THE
Letter of Columbus
on the Discovery of
AMERICA

A Facsimile Reprint of the Pictorial Edition of 1493, with a Literal Translation, and an Introduction

PRINTED BY ORDER OF THE TRUSTEES OF THE
LENOX LIBRARY

Second Edition

NEW-YORK, M DCCC XCIII
Copyright, 1892,
By the Trustees of the Lenox Library.
The present facsimile of one of the Columbus Letters belonging to the Lenox Library is published by the Trustees at this time as an appropriate tribute to the memory of the great discoverer.

JOHN S. KENNEDY,
President.

New-York, May 1, 1893.
INTRODUCTION.

THE letter of Columbus giving the earliest information of his great discovery was first printed in Spanish at Barcelona in April, 1493. It was immediately translated into Latin and sent to Rome for publication, where it appeared in at least three editions, and was reprinted at Basle, Paris, and Antwerp. One of the rarest and most interesting of these is the pictorial edition, complete in ten leaves, which is reproduced here in exact facsimile, accompanied by a literal translation. The curious woodcuts with which it is illustrated are supposed by some to have been copied from drawings made originally by Columbus himself. They give remarkable representations of the admiral's own caravel, of his first landing on Hayti and meeting with the natives, and of the different islands which he visited.

The memorable voyage which this letter describes lasted two hundred and twenty-four days, from the 3d of August, 1492, when Columbus sailed from the harbor of Palos on the southern coast of Spain, with three small caravels and about ninety men, to the 15th of March, 1493, when he returned in a single vessel to
the same port. Nine days after leaving Palos he reached the Canary Islands, where he remained until the 6th of September, taking in provisions and making other preparations. On the 8th, after lying becalmed for two days, he left these islands, and steered his way directly across the Atlantic, with the expectation of reaching India or China. On the morning of Friday, the 12th of October, corresponding to the present 21st of October, he came in sight of one of the Bahama Islands, where he landed and took possession in the names of the Spanish sovereigns. On the 15th he visited another island, which he named Santa Maria de la Concepcion; on the following day he reached the island Fernandina; and on the 19th, Isabella. Supposing that he was in the neighborhood of Cipango or Japan, he sailed toward the south, and on the 28th of October landed on Cuba, which he named Juana. Here he remained, exploring the northeast coast, until December 5th, when he sailed over to Hayti, called by him Española. After exploring the northern shore of this island, where he lost his own vessel by shipwreck on the 24th, he sailed in the Niña for Spain on the 16th of January, 1493, reaching the Azores on the 18th of February, Lisbon on the 4th of March, and Palos on the 15th of the same month.

The following list comprises all the editions and
translations of the Columbus letter known to have been printed before the year 1500:—

(1) The original folio edition in Spanish, addressed to the "Escribano de Racion," Luis de Santangel, and supposed to have been printed at Barcelona in April, 1493. It is complete in two leaves or four pages. The only known copy, now in the Lenox Library, was discovered only a few years ago in Spain.

(2) The quarto edition in Spanish, also addressed to the "Escribano de Racion," and containing four leaves or eight pages. It was probably printed in Spain, in 1493. The only known copy was discovered about thirty years ago in the Biblioteca Ambrosiana at Milan. A facsimile by photozincography, made from an inaccurate hand-tracing of this copy, was published at Milan in 1866, and from this facsimile several recent forgeries seem to have been copied.

(3) The edition in Latin with King Ferdinand's name alone in the title, described by Mr. Harrisse as No. 1 of his list, and by Mr. Major as No. 3. It is in four leaves or eight pages, and is supposed to have been printed at Rome by Stephen Plannck, in 1493. A copy is in the Lenox Library.

(4) The edition in Latin with the names of Ferdinand and Isabella in the title, described by Mr. Harrisse as No. 4, and by Mr. Major as No. 1, of their
respective lists. In other respects it is almost identical with the preceding, page for page and line for line, and probably was printed at Rome by Plannck, in 1493. The Lenox Library possesses a copy.

(5) The edition in Latin printed at Rome by Eucharius Argenteus, or Silber, in 1493, complete in three leaves or six pages. A copy is in the Lenox Library.

(6) The pictorial edition in Latin, reproduced here in facsimile from the original in the Lenox Library, which is the only perfect copy known. As the same woodcuts appear in a reprint appended to the drama of Carolus Verardus, published by Bergmann de Olpe at Basle in 1494, it is supposed that this edition was also printed at Basle, by the same printer, in 1493.

