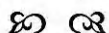


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### Letter of Columbus on the Fourth Voyage

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Letter of Columbus  
on the Fourth Voyage

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## INTRODUCTION

THE letter on Columbus's last voyage when he explored the coast of Central America and of the Isthmus of Panama was written when he was shipwrecked on the island of Jamaica, 1503. It is his last important writing and one of great significance in understanding his geographical conceptions.

The Spanish text of this letter is not older than the sixteenth century and perhaps not older than the seventeenth. The Spanish text was first published by Navarrete in his *Coleccion de los Viages y Descubrimientos*, 1825. An Italian translation, however, was published in 1505 and is commonly known as the *Lettera Rarissima*. Mr. John Boyd Thacher has reproduced this early Italian translation in facsimile in his *Christopher Columbus*, accompanied by a translation into English. Cesare de Lollis prepared a critical edition of the Spanish text for the *Raccolta Colombiana*, which was carefully collated with and in some instances corrected by this contemporary translation. Most of his changes in punctuation and textual emendations have been adopted in the present edition, and attention is called to them in the notes.

The translation is that of R. H. Major as published in the revised edition of his *Select Letters of Columbus*. It has been carefully revised by the present editor, and some important changes have been made. As hitherto published in English a good many passages in this letter have been so confused and obscure and some so absolutely unintelligible, that the late Justin Winsor characterized this last of the important writings of Columbus as "a sorrowful index of his wander-

ing reason.”<sup>1</sup> Almost every one of these passages has yielded up the secret of its meaning either through a more exact translation or in the light of the textual emendations suggested by de Lollis or proposed by the present editor. Among such revisions and textual emendations attention may be called to those discussed on pp. 392, 396, 397. As here published this letter of Columbus is as coherent and intelligible as his other writings.

The editor wishes here to acknowledge his obligations to Professor Henry R. Lang of Yale University, whom he has consulted in regard to perplexing passages or possible emendations, and from whom he has received valuable assistance.

The other important accounts of this voyage, or of the part of it covered by this letter, are the brief report by Diego de Porras, of which a translation is given in Thacher's *Columbus*, and those by Ferdinand Columbus in the *Historie* and Peter Martyr in his *De Rebus Oceanicis*. On this voyage Las Casas's source was the account of Ferdinand Columbus. Lollis presents some striking evidence to show that the accounts of Ferdinand Columbus and Peter Martyr were based upon the same original, a lost narrative of the Admiral. It will be remembered, however, that Ferdinand accompanied his father on this voyage, and although only a boy of thirteen his narrative contains several passages of vivid personal recollection. The editor has carefully compared Ferdinand's narrative with the account in this letter and noted the important differences.

E. G. B.

<sup>1</sup> *Christopher Columbus*, p 459; cf. also the passages quoted on p. 460.

## THE FOURTH VOYAGE OF COLUMBUS

*A Letter written by Don Christóbal Colon, Viceroy and Admiral of the Indies, to the most Christian and mighty King and Queen of Spain, our Sovereigns, in which are described the events of his voyage, and the countries, provinces, cities, rivers and other marvellous matters therein discovered, as well as the places where gold and other substances of great richness and value are to be found*

*Most Serene, and very high and mighty Princes, the King and Queen our Sovereigns: —*

MY passage from Cadiz to the Canary occupied four days, and thence to the Indies sixteen days. From which I wrote, that my intention was to expedite my voyage as much as possible while I had good vessels, good crews and stores, and that Jamaica was the place to which I was bound. I wrote this in Dominica:<sup>1</sup> —

Up to the period of my reaching these shores I experienced most excellent weather, but the night of my arrival came on with a dreadful tempest, and the same bad weather has continued ever since. On reaching the island of Española<sup>2</sup> I despatched a packet of letters, by which I begged as a favor that a ship should be supplied me at my own cost in lieu of one of those that I had brought with me, which had become unseaworthy, and could no longer carry sail. The letters were taken, and your Highnesses will know if a reply has been given to them. For my part I was forbidden to go on

<sup>1</sup> The punctuation of this first paragraph has been changed in the light of the contemporary Italian translation known as the *Lettera Rarissima*, which is given in facsimile and English translation in Thacher's *Christopher Columbus*, II. 671 *et seqq.*

<sup>2</sup> June 29. Las Casas, III. 29.

shore;<sup>1</sup> the hearts of my people failed them lest I should take them further, and they said that if any danger were to befall them, they should receive no succor, but, on the contrary, in all probability have some great affront offered them. Moreover every man had it in his power to tell me that the new Governor would have the superintendence of the countries that I might acquire.<sup>2</sup>

The tempest was terrible throughout the night, all the ships were separated, and each one driven to the last extremity, without hope of anything but death; each of them also looked upon the loss of the rest as a matter of certainty. What man was ever born, not even excepting Job, who would not have been ready to die of despair at finding himself as I then was, in anxious fear for my own safety, and that of my son, my brother<sup>3</sup> and my friends, and yet refused permission either to land or to put into harbor on the shores which by God's mercy I had gained for Spain sweating blood?

But to return to the ships: although the tempest had so completely separated them from me as to leave me single, yet the Lord restored them to me in His own good time. The ship which we had the greatest fear for, had put out to sea to escape [being blown] toward the island. The *Gallega*<sup>4</sup> lost her boat and a great part of her provisions, which latter loss indeed all the ships suffered. The vessel in which I was, though dreadfully buffeted, was saved by our Lord's mercy from any injury whatever; my brother went in the ship that was unsound, and he under God was the cause of its being saved.

<sup>1</sup> By the letter of the King and Queen, March 14, 1502, Columbus had been forbidden to call at Española on the outward voyage. Las Casas, *Historia de las Indias*, III. 26.

<sup>2</sup> The new governor, Ovando, who had been sent out to supersede Bobadilla, had reached Santo Domingo in April of this year, 1502.

<sup>3</sup> Columbus was accompanied by his younger son Ferdinand and his elder brother Bartholomew. Las Casas, III. 25.

<sup>4</sup> The translation here follows Lollis's emendation of the text which changed the printed text, "*habia, echado á la mar, por escapar, fasta la isola la Gallega; perdio la barca,*" etc., to "*habia echado á la mar, por escapar fasta la isla; la Gallega perdio la barca.*" One of the ships was named *La Gallega*, and there is no island of that name in that region.

With this tempest I struggled on till I reached Jamaica, and there the sea became calm, but there was a strong current which carried me as far as the Queen's Garden <sup>1</sup> without seeing land. Hence as opportunity afforded I pushed on for the mainland, in spite of the wind and a fearful contrary current, against which I contended for sixty days, and after all only made seventy leagues. All this time I was unable to get into harbor, nor was there any cessation of the tempest, which was one continuation of rain, thunder and lightning; indeed it seemed as if it were the end of the world. I at length reached the Cape of Gracias á Dios, and after that the Lord granted me fair wind and tide; this was on the twelfth of September.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Columbus set forth from the harbor of Santo Domingo in the storm, Friday, July 1. The ships found refuge in the harbor of Azua on the following Sunday, July 3. (Ferdinand Columbus in the *Historie*, ed. 1867, pp. 286-287.) Azua is about 50 miles west of Santo Domingo in a straight line, but much farther by water. After a rest and repairs the Admiral sailed to Yaquimo, the present Jacmel in the territory of Hayti, into which port he went to escape another storm. He left Yaquimo, July 14. (Las Casas, III. 108; Ferdinand Columbus, *Historie*, p. 289.) He then passed south of Jamaica, and was carried by the currents northwest till he reached the Queen's Garden, a group of many small islands south of Cuba and east of the Isle of Pines, so named by him in 1494 on his exploration of the coast of Cuba.

