

The Catholic Record.

"Christianus mihi nomen est, Catholicus vero Cognomen."—(Christian is my Name, but Catholic my Surname.)—St. Pacian, 4th Century.

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Christopher Columbus

—AND THE—
DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

A Series of Articles Relating to the Memorable Event of the 12th of October, 1492, and Designed for Use, at the Forthcoming Anniversary, by the Separate Schools of Western Ontario. (See Note at End.)



"Gloria in Excelsis Deo."

General View of His Career.

He was a man whom danger could not daunt,
Nor sophistry perplex, nor pain subdue;
A stoic, reckless of the world's vain taunt,
And steered the path of honor to pursue.

—De Vere.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS was born at Genoa, of humble parentage, in or about the year 1456. He was instructed in his early youth at Pavia, where he acquired a strong relish for the mathematical sciences in which he subsequently excelled. At the age of fourteen he engaged in a sea-faring life, which he followed with little intermission until 1470, when he landed in Portugal, the country to which adventurous spirits from all parts of the world then resorted, as the great theatre of maritime enterprise. After choosing Lisbon as his place of residence, he continued to make voyages to the then known parts of the world, and, when on shore, occupied himself with the construction and sale of maps and charts; while his geographical researches were considerably aided by the possession of papers belonging to his father-in-law, Bartolomeo de Palastrello, an eminent Portuguese navigator. Thus stored with all that nautical science could supply in that day, and fortified by large practical experience, the reflective mind of Columbus was naturally led to speculate on the existence of some other land beyond the western waters; and he conceived the possibility of reaching the eastern shores of Asia by a more direct and commodious route than that which traversed the eastern continent. Filled with lofty anticipations of achieving so great a discovery, but unable through poverty to fit out an expedition at his own expense, he applied for assistance alternately to the courts of Portugal, Genoa, and Spain. At last, after many refusals, his long-tried patience was rewarded by the patronage of the sovereigns of Spain—Ferdinand and Isabella, who furnished him with three small vessels equipped and manned. Having, with all his followers, approached the sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist, in order to obtain God's blessing on his undertaking, Columbus set sail from the port of Palos on the 3rd of August; and, after a hazardous voyage, the natural difficulties of which were greatly increased by the distrust and mutinous spirit of his followers, he discovered the island of San Salvador—the first land in the new world—on the 12th of October, 1492. Steering southward soon after, he discovered the beautiful islands of Cuba and Hayti; after which he returned to Spain to announce that wonderful achievement which has ever since entitled him to the admiration of mankind. He made our voyages in all to the New World, in the course of which he discovered the principal West India Islands, and on the third of the main land of South America, 1498. His exploits had the effect of making Spain the leading nation of Europe; but the Spanish Government proved ungrateful. King Ferdinand at first honored him with several marks of distinction; but, listening to the slanders of jealous courtiers, he caused or permitted Columbus to be repeatedly treated with indignity, and coldly allowed him to pass his last days amid difficulty and distress. He died at Valladolid on Ascension Day, 1506, in a true spirit of Christian piety and resignation. His body was successively interred at Seville, San Domingo and the city of Havana (Cuba); and here, in the stately cathedral since 1795, have quietly reposed the earthly remains of the great-souled voyager.

His First Day in the New World.

(October 12, 1492.)

Long on the deep the mists of morning lay;
Then rose, revealing, as they rolled away,
Half circling hills, whose everlasting woods
Sweep with their sable skirts the shadowy floods:
And say, when all to holy transports given,
Embraced and wept as at the gates of heaven—
When one and all of us, repentant, ran,
And, on our faces, blessed the wondrous man,
"Say, was I then deceived, or from the skies
Burst on my ear seraphic harmonies?
"Glorious God!" unnumbered voices sung—
"Glorious God!" the vales and mountains rung,
Voices that hailed creation's primal morn,
And to the shepherds sang a Saviour born
Slowly, hushed, and though the surf we bore
The sacred cross, and, kneeling, kiss'd the shores.

