

of the newly found islands. On his course he discovered the Carribee Islands.

After having been seven months and eleven days absent, Columbus arrived at the port of Palos on the 15th of March, 1493. Great rejoicings were had on his arrival, for, from the sight of a few articles of gold he had brought from America the most extravagant ideas of the wealth of the new lands were entertained. The highest honors were paid to the intrepid mariner. The king and queen issued letters patent confirming to him and his heirs all the high privileges which had been agreed on, in case of his success before his departure, and his family were enrolled among the proudest nobility of Spain.

Still neither the Spaniards nor any other European nation entertained the least doubt that the lands Columbus had found were parts of India, for at that time the extent of India was unknown. For this reason it was that Ferdinand and Isabella gave them the name of "Indies" in the instrument by which they ratified their agreement with Columbus, and on this account they still erroneously bear that name, and all the aborigines of the new world are called Indians.

The success of Columbus had its natural effect. The whole enterprise of Spain was roused. No time was lost, no expense was spared, in equipping a fleet to accompany the great mariner back to the lands he had made known. A fleet of seventeen vessels was fitted out within six months and manned with fifteen hundred men, among whom many of the noble and the distinguished of Spain did not disdain to enroll themselves. It was one of the popular opinions of the day that the new found land was either the Ophir of Solomon or the Cipango of Marco Polo. Ferdinand himself caught the prevailing enthusiasm of the day and was desirous of securing his part of the golden harvest expected to be reaped in the new world. He applied to the Pope to be invested with a right in the lands discovered, or to be discovered. A shew of a religious motive was necessary, and he made his zeal to convert the natives to the Catholic faith the basis of his hypocritical plea; not without the desired effect.