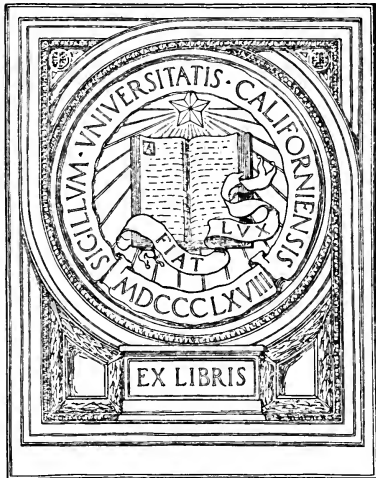


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Quaritch's Translations of Rare Books.

I. VESPUCCI (AMERIGO) LETTER CONCERNING
THE ISLES NEWLY DISCOVERED IN
HIS FOUR VOYAGES.

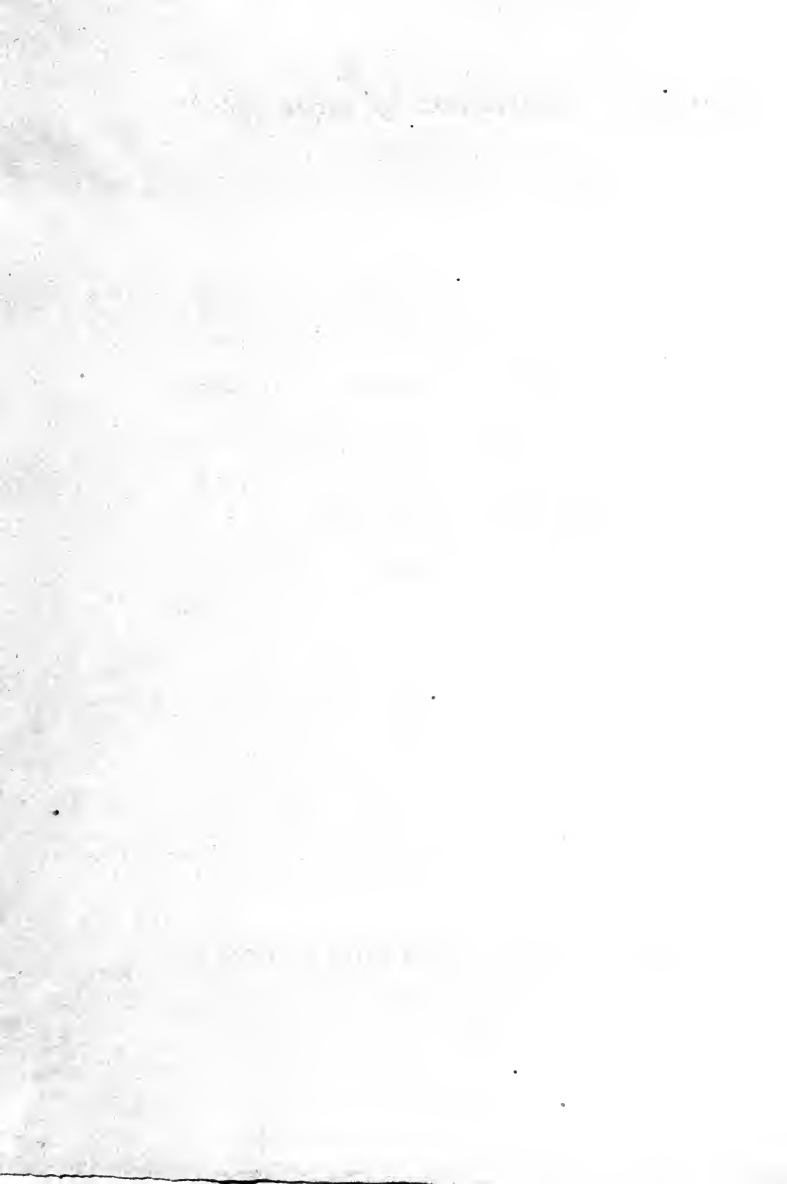
[*Florence, 1505.*]

LONDON: BERNARD QUARITCH,

8693

75 PICCADILLY.

1885.



