

THE STUDENT PRINCE.



ONE on whom the Muses smiled has made a poetic appeal* for the giving of a due measure of honor to the memory of the noble old Monk who succoured Columbus in the days of his adversity, and gave him priestly benediction and the Bread of Life ere he setsail in the Santa Maria from the harbour of Palos on his voyage to discover a world. We are prone to forget the humbler ones who have aided mighty men to do great deeds. Statues are erected and pæans are sung to Columbus; but what is done in memory of the Franciscan Friar who refreshed him when he stood hungry at the gates of the Convent of La Rabida, who comforted him, when he was cast down, with that sweetest of all consolations to great thinkers—intelligent interest and sympathy, who mounted his mule at midnight and journeyed to Santa Fé to plead with Isabella of Castile for the man whose project the great Junto summoned by Fernando de Talavera had declared vain and impossible? When we sing the praises of Columbus, let us link with his name that of Juan Perez de Marchena, and think of the vigils he kept and the beads he told in his cell in La Rabida while he waited the return of his friend with news of the world he was seeking. The Dominican Diego de Deza, and Luis de St. Angel, whose eloquent plea lit the fire of enthusiasm in the heart of Isabella, should, with Juan Perez, be always grouped by our memory about the heroic figure of Columbus.

But it is not of these, though the theme is inviting, that I set out to write. There is another to whom honor in full measure should be given, who, though he saw not Columbus, went before him as a precursor preparing the way—Prince Henry of Portugal.

Henry was the son of John the First of Portugal, surnamed the Avenger, and Philippa of Lancaster, sister of Henry the Fourth of England. He accompanied his father on his expedition into Africa against

the Moors, and, while in what is still to us the dark continent, he conceived the idea that important discoveries might be made by sailing along the coast of Africa, and a direct route found for the immense trade with the east which was then monopolized by the Italians. The channel by which the wares of the east reached Europe in those days was a most difficult one, and caused the trade to flow entirely to Italy. After coming through the Red Sea, the goods were loaded on mules and conveyed to the Nile and thence to the Mediterranean.

It is very amusing to read of the beliefs that were then prevalent as to the untravelled seas. The waters beyond Cape Brojador were believed to be perpetually boiling, and the torrid zone was supposed to separate the hemispheres with a belt made impassably hot by the sun's perpendicular rays. Immense birds that could carry away ships in their bills with the ease of a sea-gull sailing off with a mackerel, and mighty monsters that could swallow the largest caravels as gracefully as big fish take in the little ones, were believed by the unlearned to keep watch and guard over the unsailed ocean. But in those days as in the present the unlettered had not a monopoly of ignorance. Maps were filled with absurdities. Ptolemy was regarded as the great cosmographic authority; and the theory of Hipparchus, that Africa continued on to the south pole and united with Asia beyond the Ganges, had come to be generally accepted. And as for antipodes, Lactantius was supposed to have settled them in the bit of writing which now seems so ridiculous, in which he asks if "there are any so foolish as to believe....that there is a part of the world in which all things are topsy-turvy....people walk with their heels upward and their heads hanging down....where trees grow with their branches downward....and it rains, hails and snows upward."

The idea which he conceived while in Africa so took possession of the mind of Henry that he resolved to sacrifice the chivalrous ambitions natural to one of his rank and time, and to devote himself to

* "Juan Perez," by Charles J. O'Malley, in the New York *Catholic Review* of November 28th, 1891.