get up again; he had himself carried to La Rabida, where he died in a few days, the good friars comforting him. So no more of Martin Alonzo Pinzon, whose end was inglorious, but whose courage and enterprise were later remembered gratefully by Spain; for Charles V., Queen Isabella's grandson, made public acknowledgment of Pinzon's great services in discovering the New World.

And now to pleasanter things. What has the Admiral been doing since the Palos bells pealed out their joyous welcome to him? First, of course, he greeted the good Friar Juan Perez. And next he dispatched another letter to court announcing his discovery. In fact, he sent several letters; for, as we know, he was an energetic letter-writer; one to their Majesties, one to Luis de Santangel, King Ferdinand's treasurer, who had urged the queen to help him, and one to another friend at court. Here is the beginning of the Santangel letter:—

Senor:

As I know you will have pleasure in the great success which Our Lord hath given me in my voyage, I write you this by which you shall know that in thirty-three days I passed over to the Indies where I found very many islands peopled with inhabitants beyond number.

“I passed over to the Indies.” says the letter. The writer, we see, has decided to give his islands the vague general name that Europe applied to all unknown, distant lands—the Indies. Christopher was always ready to take a chance. If, as he had probably begun to hope, the western path might ultimately lead to India, why not at once adopt that important name?

His letters sent off to court by fast courier, the Admiral himself said good-by to Friar Juan and leisurely followed them. Ferdinand and Isabella, at this time, happened to be in the remotest possible point from Palos, in Barcelona, the great seaport of northeastern Spain. It was a long, long land journey for a seaman to make, but Christopher Columbus did not mind, for every step of it was glory and triumph. He

who had once wandered over this same land from city to city, obscure, suspected of being either a visionary or an adventurer, had returned as a great personage, an Admiral of Spain, a Viceroy, a Governor; and, best of all, a practical discoverer instead of a mere dreamer. Every town he passed through acclaimed him a most wonderful man.

Besides, he had brought them proofs of his discovery—those six strange people called “Indians”; these, along with an iguana and some red flamingoes, parrots, and unfamiliar plants, were exhibited in every town, and every town gaped in wonder, and crowded close to get a view of the Admiral and his *Indios*, and to whisper in awed tones, “and there is much gold, too, but he is not showing that!”

All this was very gratifying to the Admiral; but even more so was his reception when he arrived finally at Barcelona. Here he was met at the city gates by a brilliant company of *caballeros*, or Spanish nobility, who escorted him and his extraordinary procession through the streets of the quaint old town. We may be sure that the authorities made the most of what the discoverer had brought back; the Indians were ordered to decorate themselves with every kind of color and every kind of feather. The tropical plants were borne aloft, and it was rumored

that merely to touch them would heal any sort of malady.

Most imposing of all, there was shown a table on which was every golden bracelet and ornament that had been collected. To be sure, these were not numerous, but everybody hinted to everybody else that they were but a few articles out of Columbus's well-filled treasure-ship. The discoverer himself, richly clad, mounted on a fine horse, and surrounded by gorgeously accoutered *caballeros*, brought up the rear of this unique procession. What shouting as he passed! and later what reverent thanksgiving! Barcelona was no insignificant little port like Palos, to be stupefied at the wonder of it; Barcelona was one of the richest and most prosperous seaports of Europe, and could look upon the discovery intelligently; and precisely because she herself had learned the lesson that trade meant wealth, she rejoiced that this wonderful new avenue of commerce had been opened for Spain.

The display over, the king and queen invited Columbus to tell his story. Now had arrived the most critical moment since his return; but our Admiral, it is to be regretted, did not realize it, else he would have been more guarded in what he said. He should have told a straightforward tale of what he had done, without one word of exaggeration; but

Christopher had a fervid Italian imagination and could never resist exaggerating. So, instead of dwelling on the one stupendous, thrilling fact that he had sailed three thousand miles into the fearsome west and discovered new lands; instead of making them feel that he was great because of what he *had* done, and letting it go at that, the foolish man filled his narrative with absurd promises of miracles he would perform in the future. But none of it did seem absurd to him! He had persuaded himself, by this time, that west of his poor, uncivilized islands lay richer countries; and so he did not hesitate to assure the sovereigns that he had discovered a land of enormous wealth, and that if they would equip another expedition, he stood ready to promise them any quantity of gold, drugs, and cotton, as well as legions of people to be converted to Christianity.

Indeed, he went much further, and made a solemn vow that he, from his own personal profits in the discovery, would furnish, within seven years, an army of four thousand horse and fifty thousand foot for the purpose of reclaiming the Holy Sepulchre! Imagine a man pledging this, just because he had gathered a few gold bracelets! And yet, as he stood there in all the glamour of the court, with a whole nation regarding him as a wonder, he was so carried away by the situation that he probably

actually saw himself leading a triumphant crusade! As for the king and queen, so deeply affected were they that they fell on their knees then and there and poured forth their thanks to God.

The good Bartolome de las Casas (the priest who devoted his life to the Indians) was present and has described this memorable interview.

Columbus, he says, was very dignified and very impressive with his snow-white hair and rich garments. A modest smile flitted across his face “as

if he enjoyed the state and glory in which he came.” When he approached

the monarchs, they arose to greet him as though he were the greatest

hidalgo in the land; and when he dropped on his knee to kiss their

hands, they bade him rise and seat himself in their presence. Surely

this was a great day for the humble Genoese sailor. He was *Don*

Cristobal henceforth, with the right to select a noble coat of arms. For

his sake his brothers Bartholomew and Diego (James) were to receive

appointments, and his son Diego was to be brought to court and educated.

Then, after securing the welfare of these members of his family,

Columbus wrote to his old father, the wool-comber in Genoa, and sent him

some money.

All this shows his good heart toward his own people; for toward one not

his own was he guilty of an ignoble act. It was to that sailor Rodrigo, of the *Pinta*, who had been the first to sight land early on the morning of October 12. When Columbus was asked to whom the queen's promised reward of ten thousand maravedis should go, he replied, "To myself." Surely it could not have been because he wanted the money for its own sake; it did not equal twenty-five dollars, and he had already received a goodly sum on arriving in Barcelona; it must have been that he could not bear to share the glory with another, and so told himself that the light he saw bobbing up and down early that night was carried by a human being, and the human being must have been in a canoe, near the island. On the strength of this argument he claimed the money Rodrigo had expected to receive.



## CHAPTER XIII

### PREPARING FOR A SECOND VOYAGE

Once the story of the first voyage had been digested, all thoughts were turned toward preparations for the next. Indeed, while Columbus was still in Sevilla on his way to Barcelona he had received a letter from the monarchs asking him what they could do to help him accomplish a second voyage, and he had sent them a list of his needs in the way of men, ships, and supplies. This the royal officers now brought out and the sovereigns went over it carefully with their new Admiral.

Now began the test of Don Cristobal Colon, *not* as an intrepid mariner, but as a business man cooperating with other business men in the colonizing, Christianizing, and commercializing of the new territories. In this matter he was to be associated with the powerful Juan de Fonseca. This Bishop Fonseca was very keen and efficient, but worldly, and vindictive toward those who opposed him in any way. To keep his good will needed much tact. He was not long in deciding that the great navigator had neither tact nor business ability; so he snubbed him accordingly, and made his path a hard one.

Knowing, as we do, that to-day Spain possesses not an inch of territory in the New World she discovered and opened up, that other nations have reaped where she sowed, we are prone to conclude that it was all bad management on her part. But this is not entirely true. So far as colonizing could be managed from the home country, Spain faced her new responsibility with great energy. Immediately a sort of board of trade, or bureau of discovery, was organized, with the capable Bishop Fonseca at its head. This was called the Casa de Contratacion and its headquarters were at Sevilla; for Sevilla, though fifty miles up the Guadalquivir River, is practically a seaport. Cadiz was appointed the official harbor for vessels plying between Spain and the Indies. This meant the decline of proud Barcelona, but naturally a port nearer the Atlantic had to be chosen. Customhouses were established in Cadiz, and special licenses were issued to intending traders. Botanists were called upon to decide which Spanish fruits and vegetables might best be transplanted to the new islands; arrangements were made for shipping horses (which were lacking there), also sheep and cows.

Plans were soon drawn up for towns and cities—not mere log-cabin villages such as the later English and Dutch colonists were content

with—and a handsome cathedral was to be begun in Haiti, and filled with paintings and carvings and other works of art. In fact, no material detail was overlooked to make the new settlements worthy of their mother country. Where the effort failed was in selecting the men to be sent out, not in the things sent. If only the proper individuals had been sent to Columbus's islands, all these other details might have taken care of themselves in the course of time.

The second expedition was to be on a very large scale. It had to be assembled quickly lest other nations, learning of the discovery, or the one nation that had already learned of it, might get there first; wherefore Fonseca and Columbus were authorized to buy, at their own price, any boat lying in any port of Andalusia that was suitable for the long journey; if its owner protested against the price named, they had authority to seize it. The same system applied to provisions and other equipment for the voyage—these must be given at the government's price, else the government, represented by Columbus and Fonseca, would seize them. Lastly, these two could compel any mariner to embark on the fleet, and could fix his wages, whether he wished to go or not.

The money for this second expedition came from a source which Spain has

no reason to be proud of today, but which she had small reason to be ashamed of in the sixteenth century. It was the confiscated wealth of the Jews who, as enemies of Christianity, had been banished from the kingdom the year before. Columbus's "one eighth of the expense," which by the contract of Santa Fe he was bound to supply, he had no means of furnishing, since he had not yet reached lands rich enough to yield it.

It was at the end of May that Columbus left Barcelona, hoping soon to embark again for his "Indies." There was indeed every reason for haste, since King John of Portugal had lost no time in presenting his claims to Rome.

We have already mentioned the important part which prelates played in the affairs of their countries. Similarly, the Pope played an important part in international affairs; and that is why a Pope had made the Portuguese treaty of 1470, and why King John now sought its enforcement by the present Pope. But Ferdinand and Isabella also were hurrying messengers to Rome. The pontiff at this time happened to be not an Italian but a Spaniard, Alexander Borgia, born a subject of Ferdinand's own kingdom of Aragon. Ferdinand knew well how to judge this shrewd Aragonese character, and what arguments were most likely to appeal to

it. He told the Spanish ambassadors to say that Spain would immediately set to work to convert the vast new lands to Christianity; that the Spanish explorers would take great care not to intrude into Portugal's African Indies, which shows how confused geography still was in everybody's mind; and that, whatever the Pope's decision, Spain would defend her discoveries from any other claimant. This being made clear, the ambassadors were to present Ferdinand and Isabella's supplication that a papal bull, or decree, might be issued, granting them all lands discovered in the past and future by their Admiral Don Cristobal Colon. Ferdinand of Spain being now a much more powerful king than John of Portugal, the Pope granted all that Spain asked, but was careful not to admit that Columbus had discovered the real India; for the bull refers only to "insulae et terra firma remota et incognita" or "islands and a remote and unknown mainland."

Meanwhile, all sorts of intrigues were going on between the two monarchs. John had spies at Ferdinand's court to discover the negotiations with Rome, and others to find out how Columbus's preparations were getting along; Ferdinand also sent spies to Portugal. These reported a Portuguese plan for seizing the western lands before Columbus could return to them. This came to nothing, however, through

John's fear of the Pope; and well for Spain that John did fear the power of Rome, for it took Columbus so long to gather his second fleet that there would have been ample time for the Portuguese mariners to cross the Atlantic ahead of him.

The very measures that had been devised to help the second departure retarded it. Shipowners and provision dealers, in spite of royal orders, fought for fair prices and would not sell; and as for assembling crews for the ships, the difficulty was *not*, as in the first expedition, in getting men to go, but in keeping them back. If only Columbus had not talked gold, gold, gold! If only he could have refrained from exaggerating, and had simply stated that he had found some wild islands whose people had not a glimmering of civilization and who possessed but few golden trinkets! Had he not deceived the people and himself, only those would have joined the expedition who had the true, fine, adventurous spirit; or those who, seeking a new home, wished to settle down in new territory and develop it; but instead, men thought only of the vast wealth to be easily picked up—they would not even have to dig for it! Thus the expedition attracted mainly men of doubtful character who wanted to become rich quickly. Others offered themselves who wanted nothing more than excitement and novelty; others had dark

schemes of breaking away from all restraint, once they reached the new land, and carrying on any sort of robbery or traffic that might offer profit; while still others were priests who thought only of converting the heathen. If ever men engaged upon an undertaking that required endurance, hard work, sound common sense, and a practical knowledge of how to tackle any task that might present itself, this was the occasion. Yet the men who came forward lacked exactly these indispensable qualities.

No doubt Columbus and Fonseca picked the best of them; but the misfortune was that Columbus, who should have known what the business ahead of them required, did not know how to judge men; and the shrewd archbishop, who *did* know how to judge men, had no idea what the occasion was going to demand of them; and thus they chose men for the second trip to the new lands who were utterly unsuitable.

Nearly all the two thousand who applied for permission to sail were personally interviewed by the Admiral, which must have taken much time; besides, he was busy buying wheat and flour, hard biscuit, salt pork and fish, cheese, peas, beans, lentils, wine, oil, and vinegar, as well as honey, almonds, and raisins for Don Cristobal's own table. It was just

about the same food that a sailing vessel would carry to-day, with the exception of tea and coffee; for Portugal had not then discovered the lands from which these two beverages were to be introduced into Europe.

All these preparations were watched by two eager-faced boys who no doubt often said to each other, "I hope father will think us old enough to go with him on his next voyage!" For the Admiral had brought little Diego and Fernando along to Sevilla and Cadiz, so that he might see them every day before the long separation.