THE FIRST FOUR
VOYAGES
OF
AMERIGO VESPUCCI.

TRANSLATED

*From the rare original edition (Florence, 1505-6);
with some Preliminary Notices,*

By M. K.



LONDON :
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Vespucci's Works.



LE QUATTRO GIORNATE. Diary and Common-place Book, written during the course of his first four voyages, and containing astronomical diagrams and drawings of remarkable objects.

Now lost, and only known by his references to it in the *Lettera*.

EPISTLES TO LORENZO DI PIER FRANCESCO DE MEDICI.

All now lost. The one usually considered to be an account of his third voyage (but which also contains a short summary of various observations made in his first three voyages), written probably about the end of 1502, was saved from the complete destruction which has been the fate of the others, by being translated into Latin by "Jocundus interpres ut latini omnes intelligant." This translator was the celebrated Fra Giovanni del Giocondo, of Verona, then resident in Paris. The original was presumably in bastard-Italian, like the *Lettera* to Soderini, but it cannot have been ever printed, since the Italian or Venetian form of it, which appeared (for the first time) in the *Paesi* of 1507, is merely a retranslation from the Latin. The Latin translation and the Italian retranslation were printed several times between 1503 or 1504 and 1521; and were substantially reproduced in the compilations of Grynæus and Ramusio.

LETTERA DELLE ISOLE NUOUAMENTE TROUATE. Written at Lisbon in 1504, and printed at Florence probably in 1505, for Pietro Pacini, of Pescia.

This is the work now produced in facsimile, and is apparently the only narrative by Vespucci of which the original text has survived. (The other three Letters attributed to him, and printed in the last and the present century, are decidedly supposititious.) It was translated into French, probably in 1505 or 1506, we know not by whom, and from this lost French translation, a Latin version (generally

accurate enough, but comprising several significant errors and mistranslations) was made, and printed for the first time in 1507 as a supplement to Waldseemüller's *Cosmographiæ Introductio*, and frequently afterwards. It is said in the *Speculi orbis declaratio* of Gualterius Ludd (printed, like the *Cosmographia*, at St. Dié, in Lorraine, 1507) that the Latin translation was made by Jean Basin de Sendacour. It might seem more likely that he made the French version, and that Waldseemüller was responsible for the Latin one; but to whomsoever we may ascribe the latter text, it is from this that Europe for more than three centuries derived its knowledge of Vespucci's voyages, and to this that we may trace the origin of the name America, bestowed by Waldseemüller, and sanctioned by many other scholars of France and Germany.

In the various editions of the *Novus Orbis* which is known under the name of Grynæus, the account of the four voyages was reproduced in Latin from the *Cosmographia*; and Ramusio has given an abridgment in Italian of the third and fourth voyages only (his attention being chiefly directed to the results of southern and African explorations).

NOTE.—Pietro Pacini, of Pescia, was not a printer, but a publisher at Florence. Varnhagen has erroneously supposed that he printed the *Lettera* of Vespucci, because he was able to identify the type in which it is set up with that which was used in certain books published in 1505 for Pacini. Many books were printed *ad instantia* or *alle spese* of Pietro Pacini, some with dates and some without them. The earliest dated book on which his name thus appears was printed for him by *Lorenzo Morgiani et Giovanni di Maganza*, in 1495 [BERNARDO (S.), *Sermoni*, 4to.]; the second by *Franciscus Bonaccursius*, in 1496 [LILIO (Zach.), *De origine et laudibus scientiarum*, &c., 4to.]; and the latest by *Gian Stefano di Carlo di Pavia*, in 1513 [POLIZIANO, *La Giostra di Giuliano dei Medici*, 4to.]. In 1505 he produced three books [D. LAHERTIO (*i.e.*, *Diogenes Laertius*), *Vita di Philosophi*, 4to.; AUGUSTINO (S.), *Sermoni*, 4to.; GERSONE, *Imitazione di Cristo*, 4to.], in which only his own name appears, that of the actual printer not being given. The type in these three books, in the *Lettera* now reprinted, and in the *Lettera di CORSALI* printed by Gian Stefano di Carlo di Pavia, in 1516, has been ascertained to be identical; and we may therefore assume that Gian Stefano was working for Pacini in 1505, but only as a new printer of small standing, and therefore ignored in the colophons of Pacini's publications. By 1513, Gian Stefano had acquired sufficient importance to be mentioned in connexion with Pacini, and in 1516 he was printer and publisher on his own account [CORSALI]. It is probable consequently that Pacini died between 1513 and 1516, and that the unsold copies of his books remained in the hands of Gian Stefano. This would account for the circumstance that in two instances the Corsali letter was found bound in a single volume with the Vespucci *Lettera*,—a combination which has misled Brunet and other bibliographers, leading to the supposition that the latter was printed in the same year as the former. From the foregoing facts, it might be thought