—Samuel Rogers.

About two hours before midnight, Columbus, standing on the forecastle, observed a light at a distance, and privately pointed it out to Pedro Gutierrez, a page of the Queen's wardrobe. Gutierrez perceived it, and calling to Saldoco, controller of the fleet, all three saw it in motion, as if it were carried from place to place. A little after midnight the joyful sound of "land! land!" was heard from the *Pinta*, which kept always ahead of the other ships. But having been so often deceived by fallacious appearances, every man was now become slow of belief, and waited in all day. As soon as morning dawned, all doubts and fears were dispelled. From every ship an island was seen, and two leagues to the north, whose flat and verdant fields, well stored with wood, and watered with many rivulets, presented the aspect of a delightful country. The crew of the *Pinta* instantly began the "Te Deum," as a hymn of thanksgiving to God, and were joined by those of the other ships, with tears of joy and transports of congratulation. This office of gratitude to Heaven was followed by an act of justice to their commander. They throw themselves at the feet of

Columbus, with feelings of self-condemnation mingled with reverence. They implored him to pardon their ignorance, incredulity and insensibility, which had created him so much unnecessary disquiet, and had so often obstructed the prosecution of his well-concerted plan; and, in the warmth of their admiration, they now pronounced the man whom they had so lately reviled and threatened, to be a person inspired by Heaven with sagacity and fortitude more than human, in order to accomplish a design so far beyond the ideas and conceptions of all former ages.

As soon as the sun arose all their boats were manned and armed. They rowed towards the island with their colors displayed, with warlike music and other martial pomp. As they approached the coast, they saw it covered with a multitude of people, whom the novelty of the spectacle had drawn together, whose attitudes and gestures expressed wonder and astonishment at the strange objects which presented themselves to their view. Columbus was the first European who set foot on the New World which he had discovered. He landed in a rich dress, and with a naked sword in his hand. His men followed, and, kneeling down, they all kissed the ground which they had so long desired to see. They next erected a crucifix (cross), and, prostrating themselves before it, returned thanks to God for conducting their voyage to such a happy issue. They then took solemn possession of the country for the crown of Castile and Leon, with all the formalities which the Portuguese were accustomed to observe in acts of this kind in their new discoveries. —Dr. Robertson.

What Convinced Him of a Western Land.

How he should ever think
That on the other brink
Of this wild waste, *terra incognita* should be
Is a pure wonder, I must say, to us.

His fundamental principle was that as the earth was a globe—a fact known to astronomers at least as early as the second century—it might be travelled around from east to west, and that men stood foot to foot on opposite points. In the second place, he was influenced by the writings of eminent Greek and Roman geographers—notably Strabo and Ptolemy, whose opinions were that the ocean surrounds the earth, that it washes the shores of Spain on the west and of India on the east and that one might pass from Cadiz to the Indies without much trouble. Finally, his theory was strengthened by information derived from veteran mariners, and inhabitants of the Azores and other islands, of natural and artificial objects which were wanted to their shores by westerly winds, and which were not the productions of any nation of the known world. On these and some minor grounds Columbus concluded that there was undiscovered land in the western part of the ocean, that it was attainable, and that it was fertile, and finally that it was inhabited. What was a matter of mere speculation to his learned contemporaries became to him a settled practical conviction, which was not shaken for an instant by the long series of disappointments and acts of opposition to which he was subjected.

What Proved His Genius and Courage.

To our minds, familiar with the course, it would seem an easy matter to find land by sailing directly westward, but the merit of Columbus' conception and the boldness of his attempt may be in a measure realized when it is considered that in those days the circumference of the earth was unknown, that no one could tell whether the ocean were not of immense extent, impossible to be traversed, and that the laws of central gravitation were not then ascertained, by which, granting the rotundity of the earth, the possibility of making the tour of it would be manifest.

