

On arriving at Cordova, where the court at the time was residing, he found it almost impossible to obtain a hearing. This he at length accomplished; but it was long before he could make a sufficient impression on Ferdinand or his queen in order to second his views. They referred his suit to a body of learned professors, who laughed at his project, which they declared to be irreligious and impious.

Tired out with waiting on the pleasure of the court of Spain, and receiving a letter of encouragement from the court of France, Columbus departed on a journey to Paris, taking in his way the friendly convent at Palos, where he had left his son under the care of Juan Perez. When his old friend the prior saw Columbus once more at the gate of his monastery, after several years of vain solicitation at court, he was deeply affected. He entreated him by all means to remain in the country. He had been father confessor to the queen, and thought he might still exercise an influence over her mind. He accordingly proceeded to Santa Fe, where the sovereigns were in person superintending the siege of the capital of Granada. Perez obtained a ready access to the queen. He laid before her the propositions of Columbus with freedom and eloquence. Isabella was moved with the grandeur of the project. The principles upon which it was founded, the advantages that would result from its success, and the glory it would shed upon Spain, were for the first time represented to her in their true colors. She promised her patronage to the undertaking.

It was now only necessary to agree upon the terms. Columbus would listen only to princely conditions. A meaner spirit, after years of unsuccessful toil, poverty, and disappointment, would have been glad to secure the assistance of the sovereigns, on such arrangements as their own liberality might dictate. But Columbus proposed his own rewards and honors, and would consent to no other. He demanded them as if he were already successful, and aware of the extent and importance of his discoveries. The court were eventually obliged to grant that he should be admiral on the ocean, and enjoy all the privileges and honors allowed to the high admiral of Castile; that he should be governor over all the countries he might discover; and that he should reserve to himself one-tenth of all pearls, precious stones, gold, silver, and articles of merchandise, in whatever manner obtained, within his admiralty. They also allowed that he should appoint judges in all parts of Spain trading to those countries; and that on this voyage, and at all other times, he should contribute an eighth part of the expense, and receive an eighth part of the profits. These articles of agreement were signed by Ferdinand and Isabella, at the city of Santa Fe, on the 17th of April 1492. Three caravels, or very small vessels, little better than decked boats, were procured at Palos, and orders given that they should be manned and provided with all care and diligence. There were still difficulties before commencing the voyage, that it required all the perseverance of Columbus to overcome. It was almost impossible to prevail upon any seamen to engage in the undertaking. The royal order in respect to the fitting out of the caravels was peremptory; but weeks passed, and it still remained without any thing being done. The old sailors who had passed most of

their lives upon the water, shrunk from the enterprise with horror. It shocked all the notions that had been entertained so long in respect to the formation of the earth, and the extent of the ocean. New orders were issued by the court, and officers were appointed to press ships and seamen into the service of Columbus. This measure occasioned a great deal of disputing and confusion, but led to no important result. At length a rich and adventurous navigator, named Alonso Pinzon, came forward, and interested himself very strenuously in the expedition. His assistance was effectual. He owned vessels, and had many seamen in his employ, and consequently possessed great influence. He and his brother Vicente Pinzon determined to take commands, and sail with Columbus. Their example had a great effect; they persuaded their relations and friends to embark with them, and the vessels were ready for sea within a month after they had thus engaged in their equipment.

We now find Columbus on the eve of his first grand expedition, which was to result in the discovery of the American continent and islands. The simple seaman of Genoa, whom the ignorant derided as a fool, and philosophers neglected as an impostor, after years of poverty and disappointment, had at length obtained the object of his unwearied solicitations; and was going forward with a calm and dignified assurance of success. What unspeakable joy must have filled his heart, as the little caravel in which he sailed was leaving the shores of Spain in the distance, stretching forward into that dim and unexplored ocean, from whose shadows he was to reveal new dominions for his country, and a new world for Europe!

