

CHAPTER II.

COLUMBUS AND HIS DREAM.

"A time shall come, tho' it be late,
When the proud ocean shall abate
Of its vast empire; men descrie
New isles, new countries where they lie;
Nor shall bleak Thule longer stand
To us the last discovered land."

Prophecy in the *Medea* of Seneca.



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS, as the world knows him, Cristóbal Colón, as he called himself in Spanish, or Cristoforo Colombo, as he was baptized, was the eldest son of Domenico Colombo and of Susanna Fontanarossa, his wife. His brothers were Bartolomé, Giovan (John) Pellegrino, and Giacomo (James), written Diego in Spanish. Giovan Pellegrino died in early manhood; but Bartolomé and Diego followed the fortunes of their elder brother in the New World he discovered.

Columbus had one sister, named Bianchinetta, who became the wife of Giacomo Bavarello, a cheesemonger. Doubtless her life was placid and happy, as it excited no human interest.

Columbus was an Italian, being born in the ancient city of Genoa, some time between the years 1430 and 1456, say about 1446. His father's house in Genoa, in which Christopher was born, has been identified; and in the Piazza Acquaverde, in front of the railway station, stands an imposing statue to his memory.

Possibly of illustrious ancestry and connection, his immediate family were humble wool-combers and weavers. The boy Cristoforo helped his father in his trade, and attended a school established by the wool-combers for the education of their children. It is claimed that Columbus studied for a time at Pavia; and that famous Lombard university has erected a monument to commemorate the glory of having had him as a student. While at school he learned the common branches, and some Latin, geography, geometry, and astronomy.

COLUMBUS AND

His schooling could not have been extensive, as when but fourteen years of age, so he tells us, he went to sea, for which he had a natural inclination; and followed a maritime career, on and off, for the remainder of his life.

At this time Columbus was a red-haired, freckled-faced boy, large for his age, and full of energy.

For a number of years he probably followed the usual life of a sailor about the Mediterranean, rising rapidly, no doubt, to positions of command.

Columbus must be rated as a self-made man; or, more correctly, a genius. He was a great reader and student of history, cosmography, mathematics, and astronomy. In navigation and seamanship he stood without a peer. He was a fine penman, and, at times, obtained a livelihood as a cartographer.

Previous to the entry of Columbus into Spain, about 1485, but little is known of him. Many recorded incidents in his life are of questionable historical accuracy. Fernando Columbus, raised among courtiers, and sensitive of the lowly origin of his father, would have it appear that Columbus was related to the famous admirals or corsairs, the Colombos of Italy, or the Coulons (Casanove) of France.

Columbus served under René of Anjou in his sea-fights against Naples. *Colombo el Mezo*, said to be a nephew of Columbus, commanded the squadron, and was such a terrible corsair that Moorish mothers hushed their unruly children with the mere mention of his name. In an encounter with four Venetian galleys off the coast of Portugal, the ship commanded by Columbus caught fire, and he saved himself only by swimming two leagues to land, with the aid of an oar.

This latter event, which did not occur until 1485, is often given as the manner in which he arrived in Portugal. But we know that Columbus came to Lisbon in 1470, to avail himself, according to Bernaldez, of the new facts concerning the west coast of Africa, brought to light by the Portuguese, then the foremost in maritime discovery. His brother Bartholomew was there with him, and together they made and sold charts, maps, nautical instruments, and books.

The world at this time, as known to Europeans, was still defined by the geography of Ptolemy and of Marinus of Tyre. The continent of America and the great Pacific Ocean were unheard of. What was not Europe or Africa was Asia, of course. It was supposed that Africa was joined to Asia on the south, and enclosed the Atlantic Ocean, which was depicted on the maps as extending to the eastern shores of Asia. The

HIS DREAM

Mediterranean was well known, and voyages were made along the shores of Europe; but the hardy mariners hugged the coast and dreaded to lose sight of land. A few degrees out the Strait of Gibraltar marked the limit of the world to the west. To venture far from land was to face the dangers of the unknown, peopled with the demons of ignorance.