(7) The edition in Latin entitled Epistola de insulis repertis de nouo, printed at Paris by Guyot Marchand, probably in 1493. It is in four leaves or eight pages, and contains only the name of Ferdinand in the title. Two copies are known, one in the Royal Library at Turin, the other in the University Library at Göttingen.

(8) The edition in Latin entitled Epistola de insulis de nouo repertis, printed at Paris by Guyot Marchand, in 1493 or 1494. It is evidently a reprint of the preceding, with which it agrees in the number of the
leaves, and in containing only the name of King Ferdinand in the title. Only two copies are known, one in the John Carter Brown Library at Providence, R. I., and the other (imperfect) in the National Library at Paris. A facsimile is in the Lenox Library.

(9) The edition in Latin entitled *Epistola de insulis nouiter repertis*, printed at Paris by Guyot Marchand, in 1493 or 1494. It is also in four leaves, and agrees closely with the two preceding. Two copies only are known, both in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. A facsimile is in the Lenox Library.

(10) The edition in Latin beginning *Epistola Cristophori Colom*, supposed to have been printed at Antwerp by Thierry Martens, in 1493 or 1494. It contains only the name of Ferdinand in the title, and is in four leaves. The only known copy is in the Royal Library at Brussels.

(11) The pictorial edition in Latin appended to the drama of Verardus, published by Bergmann de Olpe at Basle in 1494. It is evidently a reprint of the separate pictorial edition, already described. There is a copy in the Lenox Library.

(12) The edition in Italian verse entitled *Storia della inventione delle nuove insule di Chanaria indiane*, printed at Rome on the 15th of June, 1493. The version was made by Giuliano Dati. The discovery
of the only known copy was announced recently by Mr. Harrisse.

(13) The edition in Italian verse entitled *Questa e la hystoria della inuentiœ delle diese Isole di Cannaria Indiane*, printed at Florence on the 25th of October, 1493, in four leaves, being a reprint of the preceding. The only known copy, lacking the second and third leaves, is in the library of the British Museum. A facsimile is in the Lenox Library.

(14) The edition in Italian verse entitled *La lettera dellisole che ha trouato nuouamente il Re dispagna*, printed at Florence on the 26th of October, 1493. It is another edition of the preceding. The only known copy, complete in four leaves, is in the library of the British Museum. A facsimile is in the Lenox Library.

(15) The edition in Italian verse entitled *Isole Trouate Nouamente Per El Re di Spagna*, printed at Florence, and dated 26th of October, 1495. It is in four leaves. The only known copy is in the Biblioteca Trivulziana at Milan.

(16) The edition in Italian verse entitled *La lettera dellisole che ha trouato nuouamente el Re dispagna*, printed at Florence, and dated 26th of October, 1495. The only known copy, complete in four leaves, is in a private library in New-York.

(17) The edition in German printed at Strasburg by
Bartholomew Küstler, in 1497, in seven leaves. There is a copy in the Lenox Library.

Besides the printed editions mentioned above, there are extant several manuscript copies in Spanish. One in the Archives of Simancas, addressed to the "Escribano de Racion," was printed by Navarrete in his Coleccion de Viages (Madrid, 1825), Vol. I, pp. 167-175. It is also described, and an English synopsis given, by G. A. Bergenroth, in the Calendar of Letters, Despatches, and State Papers, relating to the Negotiations between England and Spain (London, 1862), Vol. I, pp. 43-48. Another manuscript, in Spanish, addressed to Don Gabriel Sanchez, was discovered by Varnhagen in the Colegio Mayor at Cuenca, and published by him at Valencia in 1858. Columbus also made a full report of his voyage in the form of a diary, which he sent to the Spanish sovereigns. The original of this has not been found, but an abridgment, or synopsis, made by Bartolome de Las Casas, is extant, and has been printed in Navarrete's Coleccion. The transcript of this manuscript which was probably used by Muñoz and Navarrete is now in the Lenox Library. An English translation of this "Personal Narrative," made by Samuel Kettell, was printed at Boston in 1827.

Wilberforce Eames,
Assistant Librarian.