<sup>2</sup> From the Queen's Garden he sailed south July 27 (the Porras narrative of this voyage, Navarrete, II. 283; in English in Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 640 *et seqq.*), and after a passage of ninety leagues sighted an island Saturday, July 30. (Porras in Thacher, II. 643.) This was the island of Guanaja about twelve leagues north of Trujillo, Honduras. (Las Casas, III. 109.) Here a landing was made and a canoe was encountered which was covered with an awning and contained Indians well clothed and a load of merchandise. Notwithstanding these indications of a more advanced culture than had hitherto been found, the Admiral decided not to explore the country of these Indians, which would have led him into Yucatan and possibly Mexico, but to search for the strait which he supposed separated Asia from the continental mass he had discovered on his third voyage (Paria, South America). He struck the mainland near Trujillo, naming the point Caxinas. At or near this place they landed Sunday, August 14, to say mass. (Las Casas, III. 112; Ferdinand Columbus, *Historie*, p. 295.) From this point he coasted very slowly, sailing in sight of land by day and anchoring at night, distressed by storms and headwinds, some days losing as much ground as could be gained in two, till September 12, when he reached Cape Gracias á Dios. (Las Casas, III. 113; *Historie*, p. 297; Porras narrative in Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 644.) It will be seen from this collation of the sources that the statements in our text are far from exact, that they are in fact a very

Eighty-eight days did this fearful tempest continue, during which I was at sea, and saw neither sun nor stars; my ships lay exposed, with sails torn, and anchors, rigging, cables, boats and a great quantity of provisions lost; my people were very weak and humbled in spirit, many of them promising to lead a religious life, and all making vows and promising to perform pilgrimages, while some of them would frequently go to their messmates to make confession.<sup>1</sup> Other tempests have been experienced, but never of so long a duration or so fearful as this: many whom we looked upon as brave men, on several occasions showed considerable trepidation; but the distress of my son who was with me grieved me to the soul, and the more when I considered his tender age, for he was but thirteen years old, and he enduring so much toil for so long a time. Our Lord, however, gave him strength even to enable him to encourage the rest, and he worked as if he had been eighty years at sea, and all this was a consolation to me. I myself had fallen sick, and was many times at the point of death, but from a little cabin that I had caused to be

general and greatly exaggerated recollection of a most trying experience. It will be remembered that Ferdinand was on this voyage, but his narrative says nothing of any storm between July 14 when he left the Queen's Gardens and the arrival at Guanaja, a passage which Porras says took three days. This passage, however, Las Casas describes apparently on the basis of this letter as having taken sixty days (*Historia*, III. 108). Next the text of the *Historie* presents a difficulty, for it places the tedious stormy voyage of sixty leagues and seventy days between Caxinas (Trujillo) and Cape Gracias á Dios (*Historie*, p. 296), although in another place it gives the beginning of this coasting as after August 14 and the date of arrival at the Cape as September 12. This last chronological difficulty may perhaps be accounted for in this way: The original manuscript of the *Historie* may have had "XXX dias," which a copyist or the Italian translator may have taken for "LXX dias."

<sup>1</sup> A review of the chronology of the voyage in the preceding note will show that no such storm of eighty-eight days' duration could have occurred in the first part of this voyage. Columbus was only seventy-four days in going from Santo Domingo to Cabo Gracias á Dios. Either the text is wrong or his memory was at fault. The most probable conclusion is that in copying either LXXXVIII got substituted for XXVIII or *Ochenta y ocho* for *Veinte y ocho*. In that case we should have almost exactly the time spent in going from Trujillo to Cape Gracias á Dios, August 14 to September 12, and exact agreement between our text, the *Historie*, and the Porras narrative.



constructed on deck, I directed our course. My brother was in the ship that was in the worst condition and the most exposed to danger; and my grief on this account was the greater that I brought him with me against his will.

Such is my fate, that the twenty years of service<sup>1</sup> through which I have passed with so much toil and danger, have profited me nothing, and at this very day I do not possess a roof in Spain that I can call my own; if I wish to eat or sleep, I have nowhere to go but to the inn or tavern, and most times lack wherewith to pay the bill. Another anxiety wrung my very heartstrings, which was the thought of my son Diego, whom I had left an orphan in Spain, and dispossessed of my honor and property, although I had looked upon it as a certainty, that your Majesties, as just and grateful Princes, would restore it to him in all respects with increase.<sup>2</sup>

I reached the land of Cariay,<sup>3</sup> where I stopped to repair my vessels and take in provisions, as well as to afford relaxation to the men, who had become very weak. I myself (who, as I said before, had been several times at the point of death) gained information respecting the gold mines of which I was in search, in the province of Ciamba;<sup>4</sup> and two Indians conducted me to Carambaru,<sup>5</sup> where the people (who go naked)

<sup>1</sup> Twenty years, speaking approximately. This letter was written in 1503, and Columbus entered the service of Spain in 1485.

<sup>2</sup> Diego was the heir of his father's titles. He was appointed governor of the Indies in 1508, but a prolonged lawsuit was necessary to establish his claims to inherit his father's rights.

<sup>3</sup> Their course was down the Mosquito coast. Cariay was near the mouth of the San Juan River of Nicaragua. Las Casas gives the date of the arrival at Cariarí, as he gives the name, as September 17 (III. 114). The *Historie* gives the date as September 5 and the name as Cariai (p. 297).

<sup>4</sup> Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis* (ed. 1574), p. 239, says that Columbus called Ciamba the region which the inhabitants called Quiriquetana, a name which it would seem still survives in Chiriqui Lagoon just east of Almirante Bay. The name "Ciamba" appears on Martin Behaim's globe, 1492, as a province corresponding to Cochin-China. It is described in Marco Polo under the name "Chamba"; see Yule's *Marco Polo*, II. 248-252 (bk. III., ch. v.).

<sup>5</sup> Carambaru is the present Almirante Bay, about on the border between Costa Rica and Panama. Las Casas describes the bay as six leagues long and over three broad with many islands and coves. He gives the name

wear golden mirrors round their necks, which they will neither sell, give, nor part with for any consideration. They named to me many places on the sea-coast where there were both gold and mines. The last that they mentioned was Veragua,<sup>1</sup> which was five-and-twenty leagues distant from the place where we then were. I started with the intention of visiting all of them, but when I had reached the middle of my journey I learned that there were other mines at so short a distance that they might be reached in two days. I determined on sending to see them. It was on the eve of St. Simon and St. Jude,<sup>2</sup> which was the day fixed for our departure; but that night there arose so violent a storm, that we were forced to go wherever it drove us, and the Indian who was to conduct us to the mines was with us all the time. As I had found every thing true that had been told me in the different places which I had visited, I felt satisfied it would be the same with respect to Ciguare,<sup>3</sup> which according to their account, is nine days as Caravaró (III. 118). Ferdinand Columbus's account is practically identical.

<sup>1</sup> Veragua in this letter includes practically all of the present republic of Panama. The western quarter of it was granted to Luis Colon, the Admiral's grandson, in 1537, as a dukedom in partial compensation for his renouncing his hereditary rights. Hence the title Dukes of Veragua borne by the Admiral's descendants. The name still survives in geography in that of the little island Escudo de Veragua, which lies off the northern coast.

<sup>2</sup> The eve or vigil of St. Simon and St. Jude is October 27. According to the narrative in the *Historie*, on October 7, they went ashore at the channel of Cerabora (Carambaru). A few days later they went on to Aburema. October 17 they left Aburema and went twelve leagues to Guaigo, where they landed. Thence they went to Cateva (Catiba, Las Casas) and cast anchor in a large river (the Chagres). Thence easterly to Cobrava; thence to five towns, among which was Beragua (Veragua); the next day to Cubiga. The distance from Cerabora to Cubiga was fifty leagues. Without landing, the Admiral went on to Belporto (Puerto Bello), which he so named. ("Puerto Bello, which was a matter of six leagues from what we now call El Nombre de Dios." Las Casas, III. 121.) He arrived at Puerto Bello November 2, and remained there seven days on account of the rains and bad weather. (*Historie*, pp. 302-306.) Apparently Columbus put this period of bad weather a few days too early in his recollection of it.

<sup>3</sup> Ciguare. An outlying province of the Mayas lying on the Pacific side of southern Costa Rica. Peter Martyr, *De Rebus Oceanicis*, p. 240, says, "In this great tract (*i.e.*, where the Admiral was) are two districts, the near one called Taia, and the further one Maia."

journey across the country westward: they tell me there is a great quantity of gold there, and that the inhabitants wear coral ornaments on their heads, and very large coral bracelets and anklets, with which article also they adorn and inlay their seats, boxes, and tables. They also said that the women there wore necklaces hanging down to their shoulders. All the people agree in the report I now repeat, and their account is so favorable that I should be content with the tithe of the advantages that their description holds out. They are all likewise acquainted with the pepper-plant;<sup>1</sup> according to the account of these people, the inhabitants of Ciguare are accustomed to hold fairs and markets for carrying on their commerce, and they showed me also the mode and form in which they transact their various exchanges; others assert that their ships carry cannon, and that the men go clothed and use bows and arrows, swords and cuirasses, and that on shore they have horses which they use in battle, and that they wear rich clothes and have good things.<sup>2</sup> They also say that the sea surrounds Ciguare, and that at ten days' journey from thence is the river Ganges; these lands appear to hold the same relation to Veragua, as Tortosa to Fontarabia, or Pisa to Venice.<sup>3</sup> When I left Carambaru and reached the places in its neighborhood, which I have mentioned above as being spoken of by the Indians, I found the customs of the people correspond with the accounts that had been given of them, except as regarded the golden mirrors: any man who had one of them would willingly part with it for three hawks'-bells,<sup>4</sup> although they were equivalent in weight to ten or fifteen ducats. These people resemble the natives of Española in all their habits.