Finally, on September 25, 1493, all was ready and the anchors were hoisted. How different it was from that first fearful sailing out of Palos in 1492. This time the fleet was magnificent; seventeen vessels, all newly calked and painted; about fifteen hundred men, all happy and hopeful; and on shore, instead of a populace wringing its hands in dismay, a populace cheering and making music and flying banners, and actually envying the lucky ones who were starting off to the wonderful new lands where they could pick up gold!



## CHAPTER XIV

### FINDING NEW ISLANDS

With the departure of this second expedition for the “western lands” Columbus’s brief season of glory ended. Neither home-comings nor departures would ever be the same for him again; for behind him he left a few jealous enemies, potent to do him harm, and with him he took men of such unstable character that more enmity was sure to spring up. These last he held with a firm hand as long as the voyage lasted; Christopher could always control men at sea, but on land it was another matter. Even though *he* might have clear notions of the difficulty of planting a colony in new territory, how would these adventurers, and these high-born young gentlemen who had never worked, and these hundred wretched stowaways who, after Columbus had refused to take them, had hidden in the vessels until well out to sea—how would all these behave when it was time to fell trees, build houses, dig ditches, and cut roads? And then again, good Admiral, why did you make the great mistake of bringing no women colonists with you? How could men found homes and work when there were no wives and little ones to be housed and fed?

Of the better sort who accompanied this second expedition there were a few, but only a few, solid, reliable individuals whose society must have been a comfort to the Admiral; among them, the faithful Juan de la Cosa, the Palos pilot; James Columbus, or as the Spaniards called him, Diego Colon, faithful to his celebrated brother, but unfortunately somewhat stupid; Antonio de las Casas, father of the young priest who later became the champion of the Indians and who wrote Columbus's biography; Juan Ponce de Leon, an intrepid aristocrat who was destined to discover Florida; and Doctor Chanca, a physician and botanist who was to write an account of the vegetables and fruits of the western lands. These vegetables included the "good tasting roots either boiled or baked" which we know as potatoes. Most daring of all the company was a young nobleman named Alonzo de Ojeda. Alonzo was a real adventurer, willing to face any danger or hazard.

Columbus, on leaving Spain, again headed for the Canaries, this time for the purpose of taking on sheep, goats, swine, and other domestic animals to stock the new lands; then off again for the real business of crossing the Atlantic. Gold being the thought uppermost in every mind—even in the mind of the Admiral—the rudders were set southwest for the Caribbean Islands.

These, the natives of Haiti had told him, were full of gold; at least, that is how Columbus interpreted the signs the Haitians made when he asked for gold; and so, instead of hurrying to cheer up those forty men he left at La Navidad, he steered to a point considerably south of Haiti and reached the Caribbeans precisely; which, it will be seen, was a far greater test of nautical skill than merely to sail anywhere into the west, as he had done on the first voyage.

The sea nearly all the way across was deliciously smooth and the trade wind soft and steady; only once was there bad weather; very bad while it lasted and very terrifying to those who had never before been at sea; but it happened that, during the storm, the electric phenomenon known as the Light of St. Elmo was seen over the rigging of the *Marigalan'te*, the Admiral's ship, and all that horde of superstitious men were reassured and considered it a sign that the expedition was divine protection.

Yet a little later, when the water supply ran low, and when there were so many leaks in the vessels that the pumps were working constantly, they began to grumble. But Columbus, who was a magician at reckoning sea

distance, laughed at their alarm and said to them, “Drink all the water you like; we shall reach land in forty-eight hours.” Next day no land appeared, but still he spoke confidently and ordered them to take in sail and slow down. That was at sunset, on Saturday, November 2; Sunday morning, November 3, the sun rose on a beautiful verdant island only a few leagues ahead of them. The magician had fairly scented land from afar!

This little island, Dominica he called it, had no harbor; but what did that matter since another island lay alongside it, to the north. Here they landed and took possession in the name of Spain—not only of the one island but of five or six more which were visible from a little hill. On this spot, which they christened Marigalante, there were no inhabitants; so, after waiting only long enough to feast on new, luscious fruits, they sailed to the next island, which they called Guadeloupe.

And here the Spaniards began to learn what real savagery meant. Only women and children appeared to inhabit the island, and these fled inland at the strangers’ approach. This afforded an excellent opportunity for the visitors to look into the native huts and see how these wild people

lived. Hammocks of netting, earthenware dishes, and woven cotton cloth were found; but along with these rudiments of civilization something else was found that made the Europeans look at each other in horror—human bones left from a recent feast!

The next day they landed at a different island, for these Caribbeans all lie close together. Here the deplorable business of kidnapping began again, and quite legitimately, the Spaniards thought, for were not the miserable creatures cannibals? A young boy and three women were captured, and from these Columbus learned that the people of the two islands he first visited, along with a third he had not yet come to, had formed a league among themselves to make war on the remainder of the islands. That was why all the men happened to be absent at the time of the Spanish landing. They had gone off in their canoes to capture women as wives, and men and children to be killed and eaten!

The fact that the warriors of this island were absent emboldened a party of nine Spaniards to penetrate inland in search of gold; secretly, too, without the Admiral's knowledge or consent. Night came and the nine men had not returned. The crew were naturally anxious to leave the island before its man-eating population returned, but the majority were willing

to await their lost companions. Next day Alonzo de Ojeda, who said he was not afraid of cannibals, led a search party clear across the island, but without success; not until the third anxious day had passed did the gold seekers get back to the ship. They had paid dearly for their adventure, having been utterly lost in a tangled forest, without food, torn and scratched by brambles, and fearing all the time that the fleet would give them up for dead and sail without them.

A week having now been passed among the cannibals, Columbus decided to give up gold-hunting and go and greet the colony at La Navidad. His captives told him that the mainland lay south, and had he not grown anxious about the men he had left the year before, he might have sailed south and found South America; but instead he headed north, stopping sometimes at intermediate islands. Once again they tried capturing some natives whom they saw on the shore, but these Carib women were wonderful archers, and a number of them who managed to upset their canoe and swim for liberty shot arrows as they swam. Two of the Spaniards were thus wounded.

Not until the 22d of November did the fleet come in sight of Haiti—about a month later than if they had come direct from the Canaries. Many

islands, including Porto Rico, had been discovered and named before they finally touched Espanola and began sailing along its northern coast to where the *Santa Maria* had been wrecked. Although no gold had been found, all the men on the boats were confident that quantities of it would have been collected during the year by the men at La Navidad; and so great content reigned on all the ships.

While the fleet was still some distance away, one of the captured Haiti Indians who had made the voyage to Spain and back was sent ashore to tell Chief Guacanagari and the colony of the Admiral's return. This Indian messenger, having been converted to Christianity and having learned to speak Spanish, was expected to be of great use in the present expedition. Before sending him ashore they dressed him handsomely and covered him with showy trinkets that would impress his countrymen. But the real impression was to come from his telling his tribe what a powerful people the Spaniards were and how advisable it would be to receive them kindly. This attended to, the converted Indian was to rejoin the ship at La Navidad, where Columbus would richly reward him for his services. Our simple Columbus, who loved Spain's civilization and power, entertained great hopes of the Indian's mission, and never suspected that this savage preferred his native island; and that, once

he set foot on it, he would never again risk himself in the presence of white men!

The Admiral next stopped at the mouth of a stream where, on his previous voyage, he had heard of gold. The party who went ashore to search for it soon came back aghast. They had found, instead, two bodies lashed to a stake in the form of a cross. The men were hardly recognizable, but the scraps of clothing looked Spanish. The ominous news ran from ship to ship and gloom began to settle over the entire expedition.

Columbus, much disturbed, hastened on to La Navidad. On approaching the spot his crew fired a cannon and shouted, but no response came. They landed; but it was to find the fortress a blackened ruin and the whole settlement destroyed. Even the stout-hearted Admiral was now utterly dejected.

After a spell of grieving came a ray of hope. Perhaps Diego de Arana and his other friends were not all dead; perhaps the treacherous natives had merely driven them off. He had told Diego to keep the gold they gathered hidden in a well, so that, in case of attack, it would be safe; and off Columbus started to hunt for the well. No amount of searching revealed



it; instead, another painful sight, a few dead Spaniards; that was all.

Inland, far away from his original abode, the king was found who had so kindly helped Columbus when the *Santa Maria* was wrecked—King Guacanagari. From him came the only account ever obtained of the fate of the colony; a true account apparently, for later investigations confirmed it. The Spaniards, with the exception of their leader, Arana, had behaved very badly toward each other and toward the natives. They wanted wives, and had stolen all the young women from Guacanagari's village and then had fought with each other for the prettiest. Having obtained wives, some deserted the little European colony and went to live as savages among the Indians. Others had gone to find the gold mines, which quest took them to the eastern part of the island where the fierce chief Caonabo ruled. So enraged was this chief at their invasion that he not only killed *them*, but descended upon their compatriots at La Navidad, and attacked them one night when all was still and peaceful. Guacanagari heard the savage war whoops, and out of friendship for the Admiral he tried to drive off the assailants, but he himself was wounded and his house was burned. The Spanish fort was fired; the inmates rushed out, only to be butchered or driven into the sea and drowned. Not one man escaped.

Thus ended Columbus's second trip westward across the Atlantic. What a landing! Blackened ruins, dead bodies, the enmity of the natives, and—no gold; all this where he had hoped to be greeted by happy, prosperous men. Here were the first fruits of his great discovery; here the first sample of Spanish ability at colonizing; here the first specimen of what the white man could do in a new and peaceful land; and our great Admiral, thinking of the mixed band he had brought out from Spain to colonize, dropped his head and covered his face with his hands.

All were anxious to leave the scene of this tragedy; but before they left, the native king, Guacanagari, who appeared as friendly as ever, expressed a desire to visit Columbus's ship. While on it he managed to talk with the Caribbean Indians who were aboard. That night the captives, including a woman whom the Spaniards had named Catalina, made their escape and were picked up in waiting canoes. Next day when Columbus sent to Guacanagari to demand their return, the king and his whole village had disappeared. It would appear that this simple savage had grown into a far shrewder person than his European host since that Christmas night when the *Santa Maria* ran aground.

La Navidad having disappeared, the next concern was to found another settlement. A point some distance east was chosen, where a beautiful green vega, or plain, stretched far back from the shore. The city was to be called Isabella, in honor of the queen who had made possible the discovery of the new lands. Streets were laid out, a fine church and a storehouse were planned to be built of stone, and many private houses, to be built of wood or adobe or any convenient material, were to be constructed. All this was very fine in plan; but when the men were called upon to do the hard manual labor that is required for building a town and planting gardens and fields in an utter wilderness, many of them murmured. They had not come to do hard work, they had come to pick up nuggets of gold. Besides, many were ill after the long diet of salted food and musty bread; even Columbus himself fell ill upon landing, and could not rise from his bed for weeks; and although all this time he continued to direct the work of town building, it progressed but slowly.

So there lay the great Christopher Columbus, bedridden and empty-handed, at the moment when he hoped to be sending back to Spain the gold and other precious substances collected by the men of his first settlement.

What should he write to the sovereigns waiting for news? He could not bear to write the sad truth and tell them how all his hopes, and theirs,

had come to naught. If only he could have known, or surmised, that his islands fringed a magnificent new continent that had never even been dreamed of by civilized man, his worry might have ceased; for surely a man who had found a new world for Spain need not have found gold besides; but he knew nothing of the continent as yet; and remembering the extravagant promises made in Barcelona, he decided to postpone writing the letter home to Spain until he should make another attempt to find gold.

Accordingly, he sent two expeditions to different parts of the island to find the mines which, according to his understanding of the natives' sign language, must exist. Alonzo de Ojeda and the other captain he sent out returned each with a little gold; and this slight find was sufficient to set Columbus's fervid imagination at work again. He sent a rosy account of the island to the monarchs, and repeated his former promise to soon send home shiploads of gold and other treasures. And no wonder that he and so many others wished for gold; for it is written in his journal, "Gold is the most precious of all substances; gold constitutes treasure; he who possesses it has all the needs of this world as well as the price for rescuing souls from Purgatory and introducing them into Paradise." If gold could do all that, who would

not try to possess it?

But so far as his letter to the monarchs went, Columbus knew, even while writing it, that real gold and the promise of gold were two very different things. His promises could never fill up the empty hold of the ship that was going back to Spain; and so, failing the rich cargo which the men of La Navidad were to have gathered, Columbus bethought himself of some other way in which his discoveries might bring money to the Spanish Crown. The plan he hit upon was the plan of a sick, disappointed, desperate man, as will be seen from a portion of his letter. The letter, intended for the sovereigns, was addressed, as was the custom, to their secretary.

“Considering what need we have for cattle and beasts of burden ... their Highnesses might authorize a suitable number of caravels to come here every year to bring over said cattle and provisions. These cattle might be paid for with *slaves* taken from among the Caribbeans, who are a wild people fit for any work, well built and very intelligent; and who, when they have got rid of the cruel habits to which they have been accustomed, will be better than any other kind of slaves.”

Horrible, all this, we say, but it was the fifteenth century. Slavery had existed for ages, and many still believed in it, for men like the good Las Casas were few. Moreover, Columbus was tormented by a feeling of not having “made good.” He had promised his sovereigns all sorts of wealth, and instead he had been able to collect only an insignificant amount of gold trinkets on Haiti. Desperate for some other source of wealth, in an evil moment he advised slave-catching.