In his memorable first voyage, when his ships had advanced further west than ever man had sailed before, his crews, now full of vague terrors, harassed their commander with incessant murmurs; they exclaimed against him as a mad desperado; they talked of throwing him into the sea; and, at last, breaking into turbulent clamor, they insisted upon turning homeward and giving up the voyage as hopeless. But Columbus, after endeavoring in vain to pacify his men by promises, finally assumed a decided tone; he told them that it was useless to murmur, that he was determined to persevere until, by the blessing of God, he should accomplish his enterprise.

While negotiating with the Spanish court he was more than once stigmatized as a visionary, and his scheme pronounced vain and impracticable. The Portuguese Government tried to defraud him of his enterprise by privately sending out a ship to follow the course he designated, but it was soon driven back by the terrors of the unknown seas. His own native city of Genoa coldly declined to give him the assistance he required, and he was obliged to seek aid elsewhere. England hesitated, but has since distinguished her part in his enterprise, in a manner befitting his way from court to court and offering to princes the discovery of a world, found that his great reliance was on his own personal exertions.

For the Glory of God.

The enthusiasm with which he conceived and executed the plan of his expedition was essentially religious. Columbus, says Washington Irving, considered himself as marked by Providence to fulfil a high destiny; he thought he saw his future discovery described in the Holy Scriptures and obscurely announced by the Prophets; the ends of the earth were to be brought together and all nations and tongues and languages united under the banner of our Saviour. This was to be the triumphant consummation of his enterprise, bringing the remote and unknown regions of the earth into communion with Christian Europe; carrying the light of the True Faith into benighted and pagan lands, and gathering their countless nations under the holy dominion of the Church. These were the sentiments that predominated in the mind of the discoverer of America, and inspired him with that pious and courageous ardor which enabled him to sustain so heroically his many trials and contradictions. With such sublime motives, it is no wonder that his plans succeeded so gloriously, or that their results were, as the historian Prescott observes, "more stupendous than those which heaven has permitted any other mortal to achieve."

Columbus on the Ocean.

Yet who but he undaunted could explore
A world of waves, a sea without a shore,
Trackless and vast and wild as that revealed
When round the ark the birds of tempest wheeled;
When all was still in the destroying hour,
No sign of man? no vestige of his power?
One at the stern before the hour glass stood,
As 't were to count the sands; one o'er the flood
Gazed for St. Elmo; while another cried
"Once more good morrow!" and sat down and sighed,
Day, when it came, came only with its light,
Though long invoked, 't was sadder than the night!
Look where he went, for ever as he turned,
He met the eye of one that nily mourned
Thou such his generous spirit, and he wept;
The friend, the father rose; the hero slept,
Palms, thy port, with many a pang resigned,
Filled with its busy scenes his lonely mind;
The solemn march, the voices in concert given,
The heaved knees and lifted hands to heaven,
The increased rites and choral harmonies,
The Guardian's blessings mingled with his sighs;
While his dear boys—ah, on his neck they hang,
And long at parting to his garments clung.

Grandeur of the Discovery.

The New World has an area of 15,000,000 square miles—equal to the full extent of the known earth before the time of Columbus. Already it has a population of 120,000,000, and it is capable of comfortably and profitably accommodating fifteen hundred millions, or almost the present population of the whole world! It has the most wonderful, thought not the loftiest, mountain chain in the globe; its rivers and lakes are unequalled for magnitude and utility; its vast plains are immense gardens of almost unbroken fruitfulness; its mineral wealth is unbounded, and from its situation, it must, in the near future, if it does not already, command the trade and commerce of the world. With all his sagacity and foresight, Columbus did not realize the full grandeur of his discovery. "How would his magnanimous spirit," says Irving, "have been consoled amid the afflictions of age and the care of penury, could he have anticipated the splendid empires that were to spread over the beautiful world he had discovered, and the nations and tongues and languages which were to fill its lands with his renown, and revere and bless his name to the latest posterity!"