<sup>1</sup> See p. 311, note 5.

<sup>2</sup> Probably *casas*, houses, should be the reading here. In the corresponding passage of the contemporary Italian version the word is "houses." This information, mixed as it is with Columbus's misinterpretations of the Indian signs and distorted by his preconceptions, was first made public in the Italian translation of this letter in 1505 and then gave Europe its first intimations of the culture of the Mayas.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.*, in being on either side of a peninsula, Tortosa and Fontarabia being on opposite sides of the narrowest part of the Spanish peninsula.

<sup>4</sup> See p. 300, note 1.

They have various modes of collecting the gold, none of which will bear comparison with the plans adopted by the Christians.

All that I have here stated is from hearsay. This, however, I know, that in the year ninety-four I sailed twenty-four degrees to the westward in nine hours,<sup>1</sup> and there can be no mistake upon the subject, because there was an eclipse; the sun was in Libra and the moon in Aries.<sup>2</sup> What I had learned by the mouth of these people I already knew in detail from books. Ptolemy thought that he had satisfactorily corrected<sup>3</sup> Marinus, and yet this latter appears to have come very near to the truth. Ptolemy placed Catigara<sup>4</sup> at a distance of twelve lines to the west of his meridian, which he fixes at two degrees and a third beyond Cape St. Vincent, in Portugal. Marinus comprised the earth and its limits in fifteen lines.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Spanish reads, "Lo que yo sé es que el año de noventa y cuatro en veinte y cuatros grados al Poniente en termino de nueve horas." The translation in the text and that in Thacher (II. 687) of the Italian makes nonsense. The translation should be "what I know is that in the year '94 (1494) I sailed westward on the 24th parallel (lit. on 24 degrees) a total of nine hours (lit. to a limit of nine hours)." That is, he reckoned that he had gone  $\frac{9}{24}$  round the world on the 24th parallel, and he knew it because there was an eclipse by which he found out the difference in time between Europe and where he was. The "termino" of nine hours refers to the western limit of his exploration of the southern coast of Cuba when he concluded it was a projection of the mainland of Asia. After reaching the conclusion that this is the correct interpretation of this passage, I discovered that it had been given by Humboldt in his *Kritische Untersuchungen über die historische Entwicklung der geographischen Kenntnisse von der Neuen Welt*, I. 553, and by Peschel in his *Zeitalter der Entdeckungen*, p. 97, note 2. It may be objected to this explanation that in reality Columbus had only gone about 75 degrees west of Cape St. Vincent in Portugal. The accurate calculation of longitude at that time, however, was impossible, and as will be seen in the following note Columbus's calculation was biased by powerful preconceptions.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Libro de Profecias* Columbus recorded the data of this eclipse which took place February 29, 1494, from which he drew the conclusion, "The difference between the middle of the island Jamaica in the Indies and the island of Cadiz in Spain is seven hours and fifteen minutes." Navarrete, *Viages*, II. 272.

<sup>3</sup> Reading *remendiado* or *remendado* instead of *remedado*.

<sup>4</sup> Catigara was in China on the east side of the Gulf of Tonquin.

<sup>5</sup> Marinus of Tyre divided the earth into 24 meridians, 15 degrees or one hour apart. His first meridian passed the Fortunate Isles, which he supposed to be  $2\frac{1}{2}$  degrees west of Cape St. Vincent, and his fifteenth through

Marinus on Ethiopia gives a description covering more than twenty-four degrees beyond the equinoctial line, and now that the Portuguese have sailed there they find it correct.<sup>1</sup> Ptolemy says also that the most southern land is the first boundary, and that it does not go lower down than fifteen degrees and a third.<sup>2</sup> The world is but small; out of seven divisions of it

Catigara, southeastern China. The inhabited world embraced fifteen of these lines, 225 degrees, and the unknown portion east of India and west of Spain, nine lines, or hours, or 135 degrees. Cf. Vignaud, *Toscanelli and Columbus*, p. 74; Bunbury, *History of Ancient Geography*, II. 519 *et seqq.* Columbus, therefore, according to his calculations, had in 1494 completely covered this unknown section and reached India (or China), and so had demonstrated the correctness of Marinus's views. In reality his strong preconceptions as to where he was distorted his calculations of the longitude. Ptolemy corrected Marinus's estimate of 225 degrees from Cape St. Vincent to Sera in China, and, as noted in Columbus's letter, placed Catigara in China (on the east side of the Gulf of Tonquin) at twelve lines or 180 degrees west of his meridian ( $2\frac{1}{2}$  degrees west of Cape St. Vincent). If Ptolemy was right, Columbus had not reached India (or more exactly China) or come, on his own calculation, within 45 degrees or 2700 geographical miles of it measured on the equator. The outline reproduction of the map of Bartholomew Columbus made after his return from this voyage given in Channing's *Student's History of the United States*, p. 27 (photographic reproduction in Bourne, *Spain in America*, p. 96) illustrates the Admiral's ideas and conclusions. This region (*i.e.*, Costa Rica and Panama) is a southern extension of Cochin-China and Cambodia and is connected with *Mondo Novo*, *i.e.*, South America.

<sup>1</sup> The translation here adopts the emended text of Lollis, substituting "ali[e]nde" for "al Indo" in the sentence "Marino en Ethiopía escribe al Indo la línea equinoçial." *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte I., tomo II., p. 184. The translation of the unamended text as printed by Major was "the same author describes the Indus in Ethiopia as being more than four and twenty degrees from the equinoctial line." Apparently the 24 should be 44. With these changes the statements in the text agree with Columbus's marginalia to the *Imago Mundi*, where he notes that the Cape of Good Hope is Agesinba and that Bartholomew Diaz found it to be 45 degrees south of the equator. "This," he goes on, "agrees with the dictum of Marinus, whom Ptolemy corrects, in regard to the expedition to the Garamantes, who said it traversed 27,500 stadia beyond the equinoctial." *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte II., tomo II., p. 377. On Marinus's exaggerated estimate of the distance covered by the Romans in tropical Africa, see Bunbury, *History of Ancient Geography*, II. 524.

<sup>2</sup> This is unintelligible. The Spanish is, "Tolomeo diz que la tierra mas austral es el plazo primero." The meaning of *plazo* is not "boundary" but "term" (allotted time). The reading should be: "la tierra mas austral es el praso promontorio," and the translation should be, "Ptolemy says that the most southern land is the promontory of Prasum," etc. Prasum promon-

the dry part occupies six, and the seventh is entirely covered by water.<sup>1</sup> Experience has shown it, and I have written it with quotations from the Holy Scripture, in other letters, where I have treated of the situation of the terrestrial paradise, as approved by the Holy Church;<sup>2</sup> and I say that the world is not so large as vulgar opinion makes it, and that one degree of the equinoctial line measures fifty-six miles and two-thirds; and this may be proved to a nicety.<sup>3</sup>

But I leave this subject, which it is not my intention now to treat upon, but simply to give a narrative of my laborious and painful voyage, although of all my voyages it is the most honorable and advantageous. I have said that on the eve of St. Simon and St. Jude I ran before the wind wherever it took me, without power to resist it; at length I found shelter for ten days from the roughness of the sea and the tempest overhead, and resolved not to attempt to go back to the mines, which I regarded as already in our possession.<sup>4</sup> When I started in pursuance of my voyage it was under a heavy rain, and reaching the harbor of Bastimentos I put in, though

torium was Ptolemy's southern limit of the world. He placed it at about 16 degrees south latitude. See Bunbury, *History of Ancient Geography*, II. 572, and Smith's *Dictionary of Greek and Roman Geography*, art. "Prasum Promontorium"; also Ptolemy's *Geography*, bk. iv., ch. ix., the descriptive matter relating to Map 4 on Africa.