Besides considering himself to have fallen short in the royal eyes, he was hounded by the complaints and taunts of the men who had accompanied him. They hated work, so he tried to appease them by giving them authority to enslave the natives; and, as our good Las Casas wisely remarks, “Since men never fall into a single error ... without a greater one by and by following,” so it fell out that the Spaniards were cruel masters and the natives revolted; to subdue them harsher and harsher measures were used; not till most of them had been killed did the remaining ones yield submissively.

## CHAPTER XV

### ON A SEA OF TROUBLES

In the new colony of Isabella things went badly from the very start. Its governor comforted himself by thinking that he could still put himself right with everybody by pushing farther west and discovering whether the Asiatic mainland—which Martin Alonzo Pinzon had always insisted lay back of the islands—was really there. Accordingly, Columbus took a crew of men and departed April 24, 1494, leaving his brother Diego in command of the colony. Never had Columbus done a more unwise thing than to leave Isabella at that moment. Not one single lesson of self-help and cooperation had his men yet learned; and of course they reproached him with their troubles. The root of it all was disappointment. They had come for wealth and ease, and had found poverty and hardship. They even threatened to seize the ships in the harbor and sail off, leaving the two brothers alone on the island; yet, knowing all this, Columbus decided to go off and continue his discoveries!

Again he just escaped finding the mainland. On sailing west from Isabella and reaching Cuba at the nearest point to Haiti, he decided to

coast along its southern shore. He had gone along its northern shore on his first voyage, and had turned back instead of continuing toward the continent. This time he took the southern coast, pushing west for about a month and a half, and again turning back when he was not more than two hundred miles from Central America. The natives whom he questioned told him, as on his first visit to Cuba, that their land was surrounded by water; but Alonzo de Ojeda, who was with Columbus, said, "These are a stupid race who think that all the world is an island, and do not know what a continent is!" Columbus too did not wish to believe the savages; he preferred to believe that Cuba was the continent. Yet as a navigator Columbus was honest, and no doubt would have gone farther and proved the natives right had he not been pestered by a grumbling crew. His men were dissatisfied at the long tropic voyage which never appeared to bring them one inch nearer wealth, and they clamored to return to Isabella. So mutinous did they become that he decided to turn back, but it was with a heavy heart. Again he must write to the sovereigns and report that he had not yet found a land of wealth. The very thought of this next letter made him miserable.

In fact, our enterprising Admiral was in a very bad way by this time. We recall how he was ill when the new settlement of Isabella was started,



and how he nevertheless personally superintended the work. Always a tremendous worker on sea or land, always at his post, meeting his heavy responsibilities as best he knew how, it was nothing but work and worry for the harassed Christopher Columbus; and now when he, a sick man, had undertaken this voyage to the mainland, the natives had declared that Cuba was only a big island!

Columbus lay down in his bunk, broken-hearted. A fever seized him and he raved for several days; and in his ravings he hit upon a plan which was so childish that one would laugh were it not also so pitiful. He decided to write that he had discovered the mainland of Asia, but not yet Cathay, as Cathay lay far inland. To prove that Cuba was really Asia, he called together his crew of eighty men and made them swear before a notary that not only had they cruised along the mainland, but they had learned that it was possible to return from Cuba to Spain by land. This statement being duly sworn to and sealed, the crew were informed that if any one of them should ever deny this, his tongue would be torn out to prevent his repeating the lie.

This time they did not keep so close to the shore. By going farther out they discovered the Isle of Pines, also the pretty little group known as

“The Queen’s Gardens,” and Jamaica, later to be the scene of much woe. Always islands, islands, islands! Among some of them navigation was very dangerous, and the Admiral, still ill, never left the deck for several days and nights. At last he broke down and could not move from his bed. The minute this happened the crew, who had not the slightest interest in discovering beautiful islands, hurried direct to their countrymen in Isabella.

Poor Admiral! Poor men! If only they could have forgotten all about the riches of Cathay, and could have realized the wonder and the honor of being the first white men to gaze on all these lovely spots, these bits of earth straight from the hand of God, how their hearts might have welled with joy and thanksgiving! But no, it was a dissatisfied, heavy-hearted body of men who came back empty-handed to Isabella on September 29, and reported that in all their five months’ absence they had seen nothing but savage islands.

Now let us see what mischief had been brewing in the colony during their absence. Columbus, before leaving, had commanded the military governor to place himself at the head of four hundred men and scour the island for provisions. Instead of following these orders, the military

governor, without Diego Columbus's leave, went aboard the first ship sailing for Spain. In other words, he deserted. The remainder, on learning this, made a raid on the nearest natives and stole their food and their wives; and the natives naturally took revenge.

It was while the outraged Indians were gathering in large numbers to destroy Isabella that Columbus returned. A sad state of affairs to greet a sick man, and especially when the trouble was all of Spanish making. But there was no time to spend in asking whose fault it was. Their lives were at stake. Isabella might soon share the horrible fate of La Navidad. Columbus hurriedly mustered his men—less than two hundred—and divided them into two companies. One of these he himself commanded, and the other was under his older brother, Bartholomew, who had arrived from Spain during the expedition to Cuba. The Spaniards were clad in armor. The natives were naked and had no guns, and though they were far more numerous than the Europeans, they were soon overcome.

One of the powerful chiefs, however, still remained unsubdued at the head of his forces in the interior of the island. This was the chief Caonabo, already mentioned as the one who had avenged his wrongs on the offenders at La Navidad. Soon he too was captured by Alonzo de Ojeda

through the clever ruse of sending him a present. Then came a little more fighting, and the men who had come to convert the savages to Christianity obtained absolute control of the island of Haiti. The enslaved natives, we are told, wove their sorrows into mournful ballads which they droned out desolately as they tilled the fields of their harsh masters.

But even with the natives subjugated there was still much discontent among Columbus's men. There being no gold to pick up and sell, by tilling the land only could they live; and even to farm profitably takes years of experience. For everything that went wrong, they blamed the man who had brought them to the New World, and similarly his brothers who had come to help him govern.

Whenever a ship returned to Spain the miserable colonists sent back letters full of bitter upbraidings against the man who had led them into poverty and hardship. Also one of the priests had gone home, and straight to court, to make a thousand complaints. The military governor who had deserted the colony did the same thing, adding, "There is no gold in the Indies of Antilla, and all the Admiral said about his discoveries was mere sham and banter."

We have already mentioned that, from the moment Columbus started on this second voyage, enemies at home began to do him harm. When, therefore, all these tales reached Spain, they fell on ready ears. Even Queen Isabella, who had always championed Columbus, had grown to see that his discretion and general common sense fell very far short of his courage and his navigating ability. The royal pair, therefore, decided that the whole matter must be investigated.

A man who had accompanied Columbus on his first voyage was appointed by the monarchs to go as Royal Commissioner to Haiti and question Columbus about the condition of the colony. This man was selected because of his supposed kindly feelings to the Admiral, the latter having recommended him to the queen for excellent conduct on that trying first voyage. The queen, we see, thus endeavored to make the inquiry as easy and friendly as possible for the great navigator. But the Royal Commissioner, Don Juan Agnado, acted like many another man suddenly vested with authority; he carried it with a higher hand than kings themselves! Arriving at Isabella at the moment when the Admiral was trying to capture the chief Caonabo in the interior of the island, Agnado snubbed Bartholomew Columbus, threw several officials into prison, put himself at the head

of the garrison, and announced that he was going inland after the Admiral!

On his making this show of insolent power, every one believed that he was to be the new governor, and that he had been authorized even to put Columbus to death. At once they gave way to all the meanness of their natures and, in order to gain favor with the new viceroy, they began bitterly denouncing the old.

Columbus, who had received word of Agnado's advent into Isabella, hurried to meet him there. Seeing himself in a sorry plight, he told Agnado that he would immediately go back to Spain and answer his sovereigns' inquiries in person. This was in October, 1495. But all sorts of ill luck prevented his going. A frightful hurricane tore over the island and sank the four vessels which Agnado had brought; then a wanderer came in with tales of a real gold mine in the south of the island and the report had to be investigated. Next, the several forts which had been built had to be strengthened and stocked with provisions; so that it was not till March, 1496, that the Admiral was ready to sail. Only two caravels now remained in Isabella harbor. One of these was the faithful little *Nina*; and on her the weary Admiral returned to

Spain.

## CHAPTER XVI

### THE THIRD VOYAGE

Columbus's second voyage home from his western lands was even more stormy and threatening than his first had been, but the little *Nina* remained staunch as ever. Besides frightful weather to try his soul, Columbus was taking home two hundred broken-down, disheartened colonists who could no longer endure the hardships of the New World. Even the prospect of going home did not improve their tempers. When the food ran low, colonists and crew threatened to kill and eat the captive natives in the hold. Columbus managed to pacify them all, however, but it must have used up every bit of energy in his worn body.

When, after this tempestuous voyage, the *Nina* and the other little caravel put into Cadiz harbor on June 11, 1496, there was more humiliation. Crowds collected to greet the gold gatherers; but the unhappy men who crawled off the vessels were paupers—wrecks—mere living skeletons. The very sight of them brought down curses on Christopher Columbus. The man who had dreamed of coming back with a ship full of gold, and being acclaimed by the cheers of the populace, came



back instead with the royal displeasure hanging over his head and curses ringing in his ears!

The court was settled, at that time, in the north near Valladolid, and thither Columbus went to plead his case. All along the way he displayed his Indians and tropical plants and little golden ornaments, but the inhabitants were less curious than before. In the picture of this greatest and most illustrious discoverer trying to gain favor with critical crowds by showing them a few naked savages and a few bits of gold, there is something pitiful. For Columbus knew, and the crowds knew, that he was in disfavor, and he was dejected by the fear of an unfriendly reception.

What a relief it must have been to him when, instead, he found himself graciously received. Not a word did the sovereigns utter of their dissatisfaction, either over the affairs of the colony or the small amount of gold. He told them all about his trip along Cuba and the new islands found; and of course he could not refrain from telling them that just before he left Hispaniola *real* gold mines had been discovered from which they might “confidently expect large returns.” They thanked him for his new discoveries and showed him many marks of

favor. Instead of paying attention to the many complaints which had been made against Bartolome Colon, they told the Admiral that his brother might remain vice-governor for life. A little later they told him they would take his young son Fernando into the royal household and educate him, and after a time they began to make plans for a third voyage. How much better it all turned out than he had been led to expect from Agnado's conduct!

For his next voyage Columbus asked for eight ships and the sovereigns complied. More than three hundred men were to be sent out, paid by the Crown; and as many more, if they would volunteer to go without pay, were promised a third of the gold they got out of the mines, besides a share in other products.

All these fair promises, where he had been expecting disgrace, must have lifted a load from Columbus's mind; but he was soon to find, as in years gone by, that a long time may elapse between promise and fulfillment. Months and months rolled slowly away and Columbus was still kept waiting in Spain.

It is possible that Ferdinand and Isabella wanted to see what the colony

could do without him; or perhaps there really was no other reason than that given, that Spain herself needed every available ship at that time. First, she was sending a great expedition against Naples; being at war with France also, she needed a fleet to guard her own seacoast. Further, as a brilliant marriage had been arranged between two of the royal children of Spain and two of the royal children of Burgundy, there was extra need of ships to carry these princes, in suitable state, across the Bay of Biscay. Indeed, these various Spanish plans called not only for ships, but money; and yet the government managed finally to set aside six million maravedis for Columbus's use. Before he could begin to spend it, however, Ferdinand took it back again, and under circumstances that were very mortifying to the waiting Columbus.

Just after the royal treasurer was ordered to put this sum at the Admiral's disposal, word came to court that Pedro Nino had arrived from Espanola with ships laden with gold!

"There now," cried Christopher in glee, "did I not tell you gold was sure to come?"

"Well then," craftily reasoned King Ferdinand, "hasten you to Cadiz with

an order to Pedro Nino to pay the government's share over to you for your ships, and I will keep these six million maravedis in my own treasury for war expenses.”

But it all turned out to be a sorry joke on the part of Captain Pedro Nino. His ships were full of slaves which, he laughingly declared, he expected to turn into gold in the slave market.

Thus was Columbus, weary with long waiting, left without any appropriation at all; and Bishop Fonseca laughing at him whenever he observed his eagerness to be off!

In this quarter the impatient Admiral found much hindrance and no sympathy. Not only did Fonseca himself exhibit indifference to Columbus's work, but his secretary did the same. Furthermore, contrary to the terms of Columbus's contract, by which he was to have a monopoly of Indian discovery, Fonseca (on royal order, of course) began giving licenses to other navigators, and the intrepid Columbus saw his coveted prize slipping through his hands.

In all matters relating to government and administration, Bishop Fonseca

was a far wiser man than the great navigator. Fonseca possessed the best education a man could receive in that day. His training in the great church organization had given him skill in reading character. He soon saw that Columbus had but little ability outside of navigation; and we wish that, instead of despising him, he had been big enough and kindly enough to say: "Good friend, give up all connection with that struggling colony of Hispaniola. Let me send out a more competent man than yourself to handle it, and do you devote your energies entirely to discovery. That alone shall be your work. Carry it as far as you can, for you are not young and the day will come when you can sail no more."

If a sympathetic, convincing, friendly voice had whispered this good advice to the harassed governor of Espanola, what a load of trouble it might have lifted from his heart. But Bishop Fonseca, unfortunately, was not the man to help another in his hour of trouble. He merely treated Columbus coldly and put every sort of obstacle in his way.

Ships and men were at last ready to sail from Cadiz on May 30, 1498. It happened that ten days before Vasco da Gama, following the Portuguese track around Africa, had left the coast and gone across the Indian Ocean, reaching the rich mainland of the real India—the brilliant,

civilized city of Calcutta. Let us be thankful for poor Columbus's sake that there were no cables in those days to apprise him of the fact, else he might have felt even more keenly what a poor showing his own discovery had made.