Clerical Friends of Columbus.

CARDINAL MENDOZA, Archbishop of Toledo and Primate of Spain, an eloquent scholar and a man of sound judgment and quick intellect. Pleased with the noble and earnest manner of Columbus, and realizing the force of his arguments in favor of his theory, the Cardinal decided that it was a matter highly worthy of consideration, and at once threw his powerful influence in favor of the project.

DEZA, Archbishop of Seville, the second ecclesiastical dignitary of Spain, and an able and erudite divine. He took a generous interest in the cause, and by his earnest efforts contributed largely to have the scheme of Columbus looked upon with favor by the monarchy.

JUAN PEREZ, prior of the monastery of La Rabida where Columbus stopped one day in the extremity of his distress, to beg some bread and water for his child. Having ascertained that his strange guest was Columbus on his way to Paris to seek the patronage of the French King for his undertaking, the prior, who was a man of keen penetration and a patriotic Spaniard, determined that so important an enterprise should not be lost to his country without one more effort to prevent it. The action of Juan Perez was the turning-point in the fortunes of Columbus; for the interview which he had with Queen Isabella as the result of the good offices of the worthy prior, finally led that royal lady to cordially assume the undertaking on her own responsibility.

LUIS DE SAN ANSEL, receiver of the ecclesiastical revenues in Aragon. When the curious courtiers denounced as exorbitant the demands of Columbus to be appointed viceroy of all the lands he discovered, with one-tenth of the profits, San Angel silenced all opposition by showing the Queen that the demands, if high, were contingent on success; that if Columbus failed he required nothing; and that if he succeeded, the stipulated rewards would be a cheap price for the fame and dominion that Spain would acquire by his discoveries.

What the World has Learned Since.

METHODS OF TRAVELLING.—It took Columbus seven weeks of actual sailing to go from Palos to San Salvador. A modern vessel can make the journey in ten days, while an express train can travel the same distance on land in less than a week. But then, steam was unknown as a travelling agent four hundred years ago; the use of steam for some purposes dates from antiquity; but it was not until the early part of the present century that steamboats and railways became established facts.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION.—The ship that brought the admiral and his crew back to Spain also brought the news of his discovery. There was no speedier means; consequently, it took sixty-five days. Had Columbus the use of our modern telegraph, the following despatch might have made known the event to King Ferdinand in ten minutes:

San Salvador, Oct. 12th, 1492.
To His Majesty, Don Ferdinand, King of Spain.—Just landed on the coast of India; inhabitants strange but friendly; country beautiful and promising. All safe, by the grace of God.
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

Having imagined the feelings of the sceptical monarch on receipt of this despatch, let us go a step further and picture him at the telephone, telling the glorious news to Isabella, two hundred miles away:

Isabella.—Hello! Central; give me Valladolid, queen's palace, right off.
F.—Hello! Isabella! Hello! Hello!
Isabella.—Well, Ferdinand, what on earth is the matter? Another rebellion of the Moors?
F.—Nothing of the kind. You remember that bold fellow Columbus who left here to reach India by sailing westward?
Isabella.—I should think I do remember him! I had to sell all my jewels to pay his expenses. What about him?
F.—Why, just think! Got a despatch from him today saying he's landed in India. San Iago! Who would have believed it?
Isabella.—Just what I expected. You know I always had faith in him. Is the poor man safe?
F.—Yes; he says everything is safe and sound.
Isabella.—Gracias a Dios a Nuestra Señora!

Although of comparatively recent invention, the telegraph and telephone have become so familiar to us that we have almost ceased to wonder at them. How much better would we appreciate them if some magic influence suddenly caused them to vanish and supplied their place with the slow-going jenny team, the chief substitute for electric wires and railways trains, four hundred years ago!