unnecessary to couple Pacini's name with Vespucci, since we know who was the actual printer, and there is nothing in the book to show that it was produced for Pacini, rather than some other publisher. This would hardly be correct, as the LILIUS volume produced in 1496 for him contains a slight reference to the recent discoveries in the West, which seems to have initiated a connexion between Pacini and the literature of navigation. He published the *Sfera* of Gregorio Dati in 1513,—a cosmographical poem, the mention of which brings the *Lettera dell' Isole* of Giuliano Dati immediately to mind. The latter piece—a reduction to verse of Columbus's first letter—was perhaps printed for Pietro Pacini in 1493, when it first appeared. The design which is seen in the woodcut on the first leaf of Giuliano Dati's *Lettera* is identical with that on the title-page of Vespucci's *Lettera*, save that the figures are reversed in the latter, as though the old block had been worn out and a new one engraved from it. Pacini published opuscles of Lorenzo dei Medici, Luca Pulci, and Polizian; none of his books printed during Soderini's rule in Florence make any reference to the Gonfaloniere, as was frequently done in the books published by the Giunti: we may therefore safely conclude that he was a Medici partisan, and so discover the reason why the name of Soderini is entirely omitted in Vespucci's *Lettera*. This omission led to a misconception on the part of the French and of the Latin translator (*Cosmogr. Introd.*, 1507) who imagined that *Vostra Mag.* meant *Your Majesty*, and referred to René, Duke of Lorraine, King of Jerusalem. The blunder was all the more ludicrous as the very opening sentences of the *Lettera* show that the person to whom it was addressed had been an old schoolfellow of Vespucci, a fact so far as Soderini was concerned, but which no one could have supposed to be true with regard to King René. This is not the only blunder in the Latin translation (there being many other errors in its various editions which have tended to discredit Vespucci), but it is useful now as showing, to any one who needed such proof, that the text of the *Lettera* was printed in Florence *before*, not after, the second-hand Latin translation which was published in 1507 at St. Dié.



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Notes on the Life of Amerigo Vespucci.

(Chiefly extracted from the Works of Varnhagen.)



HE was the third son of Ser Nastagio [Anastasio] Vespucci, notary at Florence, and was born on March 9, 1451. As he states in the *Lettera*, he was educated by his uncle, the learned Dominican (and friend of Savonarola), Giorgio Antonio Vespucci; but, according to his own ingenuous admission, he did not make great progress in study, and a letter written by him in Latin to his father, in 1476, exhibits at once the extent and the limits of his erudition. He was then *in villegiatura* at Mugello, for the purpose of avoiding the plague which had broken out in Florence. One of his fellow pupils was Pier Soderini, the future Gonfaloniere of the Florentine Republic (1502-1512), to whom he addressed, in 1504, the letter concerning his four voyages, which is now reprinted and translated. He was not sent to the University of Pisa, as his two elder brothers had been, but placed as a clerk in the banking-house of the Medici at Florence, and there probably obtained the favour and protection of Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici (cousin of Lorenzo the Magnificent), who afterwards (in 1492) became chief of the business, and to whom at a still later date Vespucci sent accounts of at least the first three of his voyages. In March, 1492,