His fleet this time consisted of six vessels. They stopped as usual at the Canaries, then went farther south to the Cape Verde Islands. Thus a whole month passed before they were ready to cross the Atlantic.

On leaving the Cape Verdes, the Admiral decided to send his best captain with three of the ships due west to Haiti,—this because the Isabella colony was in sore need of provisions. Meanwhile he himself would lead the other three farther south and discover new lands; for he had received a letter in Spain from a gem expert saying, “Go to hot lands for precious stones.”

Knowing nothing of currents and calms around the equator in July, he conducted his three ships into such a strong northern ocean current that he had to change his course before ever they reached the equator. Next they lay becalmed for eight days in the most cruel heat imaginable. The provisions were spoiling; the men's tempers were spoiling, too; and so,

on the last day of July, judging that they must be south of the Caribbean Islands, Columbus gave up all thought of new investigations and started northwest for Hispaniola. By the new course land was soon sighted, a much larger island than any of the Caribbeans. Out of it rose three imposing mountain peaks; and accordingly it was christened \_La Trinidad\_ (the Trinity) after the custom of religious naming that prevailed.

Columbus's ships, having shrunken and cracked in the heat of the voyage, were much in need of repair. After cruising around the south and west shore, Looking in vain for a harbor where he could patch up his ships and take on water, he at last found a suitable spot near Point Alcatraz. Here the necessary repairs were made, and, as the Spaniards worked on their boats, they could look across to a low strip of land in the west—the coast, did they but suspect it, of an unheard-of continent nearly as large as all Europe!

Thinking it another island, they sailed over to it when the boats were mended. The Admiral was suffering torture with eyestrain (small wonder, one would say who has seen those hundreds of cramped pages he wrote), so he called a reliable man and ordered him to conduct a party ashore and

take possession in the name of their sovereigns. He himself, he said, would lie down awhile in his dark cabin, for the glare of the tropic sun made his eyes ache cruelly. That is how it happened that, on August 10, 1498, the Admiral lost the chance of putting foot on the vast mainland of South America.

Back came the party from shore after a few hours to report that the natives appeared very intelligent, that their land was called Paria, that they wore a little gold which came (as usual) from “the west,” and that they wore strings of pearls that were gathered a little farther south on the Paria coast. At last, pearls! How it must have encouraged our ever hopeful Admiral!

So now, though they did not suspect it, the great continent of South America was discovered. They sailed south along its shore for a time, hoping to find the pearls, but the farther they went the rougher the great waves became,—mountainous, indeed,—forming actual lofty ridges on the surface of the sea. Of this phenomenon Columbus wrote home to the monarchs, “I shuddered lest the waters should have upset the vessel when they came under its bows.” The rush, as we now know, was made partly by the delta of the Orinoco River and partly by the African current



squeezing itself into the narrow space between the continent and the southern end of Trinidad, after which it curls itself into the Gulf of Mexico and comes out again as the Gulf Stream.

Columbus, after buffeting these dangerous waters as long as he could, turned north again along Trinidad and emerged out of the Gulf of Paria, leaving the pearls behind him. Instead of landing and looking to see if the natives spoke the truth, he started a hopeful letter to the sovereigns, telling them what rich pearl fisheries he had discovered. This time, however, Christopher's imagination really ran close to the facts, for at their next landing, on the island of Margarita, north of Venezuela, they actually bartered three pounds of large pearls from the natives! Then they headed northwest for Haiti, reaching it the last of August, 1498.

Nearly two and one half years had passed since he and Agnado had left the island in the hands of their successor, Bartholomew Columbus. During that time no change for the better had come to it. The mistakes on the part of officers, and the rebellions on the part of the people, now made a longer list than ever. Not a man among them, from Bartholomew down to the meanest commoner, appeared to know how to build up a well-ordered,

self-respecting community. The spirit of cooperation was entirely lacking. No one thought of the common good, only of his own interests; and those in power had not been trained to handle large groups of men who needed wise directing. In those days, and especially in Spain, the general education was not the sort to develop each individual man toward self-reliance, but to make him part of a big organization where he need not think for himself, but need merely obey orders. If, then, those appointed to issue the orders were not men of wisdom and sense, things were bound to go wrong. Bartholomew Columbus, whom the sovereigns had appointed lord lieutenant for life, had not been a very wise governor, as will soon be apparent.

It was only a little while before the Admiral sailed home with Agnado that gold mines had been discovered on the south coast of Espanola. Bartholomew was therefore instructed to take a certain number of men to the south coast and establish a seaport at the nearest suitable point to the mines. That was how the present town of Santo Domingo (now shortened into San Domingo) came into existence, a town that in time grew to be so important that it gave its name to the whole island.

In order to start building San Domingo, Bartholomew, or, as he should be

styled, Don Bartolome, took nearly all the working population out of Isabella. The only ones left were those engaged in building two caravels which the Admiral had started constructing. The men under Don Bartolome appear to have entered into building the new port with fairly good will; for there really was a little gold in the vicinity, and they had been promised payment for their services. If Don Bartolome had stuck to his post, everything might have gone well; but scarcely were the first few houses completed when he decided, most unwisely, to make an expedition far into the west of the island, where there was supposed to be a rich Indian kingdom called Xaragua. Of course when Bartolome reached Xaragua, he found the tribe to be, as usual, a “poor people.” He could collect no golden tribute from them, and had to take their offer of produce instead, which, he told them, they must have ready within a certain time. Then he rode off to see how the men left behind at Isabella were getting on.

There, since the day when he had taken away the best (that is, the most industrious) men to work in San Domingo, those remaining had known nothing but misfortune. Many had died; and of those left, many were ill and all were discontented. Unluckily, Don Bartolome was not the man to offer much sympathy or even to stay and put things in order. Instead, he

left this first American town to its fate and started on to the second.

All the way across the island to San Domingo he kept demanding tribute from the natives he passed. The poor creatures, though they well knew the malignant power of the Spaniards, determined to make one more attempt at resistance. The result was that most of them were killed or taken captive. By this time the tribute of Xaragua was to be ready, and Don Bartolome went after it and did not continue on to the new seaport of San Domingo.

While he was gone, his younger brother Diego was left in command of the eastern part of the island. Diego was far less of a disciplinarian than either Cristobal or Bartolome, and the Spaniards themselves now revolted. In this they were led by a man named Francisco Roldan whom the Admiral had appointed chief-justice. Roldan gathered about him nearly all the well men on the island, taking them from their work in the mines and on the new town. Once banded together, these rebels rode and tramped all over the center of the island, stealing food wherever they could find it. It happened that while they were in the west, near the coast of those same regions of Xaragua where Bartholomew was, along came the three caravels laden with food which Columbus had sent direct from the Cape Verde Islands.

Columbus had instructed the commander of this little fleet to coast along the southern shore till he found the new seaport which Bartholomew was building; but somehow the commander missed it, and sailed much farther west and into the very territory where the Roldan rebels were. Knowing nothing of their disloyalty, he sent a large number of men ashore to inquire for San Domingo. These, as ill luck would have it, fell in with Roldan and his men. We may readily imagine the conversations that ensued.

“Don’t go to the town,” the malefactors warned the newcomers. “It is nothing but work, work, work, and no pay. We are supposed to be paid out of the gold found, but the amount is so small that not a grain of it ever reaches us! Better stay here and go from one Indian village to another, taking food and golden ornaments from the natives.” And the shore party, instead of searching for San Domingo, stayed with Roldan.

The three caravels then continued their search, but never reached San Domingo till a few days after Columbus himself had come up from South America.

## CHAPTER XVII

### A RETURN IN DISGRACE

What a discouraging state of affairs to greet the returning “Governor-General and Viceroy of all the Lands Discovered in the Western Seas!”

What comfort were all these titles that Columbus stood out for so obstinately, when half his colonists had joined a rebel leader and the other half were sick and hungry!

By this time Roldan’s army was so large that Christopher and his brother had to admit to each other that there was no chance of subduing the insurrection by force. In truth, there was no “force”; for those who were not ill, even the newcomers, were all grumbling against the government. So there was nothing to do but make a treaty with the rebel leader, as if he had been the lawful ruler of a state; and in this treaty he had everything his own way. Columbus had humbly to agree to give two vessels to carry the discontented ones back to Spain; to fill these vessels with ample provisions, and to agree to write a letter to the monarchs stating that Roldan and his men were in no way to blame for the trouble. Here was humiliation indeed! Fancy a high official of the

Crown being forced to such an undignified treaty with one who had rebelled against his authority!

But even this did not end the trouble. Columbus could not get the vessels ready in time, and so the malefactors became more vexatious than ever. Later another treaty was made, still more humiliating to the Admiral, for he had to promise, first, that those of Roldan's men who were most anxious to return should be sent to Spain immediately; second, that those who chose to remain should receive gifts of land and houses; third, that he, Columbus, would issue a public proclamation stating that all that had happened had been caused by the false reports of bad men; and fourth, that Roldan the leader should remain chief-justice for the rest of his life! Roldan now condescended to return to San Domingo and sit in the judge's seat.

No sooner was this turbulent leader appeased than another rebel arose. This time, sad to say, it was the brave Alonzo de Ojeda. Because he had succeeded in taking the chief Caonabo prisoner, Columbus had rewarded and honored him by making him captain of a voyage of discovery among the islands. All this time, no doubt, Ojeda was loyal to his Admiral; but he had recently made a trip home to Spain, where, from his friend Bishop

Fonseca, he had learned many things, false as well as true, that poisoned his mind against his great leader. So he in turn gathered the discontented into a threatening band.

“I have word from Spain,” he told them, “that our good queen lies dying. She is the only friend Cristobal Colon has; and you may be sure that the minute she is dead I can easily arrange to have her favorite removed if you will all rally around me.” Many, of course, lent ear to his treacherous talk, and these had many a skirmish with the few who were faithful to Columbus.

Ojeda, besides sneering at and opposing the Admiral’s authority, wrote letters back to Fonseca telling him all sorts of unfavorable things concerning Columbus and his brothers. All the rebels, in truth, were sending back complaints, for the old and the new world sent little packet ships monthly. What they did not write was told in Spain by those of Roldan’s men whom Columbus had sent home. Some indeed went straight to the king himself with their stories, with the result that the queen had to agree with her husband, who had never been much interested in Columbus and his savages, that the whole matter must be thoroughly investigated.



Yet, even after consenting to court-martial Columbus, as it were, the queen delayed the proceeding as long as possible, as if trying to give her viceroy time to straighten out his situation. But sad tales of misrule still kept coming from Espanola, and finally, after more than a year of waiting, the monarchs sent out Don Francisco de Bobadilla (Bobadilla) with a letter that began:—

\*

Don Cristobal Colon, our Admiral of the Ocean:

We have ordered the Comendador Francisco de Bobadilla, the bearer of this, that he speak to you on our part certain things which he will tell you. We pray you give him faith and credence, and act accordingly.

\*

Christopher, however, was not permitted to give the royal commissioner faith and credence, for the simple reason that Bobadilla did not show him the letter. We have already read of the high-handed manner in which

Juan de Agnado acted some years before when sent out to investigate; but, by comparison with Bobadilla, Agnado had been gentleness itself. Bobadilla was a stern and rigorous churchman, comendador, or commander, of one of the famous religious-military orders in Spain. He could tolerate nothing short of the strictest and most unquestioning obedience to authority. He also had a great respect for high birth, and he, like Bishop Fonseca, could never forget that Christopher Columbus was of humble origin. Both Fonseca and Bobadilla would have been astounded had they dreamed that their principal claim to remembrance by coming ages would be from their reluctant association with a certain illustrious man “of humble origin.”

It was on August 23, 1499, that Bobadilla’s ship entered the mouth of the little river on which San Domingo was situated; and on seeing on either side of the settlement a gallows, and on either gallows the body of a high-born Spaniard lately executed for rebellion, the sight did not incline him to feel kindly toward the low-born governor who had executed them. Columbus and his brother Bartholomew were in the interior at the time, and Bobadilla had no intention of awaiting their return, so eager was he to show his power.

Next morning, when all the colony had gathered in church for mass, he read them the royal letter authorizing him to inquire into the administration of the Viceroy. The letter stated that their Majesties empowered Bobadilla to seize evil-doers and their property, and that the Admiral and all others in authority must aid him in doing so.

Columbus had left his brother Diego in charge of the colony; and Diego, though weak as a ruler, was strong in words when Bobadilla ordered him to hand over the remainder of the rebels for trial, together with evidence against them. Diego replied that the prisoners were held by order of the viceroy, and that the viceroy's authority was higher than the comendador's. Such an answer was not likely to mollify the royal commissioner.

The next morning after mass he opened a second letter and read it to the colonists, a letter which the monarchs told him to open only in case Columbus refused to submit to him. This document proclaimed the bearer, Don Francisco Bobadilla, governor of all the islands. He immediately took the oath of office, and then opened and read to the astonished populace a third royal letter in which Christopher Columbus was commanded to hand over all papers and property belonging to the Crown.

The discontented colonists saw that the day of reckoning had come for their unpopular governor. They exulted in it; and Bobadilla, who realized the satisfactory impression he was making, then and there opened a fourth letter which commanded that he, Bobadilla, should straightway pay all arrears of wages to the men who had worked on San Domingo. As nearly all the men had gone unpaid for a long time past (owing to utter lack of funds), when they heard this last proclamation, they hailed Bobadilla as a benefactor, and his narrow, mean soul swelled with pride.

