

noted. These signs of approaching land raised hopes which were not immediately fulfilled; and the crews, being utterly unacquainted with the seas they now traversed, seeing nothing but water and sky, began to mutter among themselves. Later, a number of seagulls and small land birds were seen, the latter settling sometimes in the rigging. Again, a vast floating field of sea-weed was encountered. These appearances gave some assurances of comfort to the men at times; but when the weeds became thick enough to partially impede the progress of the vessels, they became terrified, lest the fabled fate of St. Amaro in the frozen seas, whose vessel could neither move forward nor backward, might be theirs. "Wherefore they steered away from those shoals of weeds as much as they could."

On the 23rd a brisk WNW. gale, favourable for their course, arose, and on the same day a turtle-dove, a land fowl, and other birds, were seen. The more these tokens were observed, and found not to be followed by the anxiously-looked-for land, the more the crews rebelled; cabals were formed, of which the admiral was only partially aware. "They represented that they had already sufficiently performed their duty in adventuring further from land and all possibility of succour than had ever been done before, and that they ought not to proceed on the voyage to their manifest destruction." They growlingly remarked that Columbus was a foreigner, who desired to become a great lord at their expense, that he had no favour at court, and that the most learned men had scorned his ideas as visionary and absurd. Some even went so far as to propose cutting the Gordian knot by throwing him overboard. Poor Columbus! He had enough to do, sometimes expostulating and sometimes threatening, and always in danger of a mutiny upsetting all his grand projects. Nor were matters improved on September 25th, when Pinzon, whose vessel was near, shouted out to the admiral, "Land! land, sir! let not my good news miscarry!" Next morning the supposed land resolved itself into sea-clouds.

During the following days the men caught some fish "with gilt backs" with the aid of a line, and numerous birds were observed. Still Columbus persisted in a westerly course, although many on board, thinking that the birds were flying from one unseen island to another, wished him to deviate. About sunrise on Sunday, October 7th, some signs of land appeared to the westward, "but being imperfect, no person would mention the circumstance. This was owing to fear of losing the reward of thirty crowns yearly for life which had been promised by their Catholic majesties to whoever should first discover land; and to prevent them calling out 'land! land!' at every turn without just cause, it was made a condition that whoever said he saw land should lose the reward if it were not made out in three days, even if he should afterwards actually prove the first discoverer." Those on the *Nina*, however, forgot this provision, and fancying they saw land, fired a gun and hoisted their colours. This time also they were disappointed, but derived some comfort by observing great flights of large fowl and other birds going from the west towards the south-west.

It would have been impossible for the admiral to have much longer withstood the spirit of mutiny which was fast gaining ground, "but," says the narrative of Ferdinand, "it pleased God that, in the afternoon of Thursday the 11th of October, such manifest tokens of being near the land appeared that the men took courage and rejoiced at