There were vague stories afloat that, beyond the Pillars of Hercules, somewhere out in the great Sea of Darkness, as the Atlantic was still called, were the large island of *Atlantis*, as told to Plato by an Egyptian priest; *Antillia*, or the island of the Seven Cities, founded by the Seven Bishops driven out of Spain and Portugal by the Moors; and the mirage island of *St. Brandan*, said to have been visited in the sixth century by St. Brandan, a monk from Ireland. An Englishman named Macham, "who, sailing out of England into Spaine, with a woman that he had stolen," was driven out of his course, and came, it is said, in 1344, upon the island of Madeira. The Isles of the Blest, or Fortunate Islands, probably meant the Canaries. There is little doubt but that Dante's description of the mount of repentance, "Purgatorio," is the Pico di Teneriffa, so far from the center of Tuscany that it was quite easy to place it at the antipodes of the center of the earth from Jerusalem.

A few years before the advent of Columbus, Prince Henry of Portugal, surnamed the Navigator, and who lived from 1394 to 1460, became convinced, from what he learned from the Moors while in Africa, that great discoveries could be made down the African coast; and from study of the works of the Ancients he came to the belief that Africa was circumnavigable; and that the produce of India and of the Spice Islands, now coming by caravan, and through the Persian gulf and Red Sea, could be reached and brought to Europe by way of the Sea of Darkness.

According to traditions, Hesperus, a King of Spain, had discovered as far as Cape Verde as early as 650 years after the Flood. Phenician sailors sent out by Necho, King of Egypt, and Hanno, the Carthaginian, had sailed from the Mediterranean around Africa to Arabia; and Eudoxus of Cyzicus had circumnavigated in the other direction from the Red Sea to the Pillars of Hercules. It was even related by Strabo that Menelaus, spouse of the fair Helen, had sailed around Africa, after the fall of Troy.

Prince Henry, who was half English by his mother Philippa, daughter of John of Gaunt, deliberately planned to discover

COLUMBUS AND

new lands for Portugal, with the hope of ultimately rounding the southern extremity of Africa, and reaching China and India by sea. For this purpose this enlightened prince established a school for the study of navigation and astronomy, in 1418, at Sagres, near Cape St. Vincent, the extreme southwestern point of Europe.

The farthest place down the African coast then known was Cape Nam (or Not); and it was a grim joke among Mediterranean seamen that "He who sails to Cape Nam will either return or not." The Prince ordered two of his young gentlemen, Varco and Texeira, to sail down the Barbary coast and see what they could find. They bravely passed Cape Nam; but sixty leagues beyond, where the Jebel-khal, or Black Mountain, juts out from the great Desert of Sahara, they encountered a bold promontory, which they called Bojador. Its aspect was so forbidding, and the sea so turbulent, that they were frightened back; and for a number of years Bojador, meaning the "Outstretcher," defied further exploration to the south.

When Gil Eannes, in 1433, rounded the Bojador and lived to return, his efforts were likened to the labors of Hercules. Subsequent ventures discovered Rio de Oro, La Mina, the mouth of the Senegal, Sierra Leone, and the Guinea coast about the equator. The discovery of Porto Santo and the Azores, and the rediscovery of Madeira, followed.

In 1445 one of the Prince's vessels reached Cape Verde; and five years later the Cape Verde Islands, 320 miles west of the Cape, were brought to light.

Such was the knowledge of geography and the stage of discovery about the year 1470, when Columbus arrived at Lisbon. No better environment could have been found for completing and perfecting the education of the navigator destined to discover the New World.

Columbus at this time was in the full maturity of his manhood. He is described by his son Fernando as follows: "The Admiral was a well-made man, of a height above the medium, with a long face, and cheek-bones somewhat prominent; neither too fat nor too lean. He had an aquiline nose, light-colored eyes, and a ruddy complexion. In youth he had been fair, and his hair was of a light color, but after he was thirty years old it turned white. In eating and drinking he was an example of sobriety, as well as simple and modest about his person." Columbus had a grave and dignified bearing, and took himself and the world seriously on all occasions.

HIS DREAM

His accepted portrait is as sad and severe as that of Dante, and reminds one of some faces we see among the American Indians. He commanded admiration and respect from his men, but never love nor enthusiasm.

In Lisbon, Columbus attended mass at the Church of the Convent of All Saints, where he first saw and met Doña Felipa Moñis, niece of Isabel Moñis de Perestrello, whom he soon married. Columbus lived with his wife's aunt, who was the widow of Bartolommeo Perestrello, a distinguished Italian navigator, who died in 1457, and who had found the islet of Porto Santo for Prince Henry, and over which he was appointed governor. She told Columbus of her husband's voyages, and showed his charts and papers. Soon after their marriage, Columbus moved to Porto Santo with his wife, who owned a share in the island. While here their son Diego, the heir of Columbus, was born, about 1470.