he was despatched by Lorenzo di Pier as confidential agent to reside at Cadiz, and to supervise the conduct of affairs there, the probity of the managers of the Spanish branch business having become suspected. A year later he seems to have begun some trading speculations on his own account, without, however, ceasing to correspond with his patron. He was not successful, although his commercial position must have been a respectable one, judging from the circumstance that he was commissioned in January, 1496, to complete the financial part of a contract with the Crown which his compatriot Berardi had left unfulfilled at his death in December, 1495. Berardi was a great merchant and naval outfitter, who had undertaken to furnish a dozen vessels to the Government for service in the Indies, and the accounts were unsettled when he died. It was probably this transaction which influenced Vespucci, already discontented with his fortune as a trader, to seek and obtain service from King Ferdinand, when an expedition of four ships was prepared in the following year for adventure in the New World. The monopoly granted originally to Columbus had been recalled, and freedom of navigation conceded in April, 1495, to all merchant-adventurers, so that the efforts of the great Genoese were in vain to prevent the despatch of the four ships which the King was about to send out. He ultimately succeeded, but the renewal of his monopoly was not signed till June, 1497, when the King's expedition was already on its way across the Atlantic.

The four ships sailed from Cadiz on May 10, 1497, and Amerigo went in one of them. We do not learn what position in the fleet had been assigned to him, but it was probably an important one, as he seems to have completely gained the favour of King Ferdinand. His special qualification was his knowledge of astronomy, and, as he combined with it a useful experience in commercial matters, it was perhaps as astronomer and super-cargo that he figured in this first expedition. There are grounds for believing that Vincente Yañez Pinzon (one of Columbus's former captains) and Juan Diaz de Solis were the chief com-

manders, although their names are not mentioned by Vespucci ; and that the famous pilot, Juan de la Cosa, accompanied them. Whatever credit may be due to them for the conduct of the enterprise, it is certain that our Florentine was the only one whose account of the voyage has survived ; and we glean from his *Lettera* that in this expedition (in which the navigators were more than seventeen months absent from Spain, and in which Cuba seems to have been discovered to be an island, not a portion of the Asiatic continent, as Columbus had imagined) the coasts of Mexico and Florida were seen and touched upon for the first time, and Vespucci won the honour of being the first explorer who has recorded a visit to any portion of the territory now known as the United States of America.¹ It is true that his notices are jejune and confused, and that there have been eminent writers who held this first voyage to be supposititious,—that either the dates were wrong, or the whole narrative forged ; but every one² is now agreed that Vespucci was an honest sailor, incapable of fraud, and recognised by Columbus himself as a worthy and honourable friend. This appears from a letter dated February 5, 1505, addressed by the Genoese discoverer to his son Diego. In that letter, of which Amerigo was himself the bearer, and which is still in existence in the autograph of Columbus, these significant phrases occur:—“*I spoke with Amerigo Vespucci, the bearer hereof, who is going yonder on business of navigation. He has ever had a desire to do me pleasure : he is a very worthy man : fortune has been adverse to him as to many others : his labours have not profited him so much as justice would require. . . . He goes resolved to do for me everything that shall be possible to him. See yonder in what he can be benefited, and exert yourself for him. . . .*” Vespucci’s narratives were already in

¹ Mr. HARRISSE’S recent work upon the voyages of the Cabots disposes completely of the notion that they coasted the shores of the continent from Newfoundland to Florida in 1497. There was undoubtedly some such voyage in 1498, although there is no direct proof of it ; but in 1497 they did no more than touch land, probably a long way to the north of Cape Breton, and then immediately returned.

² Except Mr. Major. See note, p. xviii.

circulation at this date, and could not have been unknown to Columbus, whose testimony to his probity suffices to put an end to the old charge of wilful fraud. As for the modern assumptions that his dates were erroneous and his memory imperfect, or of the sophistication of his narratives by injudicious friends,—no one who reads the original text of the *Lettera* will now maintain them. It is from beginning to end the homogeneous and unadulterated production of a sailor whose neglected education had not been improved by a long absence in foreign countries. It is full, throughout, of characteristic vices of style, grammar, and language; Spanish, Portuguese, and Latin words and phrases being freely interlarded in his Italian text, and the punctuation being so peculiar in its nature, that there are scarcely half a dozen full stops in the whole narrative. As for defectiveness of memory, there is no sign of it. On the contrary, he seems to have been a close observer, and, as he informs us several times, he kept a diary or commonplace book, in which he wrote down his notes and made memoranda of all things that seemed to deserve it, at the time of their occurrence.