<sup>1</sup> II. *Esdras*, vi. 42, see p. 358, note 1.

<sup>2</sup> See the Letter of Columbus on his Third Voyage. Major, *Select Letters of Columbus*, p. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Ptolemy reckoned the length of the degree on the equator at  $62\frac{1}{2}$  miles. The shorter measurement of  $56\frac{2}{3}$  was the estimate adopted by the Arab astronomer Alfragan in the ninth century and known to Columbus through Cardinal d'Ailly's *Imago Mundi*, the source of much if not most of his information on the geographical knowledge and opinions of former times. Cardinal d'Ailly's source of information about Alfragan was Roger Bacon's *Opus Majus*. Columbus was deeply impressed with Alfragan's estimate of the length of the degree and annotated the passages in the *Imago Mundi*. Cf. *Raccolta Colombiana*, Parte I., tomo II., pp. 378, 407, and frequently. See this whole question in Vignaud, *Toscanelli and Columbus*, p. 79 et seqq.

<sup>4</sup> In Puerto Bello. See p. 394, note 2. Porto Bello, to use the Anglicized form, became the great shipping port on the north side of the isthmus for the trade with Peru. Cf. Bourne, *Spain in America*, p. 292.



much against my will.<sup>1</sup> The storm and a rapid current kept me in for fourteen days, when I again set sail, but not with favorable weather. After I had made fifteen leagues with great exertions, the wind and the current drove me back<sup>2</sup> again with great fury, but in again making for the port which I had quitted, I found on the way another port, which I named Retrete, where I put in for shelter with as much risk as regret, the ships being in sad condition, and my crews and myself exceedingly fatigued.<sup>3</sup> I remained there fifteen days, kept in by stress of weather, and when I fancied my troubles were at an end, I found them only begun. It was then that I changed my resolution with respect to proceeding to the mines, and proposed doing something in the interim, until the weather should prove more favorable for my voyage.<sup>4</sup> I had already made four leagues when the storm recommenced, and wearied me to such a degree that I absolutely knew not what to do; my wound reopened, and for nine days my life was despaired of; never was the sea seen so high, so terrific, and so covered with foam; not only did the wind oppose our proceeding onward, but it also rendered it highly dangerous to run in for any headland, and kept me in that sea which seemed to me as a sea of blood, seething like a cauldron on a mighty fire. Never did the sky look more fearful; during one day and one night it burned like a furnace, and every instant I looked to see if my masts and my sails were not destroyed; these

<sup>1</sup> Columbus left Porto Bello November 9 and went eight leagues, but the next day he turned back four and took refuge at what is now Nombre de Dios. From the abundance of maize fields he named it Port of Provisions (Puerto de Bastimentos). *Historie*, p. 306.

<sup>2</sup> *Me reposó atrás el viento*, etc. For *reposó* the text apparently should be either *repuso*, "put back," or *rempujó*, "drove back," and the translation is based on this supposition.

<sup>3</sup> They remained at Bastimentos till November 23, when they went on to Guiga, but did not tarry but pushed on to a little harbor (November 26), which the Admiral called Retrete (Closet) because it was so small that it could hold only five or six vessels and the entrance was only fifteen or twenty paces wide. *Historie*, p. 306.

<sup>4</sup> That is, Columbus turns back to explore the mines on account of the violence of the east and northeast winds. This was December 5. *Historie*, p. 309.

flashes came with such alarming fury that we all thought the ships must have been consumed. All this time the waters from heaven never ceased, not to say that it rained, for it was like a repetition of the deluge. The men were at this time so crushed in spirit that they longed for death as a deliverance from so many martyrdoms. Twice already had the ships suffered loss in boats, anchors, and rigging, and were now lying bare without sails.

When it pleased our Lord, I returned to Puerto Gordo,<sup>1</sup> where I recruited my condition as well as I could. I then once more turned towards Veragua; for my voyage, although I was [ready] for it, the wind and current were still contrary.<sup>2</sup> I arrived at nearly the same spot as before, and there again the wind and currents still opposed my progress; and once again I was compelled to put into port, not daring to await the opposition of Saturn<sup>3</sup> with Mars so tossed on an exposed coast; for it almost always brings on a tempest or severe weather. This was on Christmas-day, about the hour of mass.

Thus, after all these fatigues, I had once more to return to the spot from whence I started; and when the new year had set in, I returned again to my task: but although I had fine weather for my voyage, the ships were no longer in a sailing condition, and my people were either dying or very sick. On the day of the Epiphany,<sup>4</sup> I reached Veragua in a state of ex-

<sup>1</sup> Not mentioned in the *Historie* by name. It was the place where they stayed from December 26 to January 3 to repair the ship *Gallega* as appears in the *Probanzas del Almirante*. Navarrete, *Viages*, III. 600. It was between Rio de los Lagartos and Puerto Bello. Lollis, *Raccolta Colombiana*, Parte I., tomo II., p. 187.

<sup>2</sup> Adopting de Lollis's text and punctuation.

<sup>3</sup> *La oposicion de Saturno con Marte tan desvaratado en costa brava*, adopting de Lollis's text following the suggestion of the contemporary Italian translation. According to the doctrines of astrology the influence of Saturn was malign. "When Saturn is in the first degree of Aries, and any other Planet in the first degree of Libra, they being now an hundred and eighty degrees each from other, are said to be in Opposition: A bad Aspect." William Lilly, *Christian Astrology* (London, 1647), p. 27.

<sup>4</sup> Epiphany, January 6. It will be remembered that Columbus had passed Veragua the previous October when working eastward. See p. 394,



haustion; there, by our Lord's goodness, I found a river and a safe harbor, although at the entrance there were only ten spans of water. I succeeded in making an entry, but with great difficulty; and on the following day the storm recommenced, and had I been still on the outside at that time, I should have been unable to enter on account of the reef. It rained without ceasing until the fourteenth of February, so that I could find no opportunity of penetrating into the interior, nor of recruiting my condition in any respect whatever; and on the twenty-fourth of January, when I considered myself in perfect safety, the river suddenly rose with great violence to a considerable height, breaking my cables and the breakfasts,<sup>1</sup> and nearly carrying away my ships altogether, which certainly appeared to me to be in greater danger than ever. Our Lord, however, brought a remedy as He has always done. I do not know if any one else ever suffered greater trials.

On the sixth of February, while it was still raining, I sent seventy men on shore to go into the interior, and at five leagues' distance they found several mines. The Indians who went with them conducted them to a very lofty mountain, and thence showing them the country all around, as far as the eye could reach, told them there was gold in every part, and that, towards the west, the mines extended twenty days' journey; they also recounted the names of the towns and villages where there was more or less of it. I afterwards learned that

note 2. He now found he could enter the river of Veragua, but found another near by called by the Indians Yebra, but which Columbus named Belem in memory of the coming of the three kings (the wise men of the East) to Bethlehem. (Las Casas, III. 128; Porras in Thacher, II. 645.) The name is still preserved attached to the river.

<sup>1</sup> *Proeses*. In nautical Spanish *prois* or *proiza* is a breakfast or headfast, that is a large cable for fastening a ship to a wharf or another ship. In Portuguese *proiz* is a stone or tree on shore to which the hawsers are fastened. Major interpreted it in this sense, translating the words *las amarras y proeses*, "the cables and the supports to which they were fastened." The interpretation given first seems to me the correct one, especially as Ferdinand says that the flood came so suddenly that they could not get the cables on land. *Historie*, p. 315.

the Quibian,<sup>1</sup> who had lent these Indians, had ordered them to show the distant mines, and which belonged to an enemy of his; but that in his own territory one man might, if he would, collect in ten days as much as a child could carry.<sup>2</sup> I bring with me some Indians, his servants, who are witnesses of this fact. The boats went up to the spot where the dwellings of these people are situated; and, after four hours, my brother returned with the guides, all of them bringing back gold which they had collected at that place. The gold must be abundant, and of good quality, for none of these men had ever seen mines before; very many of them had never seen pure gold, and most of them were seamen and lads. Having building materials in abundance, I established a settlement, and made many presents to the Quibian, which is the name they gave to the lord of the country. I plainly saw that harmony would not last long, for the natives are of a very rough disposition, and the Spaniards very encroaching; and, moreover, I had taken possession of land belonging to the Quibian. When he saw what we did, and found the traffic increasing, he resolved upon burning the houses, and putting us all to death; but his project did not succeed, for we took him prisoner, together with his wives, his children, and his servants. His captivity, it is true, lasted but a short time, for he eluded the custody of a trustworthy man, into whose charge he had been given, with a guard of men; and his sons escaped from a ship, in which they had been placed under the special charge of the master.