It was not long before they returned to Portugal, where Columbus continued to make maps and charts. According to the records, he visited his father in Genoa, in 1472, and again in 1473, rendering him monetary assistance.

Columbus made occasional voyages, at one time going as far south as Guinea, and again, in 1477, sailing to 100 leagues west of Thule, supposed to be Iceland, or possibly the Farões, where he met English merchants from Bristol.

Just when Columbus conceived the notion of reaching India and the Spice Islands by sailing to the west, it is impossible to state. As he extended his voyages and heard of lands farther west, he probably thought that a little more sailing would bring him to the islands lying off the shores of Asia, described in such glowing terms by Marco Polo in the thirteenth century, and by Sir John Mandeville. He calculated that the Island of Cipango lay near where Cuba and Haiti were afterwards discovered, and that Mangi (the mainland) was about where he found the Isthmus of Panama.

Long study of the ancient cosmographers and philosophers confirmed him in this belief. Aristotle, Seneca, Strabo, Pliny, Solinus, and other writers held that the Atlantic extended to the eastern shores of Asia. Pedro de Aliaco (Cardinal Pierre d'Ailly), and Julius Capitolinus stated that India could be reached in a few days' sail from Spain.

Ptolemy divided the circumference of the globe into twenty-four hours of 15 degrees each, making 360 degrees in all. The map of Marinus of Tyre showed fifteen hours as known to the ancients. The city of Thinae, in Asia, the eastern limit of the

COLUMBUS AND

world given by Marinus, had been much extended by the travels of Marco Polo, Sir John Mandeville, Rabbi Benjamin ben Jonah of Ludela, and certain wandering friars.

Discovery of the Azores, and Cape de Verd Islands by the Portuguese, added another hour, or 15 degrees, on the west; so only eight hours, 120 degrees, or one-third the circumference of the earth, remained to be discovered.

Moreover, both Ptolemy and Marinus, supported by Alfergany, the celebrated Arabian astronomer, held the circumference of the earth to be much less than the other cosmographers made it; a view in which Columbus concurred. This opinion found religious support in the Book of Esdras, which affirmed that six-sevenths of the earth was land; so the sea between the western shores of Europe and the eastern coast of Asia could not be so extensive, after all.

Pedro Correa, who had married the sister of Doña Felipa, told Columbus of picking up pieces of strangely carved wood on Porto Santo, after a period of westerly winds. Trunks of unknown trees and giant reeds were found on the shores of the Azores and other islands, or encountered far out at sea.

There is no evidence that Columbus, while on his voyage to the north, learned anything about the discovery of America by the Norsemen, about the end of the tenth century; much less had he ever heard of the nebulous report of the voyage of Madoc, the Welshman.

After the death of Columbus, a baseless story was started saying that he had obtained information of the islands he later discovered from a Spanish sea captain named Sanchez, who, driven far out of his course, had lived to return, but only to die in the house of Columbus, at Terceira, one of the Azores. Before breathing his last, it was said, he told Columbus of the new lands in the west, and gave him his log-book and charts.

Belief in the sphericity of the earth, and in the possibility of sailing round it, did not originate with Columbus, but had been expressed by wise men from Plato, Aristotle, and Hipparchus to Roger Bacon. Columbus was the first man to make the venture, and prove the truth of their reasoning and deduction.

It detracts nothing from the honor and credit due Columbus to believe that had he not made the discovery, someone else would have found America in a very short time. "The man who becomes the conspicuous developer of any great world-movement is usually the embodiment of the ripened aspirations of his time."

HIS DREAM

The whole tendency of the times was towards new and further ventures into the Atlantic; and events in the life of Columbus seemed to be preparing him for the undertaking of greater feats than had yet been accomplished. To unusual skill and experience as a mariner, he added an exceptional knowledge of geography, astronomy, and cartography. Stories of new discoveries excited his enthusiasm and strengthened his belief, until he developed religious fervor and delusions; so that in later years he came to believe that he acted in obedience to Divine commands, and had been selected by Deity to chart the way to India by the west; to carry the Gospel to millions of benighted heathen; and with the rich spoils of the East to raise and equip an army with which to rescue the Holy Sepulchre from the infidel Turk.