Lenox Library, May 1, 1893.
Reign de España.
Oceanica Classis
De Insulis inuentis

Epistola Cristosperi Colom (cui eras nostra multù debet: de Insulis in mari Indico nup inuëtis. Ad quas perquirendas octauo antea mense: auspiciùs et ere Invictissimi Fernandi hispaniarum Regismuss fuerat) ad a<ag-
nificum dùm Raphaelez Sanris: eiusde ferc-
nissimi Regis Thesaurariùmissa, quam nobi-
olis ac litteratº vir Alander o Losco: ab His-
pano ydeomate in latinù convertit:ercio kl's
ahay. ad.cccc.xciij. Pontificatus Alexandri
Seeti Anno primo.

Eloniam sustepte prouintie rem p-
sectam me psecutum fuisse: gratù ti
bi soze scio:has pstitui exarere:que
te unius cumus: ret in hoc nostro iti-
ßere gëste inuente:q: admoeneàr. Tricesimoter-
tio die postº Sadibus discessi:un mare Indi-
cù perueni:vbi plurimas Insulas innumeris
habitatas hominibº reperü:quax oim p felì-
cissimo Rego nostro:preconio celebrato 7 ves-
rillis extensis:côtradicente nemine possesiô-
º accepí.primeº earum:diui Salvatoris no-
men imposui (cuius fretº auxilio) tam ad hâc
h ad ceteras alias guénimº. Eam vero Indi
tres dies ambularit: inueneritque innumeratos
populos qui habitatoces: paruas in et abscis uillo
regimine:quapropt redierat. Interea ego in
intellexerat a quibusdam Indis: quos ibidem
sceperat: quod homini provinci: insula quidem
erat: sic perrexit orientem versus: et sempiternum
sens littora vae ad miliaria cccexyi. Vbi ipsa
insula sunt extrema. Hinc alia insula ad orientem
prosperi: distantem ab hac Johana militris us.
hiu: quae protinus Hispamam dixit: in ea
ccecessit: igitur iter quasi p Septentrionez
qua admodu: in Johana ad orientem: miliaria
dixit: quo dicta Johana alia ibidem insule
fertilissime existunt: Hec multis atq tussilaginis
latissime nec alius quos uia: videri in corpore
randis potiri: est circu data: multi maximini 
Salubres hanc interfluat fluui: multis quoq et
eminetissimi in ea sunt montes. Omnes haec insulae
sunt pulcrrime et varius distincte figuris: ut in
uie: et maximina arbor: varietate sidera lambe
ti: plene: quae uii: solus priuari credo: quippe
vidi eas ita virites atq: decora: ceu melze
Abajo i Hispam: solituer e: quie: et alie floret: alie
fructuose: alie i alio statu: sin vnumscuus: ohi
tatetvigit: garriebat philomena: alii passe
res varii ac inuni: et melze molkbis: u: ipse per
 eas deambulabat. Sunt eterea in dicta insula
ui
Johana septē vel octo palmax genera: ĕ pce
mitate p pulchritudine (quē admodum cetere oēs
arbores/herbe/fructus) nīfas facile exuperat
Sūr c marabiles pin-grow pra § vastissima/
varie aves/varie mella/variae metalia:serro
excepto. In ea aut quālispernā supra virum
nūcuparti: maximi sunt mōres ac pulcri:vasta
rura/nemora/ campi seracissimi/sert/pacisq; c
 contendis edificiēs aptrissimi. Porruit in hac in
sula cómoditas: 7 ħstantia sluminū copia salve
britate admixta boim:ā nisti quis viderit: cre-
vulitāte supat. Huius arbores pasqua t fructq;
multum ab illīs Johane disserūt. Hec ēterea
Hispana diverso aromatis genere/auro/met-
tallisq; abundar.cuiq; quidē 7 oim aliax quas
go vidi: 7 quax cognitionē habeo:scole utri
usq; sexus nudi semp incedūt: quē admodum
edunt in lucem.preter aliques feminas. ā sōs-
lio frondeve aliq: aut bombicino velo: pudē-
da operūt:qō ēpe sibi ad id negotiū parāt. Ca
rent hi omes (vt supra dixit) quocunq; genere
serri.carent 7 armis:āpore sibi: ignotis nec ad
ea sūt aptī.nō,ppt corpis desformitē (cū sīnt
bīs formati) s qū sūt timidi ac pleni formidinē,
gestat ūn,p armis arūdines sole gustas:ī quax
radicibq; hastile āddā ligneī licēū 7 in mucro
nē attenuatū sigūr: nec his audēr iugiēvrisnā
Oceanica Classis
senf. 2 bi erant primi: q id quoccūqz appellabas
mus nunciabāt:alēj deinceps alējs elata voce
dicētes. Tēnite venite q videbitis gēres ethe
reas. Quāo brē tā femīe q vīri: tā impuberēs
q adultīxram iuu enes q senes: dōsita formi
dine paulo ante ēcepta: nos certātim vīsebāt
magna iter stipāte catērūa alējs cībū/ alējs po
tum afferentib9: marīō cū amore ac beniuolē-
tia incredibili. Hābī, aeq pāqueqī intula multas
scaphas solīdi līgni: q sī angustās: longitūdine
tī ac forma nostrīs biremīb9 similēs: curīn aīr
velocīores. Regunt remis tantūmodo. hārū
quēdā sunt magnē: quēdā parue: quēdā i me-
dio pāstum. Plures tāmē biremīi que remigēr
dvodeugīnti transtrīs maiores: cū qh9 in oēs
