

AMERICAN ANNALS.

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, a native of Genoa, having formed a just idea of the figure of the earth, had several years entertained the design of finding a passage to India by the western ocean.¹ He made his first proposal of attempting this discovery to the republic of Genoa, which treated it as visionary. He next proposed his plan to John II, king of Portugal, who, at that time, was deeply engaged in prosecuting discoveries on the African coast, for the purpose of finding a way to India. In this enterprise the Portuguese king had been at so vast an expense, with but small success, that he had no inclination to listen to the proposal. By the advice, however, of a favourite courtier, he privately gave orders to a ship, bound to the island of Cape de Verd, to attempt a discovery in the west; but the navigators, through ignorance and want of enterprise, failing in the design, turned the project of Columbus into ridicule.

Indignant at this dishonourable artifice, Columbus left Portugal; and, having previously sent

¹ Some Spanish authors have ungenerously insinuated, that Columbus was led to this great enterprise by information, which he received, of a country, discovered far to the west, with the additional advantage of a journal of the voyage, in which the discovery was made by a vessel, driven from its course by easterly winds. It is affirmed, however, with entire credibility, that "Columbus had none of the West Islands set forth unto him in globe or card, neither yet once mentioned of any writer (Plato excepted and the commentaries upon the same) from 942 yeeres before Christ, untill that day; neither understood he of them by the report of any other that had scene them; but only comforted himselfe with this hope, that the land had a beginning where the sea had an ending." Hakluyt, iii. 23. Robertson, i. Note xvii.