To be sure, the monarchs really had issued all these letters; but Bobadilla was to read and act upon the second and third letters only in case Columbus refused to obey the first; and here, without giving Columbus any opportunity to speak for himself, Bobadilla had gone to the extreme limit of his powers. It makes one recall Shakespeare's lines about

“Man, proud man,

Drest in a little brief authority....

Plays such fantastic tricks before high heaven,

As make the angels weep.”

By the end of the second day the new governor had seized the Admiral’s house. Next he sent a search party to find the two brothers and bid them return. This Christopher and Bartholomew did at once; and Bobadilla, whose noble birth had not given him a noble soul, treated the grumblers and talebearers of San Domingo to the shameful sight of the Discoverer of the New World marching in chains to prison!

While Columbus had not been a successful ruler, it must be borne in mind that the men he was expected to rule were a most ungovernable lot. But even so, it is difficult to believe that among them all there was not one big enough to forget that the man who had been an unsatisfactory colonial governor had been the bravest explorer ever known. But no, they were pitiless. His own cook was ordered to fasten the chains on him. The onlookers exulted in his disgrace; and their outcries were so loud and so bitter that Columbus and his brothers expected every moment to be put to death.

Bobadilla lost no time in deciding what to do with his prisoners. They must be put out of the way, but not by death. Instead, he ordered a

nobleman named Villejo to take them at once to Spain. When Villejo, with some soldiers, entered the cell in order to remove the prisoners to the ship, Columbus thought he was to be escorted to the scaffold. "I see I am to die," he said calmly. Villejo, who seems to have been the only man in San Domingo with an ounce of humanity in him, answered kindly, "I am to escort you to a ship, Your Excellency, and then home to Spain."

As they marched to the shore, a rabble followed, shouting every insult imaginable. And thus did Christopher Columbus sail away, for the third time, from the island which he had found so quiet and peaceful that he once wrote, "The nights are lovely, like May nights in Cordova." Here was a change indeed!

When the caravel was under way, Villejo offered to remove the Admiral's shackles.

"No," answered Columbus, with dignity, "their Majesties gave Bobadilla authority to put me in irons; they alone must issue the authority to take the irons off."

And so in irons the greatest discoverer the world has ever known made

his sixth crossing of the Atlantic. And in irons he landed in Cadiz in  
November, 1500.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### PUBLIC SYMPATHY

We have just seen Columbus land in chains at Cadiz. We next see him free, traveling in great splendor to that scene of his first successful interview with Isabella—Granada. What had happened meanwhile to lift him out of misery and disgrace? Simply what always happens when a really great man is too harshly punished, a reaction in the public mind.

In all Spain Columbus had hardly a friend; yet when the people of Cadiz saw him leave Villejo's ship in chains, they were moved with deepest sympathy. They began telling each other that, no matter what his faults might be, he had been the first man deliberately to put out across the dreaded Atlantic and reveal to the world that land, and not monsters, lay on the other side. Had any one else ever begged, during seven years, for the privilege thus to risk his life for the benefit of Spain in particular, and all mankind in general? Even the Portuguese, greatest of exploring nations, had only hugged the African coast cautiously; but this man had sailed straight away from land into the setting sun. Even landsmen appreciated the fine courage that required.



And the first man bold enough to wish to go out and unravel the mystery of the west now walked in chains from a Spanish ship to a Spanish prison! It was monstrous ingratitude, all declared; and they did not hesitate to show their sympathy. The story of his disgrace traveled rapidly, and everywhere it brought out the better nature of the Spanish people, who accordingly denounced this harsh treatment by their sovereigns.

And what had Columbus himself done to help matters along? The wisest thing that he could have done; he had refrained from writing to Ferdinand and Isabella. His silence spoke in his favor; for they did not learn what had happened till a lady-in-waiting at court, a friend of Columbus and of the queen, received a letter which Columbus had written during the voyage, and which the good Villejo sent off by a trusty messenger the minute the ship reached Spain. This lady carried the shocking news to the queen, perhaps even read the whole letter to her; if so, Isabella must have winced at this passage: "I have been wounded extremely by the fact that a man should have been sent out to make inquiry into my conduct who knew that if he sent home a very aggravated account against me, he could remain himself at the head of the

government.”

Hardly had the queen heard this letter when there came a report from Villejo containing the same story of Bobadilla’s brutal haste in dealing with the Admiral. And directly after this came an inquiry from the alcalde (mayor) of Cadiz asking what he should do with his distinguished prisoner.

Isabella saw it was all too true; Bobadilla had gone to the uttermost limit of authority without even waiting to try less offensive measures. She saw that she had selected a very unworthy person for the delicate task of removing a great man from office. Even Ferdinand, who, as we have seen, had no great opinion of Columbus, was grieved over the unhappy affair. Immediately they dispatched a courier to the alcalde with instructions to set the Admiral free, and to treat him with every consideration. Then they invited Columbus to come to them at court, and ordered a credit of two thousand ducats for him, a large sum in those days, for it was equal to about ten thousand dollars in our money. This they did without even waiting to hear Bobadilla’s side of the story.

Columbus reached Granada in December, 1500; nine years precisely after

the memorable journey that Friar Juan Perez had caused him to make to the same place. As on his return from the second voyage, when he was expecting royal reproaches, he received instead only the kindest treatment. Both Ferdinand and Isabella made him feel, instantly, that, whatever had gone wrong, they knew his worth and considered him a distinguished man.

So overcome was he by this magnanimity that it was some minutes before the white-haired, worn-out man could control his feelings sufficiently to tell his story. Finally, however, he managed to speak. He admitted all that had gone amiss in Espanola and said his only excuse was his inexperience in governing. (Ah, good Admiral, if only you had remembered your inexperience on that January day in that same city of Granada, when you insisted on being made Viceroy of all the lands you might discover!)

The queen, while she pitied Columbus profoundly in his distress, was too wise a woman to let her pity run away with her prudence; so she answered cautiously:—

“Common report accuses you of acting with a degree of severity quite unsuitable for an infant colony, and likely to incite rebellion in it.

But the thing I find hardest to pardon is your reducing to slavery many Indians who had done nothing to deserve such a fate. This was contrary to my express orders. As ill fortune willed it, just at the time that news came to me of this breach of my instructions, everybody was complaining of you; no one spoke a word in your favor. I felt obliged to send a commissioner to the Indies to investigate and give me a true report, and, if necessary, to put limits to the authority you were accused of overstepping. If he found you guilty of the charges against you, he was to relieve you of the government and send you to Spain to give an account of your stewardship. This was the extent of his commission. I find that I have made a bad choice in my agent, and I shall take care to make an example of Bobadilla so as to warn others not to exceed their power. But I cannot promise at once to reinstate you as governor. As to your rank of Admiral, I never intended to deprive you of it. But you must abide your time and trust in me.”

Isabella’s reply is a model of fairness and prudence so far as Columbus is concerned, but it is hardly fair to Bobadilla. The comendador had been brutal, it is true; but it was not true that he had gone beyond the extent of his commission. His brutality consisted in pouncing upon the offender without any preliminaries whatever. Yet it turned out that, in

acting thus, he did the best possible thing for Columbus's subsequent treatment. There is no doubt that had he proceeded slowly, with a fair and formal inquiry into all the complaints against the Admiral, it would have been clearly shown that, from the very beginning, everything had gone wrong in the colony. The Indians, once friendly, were now bitter against the Spaniards. The colonists were a bad lot, but Columbus himself had examined and accepted most of them before the ships left Spain.

If mistakes were committed while he was absent exploring Cuba, they were made by his brothers and by those whom he himself had selected to rule in his absence. All of this evidence would have been against Columbus, who in consequence would have been deposed as governor and sent home to answer Bobadilla's charges before a royal court of inquiry. Arriving as a man disgraced after a fair trial, nobody's sympathies would have been stirred. It was precisely because Bobadilla had acted like a brute instead of like a wise judge that everybody denounced him and pitied his victim.

Considering all this, and considering that Columbus himself had admitted his "inexperience in government" to the queen, it is astonishing to

learn that he was deeply hurt because she did not reinstate him instantly as ruler of the island! Experience had taught the great discoverer but little. At a moment when he should have fallen on his knees in thankfulness because he would never again have to be responsible for that colony of vicious men, he instead felt hurt! He wanted to return and start the whole sorry business over again. Moreover, he protested, as indeed he had been doing for years, because other navigators were imploring the monarchs to break their contract giving *him* a monopoly of western exploration, and to allow them to undertake voyages, asking no government assistance whatsoever. Now was the time for him to say, "It is to Spain's interest that she send as many explorers as possible over to these new lands, in order that we may quickly determine how many islands there really are, and whether what I last visited was the mainland; only, pray let me hasten back free from every responsibility except that of a navigator; so that I, who so justly deserve the first chance of exploring the new lands, may get there ahead of these others who are clamoring to go."

Had Columbus been businesslike enough to make this proposition to the monarchs, he need not have died in ignorance of the prodigious fact that he had discovered a great continent undreamed-of by Europeans. But,

instead of renouncing his monopoly, he complained that licenses had been granted to others to sail west in violation of the agreement that he alone, and his descendants after him, should sail among the new lands. This attitude annoyed King Ferdinand exceedingly.

For Columbus to hope to keep this monopoly in his own family was madness; as by this time other countries, having heard of his opening up the way, had sent out explorers to plant their standards. John and Sebastian Cabot had gone out from Bristol, England, to Newfoundland, and had discovered, in June, 1497, the North American continent before Columbus had touched South America. Early in 1499 one of the pilots who had accompanied Columbus on his Cuban trip secured a license, and not only explored the Central American coast for several hundred miles, but traded his European trifles and gewgaws with the natives for gold and silver, returning to Spain with real profits.

That same year, 1499, Vicente Pinzon of Palos, who with his brother Martin had made the first voyage, also secured a license and sailed southwest over the equator, discovering the Amazon River and taking possession of Brazil for Spain. Our adventurous acquaintance Ojeda also had been busy. When the Paria pearls arrived in Sevilla, he asked his

friend Fonseca to show him both the pearls and Columbus's map of Trinidad and the neighboring coast. Although Ojeda had recently been in open rebellion against the Admiral in Haiti, as we have seen, Fonseca did not hesitate to let him see where the pearl land lay; and so Ojeda, with an Italian named Vespucci, whom we shall meet later, sailed to Paria and gathered its wealth.

Also, in this year so great for navigation, a Portuguese fleet of thirteen ships set out from Lisbon to round the Cape of Good Hope. In trying to escape the long calms which had beset Bartolome Dias in the Gulf of Guinea, Pedro Cabral, commander of the fleet, struck out quite far from the Morocco coast and got into the Equatorial Current. The existence of this powerful westward current had never been suspected by either Spanish or Portuguese mariners. Wind and current combining, Cabral and his captains found themselves, in about a month's time, on the coast of Brazil near the present Rio de Janeiro. Thus a current never before known carried them to land never before known. And thus for the second time, if the shipwrecked pilot told the truth, America was discovered by accident.

All this had given Europe some idea of the vastness of the world to the



west. If Columbus was to bring his own discoveries to a glorious finish, it was high time that, instead of quibbling over maintaining a contract, he should have given up the empty honors that were to have been his, and have asked only for permission to hurry back and discover more land.

Ferdinand, who now saw that the islands would need not one but a dozen governors if ever they were to be colonized and developed, would not hear of reinstating Columbus as governor. The most the monarchs would give him in the way of satisfaction was that Bobadilla should be removed and another man, who had had nothing to do thus far with the quarrels of the New World, should be appointed for two years. This new governor, whose name was Nicolas de Ovando, was specially instructed to protect Columbus's profits in the colony, if profits there should ever be.

Orders were given that the property of Columbus and his brothers, which Bobadilla had confiscated, was to be restored; and whenever gold was found and smelted, Columbus's share was to be put aside for him. This proved that the sovereigns intended to be just to Columbus, but the latter was nevertheless much depressed over his lost dignities.

The Comendador Ovando, of the famous religious order called the Knights of Alcantara, was appointed to succeed Bobadilla, and began his

preparations with certain definite and practical ideas on the subject of colonizing. He was the first to see that respectable married men with their wives and children were needed to give the settlement character; so he offered, or asked the sovereigns to offer, proper inducement to married men. He also secured as many trained workers as possible—artisans and craftsmen. His other measures appear less wise; that is, he felt he must go in state and dignity, else the people would not regard his authority; so he took many body servants and house servants, and rich priestly robes, for he relied a great deal on the appearance of power. No less than thirty-five vessels would suffice to carry his twenty-five hundred passengers (among them Bartolome de las Casas) to San Domingo; and when he started in all his state, the heart of Columbus was sad and sore.

“Ah,” thought he, “if only *I* had had decent men, instead of jail-birds and loafers!” and he pondered sadly on his many misfortunes.

And still the monarchs kept him waiting and would not furnish him with a fleet. While he was waiting came the bitter and disquieting news that Portuguese explorers were returning in a stream from the Indian Ocean with exceedingly rich cargoes, all justly traded for in the markets of

Calcutta. Why, he groaned, had *his* India been so barren of riches?

He began to ponder over all the theories he had read concerning the geography of the world, and to wonder what his discoveries might really be. If it dawned upon him that he had struck islands fringing on absolutely new, unsuspected land, he appears to have dismissed the extraordinary idea, and to have come back to Martin Alonzo Pinzon's theory that he, by sailing west over the globe, had come to Asiatic regions. It must be so, he argued. Marco Polo had made known the fact that an ocean bounded Asia on the east, and that ocean must be the Atlantic, which continued across to Europe. The Indian Ocean which the Portuguese had crossed must be the southern part of the Atlantic, where it curved around Asia's southern shores. Ah, if only he could reach it! If only he had sailed straight for the rich mainland, instead of wasting his time on those pretty islands, inhabited only by a "poor people"!