illas insulās: que innumerē sunt: transtrīc. cūqū
his suā mercātūrā exercētēr int er eos comer-
tia sunt. Aliquās ego hārū biremīum seu scap-
phūrū: vidi q vēhebāt septuagīnta q octuagīn
ta remīges. In omnib9 his insulās nullā est di-
uerītās int er gentīs effīgīes. nulla in mōribus
atqū loquēla: quīn oēs se intelligēt adnuīcē:
que res guitīs est ad id qō serenīssimū Regē
nostrū cōptāre precipēre reos scz eox ad san
tam rēpidēm puersiōnē, cui quīdē quantum
intelligēre potui facilīmi sunt q pūi. Dīxi quēs
admodum sum progressus anteab insula Johanae
rectae tramitez occasus in orientem miliaria
ccrxvii. sic quae via z intuitu illius trinera possim
vicere hae Johanae esse maiore Anglia z Scotia
sit: nanqz ultra dicta cccrxx. passu milia:
in ea yer q ad occidentem spectat: due: qui
non persis sup sunt quincie: quax altera Indi
Anan vocat: cui ac accole caudati nascunt. Të
vunt in longitudinem ad miliaria ccxxv. vt ab
his q s veho mecu Indis pecpi: qui omis has
caller insulas. hispane vero ambitio maiore
total hispania: a cologna vsqz ad fonte rabidui
hincqz facile arguiq: quartus ei larq qdiqpe
recta linea occidentis in oriente traieci: mili-
aria ptiner. oct. hae insula est affectada z affec-
ta ad sperneda in qua z si aliaq oim vt diri
p inuictissimo Regi no solemniter possessione
nem accep: earisqz imperii dicto Regi peni-
tus communissi oporuntiori tli loco: atq omm lu
cre t cernietio: decenti: cuiusda magneville:
cui iudiciatis omm nomi dedunt: possessione
peculiariter accep: ibi qz arcem quandaz erig-
gere extemplo iussi:que modo iam debet esse
pacta: in qua hoies qui necessariq sunt visti: cu
omni armi genere: ultra annu victu oporun
norem. It unde quidan carauella: z phuyz prux-
itsa i hac arte f in ceteri peritos: ac eiusdæ
insule Regis erga nos beniuolentia 7 familia ritatet incredibile. Sut em geres ille amabiles admodum 7 benigne: eo 8 Rex 8 dictus me fra trem suum duci gloriam habuit. Et si animu reuocarent: 7 his 8 i arce manserit nocere velint: ne queur: quia armis carer: nudi icedur: 7 nimi timidi ideo dicit arcema tenentes: dixatam piet tota ea insula nullo sibi imminente discrimine (udmodo leges quas oecum 9 ac reginam no icedur) facile verumere. In omib 8 his insulis 8t intelligi: quia quem tu 8t iugi acquiscecit: 8trem principes aut reges: qbus viginti habere licet. Femine magis 8t viri laborare vident: nec be ne potui intelligere an habeat bona ppaia: vi di em 8t quod haebat alius iparii: 8t omium de pes/obsonia/ 7 hymoi. Nullu apod eos montas 8t 8e 8t pleriq 8t existimabant: sed holus magne reueretie atque benignos. Iec sunt nigrive 8tur ethiopes habet crines planos ac demissos n6a vegunt vbi radiuzi solaris emicat calor. 9 magna nac 8t hic est solis vehementia: ppeterea 8q 8t abequotrialia linea dixat. Vbi videtur/gratius ang 8t viginti Ex montium cacuminibus magi nium 8q viget frig.: 9 id qdem moderant. In vi: t6 loci sua tudio: t6 rex calidissimam q6 8t frequenter v1 luxurioso velsum pexitio. Ita 8t mostra alia 8q no vidit: nec 8t eox alicubi habui co
gnitionem: excepta quaedam insula Charis nus-
cupata: quae secunda ex Hispaina in Indiam
trans fretatibus existit. quam gens quedam a
finitimis habita serocius incolit. hi carne hu-
mana vescunt. Habet predicti biremiis gene-
ra plurima: quibus in omnes Indianas insulas
trauciunt/deperdatur/surripiunt quaeque pibt.
Nihil ab aliis differunt nisi quae sunt mose se-
mineo longos crines. vtnx arcub9 et spiculis
arundineis: sritis (vt dixim9) in grossion pre at
renuatis hastilib9. ideaos habeb seroces: qua-
re ceteri: Indian inerhausto metu plecuntur: 13
hos ego nibili facio plus 9 alios. hi sunt qui
coeunt cum quibusdam feminis: quae sole insu-
lam abateunia primi ex Hispaina in Indiam
traencentib9 habitant. He aut8 fe mine nullo
sui sexus opus exercerunt: vtnx em arcub9 et
spiculis incerti 9 ca 4 piugib9 dixi muniur: se
se lami
nis eneis 9 z maria apd eas copia existit. Ali-
am mihi insula affirmant superaddicta Hispaina
maior: 9 incole carer pilis auroq ine alias
potissimum exuberat. Hui9 insulae taliaq 9 as t
vi di hoies mecu porto: 9 hoz 9 dixi testimonii
phibet. Deniq vt nisi diessus et celeris reuer-
fiqis copediu: ac emolumetib breub9 astringa
b polliceoz: mensib Regib9 inuictissimis quo
eoz susti auxilio: tantu sunt dataz quantunm

