

was certain, that by persevering in a western course he should arrive at the eastern coast of Asia, if he did not fall in with any intervening land \*.

His greatest difficulty was, to find the means to make the attempt, he himself being a poor and obscure person. He first proposed to undertake the discovery in the service of his native city of Genoa; but the senate treated it with ridicule. He next addressed himself to John II, king of Portugal, who, it is said, kept him unfairly in suspense, till a ship, he had secretly sent to attempt the discovery, returned unsuccessful, and then rejected his proposal. He next applied to the court of Spain, where he solicited for eight years, during which time he sent his brother Bartholomew on the same errand to the court of England. After many ignorant objections to his proposal by the Spanish courtiers, he at length obtained three ships, with ninety men. In August 1492, he sailed from Palos in Andalusia, and in thirty-three days landed in one of the Lucay or Bahama Isles, which he named St. Salvador (at present known by the name of Cat-Island), having sailed 950 leagues directly westward from the Canaries. He sailed thence to the westward, and at last discovered the great island of Cuba; but he no where found the riches he hoped for, there being neither gold, manufactures, nor product found among the simple and innocent natives; who had no poultry, oxen, sheep, goats, swine, horses, asses, camels, elephants, cats, nor dogs, excepting a dumb unbarking creature, resembling our dogs. Neither had they any lemons, oranges, pomegranates, quinces, figs, olives, melons, vines, nor sugar-canes; neither apples, pears, plumbs, cherries, currants, gooseberries, rice, nor any other corn but maize, on which, and on cassada and other wild roots, and on fish, they usually fed, and occasionally on worms and other vermin bred in rotten trees; neither knew they the comforts of fire-light, either by oil, wax, or tallow-candles; nor had they any iron instruments. Yet (such are the almost marvellous effects of commerce and navigation, joined to a tropical climate) those very isles are, in our days, plentifully stocked with all such conveniences, (the vine only excepted, which does not usually thrive so near the equator), which are long since naturalized to their climate. It is true, that on the middle continent of America (which was not discovered till the former part of the next century), the Spaniards found the natives of Mexico and Peru much more civilized than in any other part of America, whether islands or continent; they had better houses and temples; they made a sort of cotton cloth; they had wooden swords and spears, hardened by fire, and pointed with flint; and although they had no iron, yet in Peru they had copper tools, instruments, and vessels.

\* To find the way to the East Indies was undoubtedly the object of Columbus; and he was encouraged to expect the accomplishment of it by the position of the eastern parts of Asia in the maps of Ptolemy, who has extended them eastward to a prodigious distance beyond their true situation. *M.*