<sup>1</sup> *Quibian* is a title, as indicated a few lines further on, and not a proper name as Major, Irving, Markham, and others following Las Casas have taken it to be. The Spanish is uniformly "El Quibian." Peter Martyr says: "They call a kinglet (*regulus*) Cacicus, as we have said elsewhere, in other places Quebi, in some places also Tiba. A chief, in some places Sacchus, in others Jurá." *De Rebus Oceanicis*, p. 241.

<sup>2</sup> "*Una mozada de oro.*" *Mozada* is not given in any of the Spanish dictionaries I have consulted. The Academy dictionary gives *mojada* as a square measure, deriving it from the low Latin *modiata* from *modius*. Perhaps one should read *mojada* instead of *mozada* and give it a meaning similar to that of *modius* or about a peck. Major's translation follows the explanation of De Verneuil, who says: "*Mozada signifie la mesure que peut porter un jeune garçon.*"

In the month of January the mouth of the river was entirely closed up,<sup>1</sup> and in April the vessels were so eaten by the shipworm,<sup>2</sup> that they could scarcely be kept above water. At this time the river forced a channel for itself, by which I managed, with great difficulty, to extricate three of them after I had unloaded them. The boats were then sent back into the river for water and salt, but the sea became so high and furious, that it afforded them no chance of exit; upon which the Indians collected themselves together in great numbers, and made an attack upon the boats, and at length massacred the men.<sup>3</sup> My brother, and all the rest of our people, were in a ship which remained inside; I was alone, outside, upon that dangerous coast, suffering from a severe fever and worn with fatigue. All hope of escape was gone. I toiled up to the highest part of the ship, and, with a voice of fear crying, and very urgently, I called upon your Highnesses' war-captains in every direction for help, but there was no reply. At length, groaning with exhaustion, I fell asleep, and heard a compassionate voice address me thus: "O fool, and slow to believe and to serve thy God, the God of all! what did He do more for Moses, or for David his servant, than He has done for thee? From thine infancy He has kept thee under His constant and watchful care. When He saw thee arrived at an age which suited His designs respecting thee, He brought wonderful renown to thy name throughout

<sup>1</sup> The mouth of the river was closed by sand thrown up by the violent storms outside. *Historie*, p. 321.

<sup>2</sup> The teredo.

<sup>3</sup> During the weeks that he was shut in the River Belem Columbus had his brother explore the country. The prospects for a successful colony led him to build a small settlement and to plan to return to Spain for re-enforcements and supplies. The story is told in detail in the *Historie* and by Irving, *Columbus*, II. 425-450, and more briefly by Markham, *Columbus*, pp. 259-267. This was the first settlement projected on the American Continent. The hostility of the Indians culminating in this attack rendered the execution of the project impracticable. In the manuscript copy of Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias* Las Casas noted on the margin of the passage containing the account of this incident, "This was the first settlement that the Spaniards made on the mainland, although in a short time it came to naught." See Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 608.

all the land. He gave thee for thine own the Indies, which form so rich a portion of the world, and thou hast divided them as it pleased thee, for He gave thee power to do so. He gave thee also the keys of those barriers of the ocean sea which were closed with such mighty chains;<sup>1</sup> and thou wast obeyed through many lands, and gained an honorable fame throughout Christendom. What did he more for the people of Israel, when he brought them out of Egypt?<sup>2</sup> or for David, whom from a shepherd He made to be king in Judea? Turn to Him, and acknowledge thine error — His mercy is infinite. Thine old age shall not prevent thee from accomplishing any great undertaking. He holds under His sway many very great possessions. Abraham had exceeded a hundred years of age when he begat Isaac; nor was Sarah young. Thou criest out for uncertain help: answer, who has afflicted thee so much and so often, God or the world? The privileges promised by God, He never fails in bestowing; nor does He ever declare, after a service has been rendered Him, that such was not agreeable with His intention, or that He had regarded the matter in another light; nor does he inflict suffering, in order to give effect to the manifestation of His power. His word goes according to the letter; and He performs all his promises with interest. This is [his] custom. Thus I have told thee what thy Creator has done for thee, and what He does for all men. Just now He gave me a specimen of the reward of so many toils and dangers incurred by thee in the service of others.”<sup>2</sup>

I heard all this, as it were, in a trance; but I had no answer to give in definite words, and could but weep for my errors.

<sup>1</sup> De Lollis points out that these striking words are a paraphrase of the famous lines in Seneca's *Medea*, Chorus, Act II.:—

Venient annis saecula seris  
Quibus Oceanus vincula rerum  
Laxet, et ingens pateat tellus,  
Tethysque novos detegat orbes  
Nec sit terris ultima Thule.

Columbus copied these verses into his *Libro de las Projecias* and translated them. Navarrete, *Viages*, II. 272.

<sup>2</sup> Accepting de Lollis's emended text.

He who spoke to me, whoever it was, concluded by saying, — “Fear not, but trust; all these tribulations are recorded on marble, and not without cause.” I arose as soon as I could; and at the end of nine days there came fine weather, but not sufficiently so to allow of drawing the vessels out of the river. I collected the men who were on land, and, in fact, all of them that I could, because there were not enough to admit of one party remaining on shore while another stayed on board to work the vessels. I myself should have remained with my men to defend the settlement, had your Highnesses known of it; but the fear that ships might never reach the spot where we were, as well as the thought, that when provision is to be made for bringing help, everything will be provided,<sup>1</sup> made me decide upon leaving. I departed, in the name of the Holy Trinity, on Easter night,<sup>2</sup> with the ships rotten, worm-eaten and full of holes. One of them I left at Belen, with a supply of necessities; I did the same at Belpuerto. I then had only two left, and they in the same state as the others. I was without boats or provisions, and in this condition I had to cross seven thousand miles of sea; or, as an alternative, to die on the passage with my son, my brother, and so many of my people. Let those who are accustomed to finding fault and censuring ask, while they sit in security at home, “Why did you not do so and so under such circumstances?” I wish they now had this voyage to make. I verily believe that another journey of another kind awaits them, or our faith is nothing.

On the thirteenth of May I reached the province of Mago [Mango],<sup>3</sup> which borders on Cathay, and thence I started

<sup>1</sup> “Quando se aia de proveer de socorro, se proveera de todo.”

<sup>2</sup> April 16, 1503.

<sup>3</sup> Cuba. According to Ferdinand Columbus the course was as follows: The Admiral followed the coast of the isthmus eastward beyond El Retrete to a place he named Marmoro (near Punto de Mosquitos) somewhat west of the entrance to the Gulf of Darien; then May 1 in response to the urgency of the pilots he turned north. May 10 they sighted two little islands, Caymanos Chicos, and the 12th they reached the Queen’s Garden just south of Cuba (see p. 391, note 1). The next day they landed in Cuba and secured supplies. It is significant of the tenacity of Columbus’s conviction that

for the island of Española. I sailed two days with a good wind, after which it became contrary. The route that I followed called forth all my care to avoid the numerous islands, that I might not be stranded on the shoals that lie in their neighborhood. The sea was very tempestuous, and I was driven backward under bare poles. I anchored at an island, where I lost, at one stroke, three anchors; and, at midnight, when the weather was such that the world appeared to be coming to an end, the cables of the other ship broke, and it came down upon my vessel with such force that it was a wonder we were not dashed to pieces; the single anchor that remained to me was, next to the Lord, our only preservation. After six days, when the weather became calm, I resumed my journey, having already lost all my tackle; my ships were pierced by borers more than a honey-comb and the crew entirely paralyzed with fear and in despair. I reached the island a little beyond the point at which I first arrived at it, and there I turned in to recover myself after the storm;<sup>1</sup> but I afterwards put into a much safer port in the same island. After eight days I put to sea again, and reached Jamaica by the end of June;<sup>2</sup> but always beating against contrary winds, and with the ships in the worst possible condition. With three pumps, and the use of pots and kettles, we could scarcely clear the water that came into the ship, there being no remedy but this for the mischief done by the ship-worm. I steered in

Cuba was a part of the mainland of Asia that he here calls it Mago (*i.e.*, Mango). June 12, 1494, when he had explored the southern coast of Cuba, he reached this conviction and compelled his officers and crew to take oath that "it (*i.e.*, Cuba) is mainland and in particular the province of Mango." Navarrete, *Viages*, II. 144. (The affidavits are translated in Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 327.) Mangi (southern China) is described by Marco Polo at great length. In the second Toscanelli letter Quinsay is said to be "in the province of Mangi, *i.e.*, near the province of Cathay." It is noted several times in Columbus's marginalia to Marco Polo.