Cristosor Colom Oceane classis Prefsct?

Epigrana. R. L. de Ezraaria Episcopi
Ad Inuictissimii Regi Hispaniax

Granata:
TRANSLATION.
THE DISCOVERED ISLANDS.

Letter of Christopher Columbus, to whom our age owes much, concerning the islands recently discovered in the Indian sea.¹ For the search of which, eight months before, he was sent under the auspices and at the cost of the most invincible Ferdinand, king of Spain.² Addressed to the magnificent lord Raphael Sanxis,³ treasurer of the same most illustrious king, and which the noble and learned man Leander de Cosco has translated from the Spanish language into Latin, on the third of the kalends of May,⁴ 1493, the first year of the pontificate of Alexander the Sixth.

Because my undertakings have attained success, I know that it will be pleasing to you: these I have determined to relate, so that you may be made acquainted with everything done and discovered in this our voyage. On the thirty-third day after I departed from Cadiz,⁵ I came to the Indian sea, where I found many islands inhabited by

¹ In the other editions this part of the sentence reads: "concerning the islands of India beyond the Ganges, recently discovered."
² The name of Isabella (Helisabet) is also omitted in the title of one of Plannck's editions; it is found in the two other Roman editions.
³ The correct form is Gabriel Sanchez.
⁴ April 29th.
⁵ A mistake of the Latin translator. Columbus sailed from Palos on the 3d of August, 1492: on the 8th of September he left the Canaries, and on the 11th of October, or thirty-three days later, he reached the Bahamas.
men without number, of all which I took possession for our most fortunate king, with proclaiming heralds and flying standards, no one objecting. To the first of these I gave the name of the blessed Saviour, on whose aid relying I had reached this as well as the other islands. But the Indians call it Guanahany. I also called each one of the others by a new name. For I ordered one island to be called Santa Maria of the Conception, another Fernandina, another Isabella, another Juana, and so on with the rest. As soon as we had arrived at that island which I have just now said was called Juana, I proceeded along its coast towards the west for some distance; I found it so large and without perceptible end, that I believed it to be not an island, but the continental country of Cathay; seeing, however, no towns or cities situated on the sea-coast, but only some villages and rude farms, with whose inhabitants I was unable to converse, because as soon as they saw us they took flight. I proceeded farther, thinking that I would discover some city or large residences. At length, perceiving that we had gone far enough, that nothing new appeared, and that this way was leading us to the north, which I wished to avoid, because it was winter