On October 15, 1498, King Ferdinand's four ships returned to Cadiz, with 222 Indian prisoners taken in the island of Ity, and the leaders, amongst whom Vespucci seems to have been reckoned, were joyously received by the authorities and the people. A new voyage was at once contemplated, in spite of the privileges which had been so grudgingly re-accorded to Columbus; and, seven months later, on May 16, 1499, Vespucci went out again with an expedition of three ships. According to his usual custom, he mentions no names, but it seems certain that Alonso de Hojeda was the chief, and that his pilots were Juan de la Cosa, Amerigo Vespucci, and others. They sailed south-west, touching at the Cape Verde islands, and on June 27 reached the coast of Brazil, somewhere north-west of Cape St. Roque. After some ineffectual attempts to coast the land south-eastwardly, they turned round and went north-west, making acquaintance with the Caribs (Camballi or Caniballi) in the north of Guiana and Venezuela. Proceeding further

north-west, they landed on the island of St. Margaret, and Curaçao (called Isle of Giants), in the latter of which they underwent great danger from the hostility of the natives. After some further experiences, they sailed to San Domingo, but not in company, as we know from other sources that Hojeda and Juan de la Cosa arrived there first, in a small boat, having been shipwrecked. Vespucci made a long stay (two months and seventeen days) in that island, and must have been frequently in the company of Columbus, who had arrived there in 1498, and was still struggling against the jealousy and enmity of the Spanish colony. Vespucci then returned to Europe, and re-entered the port of Cadiz on September 8, 1500, having navigated along the northern coast of South America from near Cape St. Roque in Brazil to the Gulf of Maracaibo in Venezuela. He carried home a number of pearls with him from Paria, and the Queen took from him a single oyster containing 130 of those gems. He says ingenuously that he had taken care to secrete others from her observation.

Dom Manoel of Portugal, by repeated messages and promises, succeeded in detaching Amerigo from the service of King Ferdinand, and the navigator speaks with regret of his ungrateful conduct in quitting Spain without having even taken leave of his royal patron. Departing from Seville, he made his way to Lisbon, and was immediately engaged to take part in an expedition to Brazil. On May 14, 1501 (not the 10th, as it appears by a typographical error in Arabic numerals in the *Lettera*, but the *xiiii*, as it is given in the *Epistola* to Lorenzo di Pietro dei Medici), three ships started from Lisbon, in one of which Amerigo went as captain. It has been wrongly alleged that Gonzalo Coelho was the chief leader; but Varnhagen gives almost proof that Dom Nuno Manoel was in command of the expedition. They took a southern course, and stopped several days at Bezeguiche, or Besenegue, the site of the present Goree, a little below Cape Verde, on the west coast of Africa. Thence they sailed south-west and a quarter by south, and reached Brazil on August 16, the feast of St. Roch, for which reason they named the

headland Cape St. Roque. On the following day they landed and took possession of the country, but saw no natives till the 18th. They found the Indians very sanguinary and savage, and lost three men, who were massacred and eaten. The Admiral was probably wise in forbidding any attempt at reprisals, although Vespucci does not seem to have thought so. Following the coast-line southwardly, they discovered and named Cape St. Augustine on that saint's day (August 28),¹ and landed at Bahia on November 1, All Saints' Day (whence the name, *Bahia de todos os Santos*).² Still coasting southwardly, it is believed that they saw and named Rio Janeiro on January 1. They must have reached the mouth of the Rio de la Plata before they decided to change their course, as Vespucci states that they made 750 leagues in sight of the shore, reckoning from Cape St. Augustine. On February 15 they were probably on the coast of Uruguay, at about 37 degrees south latitude (although in the *Lettera* Vespucci says 32,—perhaps a typographical error), where the coast seems suddenly to recede due west, at the mouth of the Rio de la Plata (giving rise to the idea that here was the southern limit of the land that barred their way to Asia). Here the Admiral handed over the control of the expedition to Vespucci, and they quitted the American coast, sailing south-east, till, on April 7, they reached the island afterwards called South Georgia by Captain Cook, who believed himself the first discoverer of it. The intense cold, the darkness, and the storms appalled them, and after a vain effort to find a port, they veered around, and Vespucci congratulated himself on his luck, for he states that the delay of another day would have caused the total destruction of their little fleet. On May 10 they reached Sierra Leone, in Africa, and made a stay of fifteen days there, burning one of their three ships which had

¹ It is said to have been previously discovered by Vincente Yañez Pinzon.