<sup>1</sup> *Allí me torné á reposar atrás la fortuna.* De Lollis, following the Italian translation, reads: *Allí me tornó á reposar atrás la fortuna*, etc. "There the storm returned to drive me back; I stopped in the same island in a safer port." As this gives an unknown meaning to *reposar*, he suggests that Columbus may have written *repujar*, "to drive."

<sup>2</sup> June 23. *Historie*, p. 334.



such a manner as to come as near as possible to Española, from which we were twenty-eight leagues distant, but I afterwards wished I had not done so, for the other ship which was half under water was obliged to run in for a port. I determined on keeping the sea in spite of the weather, and my vessel was on the very point of sinking when our Lord miraculously brought us upon land. Who will believe what I now write? I assert that in this letter I have not related one hundredth part of the wonderful events that occurred in this voyage; those who were with the Admiral can bear witness to it. If your Highnesses would be graciously pleased to send to my help a ship of above sixty-four tons, with two hundred quintals of biscuits and other provisions, there would then be sufficient to carry me and my crew from Española to Spain. I have already said that there are not twenty-eight leagues between Jamaica and Española; and I should not have gone there, even if the ships had been in a fit condition for so doing, because your Highnesses ordered me not to land there. God knows if this command has proved of any service. I send this letter by means of and by the hands of Indians; it will be a miracle if it reaches its destination.

This is the account I have to give of my voyage. The men who accompanied me were a hundred and fifty in number, among whom were many calculated for pilots and good sailors, but none of them can explain whither I went nor whence I came;<sup>1</sup> the reason is very simple: I started from a point above the port of Brazil<sup>2</sup> in Española. The storm prevented me from following my intended route, for I was obliged to go wherever the wind drove me; at the same time I fell very sick, and there was no one who had navigated in these parts

<sup>1</sup> On the contrary the narrative of Diego de Porras, which he prepared after his return to Spain in November, 1504, is a much clearer account of the voyage in most respects than this letter of Columbus's. For it, see Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 640-646. Porras relates that during this voyage the Admiral took all the charts away that the seamen had had. Thacher, *Columbus*, II. 646.

<sup>2</sup> "*El puerto de Jaquimo* [Jacmel], which he called the port of Brasil." Las Casas, *Historia*, III. 108.

before. However, after some days, the wind and sea became tranquil, and the storm was succeeded by a calm, but accompanied with rapid currents. I put into harbor at an island called Isla de las Pozas, and then steered for mainland;<sup>1</sup> but it is impossible to give a correct account of all our movements, because I was carried away by the current so many days without seeing land. I ascertained, however, by the compass and by observation, that I moved parallel with the coast of the mainland. No one could tell under what part of the heavens we were, and when I set out from there to come to the island of Española, the pilots thought we had come to the island of St. John, whereas it was the land of Mango, four hundred leagues to the westward of where they said.<sup>2</sup> Let them answer and say if they know where Veragua is situated. I assert that they can give no other account than that they went to lands, where there was an abundance of gold, and this they can certify surely enough; but they do not know the way to return thither for such a purpose; they would be obliged to go on a voyage of discovery as much as if they had never been there before.

There is a mode of reckoning derived from astronomy which is sure and safe, and a sufficient guide to any one who understands it. This resembles a prophetic vision.<sup>3</sup> The Indies ships<sup>4</sup> do not sail except with the wind abaft, but this is not because they are badly built or clumsy, but because the strong currents in those parts, together with the wind, render it impossible to sail with the bowline,<sup>5</sup> for in one day they would lose as much way as they might have made in seven; for the same reason I could make no use of caravels, even though they

<sup>1</sup> Cuba.

<sup>2</sup> The pilots thought that they were east of Española when Columbus turned north, and consequently thought that Cuba (Mango) was Porto Rico (San Juan). Cf. *Historie*, p. 333.

<sup>3</sup> *I.e.*, in that it is clear to one who understands it, and blind to one who does not.

<sup>4</sup> *Las naos de las Indias*, *i.e.*, the large ships for the Indies, *i.e.*, Española.

<sup>5</sup> Bow-lines are ropes employed to keep the windward edges of the principal sails steady, and are only used when the wind is so unfavorable that the sails must be all braced sideways, or close hauled to the wind. (Major.)



were Portuguese lateens.<sup>1</sup> This is the cause that they do not sail unless with a regular breeze, and they will sometimes stay in harbor waiting for this seven or eight months at a time; nor is this anything wonderful, for the same very often occurs in Spain.

The nation of which Pope Pius II. describes the situation and characteristics has now been found,<sup>2</sup> excepting the horses with the saddles and poytrels and bridles of gold; but this is not to be wondered at, for the lands on the sea-coast are only inhabited by fishermen, and moreover I made no stay there, because I was in haste to proceed on my voyage. In Cariay<sup>3</sup> and the neighboring country there are great enchanters of a very fearful character. They would have given the world to prevent my remaining there an hour. When I arrived they sent me immediately two girls very showily dressed; the eldest could not be more than eleven years of age and the other seven, and both exhibited so much immodesty, that more could not be expected from public women; they carried concealed about them a magic powder; when they came I gave them some articles to dress themselves out with, and directly sent them back to the shore.<sup>4</sup> I saw here, built

<sup>1</sup> *I.e.*, rigged with lateen sails in the Portuguese fashion.

<sup>2</sup> Columbus, in his marginal notes to his copy of the *Historia Rerum ubique Gestarum* of Pope Pius II. (Aeneas Sylvius Piccolomini; Venice, 1477), summarized the description of the Massagetae in ch. xii. in part as follows: they "use golden girths and golden bridles and silver breast-pieces and have no iron but plenty of copper and gold." *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte I., tomo II., p. 300. This description of the Massagetae goes back to Herodotus. While some habits ascribed to the Massagetae were like what Columbus observed in Veragua, their home was nowhere near eastern China.

<sup>3</sup> See p. 393, note 3.

<sup>4</sup> The account in the *Historie* is radically at variance with this. The girls were brought on board and "showed themselves very brave since although the Christians in looks, acts, and race were very strange, they gave no signs of distress or sadness, but maintained a cheerful and modest (*honesto*) bearing, wherefore they were very well treated by the Admiral who gave them clothes and something to eat and then sent them back." *Historie*, p. 299. Ferdinand gives the ages as eight and fourteen and says nothing of witchcraft except that the Indians were frightened and thought they were being bewitched when Bartholomew the next day ordered the ships' clerks to write down the replies he got to his questions; *ibid.*

on a mountain, a sepulchre as large as a house, and elaborately sculptured; the body lay uncovered and embalmed in it. They also spoke to me of other very excellent works of art.<sup>1</sup> There are many species of animals both small and large, and very different from those of our country. I had a present of two pigs, and an Irish dog was afraid to face them. A cross-bowman had wounded an animal like a monkey,<sup>2</sup> except that it was larger, and had a face like a man's; the arrow had pierced it from the neck to the tail, and since it was fierce he was obliged to cut off an arm and a leg; the pig bristled up on seeing it and tried to get away. I, when I saw this, ordered the *begare*<sup>3</sup> as it is called to be thrown to the pig where he was, and though the animal was nearly dead, and the arrow had passed quite through his body, yet he threw his tail round the snout of the boar, and then holding him firmly, seized him by the nape of the neck with his remaining hand, as if he were engaged with an enemy. This action was so novel and so extraordinary, that I have thought it worth while to describe it here. There is a great variety of animals here, but they all die of *barra*.<sup>4</sup> I saw some very large fowls (the feathers of which resemble wool),<sup>5</sup> lions, stags, fallow-deer and birds.

When we were so harassed with our troubles at sea, some of our men imagined that we were under the influence of

<sup>1</sup> A specimen of the Maya sculptures, of which such imposing remains are found in Yucatan. The translation follows Lollis's emendation, which substitutes *mirrado* for *mirando*.