---

1 In Spanish, San Salvador, one of the Bahama islands. It has been variously identified with Grand Turk, Cat, Watling, Mariguana, Samana, and Acklin islands. Watling's Island seems to have much in its favor.
2 Perhaps Crooked Island, or, according to others, North Caico.
3 Identified by some with Long Island; by others with Little Inagua.
4 Identified variously with Fortune Island and Great Inagua.
5 The island of Cuba.
6 China.
on the land, and it was my intention to go to the south, moreover the winds were becoming violent, I therefore determined that no other plans were practicable, and so, going back, I returned to a certain bay that I had noticed, from which I sent two of our men to the land, that they might find out whether there was a king in this country, or any cities. These men traveled for three days, and they found people and houses without number, but they were small and without any government, therefore they returned. Now in the meantime I had learned from certain Indians, whom I had seized there, that this country was indeed an island, and therefore I proceeded towards the east, keeping all the time near the coast, for 322 miles, to the extreme ends of this island. From this place I saw another island to the east, distant from this Juana 54 miles, which I called forthwith Hispana;¹ and I sailed to it; and I steered along the northern coast, as at Juana, towards the east, 564 miles. And the said Juana and the other islands there appear very fertile. This island is surrounded by many very safe and wide harbors, not excelled by any others that I have ever seen. Many great and salubrious rivers flow through it. There are also many very high mountains there. All these islands are very beautiful, and distinguished by various qualities; they are accessible, and full of a great variety of trees stretching up to the stars; the leaves of which I believe are never shed, for I saw them as green and flourishing as they are usually in Spain