The economic necessities of the western world required a westward thrust. The conquest of Constantinople by the Osmanli Turks, in 1453, carried with it the mastery of the overland trade routes from Asia. The sea-power of the inland Mediterranean cities fell as their power to exploit their former subjects had ceased. The pressure of population for new lands, checked by the closing of the East, pushed westwards, so that those states where the Crown had centralized power were in the pathway of utilizing the popular demand for newer lands and peoples.

As contributory aids to the discovery of America at this time were the improved use of the mariner's compass, and the recent introduction by John II. of the astrolabe, the forerunner of the quadrant, with which navigators could tell their distance from the equator; as well as the general revival of learning, fostered by the introduction of printing presses.

As early as 1474, Columbus wrote to Dr. Paulo Toscanelli, a famous physician and astronomer of Florence, known to be an authority on cosmography, who sent Columbus a chart of the Atlantic, or Western ocean, and the eastern coasts of India, together with the copy of a letter recently written to the ecclesiastic Martinez on the same subject for the information of Affonso V. The learned doctor's reply is so interesting that it is given in full at end of chapter.

It was this chart of Toscanelli, substantiated by his well-thumbed copy of the *Imago Mundi* by Cardinal D'Ailly (called by Irving the Vade Mecum of Columbus), that formed the sailing directions of Columbus in his discovery of the Western hemisphere.

COLUMBUS AND

The map of Martin Behaim, which depicts the geography of that day, was issued from Nürnberg just after Columbus sailed. It will be observed that both maps estimate fairly well the width of the Atlantic, and roughly outline the islands and eastern coast of Asia; but express not the vaguest suspicion of the continent of America and the great Pacific Ocean (say two-fifths of the circumference of the earth) intervening between the Atlantic Ocean and Asia.

It is almost inconceivable that Europeans, up to Columbus and Balboa, knew but one ocean, and remained in total ignorance of another hemisphere. Had the actual distance between Spain and Cipango and Cathay (Japan and China), 12,000 miles, been known, and supposing no land in between, neither Columbus nor anyone else would have dreamed of sailing there; nor could the vessels and crews have lived through such a long voyage. As it was, some figured the distance to be 4000 miles; while many, including Columbus, believed it to be much less.

The profound religious nature of Columbus found in Holy Writ confirmation of his faith in a western route to India, and he became convinced that his discovery was foretold by the prophets, and that he was to be the agent in the hands of God for accomplishing the Great Discovery.

Columbus thought it was first necessary to receive the approval and financial support of some government or prince to carry out his great undertaking.

Tradition says he first offered his discovery to his native State of Genoa; but either she was too poor, or Columbus too obscure, for Genoa to consider the proposition. Probably he carried his scheme to the Republic of Venice; and with like result.

We do know, however, that Columbus applied to John II. of Portugal, who had come to the throne in 1481, and was refused, largely owing to the counsel of his confessor, Ortez de Calzadilla. By the advice of that bishop, King John got possession of the charts of Columbus and secretly sent out a caravel to test his theory; and it is a pleasure to read that the sailors soon became frightened and hastened back to Portugal, claiming that one might as well expect to find land in the sky as out in the great ocean.

Hurt and offended at such mean treatment, Columbus departed from Lisbon in 1484, taking his boy Diego with him. Doña Felipa and the other children were left behind; all of whom probably died within a short time, as they disappear from history.



Photo by the Author.

RAILROAD BRIDGE OVER THE CHAGRES AT BARBACOAS. TAKEN DURING THE DRY SEASON, 1906

HIS DREAM

In 1485 Columbus visited his father, his only surviving parent, and made provision for his welfare and the education of his younger brother, Diego.

It is said that he again applied, this time in person, to the republics of Genoa and of Venice to carry out his plan. Failing to receive any encouragement from these sources, Columbus decided to try his fortune in Spain; "nor is it one of the least interesting circumstances in his eventful life that he had, in a manner, to beg his way from court to court, to offer to princes the discovery of a world."—(IRVING.)

About the end of the year 1485, Columbus entered Spain, placed young Diego with his aunt Mular, at Huelva, and set out for the Spanish Court. For seven long years this vain-glorious dreamer followed their Highnesses from place to place, importuning everyone in authority to give him assistance. No doubt he made himself a nuisance to most everybody, and was considered what we now call a crank.

