

west of the "Pillars of Hercules," as the Straits of Gibraltar were then called.*

Portugal, though one of the smaller Kingdoms of Europe, then held a prominent position and was a leading power in the cause of discovery and exploration. The success of their mariners had drawn the attention of other nations, and numerous adventurers repaired thither; among whom was Christopher Columbus who reached Lisbon in 1470.

This remarkable man, whose name is for all time connected with the annals of the New World, was born at Genoa, Italy, in 1435. At an early age he showed a preference for a sea-faring life, and an aptitude for acquiring geographical knowledge. Being in humble circumstances his father could do little for him, and at the age of fourteen we hear of young Christopher as a boy mariner. Little is known of his experiences as such, but that little is favorable. On his arrival in Lisbon, he took service with the Portuguese King, and was thus thrown into frequent and intimate relations with several of the most eminent scientific men of the age, and with those navigators who had taken part in the voyages and discoveries which had already made Portugal famous. Living, thus in the society of enterprising and aspiring spirits, and fully understanding the general anxiety for a more

* These traditions assume a semblance of reality when taken in connection with the accounts of discoveries made in later times, by explorers in Central and Southern America.