AGRICULTURE.—The old-time farmer, steadily stepping up and down his field scattering the seed right and left with regularly alternate movements, must have been a picturesque sight; but, in point of productiveness how far behind the work of our modern seeding machine! The harvest field of ancient days, with its host of reapers cutting down the ripe grain with their hand hoes must have presented a busy and animating scene; but how great would be the astonishment of those patient laborers had they lived to see the day when a monster machine would travel over the land cradling, gathering, and binding—automatically doing the work of fifty men of their own era! Again, what would a modern farmer think if instead of using a steam threshing machine, he had to pound his sheaves with a flail, and instead of taking his grain to the mill he had to keep it at home and beat it into flour between two stones!

MANUFACTURING.—The progress made in ship building may be realized from considering that the flag-ship of Columbus was only sixty-six feet long and that in our time a ship has been built measuring six hundred and eighty feet in length. In the science of war, we have advanced from the flint-lock musket and six-pound cannon ball that carried terror and destruction among the aborigines of America, to the galling gun that sends out shot like a hail storm, and the Krupp monster that can throw half a ton ball to the distance of half a mile with the speed and accuracy of a rifle bullet. The sturdy smith, who once did all that could be done in the working of iron, finds most of his old-time greatness sunk out of sight in the multitude of trip hammers, rolling mills and blast furnaces to be found in every land. In cloth-making the slow hand-weaving of our ancestors, though productive of fine and costly fabrics, is a Hittitian affair in comparison with the bewildering maze of machinery now used in the manufacture of cloth driven by the wonderful steam engine or the almost magic

power of electricity. When Hoad wrote his "Song of the Shirt," to illustrate the trials and sufferings of poor needlewomen, he little dreamt of the prolific operations of the latter day sewing-machine. The shoemaker, in the proper sense of the word, no longer exists; all the parts of a shoe are now made by machinery. Printer Franklin thought he did a clever thing in printing one hundred papers (by hand) in one hour; how he would open his eyes were he to see a modern printing machine, of itself, take in the white paper from an immense roll at one end, and turn it out at the other, printed, cut and folded—and all that at the rate of sixteen thousand papers an hour.

OTHER WONDERS.—There was a time when the tallow candle excited admiration, when the coal oil lamp increased the happiness of even the great, and when the introduction of gas was considered the outside limit of light-producing ingenuity; but now we have the intensely powerful electric light, almost rivalling the sun in brilliancy. We have, too, a gigantic telescope, capable of magnifying objects a thousand times, and bringing the moon within a few hundred miles of the earth; and what is still more amazing, we have the phonograph, a machine that can, as it were, bottle up speeches, songs and conversations—like fruit preserved in jars, for future use. Finally, when we pause to consider all the marvellous inventions above mentioned—and there are many others—some of us may possibly conclude that the story of Aladdin and his wonderful lamp was not such a wonderful thing after all!

Columbus to His Sailors.

"Were there no graves—none in our land," they cry,
"That thou has brought us on the deep to die?"
Silent with sorrow, long within his cloak
His face he muffled—then the hero spoke,
"Generous and brave! When God Himself is here,
Why shake at shadows in your mad career?
He can suspend the laws Himself designed,
He walks the waters and the winged wind;
Himself your guide! and yonder the high behest,
So lift your voice, and bid a world be blest!
And can you shrink? to you, to you, consumed
The glorious privilege to serve mankind!
Oh! had I perished, had I lingered here away!
Clung to the shattered car 'mid wrecks of flame!
Why for this I lingered here away!
The scorn of Folly, and of Fraud the prey;
I loved your mind, the gift His bounty gave,
At courts a suitor, and to slaves a slave."
Yet in His name whom only we should fear,
(Tis all, all I shall ask, or you shall hear),
Grant but three days.—He spoke not uninspired;
And each in silence to his watch retired.

The Nick of Time.