Through the influence of Alonso de Quintanilla, controller of the treasury of Castile; Alessandro Geraldini, the papal nuncio; and the great Cardinal Mendoza, called by Peter Martyr "the third King of Spain," Columbus was enabled, in 1486, to appear before the Court at Cordova; and later was received by Ferdinand at Salamanca. The united kingdoms of Ferdinand and Isabella were expending their utmost endeavors to drive the Moors from Spain, and had but little time or money to devote to such a visionary enterprise. Nevertheless, Talavera, confessor to the Queen, was directed to assemble a council of learned men to consider the subject. They met in the Convent of St. Stephen, at Salamanca, and gave Columbus a hearing. This *junta* was composed principally of churchmen, and soon found the project contrary to Scripture and the teaching of the Fathers.

Concerning the sphericity of the earth and the existence of Antipodes, St. Augustine had written: "It is contrary to the Scriptures, for they teach that all men are descended from Adam, which would be impossible if men lived on the other side of the earth, for they could never have crossed the wide sea." Likewise Lactantius, who had said: "Is there anyone so foolish as to believe that there are Antipodes, with their feet opposite to ours; people who walk with their heels upwards and their heads hanging down—where everything is topsy-turvey; where the trees grow with their branches downwards, and where it rains, hails, and snows upwards?"

COLUMBUS AND

Accordingly, the junta reported the project "vain and impossible, and that it did not belong to the majesty of such great princes to determine anything upon such weak grounds of information." Indeed, Columbus was considered fortunate in escaping Torquemada and the Inquisition for daring to entertain such heretical opinions. A small minority of the junta, among whom was Diego Deza, preceptor to the Infanta, were friendly to Columbus. He remained about the Court and continued his solicitations.

Columbus received appropriations from the royal treasury, was entertained by Quintanilla and other eminent persons, and was not in such dire want and misery as often described. His condition was not so mean but that he could successfully prosecute a suit in another court. Rejected by the Court of Spain, Columbus was yet a victor in the Court of Love. While waiting at Cordova, he won the favor of Beatrix Enriquez, a noble lady in reduced circumstances. She was the mother of his second son, Fernando, born in 1488, whom he always considered equally with his legitimate son, Diego; and who, after the death of Columbus, became his biographer.

In 1486 Bartolomeu Dias reached Cape Bona Speranza, which opened up the probability of reaching India by sailing to the east. This epoch in navigation not only stimulated the endeavors of Columbus to reach India by the west, but inclined the Spanish Court, jealous of the many discoveries made by Portugal, to listen more favorably to Columbus, and finally to accede to his high-flown demands.

Bartolomé Colón, who was with Dias when he found the Cape of Good Hope, returned with him to Portugal, in December, 1487. Late the next year Columbus availed himself of the invitation of King John to return to his kingdom, and went to consult with his brother at Lisbon. It was probably at this time that Bartholomew was dispatched to England to enlist the support of Henry VII.

In 1489 Columbus is back in Spain prosecuting his appeal to their Highnesses. He entered actively in the war against the Moors, and was present at the siege of Beza, where, says Zuñiga, he "took a glorious part, giving proof of the great valor which accompanied his wisdom and profound conceptions."

Almost discouraged, Columbus sought aid from the powerful dukes, Medina-Sidonia, and Medina-Celi. The latter was

HIS DREAM

friendly to Columbus, took care of him at his castle, and brought the matter again before Isabella.

In 1490 the *junta* of wise men reported finally that the proposition of Columbus was simply impossible.

In 1491, completely disheartened, Columbus decides to leave Spain and peddle his notions at some other court. He goes to Huelva, gets Diego, and they set out on foot for the little neighboring seaport of Palos. When they arrive at the Franciscan Monastery of Santa Maria de la Rábida, standing then, as now, on the hill by the shore, a couple of miles from Palos, Columbus asks the brother porter for a little bread and water for the tired boy Diego. Former writers give this touching incident as taking place on the entry of Columbus into Spain, five or six years anterior to this time.

Juan Perez de Marchena, the worthy prior of the covenant, happened to notice Columbus, and, observing that he was no ordinary wayfarer, entered into conversation with him. Surely some good angel must have led Columbus to La Rábida, for he had at last found someone who would listen to him, and he told the good father of all his hopes, his weary waitings, and his disappointments. Juan Perez was a learned man, and from the observatory on the roof of his convent had studied the heavenly bodies, and looked out over the western sea and conceived of other lands and people across the wide waters.

Columbus is invited to remain at the monastery; and that very night Padre Juan sends for Dr. Fernandez Garcia, the village doctor, and other friends in Palos, among them Martin Alonzo Pinzon, the leading navigator and ship-owner of the place. This was the most appreciative and sympathetic audience Columbus ever had; and you can imagine the force and earnestness with which he argued his case. To the learned and erudite ecclesiastics of the cloister the plan of Columbus was visionary and impossible; but to these men, familiar with the sea and recent discoveries, it appeared both reasonable and probable.