² Misprinted in the *Lettera* "La Badia" (*i.e.*, the Abbey), for "La Bahia" (Portuguese, "A Bahia," the Bay), an error which was perpetuated in the *Cosmographia* and in most of the early maps, beginning with Ruysch's (Rome, 1507-8), and repeated in the Ptolemies of 1513, 1522, 1525, 1535.

become useless. Then, sailing homewards by way of the Azores, they reached Lisbon on September 7, 1502.

Within the next six or eight months Vespucci seems to have written at least two reports to Lorenzo di Pier Francesco dei Medici, as the opening lines of the well-known *Epistola* (of which so many editions of the Latin translation were printed in and after the year 1503-4) clearly show. It is probable that this *Epistola* concerning his third voyage was written in Lisbon about the close of the year 1502. The Italian text has perished; we only know it through the Latin translation made by Fra Giovanni del Giocondo (first printed perhaps in Paris in the year 1503, but of which the earliest dated edition is that of Augsburg, 1504); and the Italian or Venetian re-translation from the Latin (first printed in 1507 in the *Paesi nuovamente ritrovati*). It is a curious circumstance, —whether ascribable to the negligence of Vespucci himself, writing without his official notes (which were still in the hands of Dom Manoel), or to the fortuitous similarity between American tribes remote from each other,—that the account given in the *Epistola* of 1503 of the manners of the Indian men and women, seen presumably in the third voyage, resembles very much that in the *Lettera* of 1504 concerning the natives of Honduras or Yucatan, seen in his first voyage. But this may be accounted for. The *Epistola* is not professedly a record of a single voyage (Vespucci's third) to the New World, but is written in somewhat general terms regarding the whole of the Transatlantic continent. It is rather an assemblage of notes regarding the tribes of the Western Hemisphere than a detailed account of any particular voyage, although its groundwork is the narrative of his most recent expedition to the West. In any case, the *Lettera* is a document of infinitely more value, for which it is evident the author had his note-books to work from; and it is decidedly more in the nature of a set of consecutive reports of voyages than the *Epistola*, which seems rather to be an extract from the promised QUATTRO GIORNATE, or commonplace book, of the author. The chief value of the *Epistola*, apart from

its interest as the first printed account of one of the early voyages to the New World, lies in certain words of great significance by reason of their date. Vespucci says (in 1502-3, it is to be observed): "*Those new countries which . . . we have sought and found: which it is allowable to call the New World, since there has been amongst our ancestors no knowledge thereof . . . and if some of them have affirmed it to be a continent, they have for many reasons denied it to be a habitable land. But that this opinion is false, and in everywise contrary to the truth, this last navigation of mine has made clear, insomuch as I have found the continent in that southern division inhabited by more numerous peoples and animals than our Europe, or indeed Asia, or Africa.*" This quotation suffices to prove that Vespucci already knew, what no one else appears to have as yet imagined, that the Western world was not only no part of Eastern Asia, but was a large and totally distinct continent.

In the following year six ships were fitted out for the discovery of a passage by the west to Malacca. Such at least we can judge to have been the intention of the expedition, although Vespucci, who had command of one of the vessels, says nothing that can be clearly understood to mean *by the West*. However, the direction taken by the fleet, when they quitted the coast of Africa, makes it clear that there was an expectation of finding a passage or strait in the same direction in which Magellan afterwards succeeded (or perhaps by the imaginary passage supposed to be formed by the yet unexplored Plata river). Vespucci had less good-fortune in this voyage than in the others, being separated from his admiral and returning with a less brilliant record long before him. They left Lisbon on May 10, 1503 (perhaps this is a mistake for June 10), under the command of Gonzalo Coelho, and having Juan Diaz de Solis (who like Vespucci had entered the Portuguese service) amongst their pilots. After an ineffectual attempt to land at Sierra Leone on the African coast, they resumed their "proper course," and sailed across the Atlantic in a south-westerly direction, reaching the lofty island of Fernando Noronha on August 10. Here they had ill-luck, through the loss of