¹ Hispaniola, or Hayti.
in the month of May; some of them were blossoming, some were bearing fruit, some were in other conditions; each one was thriving in its own way. The nightingale and various other birds without number were singing, in the month of November, when I was exploring them. There are besides in the said island Juana seven or eight kinds of palm trees, which far excel ours in height and beauty, just as all the other trees, herbs, and fruits do. There are also excellent pine trees, vast plains and meadows, a variety of birds, a variety of honey, and a variety of metals, excepting iron. In the one which was called Hispana, as we said above, there are great and beautiful mountains, vast fields, groves, fertile plains, very suitable for planting and cultivating, and for the building of houses. The convenience of the harbors in this island, and the remarkable number of rivers contributing to the healthfulness of man, exceed belief, unless one has seen them. The trees, pasturage, and fruits of this island differ greatly from those of Juana. This Hispana, moreover, abounds in different kinds of spices, in gold, and in metals. On this island, indeed, and on all the others which I have seen, and of which I have knowledge, the inhabitants of both sexes go always naked, just as they came into the world, except some of the women, who use a covering of a leaf or some foliage, or a cotton cloth, which they make themselves for that purpose. All these people lack, as I said above, every kind of iron; they are also without weapons, which indeed are unknown; nor are they competent to use
them, not on account of deformity of body, for they are well formed, but because they are timid and full of fear. They carry for weapons, however, reeds baked in the sun, on the lower ends of which they fasten some shafts of dried wood rubbed down to a point; and indeed they do not venture to use these always; for it frequently happened when I sent two or three of my men to some of the villages, that they might speak with the natives, a compact troop of the Indians would march out, and as soon as they saw our men approaching, they would quickly take flight, children being pushed aside by their fathers, and fathers by their children. And this was not because any hurt or injury had been inflicted on any one of them, for to every one whom I visited and with whom I was able to converse, I distributed whatever I had, cloth and many other things, no return being made to me; but they are by nature fearful and timid. Yet when they perceive that they are safe, putting aside all fear, they are of simple manners and trustworthy, and very liberal with everything they have, refusing no one who asks for anything they may possess, and even themselves inviting us to ask for things. They show greater love for all others than for themselves; they give valuable things for trifles, being satisfied even with a very small return, or with nothing; however, I forbade that things so small and of no value should be given to them, such as pieces of plates, dishes and glass, likewise keys and shoe-straps; although if they were able to obtain these, it seemed to them like getting the most
beautiful jewels in the world. It happened, indeed, that a certain sailor obtained in exchange for a shoestrap as much worth of gold as would equal three golden coins; and likewise other things for articles of very little value, especially for new silver coins, and for some gold coins, to obtain which they gave whatever the seller desired, as for instance an ounce and a half and two ounces of gold, or thirty and forty pounds of cotton, with which they were already acquainted. They also traded cotton and gold for pieces of bows, bottles, jugs and jars, like persons without reason, which I forbade because it was very wrong; and I gave to them many beautiful and pleasing things that I had brought with me, no value being taken in exchange, in order that I might the more easily make them friendly to me, that they might be made worshippers of Christ, and that they might be full of love towards our king, queen, and prince, and the whole Spanish nation; also that they might be zealous to search out and collect, and deliver to us those things of which they had plenty, and which we greatly needed. These people practice no kind of idolatry; on the contrary they firmly believe that all strength and power, and in fact all good things are in heaven, and that I had come down from thence with these ships and sailors; and in this belief I was received there after they had put aside fear. Nor are they slow or unskilled, but of excellent and acute understanding; and the men who have navigated that sea give an account of everything in an admirable manner; but they never
saw people clothed, nor these kind of ships. As soon as I reached that sea, I seized by force several Indians on the first island, in order that they might learn from us, and in like manner tell us about those things in these lands of which they themselves had knowledge; and the plan succeeded, for in a short time we understood them and they us, sometimes by gestures and signs, sometimes by words; and it was a great advantage to us. They are coming with me now, yet always believing that I descended from heaven, although they have been living with us for a long time, and are living with us to-day. And these men were the first who announced it wherever we landed, continually proclaiming to the others in a loud voice, "Come, come, and you will see the celestial people." Whereupon both women and men, both children and adults, both young men and old men, laying aside the fear caused a little before, visited us eagerly, filling the road with a great crowd, some bringing food, and some drink, with great love and extraordinary goodwill. On every island there are many canoes of a single piece of wood; and though narrow, yet in length and shape similar to our row-boats, but swifter in movement. They steer only by oars. Some of these boats are large, some small, some of medium size. Yet they row many of the larger row-boats with eighteen cross-benches, with which they cross to all those islands, which are innumerable, and with these boats they perform their trading, and carry on commerce among them. I saw some of these row-boats or canoes
which were carrying seventy and eighty rowers. In all these islands there is no difference in the appearance of the people, nor in the manners and language, but all understand each other mutually; a fact that is very important for the end which I suppose to be earnestly desired by our most illustrious king, that is, their conversion to the holy religion of Christ, to which in truth, as far as I can perceive, they are very ready and favorably inclined. I said before how I proceeded along the island Juana in a straight line from west to east 322 miles, according to which course and the length of the way, I am able to say that this Juana is larger than England and Scotland together; for besides the said 322 thousand paces, there are two more provinces in that part which lies towards the west, which I did not visit; one of these the Indians call Anan, whose inhabitants are born with tails. They extend to 180 miles in length, as I have learned from those Indians I have with me, who are all acquainted with these islands. But the circumference of Hispana is greater than all Spain from Colonia to Fontarabia. This is easily proved, because its fourth side, which I myself passed along in a straight line from west to east, extends 540 miles. This island is to be desired and is very desirable, and not to be despised; in which, although as I have said, I solemnly took possession of all the others for our most invincible king, and their government is entirely committed to the said king, yet I especially took possession of a certain large town, in a very con-