As a result of this meeting Juan Perez, formerly confessor to the Queen, successfully interceded with Isabella that Columbus be given another hearing, stating, no doubt, the judgment of the sailor folk of Palos. With funds furnished by the Queen, said to have been 1180 dollars, Columbus buys himself a mule and a new suit of clothes, and starts back to Court. He found their Highnesses at the new city of Santa Fé, built before Granada, the last stronghold of the Moslems in Spain. January 2, 1492, *Boabdil el Chico*, the Moorish King, yielded

COLUMBUS AND

up the keys of the Alhambra; and the power of the Moors in Spain, enduring for 778 years, fell, never to rise again.

The termination of the long-continued wars with the Moors gave the King and Queen time to examine into the plan of Columbus; and they were about to grant his request, when the matter was again dropped on account of the preposterous rewards demanded by Columbus. He required that he be given the rank and title of Admiral; to be Governor and Viceroy over the regions discovered; to receive a tenth of the revenue thereof; and to enjoy the privileges of the aristocracy; all to be hereditary in his family.

Fernando de Talavera, now elevated to the new Archbishopric of Granada, takes advantage of these exorbitant demands by a beggarly foreigner, and ridicules his case out of Court. In February, 1492, Columbus mounts his mule, again turns his back on the Spanish Court, and sets out across the Vega, or plain of Granada, intending to go to Cordova or La Rábida, and then apply to the Court of France.

In the meantime, his friends, Alonzo de Quintanilla, the Marchioness de Moya, and particularly Luis de Santangel, Treasurer of Arragon, have so worked upon Isabella that she exclaims: "I undertake the enterprise for my own Crown of Castile, and will pledge my jewels to raise the necessary funds." Whether Isabella ever uttered this pretty phrase, and really proffered her jewels, is a mooted question with the historians, as it is claimed they were pledged already for the expenses of the late war. We do know, however, that Isabella was always friendly to Columbus, while Ferdinand was either lukewarm, calculating, or positively opposed to him.

As a matter of fact, funds and equipment for the first voyage of Columbus were furnished by the treasury of Arragon, the town of Palos, and the Pinzon brothers. The money from Arragon, amounting to 17,000 florins, was charged to the Kingdom of Castile, and was repaid out of the first gold brought from the New World, Ferdinand using it to gild the royal saloon at Saragossa.

A royal messenger overtook Columbus, when but two leagues on his journey, at the old stone "Bridge of Pines" (Piños Puente), still spanning a small stream in the Vega. When informed of the resolve of Isabella, he returns, somewhat reluctantly, to the city.

Columbus is given the title of Don; and on April 17, 1492, at Santa Fé, Ferdinand and Isabella signed articles granting all his conditions. Columbus also receives a credential letter,

HIS DREAM

signed in blank, accrediting him to the Court of the Grand Khan, Prester John, or any other potentate he may encounter. The letter is such a delicious bit of diplomatic affectation that I quote it entire:

"Ferdinand and Isabella to King"

"The Spanish Sovereigns have heard that You and Your subjects have great affection for Them and for Spain. They are further aware that You and Your subjects are very desirous to hear news from Spain. They accordingly send their Admiral, Ch. Columbus, who will tell You that they are in good health and perfect prosperity.

"GRANADA, April 30th, 1492."

The port of Palos was selected as a place to fit out the expedition, not for the reason that it was the abode of friends of Columbus, but because that town was under sentence to furnish the Crown on demand the service of two armed caravels, for the space of twelve months. On May 23, 1492, the royal command was read from the Church of St. George in Palos; but neither vessels nor mariners appeared. Sailors were afraid to make the venture; and many had to be pressed into service, and criminals taken from the jails.

After considerable delay and difficulty, Columbus was able to assemble three vessels, and 120 men, for the voyage. Martin Alonzo Pinzon and Vicente Yañez Pinzon, both well-to-do sea captains, saved the day by volunteering for the expedition and furnishing one of the vessels, the *Niña*. Probably it was this contribution by the Pinzon brothers which constituted the eighth of the expenses supplied by Columbus, and enabled him to receive an eighth of the revenue, instead of one-tenth, as first agreed. The *Pinta* was seized from her owners, Rascon and Quintero, who went with the party. Palos provided the *Gallego*, which Columbus made his flagship and placed under the special protection of the Mother of God, and so renamed the *Santa Maria*. She was the largest of the three, and the only one completely decked. The *Pinta* and *Niña* were open caravels, being undecked in the waist, but having a cabin in the stern and forecastle in the bows.