He began to recall how the land north of the Gulf of Paria stretched far west; how the southern shore of Cuba stretched far west; how the currents of the Caribbean Sea indicated, by the fact that they had washed Cuba, Haiti, and Porto Rico into their long narrow east-and-west

shape that somewhere in the west they passed through a strait which separated some large island from southeastern Asia; and that strait must lead into the Indian Ocean—the very ocean the Portuguese were now sailing so profitably! He wisely resolved to linger no longer in Spain, importuning for his lost governorship, but to undertake a fourth voyage and find this passage.

Good reasoning, all this about “the strait,” if only facts had been geographically correct; and a brave determination, too, for an old man afflicted with rheumatism and fever and bad sight to resolve to put out once more on that boisterous ocean. We salute you, Don Cristobal! You are a true navigator, never afraid of hardships and labor and perplexing problems. Even had you not discovered America for us, we still would salute you, because you were a tremendous worker!

Full of his new plan, Columbus left beautiful Granada where he had spent two empty years and went to Sevilla. King Ferdinand readily granted him four ships, for the Admiral Cristobal Colon, off on a voyage of discovery, was not nearly so troublesome as the deposed governor and viceroy, lingering around the court to obtain his lost title and revenues.

The fitting out of the ships restored his spirits considerably. Whenever Christopher had to do with boats and sea preparations he was in his element. He now grew optimistic, and, with his usual fatal habit of promising great results, he told his Sevilla acquaintances that he expected to circumnavigate the world. Fatal habit, yes; but it meant that he still kept that rich imagination, without which he never would have made his first voyage.

Meanwhile, he realized that he was getting old, and that he might never come back from this trip. His thoughts often turned to his native Genoa, where he had played so happily as a child in the Vico Dritto di Ponticello; so, one day he sat down and generously wrote to the authorities of Genoa that, should his claims against the Spanish Crown ever be settled, a part of his money was to be used in paying the Genoese tax on wheat and wine, so that the poor might buy these two staples at a lower price.

Finally all was ready; four small, weather-beaten ships; a crew of one hundred and fifty men and boys; a few months' provisions. His brother Bartholomew, not very willingly, and his son Fernando, almost too

eagerly, accompanied him. This, his fourth and last voyage, started from Cadiz on May 9, 1502.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE LAST VOYAGE

Fernando Columbus, though only a lad of fourteen, noted every new experience with intelligent delight. He had his father's passion for writing things down. As it was the result of personal observation, Fernando's account of the fourth voyage may be accepted as more reliable than many other items he has left us concerning the Admiral's history.

Among other things, Fernando says that the little fleet intended starting its search at the outlet of the Gulf of Paria, and then following the land west until they came to the straits leading into the Indian Ocean; but while approaching the Caribbean Islands, his father discovered that one of the vessels was in need of repairs; for which reason he headed for San Domingo, where he hoped to purchase a better caravel.

As Columbus had been told *not* to stop there till his return trip, he sent one of the faster ships ahead with a letter to Governor Ovando, explaining that he wanted to buy another ship, and also that he was

seeking protection from a hurricane that he saw approaching. Knowing the peculiarities of weather in those regions, he was so sure of the storm that he advised Ovando to hold back any vessels that might be about to depart for Spain.

Our weather-wise old Admiral was not mistaken in his prophecy. A furious West Indian hurricane broke on the last day of June; but his poor little ships, instead of lying safe in the shelter of San Domingo harbor, were exposed to all the ravages of the storm. Why? Because Ovando had refused to let him enter the port! A cruel insult; but the Admiral was too busy just then to brood over it. He must hastily draw in under the lee of the land and wait for the hurricane to pass.

It was not the sort that passed, for it stayed and stayed till it was worn out by its own fury. "Eighty-eight days," Columbus wrote to his sovereign, "did this fearful tempest continue, during which I was at sea and saw neither sun nor stars. My ships lay exposed with sails torn; and anchors, cables, rigging, boats, and a quantity of provisions lost.... Other tempests have I experienced, but none of so long duration or so frightful as this."



And all this perilous time, when men and vessels narrowly escaped going to the bottom, the discoverer of the New World was denied the privilege of the only seaport in it! It makes one's blood boil, even to-day, to think that at San Domingo the Comendador Ovando and the whole group of ungrateful landmen went safely to bed every night in the very houses that they had hated Columbus for making them build, while he was lashing about on the furious waves, thinking his other three ships lost, and expecting every minute a similar fate for his own!

The eighty-eight days, fortunately, were not continuously stormy; there were occasional lulls. It was the end of June when Columbus had asked for shelter; not till the middle of July did the first clear weather come. Then the scattered, battered boats reunited as by a miracle, and found themselves near the "Queen's Garden" islands south of Cuba. Let us leave them there patching their boats and enjoying a bit of sunshine while we see what has been happening at ungrateful San Domingo.

Ovando had been on the island a month and a half when Columbus came along asking permission to land. Whether this was refused through the new governor's ugly nature alone, or whether he believed Columbus's prophecy of bad weather merely an excuse to land, is not known. Certain

it is that, although the Spanish monarchs thought San Domingo could get along better without the Admiral, they never intended him to be turned off when a violent hurricane was pending. Ovando evidently did not believe in the hurricane; besides, he did not want Columbus to find out that the new governors were managing no better than he had managed. In this respect there was nothing to be proud of, else Ovando would surely have believed in the hurricane. Bobadilla had been a miserable failure; and he himself had not been there long enough to make any improvements, except the detestable one of sending for African negroes to replace Indian slaves!

One thing, however, had turned out a little better than any one expected, and that was the gold mine near which the town of San Domingo had been built. When Columbus's warning about the storm came, eighteen caravels lay in the harbor ready to start for Spain with eighteen hundredweight of gold. One nugget alone, Las Casas tells us, weighed thirty-five pounds. Out of all this treasure, Columbus's share was forty pounds, and that was set aside and loaded on the poorest, leakiest caravel of the lot, called *The Needle*, to be sent to Spain and to remain there until he should appear to claim it.

Ovando, like Columbus, wanted the colony to appear profitable in the eyes of the monarchs, and was eager to start off this first golden cargo, also all the spoils he had filched from the natives since his arrival. Then, too, the Comendador Bobadilla was already aboard, and Ovando was eager to be rid of him and also of Francisco Roldan, who never had been, and never could be, of use in any colony; so Ovando, when he read Columbus's warning, threw back his head and exclaimed, "Nonsense! Let them start just the same!"

And start they did; and scarcely were the vessels out of sight when the hurricane broke. Of the eighteen ships only one ever got to Spain. Three returned much damaged to San Domingo. The others went down. The one vessel that reached Spain was the leaky little tub called *The Needle*, laden with the Admiral's gold! Thus the same storm that sent many of his San Domingo enemies to a watery grave saved for him the first profits he received from the island. It would be some satisfaction to learn that Ovando was rebuked for his cruelty and stupidity; but there is no record of such a reprimand. Perhaps no one even knew that Ovando had been warned. As for the wholesale shipwreck, people merely looked at such things piously in those days, and said, "It is the will of Heaven!"

When the first lull came in that devastating storm, Columbus found himself south of Cuba among the little “Garden” group. It was the third time he had had a chance to sail along the Cuban coast and discover whether it really was an island, as the natives said, or whether it was the mainland, as he had forced his sailors to swear while on the Cuban voyage when his brain was full of fever. Again he let the problem go unsolved; the object of this fourth voyage was to find the straits leading into the Indian Ocean. Having failed to begin his search from Trinidad by following South America westward, as originally planned, he expected he would come to the straits by following Cuba’s southern shore in the same direction, if Cuba, as he hoped, was a great strip of land projecting eastward from the continent. And yet, instead of sailing along Cuba, or returning to the Gulf of Paria and hugging the land westward, he suddenly decided to put out southwest into the open sea. This seems to us a foolish course, for no matter at what point he struck land, how would he know whether to explore to the left or right for his straits? Why this least desirable of three courses was taken neither the Admiral nor his son explained in their diaries. Of course he found land,—the Honduras coast; but of course he had no means of knowing what relation it had either to Cuba or to the land around the Gulf of Paria.

Thus the poor Admiral lost his last chance of arriving at any just conclusions of the magnitude of his discovery.

Before reaching this Honduras coast they stopped at the Isle of Pines, where they saw natives in comfortable-looking house boats; that is, huge canoes sixty feet long, cut from a single mahogany tree, and with a roofed caboose amidships. These natives wore plenty of gold ornaments and woven clothing; they had copper hatchets and sharp blades of flint; and they used a sort of money for buying and selling. In other words, it was the nearest approach to civilization that Columbus had ever seen in his new lands. He tried by signs to ask about all these things, and the natives pointed west as the place from which their house boat had come. But so keen was Columbus for “the straits” to the Indian Ocean that even gold could not divert him this time; he refused to proceed due west, and thus failed to discover Mexico, the richest region the Spaniards were ever to find on the North American continent.

From the Isle of Pines, the Admiral put out again into the open sea, southwest, and the moment he had cleared land terrific storms were encountered. Worse still, when he neared the coast which he named Honduras, the currents were so violent that his boats could hardly make

headway against them. All July and August thunder and lightning were incessant. Timbers creaked and strained till each minute it appeared as if they must have reached the breaking point. Meanwhile the Admiral was enduring the tortures of rheumatism and could not leave his bed; and so, up on deck where the gales and the waves swept free, he ordered them to rig a little cabin of sailcloth; there he lay and directed every move of his crew. One minute he saw his terrified seamen clinging to masts or slipping over wet decks; another, hauling in the mere shreds of sails that were left. One minute he heard them vowing pilgrimages and penances if only they might be saved; another, denouncing the madman who brought them to these terrible waters.

But the sick man did not heed all this; his business was to bring them out alive if possible; so he kept a clear head and issued his orders.

Whenever he became discouraged, he looked across the wave-washed decks to the comforting sight of a slender lad of fourteen, brought up delicately at court, but now turning to with a will and helping the sailors with every rough, heavy task. How proud the Admiral must have felt when he wrote in his journal, "It was as if Fernando had been at sea eighty years!"

At last they rounded a point where better weather greeted them, and in thankfulness Columbus called it Cape Gracias a Dios (Thanks to God). But straightway came another blow. On the very first day when they could catch their breath and cease struggling against wind and current and rain, their spirits were again dashed. A rowboat went near the mouth of a river to take on fresh water, and the river came out with a gush, upset the boat, and drowned the men in it. So our sick Admiral, who was drawing a map of the coast, and had just finished writing "Thanks to God," marks down the rushing river and names it "Rio de Desastre" (River of Disaster).

Just below Gracias Cape the current divided into two, one part flowing west, the other south; this latter was followed. Sailing down the Mosquito Coast they came, toward the end of September, to a pleasant spot which Columbus called "The Garden," or El Jardin (pronounced Khardeen'), and where the natives appeared to be more intelligent than any he had yet seen. Continuing south, he came to Caribaro Bay, where the people wore many flat ornaments of beaten gold. As if they could detect, from afar, the gold lust in the European eye, the poor creatures brandished their weapons to keep the strange-looking visitors from landing; but it was of no avail. Land they did, and traded seventeen

gold disks for just three tinkly bells! The voyagers asked, of course, where the gold came from, and were told from Veragua, a little farther south. For once the sign language was correctly understood. Veragua actually existed. The Spaniards found it just west of the Isthmus of Darien.

Here plenty more gold was seen. “In two days,” wrote Columbus, “I saw more indications of near-by gold mines than I had seen in four years in Hispaniola.” Not only did he see the precious metal, but he heard that “ten days inland” lived tribes who possessed quantities of gold and silver. And then the natives spoke of something far more wonderful, had Columbus but known it, than gold; for they said, also, that ten days’ tramp westward lay a vast sea. This, Columbus concluded, must be the immense river Ganges; and his tired brain began figuring how, by a little “tramping west,” and a little river boating, and then some more tramping, a Spaniard could get from Darien back to Spain, provided the Moslems did not murder him on the way!

But he was not seeking for gold on this trip. He did not march ten days inland. He turned a deaf ear to it and to all his importuning crew and went searching for his “strait”; by which steadfastness of purpose he



just missed discovering the Pacific Ocean. It has been said that Fate was always a little niggardly with Columbus, and never was it truer than at this moment when she at last deafened his ear to the tale of gold and sent him south.

All November and December he continued coasting along South America. But his greedy crew could never forget the sight of those Veragua natives actually smelting gold. The men became sulky and clamored to go back; and furthermore, the ships were too worm-eaten and too covered with barnacles to proceed. On December 5, in order to take the gold-seekers back to Darien, he reluctantly gave over his search for the passage to the Indian Ocean. But the minute he turned north new gales began to blow. These continued so furiously that in a whole month they progressed barely a hundred miles. All this time they were nearly starved; about the only provisions left were their rotten biscuits and these were, as Fernando tells us, so disgusting to look upon that “many waited till night to eat their sop.”