Columbus and his companions sailed from the bar of Saltes, a small island in front of the town of Huelva, early on the morning of the 3d of August 1492. They directed their course in a south-westerly direction for the Canary Islands. These they reached; and after spending three or four weeks in repairing a damage in one of the vessels, and taking in fresh supplies of wood, water, and meat, set sail from the harbor of Gomera on the 6th of September. They steered their course directly west. In a few days they began to fall in with what Columbus considered signs of land; such as quantities of green weeds, a live crab, flocks of birds, and so forth; but all these signs of land continually failed, and the crews were daily more and more disposed to murmur against the admiral. The whole of the sailors in the little fleet were a set of cowardly wretches, who had by turns to be flattered and threatened with punishment, to keep them from open rebellion. Provisions at length were falling short, and some of the men proposed to throw Columbus into the sea, and give out on their return that he had accidentally fallen overboard.

The first land that Columbus expected to meet was Cipango, which had been placed by geographers at the eastern extremity of India. This was the name given to the island now called Japan, by Marco Polo, the celebrated Venetian traveller. The most extravagant accounts of the riches of this country were given by the writers of that age, and the admiral was anxious to proceed directly thither. At sunrise on Sunday the 7th of October, the Nina, which had out-sailed the other vessels, on account of her swiftness, hoisted a flag at her mast-head, and fired a gun as a signal of having

discovered land. There had been a reward promised by the king and queen to the man who should first make this discovery; and each of the vessels was striving very eagerly to get ahead, and obtain the promised recompense. As they found nothing of the land the Nina had made signals for, the admiral shifted his course, about evening, towards the west-south-west with a determination to sail two days in that direction. The reason for making this change was from watching the flight of the birds. The Portuguese had discovered most of their islands in this manner, and Columbus noticed that the flocks which passed them all flew from the north to the south-west. He inferred from this that land was situated in that quarter. After sailing a day or two, they found the air as soft as that of Seville, in April, and so fragrant that it was delicious to breathe it. The weeds appeared very fresh, and many land birds were taken. The men, however, had lost all faith in any signs of land. They did not cease to murmur and complain. The admiral encouraged them in the best manner he could, representing the riches they were about to acquire, and adding, that it was to no purpose to complain; for, having come so far, they had nothing to do but to continue, till, by the assistance of heaven, they should arrive at the Indies.

On the 11th of October, they met with signs of land that could not be mistaken, and all began to regain spirits and confidence. The crew of the Pinta saw a cane and a log. They also picked up a stick, which appeared to have been carved with an iron instrument, a small board, and abundance of weeds that had been newly washed from the banks. The crew of the Nina saw other similar signs, and found, besides, a branch of a thorn full of red berries. Convinced by these tokens of the neighborhood of land, Columbus, after evening prayers, made an address to his crew, reminding them of the mercy of God in bringing them so long a voyage with such fair weather, and encouraging them by signs that were every day plainer and plainer. He repeated the instructions he had given at the Canary Islands, that when they had sailed seven hundred leagues to the westward without discovering land, they should lie by from midnight till daybreak. He told them that, as they had strong hopes of finding land that night, every one should watch in his place; and besides the thirty crowns a-year which the Spanish sovereigns had promised to the first discoverer, he would give him a velvet doublet.

About ten o'clock that evening, while Columbus was keeping an anxious look-out from the top of the cabin, he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a great distance. Fearing that his hopes might deceive him, he called two of his companions to confirm him. One of them came in season to observe it, but the other was too late. It had disappeared. From this they supposed it might be the torch of some fisherman, raised up and then suddenly dropped again. They were all confident of being near land. About two o'clock in the morning, the Pinta gave signal of land, which was first perceived by a sailor named Rodrigo de Triana.

When the day appeared, they perceived before them a large island, quite level, full of green trees and delicious waters, and to all appearance thickly inhabited. Numbers of the people immediately collected together, and ran down to the shore. They were very