Before sailing, Columbus confessed himself to his good friend Fray Perez, and partook of the Holy Communion: an example which was followed by his officers and men in the presence of the awed and mourning town-people.

Young Diego was taken from La Rábida and placed in charge of friends in Moguer, a few miles away, to be prepared to act

COLUMBUS AND

as page to the Infante, Prince Juan, to which office Isabella had graciously appointed him.

Columbus then goes aboard his little fleet, and prepares to sail into the Sea of Darkness.

Letter of Dr. Paulo Toscanelli to Christopher Columbus:

"To Christopher Columbus, Paul the Physician wisheth health.

I perceive your noble and earnest desire to sail to those parts where the spice is produced; and therefore, in answer to a letter of yours, I send you another letter, which some days since I wrote to a friend of mine, and servant to the King of Portugal, before the wars of Castile, in answer to another he writ to me by his Highnesses order, upon this same account, and I send you another sea chart like that I sent him, which will satisfy your demands. The copy of that letter is this:

"To Fernam Martins, Canon of Lisbon, Paul the Physician wishes health.

I am very glad to hear of the familiarity you have with your most serene and magnificent King, and though I have very often discoursed concerning the short way there is from hence to the Indies, where the spice is produced, by sea, which I look upon to be shorter than you take by the coast of Guinea, yet you now tell me that his Highness would have me make out and demonstrate it so as it may be understood and put in practice. Therefore, tho' I could better show it him with a globe in my hand, and make him sensible of the figure of the world, yet I have resolved to render it more easy and intelligible to show this way upon a chart, such as are used in navigation, and therefore I send one to his Majesty, made and drawn with my own hand, wherein is set down the utmost bounds of the west from Iceland, in the north, to the furthest part of Guinea, with all the islands that lie in the way; opposite to which western coast is described the beginning of the Indies, with the islands and places whither you may go, and how far you may bend from the north pole towards the equinoctial and for how long a time; that is, how many leagues you may sail before you come to those places most fruitful in all sorts of spice, jewels, and precious stones. Do not wonder if I term that country where the spice grows *west*, that product being generally ascribed to the *east*, because those who shall sail westward will always find those places in the west, and they that travel by land eastwards will ever find those places in the east. The straight lines that lie lengthways in the chart show the distance there is from west to east, the other cross them show the distance from north to south. I have also marked down in the said chart several places in India where ships might put in upon any storm or contrary winds or any other accident unforeseen. And, moreover, to give you full information of all those places which you are very desirous to know, you must understand that none but traders live or reside in all those islands, and that there is there as great a number of ships and seafaring people with merchandise as in any other part of the world, particularly in a most noble part called Zacton, where there are every year an hundred large ships of pepper loaded and unloaded, besides many other ships that take in other spice. This country is mighty populous, and there are many provinces and kingdoms and innumerable cities under the dominion of a prince called the Great Cham, which name signifies king of kings, who for the most part resides in the province of Cathay. His predecessors were very desirous to

HIS DREAM

have commerce and be in amity with Christians, and 200 years since sent ambassadors to the Pope desiring him to send them many learned men and doctors to teach them our faith; but by reason of some obstacles the ambassadors met with they returned back without coming to Rome. Besides, there came an ambassador to Pope Engenius IV, who told him the great friendship there was between those princes, their people, and Christians. I discoursed with him a long while upon the several matters of the grandeur of their royal structures and of the greatness, length, and breadth of their rivers, and he told me many wonderful things of the multitude of towns and cities founded along the banks of the rivers, and that there were 200 cities upon one only river with marble bridges over it of a great length and breadth, and adorned with abundance of pillars. This country deserves, as well as any other, to be discovered; and there may not only be great profit made there, and many things of value found, but also gold, silver, all sorts of precious stones, and spices in abundance, which are not brought into our ports. And it is certain that many wise men, philosophers, astrologers, and other persons skilled in all arts and very ingenious, govern that mighty province and command their armies. From Lisbon, directly westward, there are in the chart 26 spaces, each of which contains 250 miles, to the most noble and vast city of Quisay, which is 100 miles in compass—that is, 35 leagues; in it there are 10 marble bridges. The name signifies a heavenly city, of which wonderful things are reported, as to the ingenuity of the people, the buildings, and revenues. This space above mentioned is almost a third part of the globe. This city is in the province of Mango, bordering on that of Cathay, where the King for the most part resides. From the Island Antilia, which you call the Seven Cities, and whereof you have some knowledge, to the most noble island of Cipango, are 10 spaces, which make 2,500 miles, or 225 leagues, which island abounds in gold, pearls, and precious stones; and you must understand they cover their temples and palaces with plates of pure gold. So that, for want of knowing the way, all these things are hidden and concealed, and yet may be gone to with safety. Much more might be said, but having told you what is most material, and you being wise and judicious, I am satisfied there is nothing of it but what you understand, and therefore I will not be more prolix. Thus much may serve to satisfy your curiosity, it being as much as the shortness of time and my business would permit me to say. So I remain most ready to satisfy and serve his Highness to the utmost in all the commands he shall lay upon me.