At last the famished party got back to Veragua. Eighty men landed with the idea of forming a settlement under Bartolome Colon. They had the good sense to act in the friendliest manner to the native chief; but he

was not the simple-minded creature that Guacanagari was, over in Haiti. He saw at once that they wanted gold, so he nodded obligingly, and indicated by signs that he would lead them to the gold mines. And he did; but they proved to be the small, worked-out mines of a neighboring chief who drove the intruders off. Back they went to the first chief's land and began to build a stockade. The first chief still appeared friendly enough, but a very clever young Spaniard named Diego Mendez happened to prowl through the undergrowth to the Indian village and saw the warriors sharpening their knives and making ready to attack the uninvited settlers. Off rushed Diego to tell Don Bartolome; and he, believing that "the best defense is a sharp attack," rushed to the village, captured the chief and many warriors, and sent them captive aboard the waiting caravels. The chief, however, succeeded in jumping over the side, diving to the bottom, and swimming ashore.

It was then quite dark and none saw him come to the surface, but the next day he had another force ready to defy them. Of his fellow-prisoners who had been thrust into the hold, some managed to throw open a hatchway, overpower the guard, and likewise plunge into the sea. The sailors hurriedly pushed back the hatchway so that no more might climb out on deck; but next morning it was discovered that all those who had

not escaped were dead. They had committed suicide rather than be carried off by the ruthless strangers.

All this time there was such a rough sea that no small boats could get ashore from the caravels to obtain news of the eighty colonists under Bartolome. At last a sailor offered to swim to land; when he came back, it was with the news that this settlement had gone the way of Isabella and San Domingo, for half its men had mutinied. The gold did not seem worth fighting for where natives were so hostile that a man could not even pick fruit from a tree and eat it! Columbus saw that there was nothing to do but get the men back on the boats and abandon all thought of colonizing what he had already named Costa Rica (Rich Coast).

But to carry out this decision for a while appeared impossible; the waves were too high for any boat to venture out; but at last the clever Diego Mendez, by lashing two canoes together into a sort of raft, got near enough to shore to rescue Don Bartolome and his men and stores. When Diego had succeeded in this perilous task, his Admiral was so grateful that, in the presence of all the men, he kissed him on both cheeks, a mark of great respect in those days. Ah, if only Christopher had found such a staunch, capable friend earlier in his career!

Ever since they reached the mainland Columbus had been suffering torments with rheumatism. Now to add to his agonies a fever attacked him. Along with these ills, and the murmurings of his hungry men, one of the ships was wrecked; and after they had rescued its men and provisions, and were about to find room for them on another ship, this other ship was discovered to be too worm-eaten and disabled to continue the voyage. Columbus, in all his pain, directed the removal of men and goods to the best two caravels. This done, he started for San Domingo, turning his back on his last chance to find the passage to India—the broad Pacific Ocean—if only he had crossed the isthmus between!

## CHAPTER XX

### THE COURAGE OF DIEGO MENDEZ

At last they were clear of the most disastrous landing that Columbus had ever made. What you have read is but the bare sketch of a chapter in his life that was crowded thick with misfortunes and even horrors. And yet, strange to say, on this detestable coast is the only settlement in the New World that perpetuates the great discoverer's name, the town of Colon, at the Atlantic terminus of the Panama Canal.

The Admiral's health was now ruined, for fevers, sleeplessness, gout, and eyestrain kept him in constant pain, and at times made even that strong mind of his a little queer and wobbly. But on one point at least it remained alert and lucid,—he still could think out his course clearly. With a view to avoiding the treacherous winds and coastwise currents that had previously wrought such havoc with his ships, he set his rudders due east on leaving Veragua; his idea being to sail first east and then north to San Domingo.

Straightway the crews became alarmed, thinking he meant to return direct

to Spain, in spite of the fact that the ships were too rotten for the long trip. But no; the Admiral hoped, besides escaping currents, to mystify them as to the geographical position of the gold coast.

Remembering how Alonzo de Ojeda had gone back and reaped riches from the pearl coast, and how Pedro Nino, that captain who brought slaves to Cadiz and sent word that he had brought a cargo of gold, and also been to Paria, Christopher decided to zigzag about in such a manner that no one could ever find his way back to the gold country ten days inland from Darien. Suffering and misfortune were surely telling on the Admiral's mind, else he would never have written this childish note:

“None of them [the crew] could explain whither I went nor whence I came; they did not know the way to return thither.”

But all the time his men grumbled, and could not understand why they were starting for Spain on crazy, crumbling ships, when San Domingo lay so much nearer. Every day they murmured louder, till at last the Admiral foolishly humored them by heading due north; the result was that he turned too soon and found himself in a new current he had never met before. This current carried them past Hispaniola westward again to those same “Gardens of the Queen.” The series of storms that here overtook the two battered little ships were almost as bad as those that

met them on their last approach to Hispaniola. Anchors were lost and the men kept the ships from sinking only by the constant use of “three pumps and all their pots and kettles.” By the 23d of June they had drifted over to Jamaica. The crews were worn out by their hard work to keep afloat. It seemed as if human endurance could stand no more. Many were badly bruised from being dashed down on the decks like bits of wood before the gales; they had had no dry clothing on for days; their hearts were faint, their stomachs fainter, for they had had nothing to eat and drink for some time but black wormy bread and vinegar. How, we ask ourselves as we sit in our comfortable, solid houses, did they endure it? And yet there was even worse to come!

The Admiral saw that even “three pumps and all their pots and kettles” could not keep the water bailed out of the leaky boats. The only thing he could do was to run his ships aground. The first harbor he tried was so barren on every side that starvation stared them in the face; so they pushed on a little farther, the exhausted men again bailing steadily, till they entered a greener spot, now called Don Christopher’s Cove. Not a minute too soon did they reach it. Once the ships were grounded on the sandy beach, the tide soon filled the hulls with water. The weary men had to turn to and build cabins on the forecastles; and here at last

they managed to keep dry, and to lie down and rest.

Their first thought was how to get food. The resourceful Diego Mendez offered to tramp over the island and trade whatever personal articles the sailors had left for foodstuffs. In this he was successful; he secured more than food; he exchanged the clothing on his own back for a large canoe and six rowers, and returned by sea. The next aid Mendez rendered the shipwrecked men showed even finer heroism than his lashing the canoes together to rescue Bartholomew. He offered to go in an open rowboat all the way from Jamaica to Haiti and ask Ovando to send a rescue vessel!

Look at a map of the West Indies and see what this offer meant! Two hundred miles to the western point of Haiti, two hundred more to the governor at San Domingo, and this, too, across a sea frequented by perilous hurricanes. It was a magnificent piece of volunteer work! Not one chance in a hundred did Diego Mendez have of reaching his destination, and he knew it; yet he offered to take the risk. One of his shipmates caught some of his valorous spirit and offered to accompany him; and the six native rowers, of course, had no choice but to go.



Mendez was as practical and ingenious as he was brave. He fastened weatherboards along the rim of the canoe to prevent shipping water; he fitted it with a mast and sail, and coated it with tar; and while he was doing it the Admiral wrote a brief, businesslike letter to Ovando, telling of the sad plight they were in; he also wrote a long, rambling letter, full of evidence of feeble-mindedness, to the monarchs. These letters Mendez was to take with him.

But Mendez, to every one's dismay, came back again in a few days,—came back alone and with boat and oars smashed. While waiting at the eastern point of Jamaica for a favorable wind to take them over to Haiti, they were surrounded by hostile natives and captured. The six rowers escaped, and the companion of Mendez was probably killed instantly; but while the savages were debating how to kill and cook Mendez, he managed to dash away, jump in his huge canoe, and push off!

The shipwrecked party felt crushed indeed. Their last hope of rescue was gone; but no—Diego Mendez offered to start all over again, if only Don Bartolome would march with an armed force along the shore till there came a favorable moment in the weather for Diego to push across to Haiti.

This precaution saved the intrepid Diego a second surprise from cannibals; but the passage, after leaving Jamaica, was torture. So intense was the heat, that he and his Indian rowers were forced to take turns jumping overboard and swimming alongside the canoe in order to cool off. The Indians, like children, wanted to drink all the water at once. In spite of warning, they emptied the kegs the second night, and then lay down on the bottom of the canoe, panting for more. Diego and his Spanish companion did the rowing till the Indians were rested a bit. Then Diego brought out two more kegs of water which he had artfully hidden under his seat, gave them all a drink, and set them to work again. Late that second night the moon came up, not out of the sea, but behind the jagged rock that lies ten miles off the western end of Haiti. Blessed sight! What new courage it put into the tired rowers; how eager they were to make the rock by sunrise so as to lie in its shade all that August day of 1503, instead of blistering under the torrid sun in an open boat. Surely, if ever men deserved to lie all day in the shade, it was these brave fellows who were trying to save Christopher Columbus.

From this point Mendez went on with his six rowers till he found the governor; but before going into that matter, let me tell you how proud,

and justly proud, Diego Mendez was all his life of this canoe trip. He lived to be an old man (in the city of Valladolid), and when he felt himself nearing the end, he asked his relatives to mark his grave by a tombstone, “in the center of which let a canoe be carved (which is a piece of wood hollowed out in which the Indians navigate), because in such a boat I navigated some three hundred leagues; and let some letters be carved above it saying *canoa*.”

Quite right of you, Diego Mendez, to wish posterity to know of your plucky voyage. We hope your relatives gave you the coveted tombstone; and we hope, also, that they carved, on its reverse side, that of all the men who ever served Don Cristobal Colon, you were the most loyal and the most valiant.

The Admiral, in writing an account of what happened on the Jamaica beach while Mendez was seeking aid, says:—

“At the request of the king’s treasurer, I took two brothers with me to the Indies—one as captain, the other as auditor. Both were without any capacity for their work, yet became more and more vain. I forgave them many incivilities. They rebelled openly on Jamaica, at which I was as

much astonished as if the sun should go black.”

Yet why, we ask, should Columbus have been so astonished? Had he ever known much else from those under him but incivility and rebellion?

Ever since Mendez left in August the men had been looking in vain for his return. Autumn and winter and spring wore away, and as the natives had grown tired of feeding them, the shipwrecked crew were now mere skeletons. Of course they blamed the pain-racked Admiral because Mendez had not returned with succor; and of course they were constantly quarreling among themselves. One day the captain who had commanded the vessel that went to pieces near Darien came into the cabin where the sick Admiral lay, and grumbled and quarreled and said he was going to seize canoes from the Indians and make his way to Haiti. It was Francisco Porras, one of the two brothers foisted on Columbus by their relative, the king's treasurer, who wanted to get rid of them.

Porras and forty-one of the discontented voyagers actually started for Haiti, but a short time on the rough sea sent them back ashore. They next formed themselves into a raiding party and outraged the natives in every possible way, falsely saying that they did so by order of the

Admiral. This so angered the Indians that they marched down to Don Christopher's Cove, surrounded the beached ships, and threatened to kill every Spaniard there.

It so happened that there was to be an eclipse of the moon that night, and Columbus suddenly recalled it and turned the fact to good use. He told the angry natives that the power that had made the moon and the stars was very displeased with them and would prove it that very night by darkening the moon. The childish creatures decided to wait before attacking and see if the Admiral spoke the truth. When the eclipse really started, they became terrified and sent their chiefs to ask Columbus's pardon; Columbus promptly declared that the light of the moon would return if the Indians would faithfully promise to treat the Spaniards kindly and supply them with food. The credulous creatures hastened to procure it; and as they brought it to the shore, the moon kindly emerged from the black shadow that had covered it. Result, the Indians believed Columbus to be a superior being and from that time on they fed him and his men well. This eclipse was on February 29, 1504.

But even with plenty of food the months of waiting were long and dreary. Had the brave Diego Mendez gone to the bottom? He must have perished,

thought the Admiral, for surely if he had reached San Domingo alive even the harsh Comendador Ovando could not have refused to send aid to stranded countrymen on a savage island! But why not, good Admiral? Had not this same Ovando refused to let you enter the harbor of San Domingo last year when the frightful hurricane was gathering?

Yet that was what happened. Ovando, whose heart, if he ever had one, had shriveled to the size of a mustard grain, practically refused to send help. On hearing Mendez' tale he said he was sorry for the Admiral and his men, but he did not say he would send them a ship. Mendez kept at him, telling him very emphatically that the one hundred and thirty stranded Spaniards would certainly die unless soon rescued; still Ovando said he was sorry, but did not offer to send relief. Instead, scoundrel that he was, he *did* send a small caravel, very small indeed, so that it could not accommodate the forlorn men, and could not carry them any provisions. The captain, one of Roldan's rebels, was carefully instructed merely to see if Columbus and his shipmates were still alive, and then to come back and report. The Roldan rebel took his caravel to Don Christopher's Cove, rowed out in a small trailer until within shouting distance of the two rotting hulks on the beach, and yelled out that Governor Ovando was very sorry to learn from Mendez that the

Admiral and his party were in trouble, and regretted that he had no ship large enough to send to their rescue. And then the villain sailed back to his villainous master.

Imagine this studied, impudent message to a group of men whose eyes had been straining for months to see a relief ship head their way! Imagine sending such a message to the most illustrious discoverer the world has ever known! A more dastardly bit of cruelty hardly exists in history!

This expedition was kept secret from Diego Mendez, however; and Diego, still storming about because nothing was being done, went among the populace of San Domingo and declared that it was a base, shameful business to leave a sick old man to perish on a savage island, especially when that old man had discovered all these lands for Spain.

The people, though many of them had been the sick old man's enemies in bygone days, and though they never suspected the greatness of Columbus, agreed. They even began to clamor that Columbus should be rescued; but it was not until they had clamored long and urgently that their knightly governor sent a ship.

On June 25, 1504, exactly one year after Columbus had beached his two

remaining caravels, the relief ship came in sight. "Never in my life," wrote Christopher, "did I experience so joyful a day!" and we may well believe it.