1 From Catalonia by the sea-coast to Fontarabia in Biscay.
venient location, and adapted to all kinds of gain and commerce, to which we give the name of our Lord of the Nativity. And I commanded a fort to be built there forthwith, which must be completed by this time; in which I left as many men as seemed necessary, with all kinds of arms, and plenty of food for more than a year. Likewise one caravel, and for the construction of others men skilled in this trade and in other professions; and also the extraordinary good will and friendship of the king of this island toward us. For those people are very amiable and kind, to such a degree that the said king gloried in calling me his brother. And if they should change their minds, and should wish to hurt those who remained in the fort, they would not be able, because they lack weapons, they go naked, and are too cowardly. For that reason those who hold the said fort are at least able to resist easily this whole island, without any imminent danger to themselves, so long as they do not transgress the regulations and command which we gave. In all these islands, as I have understood, each man is content with only one wife, except the princes or kings, who are permitted to have twenty. The women appear to work more than the men. I was not able to find out surely whether they have individual property, for I saw that one man had the duty of distributing to the others, especially refreshments, food, and things of that kind. I found no monstrosities among them, as very many supposed, but men of great reverence, and friendly. Nor are they black like the Ethiopians. They have
straight hair, hanging down. They do not remain where the solar rays send out the heat, for the strength of the sun is very great here, because it is distant from the equinocial line, as it seems, only twenty-six degrees. On the tops of the mountains too the cold is severe, but the Indians, however, moderate it, partly by being accustomed to the place, and partly by the help of very hot victuals, of which they eat frequently and immoderately. And so I did not see any monstrosity, nor did I have knowledge of them anywhere, excepting a certain island named Charis,\(^1\) which is the second in passing from Hispana to India. This island is inhabited by a certain people who are considered very warlike by their neighbors. These eat human flesh. The said people have many kinds of row-boats, in which they cross over to all the other Indian islands, and seize and carry away every thing that they can. They differ in no way from the others, only that they wear long hair like the women. They use bows and darts made of reeds, with sharpened shafts fastened to the larger end, as we have described. On this account they are considered warlike, wherefore the other Indians are afflicted with continual fear, but I regard them as of no more account than the others. These are the people who visit certain women, who alone inhabit the island Mateunin,\(^2\) which is the first in passing from Hispana to India. These women, moreover, perform no kind of work of their sex, for they use bows and darts, like those I have described

\(^1\) Identified with Dominica. \(^2\) Supposed to be Martinique.
TRANSLATION.

of their husbands; they protect themselves with sheets of copper, of which there is great abundance among them. They tell me of another island greater than the aforesaid Hispana, whose inhabitants are without hair, and which abounds in gold above all the others. I am bringing with me men of this island and of the others that I have seen, who give proof of the things that I have described. Finally, that I may compress in few words the brief account of our departure and quick return, and the gain, I promise this, that if I am supported by our most invincible sovereigns with a little of their help, as much gold can be supplied as they will need, indeed as much of spices, of cotton, of chewing gum (which is only found in Chios), also as much of aloes wood, and as many slaves for the navy, as their majesties will wish to demand. Likewise rhubarb and other kinds of spices, which I suppose these men whom I left in the said fort have already found, and will continue to find; since I remained in no place longer than the winds forced me, except in the town of the Nativity, while I provided for the building of the fort, and for the safety of all. Which things, although they are very great and remarkable, yet they would have been much greater, if I had been aided by as many ships as the occasion required. Truly great and wonderful is this, and not corresponding to our merits, but to the holy Christian religion, and to the piety and religion of our sovereigns, because what the human understanding could not attain, that the divine will has granted to human efforts. For God is
wont to listen to his servants who love his precepts, even in impossibilities, as has happened to us on the present occasion, who have attained that which hitherto mortal men have never reached. For if any one has written or said any thing about these islands, it was all with obscurities and conjectures; no one claims that he had seen them; from which they seemed like fables. Therefore let the king and queen, the princes and their most fortunate kingdoms, and all other countries of Christendom give thanks to our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, who has bestowed upon us so great a victory and gift. Let religious processions be solemnized; let sacred festivals be given; let the churches be covered with festive garlands. Let Christ rejoice on earth, as he rejoices in heaven, when he foresees coming to salvation so many souls of people hitherto lost. Let us be glad also, as well on account of the exaltation of our faith, as on account of the increase of our temporal affairs, of which not only Spain, but universal Christendom will be partaker. These things that have been done are thus briefly related. Farewell. Lisbon, the day before the ides of March.¹

Christopher Columbus, admiral of the Ocean fleet.

¹ March 14th, 1493.
Epigram of R. L. de Corbaria, bishop of Monte Peloso.

To the most invincible King of Spain.

No region now can add to Spain's great deeds:
   To such men all the world is yet too small.
An Orient land, found far beyond the waves,
   Will add, great Betica, to thy renown.
Then to Columbus, the true finder, give
   Due thanks; but greater still to God on high;
Who makes new kingdoms for himself and thee:
   Both firm and pious let thy conduct be.