

INTRODUCTION.

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whole squadron. The men blamed their sovereign for listening to the schemes of a dreaming adventurer. The indications of land had all proved fallacious. They would be amused and deceived no longer. They agreed that Columbus should be forced to relinquish an undertaking which seemed to promise nothing but destruction; and some of the more daring talked of throwing him into the sea, as a visionary projector, whose death would cause no regret, and produce no inquiry.

10. Amidst these difficulties, Columbus displayed those traits of character which proved the greatness of his mind, and his peculiar fitness for the arduous duties of his station. He appeared with a steady and cheerful countenance, as if satisfied with what he had done. Sometimes he soothed his companions by holding out to them a prospect of riches and of fame, and by offering a gratuity to him who should first discover land. Sometimes he assumed a tone of authority, threatening them with the vengeance of their sovereign, and everlasting infamy, should they compel him to abandon the undertaking.

11. These encouragements and threats prevented open and forcible resistance to his authority. Meanwhile the squadron proceeded onward; the indications of land had become frequent, and convinced him that it could not be far distant. But his crew were unconvinced, and their discontent increased. Assembling tumultuously on deck, they demanded to be conducted back to Spain. As a last expedient, he proposed that they should continue on their course three days longer, and if, in that time, land should not be discovered, he would then comply with their demand.

12. They consented. Before the time expired, Columbus, on the 11th of October, at midnight, saw a light glimmering at a distance. "A light! a light!" was the joyful exclamation, which instantly resounded through the squadron. On the approach of morning, all hands stood gazing intently in the direction where land, it was expected, would be discovered.

13. Soon, on board the Pinta, the most forward vessel, was heard the cry of "Land! land!" which was repeated, with almost frantic delight, by the crews of the other vessels. Passing from one extreme to the other, they, who a few days before had reviled and insulted their commander, now regarded him as one whom the Deity had endowed with knowledge and penetration above the common lot of mortals.