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# LIFE AND VOYAGES

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

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A  
HISTORY  
OF THE  
LIFE AND VOYAGES  
OF  
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

BY  
WASHINGTON IRVING.

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Venient annis  
Sæcula seris, quibus Oceanus  
Vincula rerum laxet, et ingens  
Pateat tellus, Typhisque novos  
Detegat Orbes, nec sit terris  
Ultima Thule.

SENECA: *Medea.*

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IN FOUR VOLUMES.

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THE  
LIFE AND VOYAGES  
OF  
COLUMBUS.

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BOOK VI.

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CHAPTER I.

DEPARTURE OF COLUMBUS ON HIS SECOND VOYAGE. DISCOVERY OF THE CARIBBEE ISLANDS.

[1493.]

THE departure of Columbus on his second voyage of discovery, presented a brilliant contrast to his gloomy embarkation at Palos. On the 25th of September, at the dawn of day, the bay of Cadiz was whitened by his fleet. There were three large ships of heavy burden,<sup>1</sup> and

<sup>1</sup> Peter Martyr says they were carracks (a large species



fourteen caravels, loitering with flapping sails, and awaiting the signal to get under weigh. The harbour resounded with the well-known note of the sailor, hoisting sail, or weighing anchor; a motley crowd were hurrying on board and taking leave of their friends, in the confidence of a prosperous voyage and triumphant return. There was the high-spirited cavalier, bound on romantic enterprise; the hardy navigator, ambitious of acquiring laurels in these unknown seas; the roving adventurer who anticipates everything from change of place and distance; the keen calculating speculator, eager to profit by the ignorance of savage tribes; and the pale missionary from the cloister, anxious to extend the dominion of the church, or devoutly zealous for the propagation of the faith. All were full of animation and lively hope. Instead of being regarded by the populace as devoted men, bound upon a dark and desperate enterprise, they were contemplated

of merchant vessel, principally used in coasting trade), of one hundred tons burden; and that two of the caravels were much larger than the rest, and more capable of bearing decks, from the size of their masts. Decad. i, l. i.

with envy, as favoured mortals, destined to golden regions and happy climes, where nothing but wealth, and wonder, and delights awaited them. Columbus moved among the throng, conspicuous for his height and for his commanding appearance. He was attended by his two sons Diego and Fernando, the eldest but a stripling, who had come to witness his departure,<sup>1</sup> proud of the glory of their father. Wherever he passed, every eye followed him with admiration, and every tongue praised and blessed him. Before sunrise the whole fleet was under weigh; the weather was serene and propitious, and as the populace watched their parting sails brightening in the morning beams, they looked forward to their joyful return laden with the treasures of the New World.

According to the instructions of the Sovereigns, Columbus steered wide of the coasts of Portugal and of its islands, standing to the south-west of the Canaries, where they arrived on the 1st of October. After touching at the Grand Canary, they anchored on the 5th at

<sup>1</sup> Hist. del Almirante, cap. 44.

Gomera, where they took in a supply of wood and water for the voyage. Here also they purchased calves, goats, and sheep, to stock the island of Hispaniola; and eight hogs, from which, according to Las Casas, the infinite number of swine was propagated, with which the Spanish settlements in the New World subsequently abounded. A number of domestic fowls were likewise purchased, which were the origin of the species in the New World; and the same might be said of the seeds of oranges, lemons, bergamots, melons, and various orchard fruits,<sup>1</sup> which were thus first introduced into the islands of the west, from the Hesperides or Fortunate Islands of the Old World.<sup>2</sup>

On the 7th, when about to sail, Columbus gave to the commander of each vessel a sealed letter of instructions, in which was specified his

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas, *Hist. Ind.*, lib. i, cap. 83.

<sup>2</sup> Mons. de Humboldt is of opinion that there were wild oranges, small and bitter, as well as wild lemons, in the New World prior to the discovery. Caldeleugh mentions also that the Brazilians consider the small bitter wild orange of native origin.—Humboldt, *Essai Politique sur l'Île de Cuba*, t. i, p. 68.

route to the harbour of Nativity, the residence of the cacique Guacanagari. This was only to be opened in case of being separated by accident, as he wished to make a mystery, as long as possible, of the exact route to the newly-discovered country, lest adventurers of other nations, and particularly the Portuguese, should follow in his track, and interfere with his enterprises.<sup>1</sup>

After making sail from Gomera, they were becalmed for a few days among the Canaries, until, on the 13th of October, a fair breeze sprang up from the east, which soon carried them out of sight of the island of Ferro. Columbus held his course to the south-west, intending to keep considerably more to the southward than in his first voyage, in hopes of falling in with the islands of the Caribs, of which he had received such vague and wonderful accounts from the Indians.<sup>2</sup> Being in the region of the trade winds, the breeze continued fair and steady, with a quiet sea and pleasant weather, and by the 24th they had made four

<sup>1</sup> Las Casas, M. Sup.

<sup>2</sup> Letter of Dr Chanca.

hundred and fifty leagues west of Gomera, without having seen any of those fields of seaweeds which they had encountered within a much less distance on their first voyage, when their appearance had been so important, and almost providential, inspiring continual hope, and enticing them forward in their dubious enterprise. Now they needed no such signals, they were full of confidence and lively anticipation; and on seeing a swallow circling about the ships, and being visited occasionally by sudden showers, they began to look out cheerily for land.

Towards the latter part of October they were alarmed in the night by one of those sudden gusts of heavy rain, which are accompanied, in the tropics, with intense lightning and tremendous peals of thunder. It lasted for four hours, and they considered themselves in much peril, until they beheld several of those lambent flames playing about the tops of the masts, and gliding along the rigging, which are occasionally seen about tempest-tossed vessels during a highly electrical state of the atmosphere. These singular phenomena occurring in such

awful times of gloom and peril, have always been objects of superstitious fancies among sailors. Fernando Columbus records their present appearance, and makes remarks on them strongly characteristic of the age in which he lived. « On the same Saturday, in the night, was seen St Elmo, with seven lighted tapers, at the topmast : there was much rain and great thunder; I mean to say, that those lights were seen which mariners affirm to be the body of St Elmo, on beholding which they chanted many litanies and orisons, holding it for certain, that in the tempest in which he appears, no one is in danger. Be that as it may, I leave the matter to them; but if we may believe Pliny, similar lights have sometimes appeared to the Roman mariners during tempests at sea, which they said were Castor and Pollux, of which likewise Seneca makes mention. »<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Hist. del Almirante, cap. 45. A similar mention is made of this nautical superstition in the voyage of Magellan. During these great storms, they said that St Elmo appeared at the topmast with a lighted candle, and sometimes with two; upon which the people shed tears of joy, receiving great consolation, and saluted him according to the custom of mariners. He remained visible for a quarter

On the evening of Saturday, the 2nd of November, Columbus was convinced from the colour of the sea, the nature of the waves, and the variable winds and frequent showers, that they must be near to land; he gave orders, therefore, to take in sail, and to maintain a vigilant watch throughout the night. He had judged with his usual sagacity. As the morning dawned, a lofty island was descried to the west, at the sight of which there were shouts of joy throughout the fleet. Columbus gave to the island the name of Dominica, from having discovered it on Sunday. As the ships moved gently onward, other islands rose to sight one after another, emerging as it were from the quiet ocean, covered with verdant forests; while great flights of parrots, and other tropical birds, were winging their way from one to the other.

The crews were now assembled on the decks of the several ships, to return thanks to God for their prosperous voyage, and their happy dis-

of an hour, and then disappeared, with a great flash of lightning, which blinded the people. Herrera, *decad.* 2, l. iv, c. 10.