<sup>2</sup> *Gato paulo*. On this name, see p. 341, note 3. Ferdinand, in the *Historie*, relates this incident in more detail, from which it is clear that the pigs were peccaries which had been captured by the men. On the other hand, Ulloa, the Italian translator of the *Historie*, mistranslated *gato paulo* by "gatto," "cat."

<sup>3</sup> *Begare*. Columbus in recollecting this incident transferred to the monkey the Indian name of the wild pigs. The *begare* is the "peccary," a native of America. Oviedo, lib. xii., cap. xx, gives *baquira* as the name of wild pigs in Nicaragua, and *baquira* and *begare* are obviously identical.

<sup>4</sup> For the word *barra* no explanation can be offered except what is derived from the context. As the Italian has *diverse malattie*, "divers diseases," de Lollis suggests that *barra* should be *varias* and that *maladias* was somehow dropped from the text.

<sup>5</sup> *Leones*. The American lion or puma.

sorcery, and even to this day entertain the same notion. Some of the people whom I discovered eat men, as was evidenced by the brutality of their countenances. They say that there are great mines of copper in the country, of which they make hatchets<sup>1</sup> and other elaborate articles both cast and soldered; they also make of it forges, with all the apparatus of the goldsmith, and crucibles. The inhabitants go clothed; and in that province I saw some large sheets of cotton very elaborately and cleverly worked, and others very delicately painted in colors.<sup>2</sup> They tell me that more inland towards Cathay they have them interwoven with gold. For want of an interpreter we were able to learn but very little respecting these countries, or what they contain. Although the country is very thickly peopled, yet each nation has a very different language; indeed so much so, that they can no more understand each other than we understand the Arabs. I think, however, that this applies to the barbarians on the sea-coast, and not to the people who live more inland. When I discovered the Indies, I said that they composed the richest lordship in the world; I spoke of gold and pearls and precious stones, of spices and the traffic that might be carried on in them; and because all these things were not forthcoming at once I was abused. This punishment causes me to refrain from relating anything but what the natives tell me. One thing I can venture upon stating, because there are so many witnesses of it, viz., that in this land of Veragua I saw more signs of gold in the first two days than I saw in Española during four years, and that there is not a more fertile or better cultivated country in all the world, nor one whose inhabitants are more timid; added to which there is a good harbor, a beautiful river, and the whole place is capable of being easily put into a state of defence. All this tends to the security of the Christians and the permanency of their sover-

<sup>1</sup> A misunderstanding. The Mayas made no metal tools. Brinton, *The American Race*, p. 156.

<sup>2</sup> Possibly Columbus may have seen some Maya codices, of which such remarkable specimens have been preserved.

eignty, while it affords the hope of great increase and honor to the Christian religion; moreover the road hither will be as short as that to Española, because there is a certainty of a fair wind for the passage. Your Highnesses are as much lords of this country as of Xerez or Toledo; your ships if they should go there, go to your own house. From there they will take gold; in other lands to have what there is in them, they will have to take it by force or retire empty-handed, and on the land they will have to trust their persons in the hands of a savage.<sup>1</sup>

Of the other [matter] that I refrain from saying, I have already said why I kept silent. I do not speak so, neither [do I say] that I make a threefold affirmation in all that I have ever said or written nor that I am at the source.<sup>2</sup> The Genoese, Venetians and all other nations that possess pearls, precious stones, and other articles of value, take them to the ends of the world to exchange them for gold. Gold is most excellent; gold is treasure, and he who possesses it does all he wishes to in this world, and succeeds in helping souls into paradise. They say that when one of the lords of the country of Veragua dies, they bury all the gold he possessed with his body. There were brought to Solomon at one journey<sup>3</sup> six hundred and sixty-six quintals of gold, besides what the merchants and sailors brought, and that which was paid in Arabia. Of this gold he made two hundred lances<sup>4</sup> and three hundred shields, and the flooring<sup>5</sup> which was to be above them

<sup>1</sup> Considering Columbus's experience at Veragua this account exhibits boundless optimism. Still it is not to be forgotten that through the conquest of Mexico to the north this prediction was rather strikingly fulfilled.

<sup>2</sup> It is not clear to what Columbus refers in this sentence.

<sup>3</sup> *De un camino*. The texts to which Columbus refers just below show that this should read *de un año*, in one year.

<sup>4</sup> In the Latin version of Josephus used by Columbus the Greek *θυρεός*, a target, was rendered *lancea*. See *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte I., tomo II., p. 367.

<sup>5</sup> *Tablado*. In the Italian translation *tavolato*, a "partition wall," "wainscoting," also "floor." *Tablado* also means "scaffold" and "stage" or "staging." We have here a curious series of mistakes. The Greek text of Josephus has *ἐκπώματα*, "cups." The old Latin translator, perhaps having a defective text, took *ἐκπώματα* apparently to be equivalent

was also of gold, and ornamented with precious stones; many other things he made likewise of gold, and a great number of vessels of great size, which he enriched with precious stones. This is related by Josephus in his Chronicle *De Antiquitatibus*; mention is also made of it in the Chronicles and in the Book of Kings.<sup>1</sup> Josephus thinks that this gold was found in the Aurea;<sup>2</sup> if it were so, I contend that these mines of the Aurea are identical with those of Veragua, which, as I have said before, extends westward twenty days' journey, and they are at an equal distance from the Pole and the Line.<sup>3</sup> Solomon bought all of it, — gold, precious stones, and silver, — but your Majesties need only send to seek them to have them at your pleasure. David, in his will, left three thousand quintals of Indian gold to Solomon, to assist in building the Temple; and, according to Josephus, it came from these lands.<sup>4</sup> Jerusalem and Mount Sion are to be rebuilt by the hands of Christians, who it is to be God told by the mouth of His prophet in the fourteenth Psalm.<sup>5</sup> The Abbot Joaquim said that he who

to *πώματα*, which has as its secondary meaning, "lids," and translated it by the uncommon word *coopercula*, "lids" (*cf.* Georges, *Lateinischdeutsches Handwörterbuch*, sub voce *cooperculum*). The meaning of this word Columbus guessed at, not having the text before him to see the connection, and from its derivation from *coopero*, "to cover," took it to be a "covering" in the sense of flooring, or perhaps ceiling, above where the shields were hung "in the house of the forest of Lebanon," and rendered it *tablado*. The whole passage from the old Latin version (published in 1470 and frequently later), Columbus copied into a fly-leaf of his copy of the *Historia Rerum ubique Gestarum* of Pope Pius II. See *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte I., tomo II., pp. 366–367.

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, bk. VIII., ch. VII., sect. 4; *I. Kings*, x. 14, 15; *II. Chronicles*, ix. 13, 14.

<sup>2</sup> The Chersonesus Aurea of Ptolemy, or the Malay Peninsula.

<sup>3</sup> That is, Veragua and the Golden Chersonese are in the same latitude.

<sup>4</sup> Josephus wrote that the gold came from the "Land of Gold," "*a terra que vocatur aurea*," as the passage in the Latin version reads. The Greek is, ἀπὸ τῆς χρυσῆς καλουμένης γῆς. Josephus gives no further identification of the location.

<sup>5</sup> I have not been able to verify this reference. There is nothing in the fourteenth Psalm relating to this matter, nor is the fourteenth Psalm mentioned among the many citations from the Psalms in the *Libro de las Profecias*.

should do this was to come from Spain ;<sup>1</sup> Saint Jerome showed the holy woman the way to accomplish it ;<sup>2</sup> and the emperor of Cathay, a long time ago, sent for wise men to instruct him in the faith of Christ.<sup>3</sup> Who will offer himself for this work ?<sup>4</sup> Should any one do so, I pledge myself, in the name of God, to convey him safely thither, provided the Lord permits me to return to Spain.

The people who have sailed with me have passed through incredible toil and danger, and I beseech your Highnesses, since they are poor, to pay them promptly, and to be gracious to each of them according to their respective merits ; for I can safely assert, that to my belief they are the bearers of the best news that ever was carried to Spain. With respect to the gold which belongs to the Quibian of Veragua, and other chiefs in the neighboring country, although it appears by the accounts we have received of it to be very abundant, I do not think it would be well or desirable, on the part of your Highnesses, to take possession of it in the way of plunder ; by fair dealing, scandal and disrepute will be avoided, and all the gold will thus reach your Highnesses' treasury without the loss of a grain.

