

of the Indies, the kingdom of the legendary monarch Prester John, or the land of the Grand Khan.

There was no larger mind or more daring spirit in Europe at this time than Christopher Columbus, the son of a wool-carder of Genoa. He spent a few brief years at the University of Pavia, and there acquired a knowledge of mathematics and an intense love of geographical science; but before he was fifteen circumstances compelled him to earn his own living, and he went to sea. The many discoveries which were then being made influenced his mind, and he brooded over enterprises that the bravest mariners never dreamed of. It was nothing to him to coast along the African shore. There he would ever be in sight of known land, but his heart yearned after something greater than had yet been done.

The broad expanse of ocean that lay far to the west had a secret that he felt he could discover. There night and day he dreamed he saw the land of the East, the land of wealth and wonders. To this land he would go, and every year he lived made him more fixed in his determination. He married a daughter of Perestrelo, a famous Portuguese navigator, and his father-in-law's books and charts, which fell into his hands, added fuel to his ambition. He perused lovingly the works of Paulo Toscanelli, and the famous "Cosmographia" of Cardinal Aliaco, where wise and accurate knowledge is almost clouded in a mist of absurd fables of lion-bodied men and dog-faced women, of monsters of gigantic size, and of sea serpents and salamanders. Columbus devoured eagerly all that related to the unknown world, and at length determined to ask aid to go forth to discover it for himself.

His first appeal was to the King of Portugal, but the king of his time had none of the enterprise of Henry IV., and so he had to turn his eyes to the court of Ferdinand and Isabella of Spain. In 1485 he began his entreaties, and till 1492 he left no stone unturned to get a chance to venture out on the unknown seas. He had but faint encouragement from the court; he was rebuffed by the wealthy, and called a monomaniac by his fellow-mariners; but he had a daring spirit and could not be borne down. When he despaired of aid from Spain, he sent his brother to Charles VIII. of France and Henry VII. of England to get either to help. The noble queen Isabella and her ambitious husband saw that Columbus