Done at Florence, June 25th, 1474."

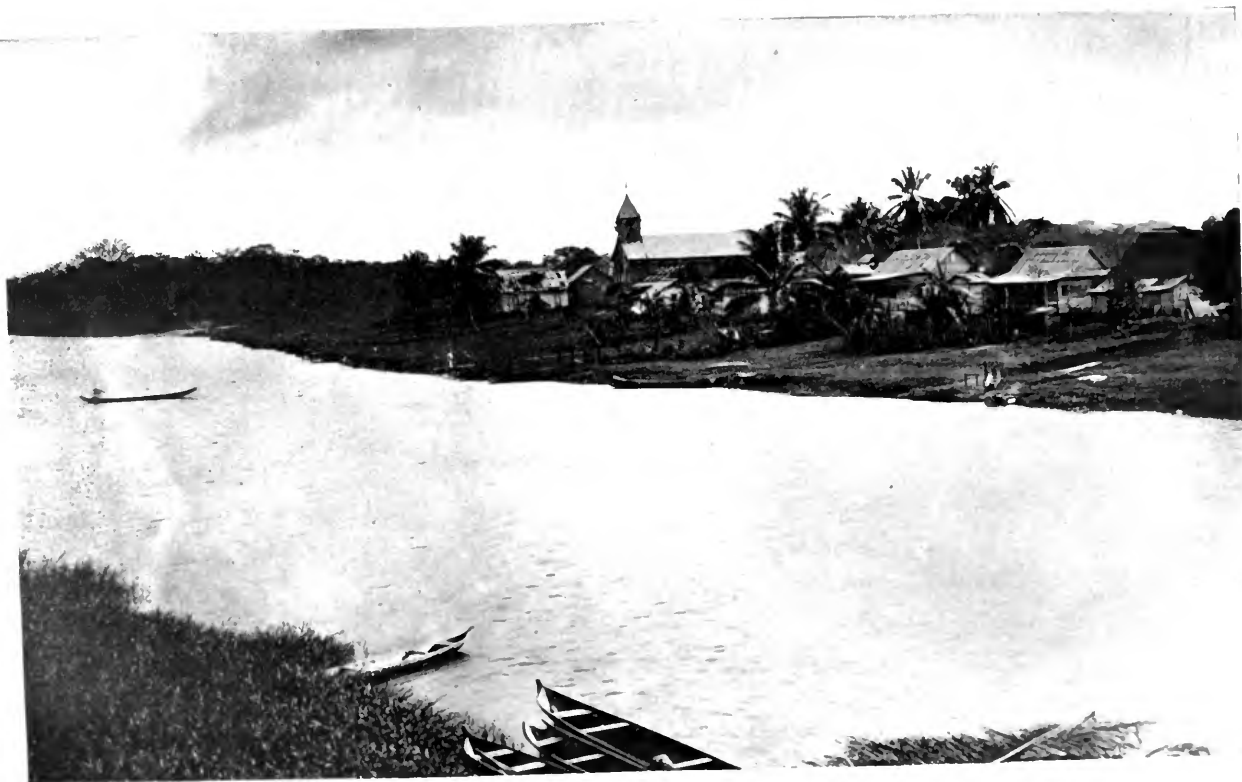


Photo by Isthmian Canal Commission.

GATUN ON THE CHAGRES. IN 1907.

This site now is occupied by the Gatun Dam, the populace having been removed to New Gatun, on the relocated Panama Railroad.