Columbus appeared upon the scene at the right moment; a few years later, and the discovery of America might have been postponed for two centuries. Scarcely had Ferdinand ceased to reign, when Martin Luther began to think that the road to Heaven as laid down in the Gospel was too narrow, and Henry VIII. decided that a king ought to be allowed as many wives as he wanted, thereby giving rise to those religious differences and bloody wars that distracted and ravaged Europe for a century and a half, and were quite sufficient to cause courts and monarchs to ignore all theories for the discovery of a New World. After the treaty of Westphalia, in 1648, the Columbian doctrine of a western world might have been entertained and perhaps put into practice by the end of that century. Two hundred years behind! Let us see where we'd be now: The mighty Frontenac lordling it over New France, the master spirit of America, and the terror of the English colonies; New York a village lost amid the swamps of Manhattan Island; Boston a small town surrounded by a howling wilderness; Chicago, the site of a French fort; the course of the Mississippi just opened up by La Salle; the "liberty-loving" Puritans of New England harassing and killing all who dared differ from them in belief, but Lord Baltimore allowing freedom of religion to all denominations in the Catholic colony of Maryland; as yet, no George Washington and no American Revolution, with the great Columbian exhibition still two hundred years in the future! To consider how backward Europe might be, lacking the immense benefits it derived from the discovery of America at the time indicated, could fill a volume, and that of no mere idle speculations; but the genius of Columbus, appearing in the nick of time, has saved the world from the vain regrets that are always excited by thinking on what might have been.

Ferdinand and Isabella.

FERDINAND was originally King of Aragon, and Isabella Queen of Castile; they were married in 1469, and, having finally conquered the Moors, became joint sovereigns of the whole Spanish peninsula. Ferdinand was the founder of the greatness of Spain, and Spaniards have always revered his memory; but he deserves little or no credit for his share in the discovery of America. Though in conjunction with Queen Isabella he conferred on Columbus and his heirs forever the title and authority of Admiral and Viceroy of all the lands discovered by him, together with one-tenth of the profits; yet, he always distrusted the admiral's projects, soon superseded him in his authority, and, on the death of Isabella, entirely withheld from him the revenues secured by the agreement here mentioned. He died in 1517.

QUEEN ISABELLA belongs almost exclusively to the glory of having aided Columbus. The squadron with which he discovered America was equipped at her expense; she undertook the enterprise when it had been explicitly declined by other powers; she ever remained the steady friend of Columbus, shielding him against the calumnies of his enemies, and, so far as her means would allow, supplying him with resources for the prosecution of his various discoveries. She encouraged learning, fostered the arts and sciences and ever exhibited a maternal solicitude for the welfare of her subjects. "God-fearing, magnanimous, righteous and benevolent, Isabella the Catholic, was," says Washington Irving, "one of the purest spirits that ever ruled over the destinies of a nation." She died in 1504.

Europe in the Time of Columbus.

ITALY had far outstripped the rest of Europe in the arts of civilized life, and she everywhere afforded the evidence of faculties developed by unceasing intellectual action, says Historian Prescott. The face of the country was itself like a garden, cultivated through all its plains to the very tops of the mountains; teeming with population, with riches and an unlimited commerce; illustrated by many munificent princes, by the splendor of many noble cities and by the majesty of religion, and adorned with all those rare and precious gifts which render a name glorious among nations. PORTUGAL, before Columbus' achievement, was the most enterprising nation of Europe. Her navigators discovered the Azores, Madeira and Cape Verde Islands, explored the coasts of Africa found a passage to India around the cape of Good Hope, became masters of the Indian ocean, and were the first to sight the continent of Australia, while a Portuguese crew, that of Magellan, was first to circumnavigate the globe. No nation has extended the scope of geographical knowledge more than Portugal.

SPAIN, after the great exploits already mentioned, was not long in becoming mistress of Mexico—extending almost to the Missouri and west to the Pacific ocean, and of all South America except Brazil. It is said that one of her daring

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