Khan of Tartary, and the splendour and magnitude | of his capitals of Cambaln and Quinsai, and the wonders of the island of Cipango or Zipangl, supposed to be Japan. This island he places opposite Cathay. five hundred leagues in the ocean. He represents it as abounding in gold, precious stones, and other choice objects of commerce, with a monarch whose palace was covered with plates of gold, as in other countries palaces are covered with lead. The narrations of this traveller were by many considered fabulous; but though they are full of splendid exaggerations, they have since been found to be substantially correct. They are thus particularly noted, from the influence they had over the imagination of Columbus.

The work of Marco Polo is a key to many parts of his history. In his application to the various courts, he represented the countries he expected to discover as those regions of inexhaustible wealth which the Venetian had described. The territories of the grand Khan were the objects of research in all his voyages; and in his cruisings among the Antilles, he was continually flattering himself with the hopes of arrivin at the opulent island of Cipango, and the coasts of Mangi and Cathay."

While the design of attempting the discovery in the west was maturing in the mind of Columbus, he made a voyage to the north of Europe. Of this we have no other memorial than the following passage, extracted by his son from one of his letters : " In the year 4477, in February, I navigated one hundred leagues beyond Thule, the southern part of which is seventy-three degrees distant from the equator, and not sixty-three, as some pretend; neither is it situated within the line which includes the west of Ptolemy, but is much more westerly. The English, principally those of Bristol, go with their merchandise to this island, which is as large as England. When I was there, the sea was not frozen, and the tides were so great as to rise and fall twenty-six fathom.""

The island thus mentioned as Thule is generally supposed to have been Iceland, which is far to the west of the Ultima Thule of the ancients, as laid down in the map of Ptolemy. Nothing more is known of this voyage, in which we discern indications of that ardent and impatient desire to break away from the limits of the old world, and launch into the unknown regions of the ocean.

Several more years elapsed, without any decided efforts on the part of Columbus to carry his design into execution. He was too poor to fit out the armament necessary for so important an expedition. Indeed, as he expected to find vast and heathen countries, unsubjected to any lawful power, he considered it to be an enterprise only to be undertaken in the employ of some sovereign state, which could assume dominion over the territories he might discover, and

· A more particular account of Marco Polo and his writings is given among the Illustrations. 2 Hist, del Almirante, c. 4.

reward him with dignities and privileges commentenry, which ha surate to his scrvices.

During the latter part of the reign of Alphonso e remote parts d ounts, true and f Portugal, there was too little ardour in the cause discovery, to make it probable that a proposition the kind would be accepted. The monarch was to much engrossed with the wars with Spain, for the sucen Jonah, of Tut cession of the princess Juana to the crown of Castil ad set out from to engage in peaceful enterprises of an expension nature. The public mind, also, was not prepare for so perilous an undertaking. Notwithstanding th many voyages which had been made to the coast Africa and the adjacent islands, and that the comparhad been introduced into more general use, navige here were also th tion was still shackled with impediments, and the mariner rarely ventured far out of sight of land.

Discovery advanced slowly along the coasts Africa, and the mariners feared to cruise far into the artary ; and the southern hemisphere, with the stars of which the aysbrook), a cele were totally unacquainted. To such men, the pro ject of a voyage directly westward, into the midst unfortunate crusad that boundless waste, to seek some visionary land dimerical mission appeared as extravagant as it would at the presenturious narrations day to launch forth in a balloon into the regions thus revived in the space, in quest of some distant star.

The time, however, was at hand, that was to ex ( Asia. tend the power of navigation. The era was propilion In these narrati to the quick advancement of knowledge. The recenthe renowned Pre invention of the art of printing enabled men to comping, said to hold municate rapidly and extensively their ideas and distribution was long an o coveries. It drew forth learning from libraries an hose kingdom set convents, and brought it familiarly to the reading of every traveller. desk of the student. Volumes of information, which ffectually as the u before had existed only in costly manuscripts, careful the fables and fully treasured up, and kept out of the reach of the his shadowy pote indigent scholar and obscure artist, were now ingain put in circu every hand. There was, henceforth, to be no retrop this empire were gression in knowledge, nor any pause in its career to the east of Be Every step in advance was immediately, and simularince, who used a Every step in advance was immediately, and state price, who used taneously, and widely promulgated, recorded in ty. John II parts thousand forms, and fixed for ever. There could ment produced by never again be a dark age; nations might shut the of his reign he ac eyes to the light, and sit in wilful darkness, but the visionary Prester J could not trample it out; it would still shine on, distance the romantic pensed to happier parts of the world, by the diffusive jast. The magni powers of the press.

At this juncture, a monarch ascended the thron of Portugal, of different ambition from Alphonso John II had imbibed the passion for discovery from his grand-uncle Prince Henry, and with his reign a his grand-uncle Prince Henry, and with his reign a which his discove its activity revived. His first care was to build a for Africa, and of the at St George de la Mina, on the coast of Guinea, protect the trade carried on in that neighbourhood for gold dust, ivory, and slaves.

The African discoveries had conferred great glory upon Portugal, but as yet they had produced mon expense than profit. The accomplishment of the route to India, however, it was expected, would repay all their cost and toil, and open a source of incalculable wealth to the nation. The project of Prince

if a century, h

Beside the mary entioned, there red remnants of ersed over the fa nwearied zeal on the known wor assed from theno wo friars, despate 247, by Pope Inn r the purpose of rrand in 4253, h ame the public cu

emote parts of the hat the splendid p ealized, and that t o the Indian seas. promontory present in the aid of science reater scope and tion. His two ph latier a Jew, the

· Bergeron, Voyage Tudela, originally writ the translation went t Let. ii, c. 6.