

At this period, (viz. the latter end of the 15th century,) Christopher Columbus, a native of Genoa, having conceived a notion of the possibility of sailing to the Indies (the traffic to which parts was then carried on either through the inland parts of Asia, or thro' Egypt and the Red Sea, and was chiefly engrossed by the Venetians) by a westward course, proposed the making such an attempt to his countrymen, as the means of opening a new avenue to commerce, wealth, and dominion; but his scheme, seeming to them to be founded in absurdity, was consequently rejected. Columbus, conscious of the superiority of his own knowledge in the matter, was not thus to be foiled; and, retiring from his country in disgust, successively repeated his proposal to the courts of France, England, and Portugal; all which, however, looked upon it as too chimerical to be adopted. Notwithstanding these mortifying disappointments, which probably would have overwhelmed the genius of any other person, Columbus was still firmly persuaded of the practicability of his plan, and resolved to propose it to the court of Spain: and here, after a delay of eight years, his design was at length