

pucci of artifice, and say, that he anticipated the time of his voyage, in order to arrogate to himself the glory of such a discovery; and that he undertook it the first time only in May, 1499, at which time Vespucci relates that he embarked the second time for the West Indies. If these accusations be true, we must say that Vespucci merely imagined his first voyage; nor has he any subterfuge whatever, so that he ought to be looked on as an impostor, and such indeed the above writers style him. I would willingly acquit him from so very odious a reproach, but confess, that, concerning the first voyage I meet with no small difficulty. We have observed, a little before, that Columbus, in 1496, was returned from his second voyage into Spain, in order to exculpate himself to the King and Queen from the crimes laid to his charge by his enemies; in which he so happily succeeded, that, with only shewing himself, he removed every accusation; and, being received at Court with the highest honour, he prepared himself for a third voyage, which he afterwards undertook in May, 1498. Columbus was therefore in Spain, when Vespucci relates that he himself was sent by King Ferdinand, for the discovery of new countries, in 1497, and received at Court, and honoured with the privilege already conferred on him of Viceroy and Governor General of the countries which might be discovered. Now, whilst he was in that kingdom, and in such favourable circumstances, that a commission of continuing the discoveries should be given to another, and that he should tamely submit to such an injury, or that he had not sufficient power to prevent it, who can believe it? How has it happened, that no one, except this same Vespucci himself, has left us an account of such a transaction? It will be said, perhaps, that the Spanish writers, envying the glory of a foreigner, maliciously hid it in silence; but Columbus was to them as much a foreigner as Vespucci; why then have they not dissimulated the glory of the former, if it is pretended, that they have obscured that of the latter? I wish that such arguments and monuments may be found which may fully justify Vespucci, and cancel all suspicion of his having capriciously fabricated his first voyage. We must however confess, that though Vespucci might have discovered *terra firma* before Columbus, much greater glory is nevertheless to be attributed to the latter than the former. After having discovered the islands, it was no very difficult matter to reach the continent. But the having, with reflection and ingenuity, first ascertained the existence of the new world, then pointed out the way by which it might be attained, and lastly, attempted with invincible courage the bold enterprise, is the glory of Columbus, of which none can possibly pretend to participate.

It is no less difficult to decide the other question, whether Vespucci was commander of that fleet which was sent to America, or merely a passenger. The Spanish writers, after having established, that only in 1499 Vespucci was sent to the new world, relate, followed in it by Father Charlevoix, and the authors of the General History of Voyages, that the news being arrived in Spain of the discovery of the continent by Columbus in his third voyage, the Bishop of Badajoz, then Minister at the Court of Ferdinand, and enemy of Columbus, availed himself of this opportunity to injure him, and dispatched to Alfonso d' Ojeda letters patent, signed however with his own name, and not with those of the two Sovereigns; by