the Admiral's ship, which struck upon a rock. He and his crew were saved, the crew being distributed amongst those of the other vessels, except that of Vespucci. The latter, on the contrary, was deprived of the services of part of his men, who had been called away in his boat to lend assistance at the time, and, while they were so absent, he received orders to find a port in the island. He went forward, found a port, and waited eight days, but the rest of the fleet did not arrive. At last he had sight of a sail and issued forth to meet it. It was one of the associated vessels, and he then was informed of the loss of the flagship, and that the others had proceeded on their voyage without him. The two detached ships thenceforward kept together, and, in accordance with the King's instructions providing for such a contingency, made their way to Bahia de todos os Santos, where it was supposed they would find the other vessels. There they stayed for over two months, but none of their companions arrived. Vespucci took for granted that they had been lost, and assigns all the blame to the misconduct of the Admiral (Gonzalo Coelho). [He could not know what we know now, that Coelho was very successful in his voyage, and discovered great part of the coast of South America, including Monte Video, the Rio de la Plata, the region of Buenos Ayres, and other lands as far as the Gulf of St. Matias; being, however, detained so long at one point on the coast that he only returned to Lisbon with one of the ships of his fleet late in 1506.] From Bahia, Vespucci and his companion sailed south-west, and reached Cape Frio (near Rio Janeiro). There they remained five months, built a fort, and left a garrison of twenty-four men sufficiently provisioned to hold it till relieved from Portugal. These twenty-four men were that portion of the Admiral's crew which had been taken on board the vessel now sailing with Vespucci. He and his comrade then set sail for Europe, and after a voyage of seventy-seven days reached Lisbon on June 18, 1504.

Thus having accomplished the four voyages described in his *Lettera*, he wrote the narrative which is here reproduced, dated September 4, 1504, and sent it to Soderini by the hands of Benvenuto

di Domenico Benvenuti, apparently one of his fellow-voyagers. Before long he threw up the service of Portugal, in which he had never been sufficiently rewarded for his labours, and returned early in 1505 to that of King Ferdinand. He was naturalised in Spain, and seems at this time to have become a married man, being accepted by a Spanish lady in spite of his fifty-three years of age and his lack of fortune. The King, however, appointed him a ship's captain, with a fixed salary, and seems to have designed to send him with an expedition then being fitted out for a voyage in search of the spice-lands. The construction of new ships caused a long and tedious delay, and the result was that Vespucci never joined such an expedition, if indeed it was undertaken. He made, however, two more voyages to America: the fifth in 1505 along the coasts of Venezuela and the isthmus; and the sixth during 1507 (between March and November), in company with Juan de la Cosa. In this last voyage, they visited the isthmus and the shores of Central America, and brought home a quantity of gold, for which they received payment, and were also rewarded with honours. In 1508 the title of *Piloto-Mayor* was conferred upon Vespucci, and, with a considerable salary, the office of Examiner-General of pilots. He remained in the enjoyment of this post, which undoubtedly required his presence continually in Spain, until his death on February 22, 1512. He left a widow and a great reputation behind him, but no pecuniary fortune, and no children. His maps and his diaries were bequeathed to his nephew Giovanni Vespucci, who was one of his successors in the office of Royal Pilot, a position which he seems to have forfeited by publishing in 1524 a map of the New World. This map, now of the extremest rarity, was probably based largely on the explorations of Amerigo Vespucci.

MR. MAJOR AND VESPUCCI'S FIRST VOYAGE.—Mr. Major is about the only person of our day who impugns, or seems to impugn, the veracity of Vespucci, and who holds, or seems to hold, his first voyage a myth. His natural dislike to the process of circumstances which gave to the New World the name of America rather than that of Columbia has swollen into a *sæva indignatio*, which in this

instance *facit injuriam* instead of *versum*. The gist and strength of his argument lie in the following charges (collected from the "Select Letters of Columbus" and "Prince Henry the Navigator").