<sup>1</sup> In his *Libro de las Profecias* Columbus wrote, "El abad Johachín, calabrés, diso que habia de salir de España quien havía de redificar la Casa del Monte Sion." "The abbot Joachim, the Calabrian, said that he who was destined to rebuild the House of Mount Sion was to come from Spain." Lollis remarks that Columbus interpreted in his own way the "Oraculum Turcicum," which concludes the thirty prophecies of Joachim of Flora in regard to the popes. In the edition (Venice, 1589) which Lollis had seen, this prophecy was interpreted to mean Charles VIII. of France. *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte II., tomo II., p. 83.

<sup>2</sup> The reference to St. Jerome I have not found in Columbus's marginalia.

<sup>3</sup> The father and uncle of Marco Polo had been given this mission by Cublay Kaan. See Marco Polo, bk. i., ch. vii. Opposite the passage in his copy of the Latin Marco Polo which he had, Columbus wrote, "magnus kam misit legatos ad pontificem." *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte II., tomo II., p. 446.

<sup>4</sup> The recovery of the Holy Sepulchre had been long a cherished object with Columbus. See the Journal of the First Voyage, December 26 ; the letter to Pope Alexander VI., February, 1502 (Navarrete, *Viages*, II. 280), and his *Libro de Profecias*, a collection of Scripture texts compiled under his supervision relating to the restoration of Zion, etc. *Raccolta Colombiana*, parte I., tomo II., pp. 77-160.



With one month of fair weather I shall complete my voyage. As I was deficient in ships, I did not persist in delaying my course; but in everything that concerns your Highnesses' service, I trust in Him who made me, and I hope also that my health will be re-established. I think your Highnesses will remember that I had intended to build some ships in a new manner, but the shortness of the time did not permit it. I had certainly foreseen how things would be. I think more of this opening for commerce, and of the lordship over such extensive mines, than of all that has been done in the Indies.<sup>1</sup> This is not a child to be left to the care of a step-mother.

I never think of Española, and Paria, and the other countries, without shedding tears. I thought that what had occurred there would have been an example for others; on the contrary, these settlements are now in a languid state, although not dead, and the malady is incurable, or at least very extensive. Let him who brought the evil come now and cure it, if he knows the remedy, or how to apply it; but when a disturbance is on foot, every one is ready to take the lead. It used to be the custom to give thanks and promotion to him who placed his person in jeopardy; but there is no justice in allowing the man who opposed this undertaking, to enjoy the fruits of it with his children. Those who left the Indies, avoiding the toils consequent upon the enterprise, and speaking evil of it and me, have since returned with official appointments, — such is the case now in Veragua: it is an evil example, and profitless both as regards the business in which we are embarked, and as respects the general maintenance of justice. The fear of this, with other sufficient considerations, which I clearly foresaw, caused me to beg your Highnesses, previously to my coming to discover these islands and mainland, to grant me permission to govern in your royal name. Your Highnesses granted my request; and it was a privilege and treaty granted under the royal seal and oath, by which I

<sup>1</sup> An opinion abundantly justified through the conquest of Mexico and the establishment of the kingdom of New Spain.

was nominated viceroy, and admiral, and governor-general of all: and your Highnesses limited the extent of my government to a hundred leagues beyond the Azores and Cape Verde islands, by a line passing from one pole to the other, and gave me ample power over all that I might discover beyond this line; all which is more fully described in the official document.<sup>1</sup>

But the most important affair of all, and that which cries most loudly for redress, remains inexplicable to this moment. For seven years was I at your royal court, where every one to whom the enterprise was mentioned treated it as ridiculous; but now there is not a man, down to the very tailors, who does not beg to be allowed to become a discoverer. There is reason to believe, that they make the voyage only for plunder, and that they are permitted to do so, to the great disparagement of my honor, and the detriment of the undertaking itself.<sup>2</sup> It is right to give God His own, — and to Caesar<sup>3</sup> that which belongs to him.<sup>4</sup> This is a just sentiment, and proceeds from just feelings. The lands in this part of the world, which are now under your Highnesses' sway, are richer and more extensive than those of any other Christian power, and yet, after that I had, by the Divine will, placed them under your high and royal sovereignty, and was on the point of bringing your majesties into the receipt of a very great and unexpected revenue; and while I was waiting for ships, to convey me in safety, and with a heart full of joy, to your royal presence, victoriously to announce the news of the gold that I had discovered, I was arrested and thrown, with my two brothers,

<sup>1</sup> See the Capitulation, pp. 77, 78 above. The limit mentioned was fixed by the Papal Demarcation line; the limit agreed upon by Spain and Portugal was 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands.

<sup>2</sup> A reference to such voyages as those of Vicente Yañez Pinzon, Hojeda, Diego de Lepe, and Rodrigo de Bastidas which occurred in 1499–1502. Cf. Bourne, *Spain in America*, pp. 67–71, and for details Irving, *Columbus*, III. 15–62.

<sup>3</sup> Accepting de Lollis's emendation *à César* instead of the MS. reading *acëtar* which Navarrete printed *acceptar*. The Italian has *a Cesaro*.

<sup>4</sup> "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God, the things which are God's." *Matthew*, xxii. 21.



loaded with irons, into a ship, stripped, and very ill-treated, without being allowed any appeal to justice.<sup>1</sup>

Who could believe, that a poor foreigner would have risen against your Highnesses, in such a place, without any motive or argument on his side; without even the assistance of any other prince upon which to rely; but on the contrary, amongst your own vassals and natural subjects, and with my sons staying at your royal court? I was twenty-eight years old when I came into your Highnesses' service,<sup>2</sup> and now I have not a hair upon me that is not gray; my body is infirm, and all that was left to me, as well as to my brothers, has been taken away and sold, even to the frock that I wore, to my great dishonor. I cannot but believe that this was done without your royal permission. The restitution of my honor, the reparation of my losses, and the punishment of those who have inflicted them, will redound to the honor of your royal character; a similar punishment also is due to those who plundered me of my pearls, and who have brought a disparagement upon the privileges of my admiralty. Great and unexampled will be the glory and fame of your Highnesses, if you do this; and the memory of your Highnesses, as just and grateful sovereigns, will survive as a bright example to Spain in future ages. The honest devotedness I have always shown to your Majesties' service, and the so unmerited outrage with which it has been repaid, will not allow my soul to keep silence, however much I may wish it: I implore your Highnesses to forgive my complaints. I am indeed in as ruined a condition as I have related; hitherto I have wept over others; — may Heaven now

<sup>1</sup> At Española in 1500 by Bobadilla. Cf. the letter to the nurse above, p. 380.

<sup>2</sup> This is one of the most important passages bearing upon the age of Columbus. As he came to Spain at the end of 1484 according to Ferdinand Columbus, *Historie*, ch. xii., Peschel fixed his birth in 1456, *Zeitalter der Entdeckungen*, p. 76. The majority of modern critics, however, have agreed upon the basis of notarial documents in Genoa that 1446 was the date of his birth and propose therefore to emend the text here by substituting "treinta y ocho" for "veinte y ocho." On the various dates set for his birth see Vignaud, *The Real Birth-date of Christopher Columbus*. Vignaud fixes upon 1451.

have mercy upon me, and may the earth weep for me. With regard to temporal things, I have not even a blanca,<sup>1</sup> for an offering; and in spiritual things, I have ceased here in the Indies from observing the prescribed forms of religion. Solitary in my trouble, sick, and in daily expectation of death, surrounded by a million of hostile savages full of cruelty, and thus separated from the blessed sacraments of our holy Church, how will my soul be forgotten if it be separated from the body in this foreign land? Weep for me, whoever has charity, truth, and justice! I did not come out on this voyage to gain to myself honor or wealth; this is a certain fact, for at that time all hope of such a thing was dead. I do not lie when I say, that I went to your Highnesses with honest purpose of heart, and sincere zeal in your cause. I humbly beseech your Highnesses, that if it please God to rescue me from this place, you will graciously sanction my pilgrimage to Rome and other holy places. May the Holy Trinity protect your Highnesses' lives, and add to the prosperity of your exalted position.

Done in the Indies, in the island of Jamaica, on the seventh of July, in the year one thousand five hundred and three.

<sup>1</sup> *Blanca*, a copper coin worth about one-third of a cent.