On the 15th of August the party reached San Domingo after their long suffering and hardships. Ovando, seeing how popular sympathy had turned towards the sick Admiral, decided to secure a little popular favor himself out of the incident by inviting the discoverer to stay in his own house, that is, the governor's house, which really had belonged to Columbus. There Columbus learned that the agent appointed to set aside his share of the island profits had not done so; also, as Ovando wanted to punish Captain Porras, who had rebelled on Jamaica, while Columbus preferred to deal with the matter himself, host and guest disagreed.

Too proud to remain an unwelcome guest in Ovando's house, Columbus collected what he could of the money due him, and prepared to go home to Spain. Two vessels were purchased, one for Bartholomew and one for Fernando and himself. Again Columbus proceeded with the familiar business of calking ships, buying provisions, and engaging a crew. In less than a month he was off again from San Domingo on the last voyage he was ever to make. On September 12, 1504, the ships weighed anchor and



pointed away from the “western lands” which Christopher Columbus had made known to Europe. The white-haired old man, we may be sure, stood long on deck gazing backward as the scene of his triumph and his humiliation faded from sight. Never again could he undertake a voyage of discovery, for he was now a confirmed invalid. Cipango, Cathay, and “the strait” to the Indian Ocean were not for him; so it was with many a heartburn that his poor old eyes strained toward the fading islands.

His ill luck held out to the end. The first day a sudden storm broke with a crash and carried away his masts. With the utmost difficulty he and Fernando got into a small boat and clambered on board Bartholomew’s vessel, the disabled boat being sent back to San Domingo. Still the sea would show him no mercy. Hardly had he crawled into a berth than another tempest came, and another and another, one unending, pitiless fury all across the ocean, till our great man must have thought that old Atlantic hated him for having solved her mysteries. The ship appeared to leap and stagger every minute of the time, and the Admiral was too ill to take command. Bartholomew was doing his best and little Fernando was helping; running down to his father for orders, scurrying up to his uncle with directions. What a struggle for life it was! And it was repeated every single day till November 7, when the crippled little caravel put into

the harbor of San Lucar near Cadiz. Christopher Columbus's last voyage was over. No bells pealed out to greet him; no flags were flung to the breeze; but at least he had the glory of knowing in his heart that he had conquered that grim, unknown, menacing Atlantic Ocean which man had feared since the beginning of time.

## CHAPTER XXI

### “INTO PORT”

The merciless storm that had beaten Columbus across the ocean swept over Spain after he landed. He had gone as far north as Sevilla, intending to proceed from there to court, which was being held at Medina del Campo, in Old Castile; but illness overcame him, and for three months he lay bedridden in the Sevillan monastery called Las Cuevas.

Besides his rheumatism, and all the other ills that might arise from two and a half years of exposure and bad food, an event happened, a few days after his return to Spain, that crushed him utterly. This was the death of his best friend, the only one to whom he could look for securing his rights in “the Indies,” where Ovando and other enemies had conspired to rob him of his share of profits in the colonies. The great Queen Isabella had passed away on November 26, 1504, in the lonely castle at Medina del Campo. In these two lives, though they had walked such different paths, there was much resemblance. The queen, like Columbus, had known a life of unceasing hard work and anxiety; like Columbus she had striven for a great purpose and had triumphed; her purpose being the

driving out of the Moor, and the establishment of Spain as a world power; like Columbus, she had made mistakes, and like Columbus, she had known much sorrow. There was a strong bond of sympathy between these two, and the news of the queen's death was a great blow to the bedridden old man in Sevilla.

Isabella had asked to be buried in Granada, the city she had labored so hard to win for Christianity, and from the day the little funeral party set out from Medina to the day they arrived at Granada, three weeks later, a frightful tempest raged that swept away bridges, flooded rivers, and made roads impassable. All the time poor Columbus, as he lay ill in the monastery, listened to the storm and thought of that mournful party tramping with their solemn burden down to the city where he and Isabella had both gained a victory. Maybe he envied the worker who had passed away first, for he sadly wrote to his son Diego, "Our tired lady now lies beyond the desires of this rough and wearisome world."

But Columbus himself was not yet out of this "wearisome world," and was troubling his weary brain far too much about its petty details. From his fourth voyage he had returned much poorer than he ever expected to be at the end of his sea-going life. The little money he had been able to

collect from his plantation in Espanola had been used to equip the ships that brought him home, and to pay his sailors; for this was a point on which he was always most scrupulous. When his ready money was thus used up, the good monks of Las Cuevas had to provide for his necessities until finally the banks advanced money on the strength of his claims against the Crown. After the death of Isabella these claims had small chance of being considered to his full satisfaction, for Ferdinand argued that the contract of Granada was, owing to the vast extent of the new lands, impossible for either the Crown on the one hand or Columbus on the other to fulfill. That rascally Porras, who had caused so much trouble during the Jamaica days, was at court, filling everybody's ears with slanderous stories about the Admiral during the days when the Admiral himself was wearying Ferdinand with a constant stream of letters. Every day that he was able to sit up he wrote long appeals for "his rights" and his property. Not only did he present his claims for recognition and reward, but he told how badly things had been going in San Domingo under Ovando; how the comendador was hated by all for his tyranny and for the favoritism he showed; and how things would soon come to a sorry pass in the colony unless a better governor were quickly appointed; and then, poor man, deluded with the idea that he could set things right, he asked to be reinstated as governor! Good Christopher!

can you not realize that your work is done now, for better or worse? Can you not let others solve the great problems across the ocean? Can you not see that you have been greatest of them all, and that nothing more is required of you? And as for all the dignities and titles and properties that should be yours, according to the Granada contract, we know you want them only to pass them on to your boy, Diego; but never mind him; you are leaving him a name that will grow greater and greater through the coming ages; a name that is a magnificent inheritance for any child.

About this time the sick man received a visit which brightened him a great deal, a visit from the man who, never intending any harm, was destined to soon assume the greatest honor which the world could have given Columbus—the honor of naming the newly discovered lands Columbia, instead of America.

Americo Vespucci was an Italian from Florence who, in 1492 or 1493, came to Sevilla to carry on a commercial business. Here he learned of Columbus's first voyage and became eager to make a trip himself to the new lands. It was a Florentine friend of Americo's who fitted out Columbus's second expedition; but this Florentine died before the

vessels were ready, and Americo continued the work. More than this; seeing, when the king canceled Columbus's monopoly, a chance for himself to win glory, he hastened off with one of the new expeditions. He claimed that they reached a continental coast on June 16, 1497, which was earlier than Columbus had reached Para, and eight days before Cabot touched at the northern edge of the new continent. We have only Americo's own account of the voyage, and his statements are so inaccurate that many students refuse to believe him the real discoverer of South America.

Of Americo's second voyage, however, we have reliable information, for it was made in the company of Alonzo de Ojeda, that one-time friend of Columbus who later rebelled against him at Espanola. Vespucci sent a letter to a friend in Florence describing his voyages and saying that the continent he had reached "ought to be considered a new world because it had never before been seen by European eyes." His second letter, written from Portugal in September, 1504, to another friend, was used by Martin Waldseemuller, a German professor who was then collecting all the information he could gather to make up a book on geography.

Martin Waldseemuller divided the globe into four large parts or

continents—Europe, Asia, Africa, and the newly discovered fourth part, which he suggested “ought to be called America, because Americus discovered it.” This professor, like most learned men of his time, wrote in Latin; and in Latin the Italian name Americo is Americus; the feminine form of Americus is America, which was used because it was customary to christen countries with feminine names. As nobody else had yet suggested a name for the vast new lands in the west, the German’s christening of 1507 was adopted for the country which should have been called Columbia, in justice to the man who first had the splendid courage to sail to it across the untraveled waters and reveal its existence to Europe. Had Columbus lived to know that this was going to happen, it would have been one more grievance and one more act of ingratitude added to his already long list; but at the time that Americo Vespucci visited his countryman who lay ill in Sevilla, neither one of them was thinking about a name for the far-away lands. They merely talked over their voyages as any two sailors might. As Vespucci was now looked up to as a practical, new-world traveler and trader, and the Admiral was lonely and forgotten, it shows a kind feeling on the visitor’s part to have looked him up. When Americo left to go to court, Columbus gave him this letter to carry to Diego, who was still in the royal service:—



\*

My dear son:

Within two days I have talked with Vespucci. He has always manifested a friendly disposition towards me. Fortune has not always favored him and in this he is not different from many others. He left me full of kindest purposes towards me and will do anything he can (at court). I did not know what to tell him to do to help me, because I knew not why he had been called there.

\*

In February, 1505, a royal order was issued to the effect that Don Cristobal Colon be furnished with a mule to ride to court, then being held in Segovia. To ride a mule in those days necessitated a royal permit, for every Spaniard preferred mules to horses. The government hoped that horses would be in more general use if the use of mules was restricted.

The Admiral's long rest with the monks of Las Cuevas had apparently improved his health, for, as this royal permit proves, he applied for a mule and went to Segovia; from there, that same year, he followed the king to Salamanca and later to Valladolid. Segovia, Salamanca, Valladolid! All bleak, harsh places in winter, and fiery hot ones in summer. Our poor Admiral left pleasant Sevilla and exposed his worn old body to icy blasts and burning suns all for naught; for, as Las Casas writes:—

“The more he petitioned, the more the king was bland in avoiding any conclusion; he hoped, by wearing out the patience of the Admiral, to induce him to accept some estates in Castile instead of his powers in the Indies; but Columbus rejected these offers with indignation.”

The Admiral could not be made to see that the Granada contract was impossible; that Ferdinand had signed it only because he never expected the voyage to be successful; and that now, when men were beginning to believe Americo's assertion that a whole continent lay off in the west, it was preposterous that one family should hope to be its governor and viceroy and to control its trade. No, Columbus could only go on reiterating that it was so written down in Granada, away back in April,

1492.

So King Ferdinand merely shrugged his shoulders and referred the matter to a learned council who talked about it a long, long time, hoping the sick old man might meanwhile die; and at last the sick, tired, troublesome old man obliged them, and left all the business of “shares” and “profits” for his son Diego to settle several years after by bringing suit against the Crown. Toward the end of 1505 and the beginning of 1506 the Admiral became very ill. He was in Valladolid, and he realized that he could travel no more; so he secured for himself, or perhaps Diego secured for him, as comfortable a lodging as possible in a street now called the Calle Colon, and determined not to move about any more. We, accustomed to heat and a dozen other comforts in our dwellings, would not consider the house in the Calle Colon, with its cold stone floors and walls, a suitable place for a rheumatic, broken-down old man; but it was the typical solid, substantial residence of its day; and the only pity is that the city of Valladolid permitted it to be torn down a few years ago to make room for a row of flats.

Even in icy Valladolid, winter with its discomfort comes to an end at last. One May day, when spring sunshine was warming up the stone chamber

where the old Admiral lay, he called for a pen and put the last touches to his will. All the titles he still hoped to get back were for Diego; and should Diego die without a son, Fernando was to be Admiral; and if Fernando should have no son, the loyal brother Bartholomew, who had shared those horrible days of disappointment and disaster off in the Indies, was to be Admiral. (Brother Diego had no need of an inheritance, for he had become a monk.) Part of the moneys due Columbus, if ever collected, were to be spent on that long-dreamed-of Crusade to recover the Holy Sepulchre. His remains were to be taken out to San Domingo. These were a few of the instructions he left.

The next day, May 20, 1506, came another whisper of springtide, and the faithful Diego Mendez, who “navigated three hundred leagues in a canoe,” came to see him; his sons, Diego and Fernando, too, and his brother Bartholomew; and as the dim old eyes saw these affectionate faces bending over him, he counseled Diego always to love his younger brother Fernando, as he had always loved Bartholomew; and Diego pressed his hand and promised. Then the old man rested quietly for a time. He was clad in the frock of a Franciscan monk, the same sort of frock that good Friar Juan Perez wore when he welcomed him to La Rabida.

They opened the window to let in the May warmth, and Christopher sniffed feebly. Did he recall the beautiful climate of Haiti which he said was “like May in Cordova”? Let us hope, at least, that it was peaceful recollections like this that flitted through his vanishing senses, and not recollections of the horrible hurricanes and insurrections and shipwrecks and prisons that made up part of his eventful life. He made no sound, not even a whisper, so we will never know what thoughts the May warmth brought to him. We only know that after a while he crossed his hands peacefully on his breast and murmured, “Into thy hands, O Lord, I commit my spirit.” A moment later and the great Admiral passed forth on his last voyage into the unknown.

The event on May 20, 1506, passed unheeded. A life had ended whose results were more stupendous than those of any other human life ever lived. Yet Valladolid took no notice of Columbus’s death; neither did Spain. The nation was too busy watching the men who had practical plans for colonizing the new lands, and turning them into profit, to concern itself with the death of the one brave soul who had found the path. Indeed, Cristobal Colon was really forgotten before his death; yet he was living on, as every great spirit lives on, in the ambitions of the men who were endeavoring to push his work still further. When, a few

years after his death, Balboa first saw the Pacific stretching far, far off to Asia, and when in another few years the whole globe had been circumnavigated, from Spain back again to Spain, only then did the vastness of Columbus's discovery begin to be appreciated. Europe at last realized that, during all her centuries of civilization, when she had thought herself mistress of the world, she had in fact known but half of it. As this truth took shape in men's minds, the humble, forgotten Genoese began to come into his own. They saw that he had done more than risk his life on the western ocean; he had sent a thrill through every brave, adventurous heart, and this at a moment of the world's development when such seed was sure to take root. Christopher Columbus, one of the greatest products of the Renaissance, had carried that Renaissance to a glorious climax.

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