1. *No assertion was made by Vespucci and his friends of any voyage to the New World before that of 1499-1500, in which he accompanied Alonso de Ojeda, until Columbus had been a year in his grave, and the false statement could be made without fear of contradiction.*

2. *There is no reason to suppose that the Letter to Soderini was printed till after the publication of the Cosmographiæ Introductio at St. Dié in 1507, which included Vespucci's account of his four voyages, in a Latin form.*

Vespucci's letter to Lorenzo di Pietro de Medici was written admittedly between September, 1502, and June, 1503; of its many editions in Latin and German, some were undoubtedly printed in 1503, and one is dated Augsburg, 1504. That letter received a wider circulation than any other of the early-printed documents relating to the New World. It would be idle to assume that its existence was unknown to Columbus at any time between November, 1504 (when he returned to Spain for the last time), and May, 1506 (when he died). If that letter had contained any false statement, prejudicial to his own just rights, Columbus would not have described Vespucci as a true and cherished friend, as he did in a letter to his son Diego dated February 5, 1505, in which he commended Vespucci to the kind offices of the latter. Yet Vespucci at the beginning of his Medici letter, speaks of "*hec mea ultima navigatio*" to the regions "*quas Novum Mundum appellare licet . . . versus meridiem*"; and near the end we read the words "*hec mea ultima navigatione quam appello diem tertiam. Nam alii duo dies fuerunt due alie navigationes quas ex mandato Serenissimi Hispaniarum regis feci versus occidentem.*" This plain statement, made and frequently published during the life-time of Columbus, is in perfect agreement with the Letter to Soderini. In the phrases *dies tertius* and *duo alii dies*, Vespucci alludes plainly to the note-book or diary which, after his fourth voyage, he entitled his *Quattro Giornate*. Under that name he describes it in the Soderini letter as containing in detail the daily observations made during his four voyages, the first two to the West (in Spanish service), the other two to the South (in the service of Portugal). At the time he wrote the Medici letter (say in January, 1503), he says explicitly that he had in his possession the diaries of the first two voyages, and that King Manoel still withheld from him that of the third,—for which reason he begs his patron to excuse the imperfections in the account then sent him. Now, it is admitted that he made a voyage to the New World between May, 1499, and September, 1500, and another between May, 1501, and September, 1502, each occupying over sixteen months in its accomplishment. Early in 1503, he speaks of those two voyages as his second and third, in a letter which was made known to all the world; at the same time referring to a first voyage which had been, like the second, a westerly one. (It is not possible, as some might allege, that any similar voyage could have taken place in the short interval between his return to Spain in September, 1500, and his

taking service with King Manoel early in 1501.) If we had no documentary knowledge of his first voyage, we might, judging from probabilities alone, assume that it was also a sixteen-months' performance, concluded four or five months before May, 1499, and therefore begun about August, 1497. This assumption, based on rational conjecture only, would differ but by three months from his own account that his first voyage occupied the seventeen months between May, 1497, and October, 1498. The facts must have been very well known to Columbus, and consequently he made no protest or accusation of falsehood against Vespucci during 1504, 1505, and 1506, but on the contrary held the Florentine to be a worthy and honourable navigator. So much for Mr. Major's No. 1.

As for No. 2, it only needs the application of ordinary common sense. Whatever special pleading might allege as to the want of proof that the Italian text of the Soderini letter was not printed at a later date than the *Cosmographia Introductio* of 1507, every unbiassed person must admit that the *text* of a letter written and sent in 1504 to the head of the Florentine Republic, and printed at Florence (without a date) for a publisher who is known to have been at work there at least as early as 1495-6, may be unhesitatingly considered to have preceded the impression of a second-hand translation printed in Lorraine with the date of 1507. A small circumstance gives corroboration to this natural assumption. The name of *Bahia* appears in the Latin impression of 1507 as *Abbatia omnium sanctorum*, a ludicrous misnomer which might be supposed to have arisen from the phrase "Labaye" ("La baye"), possibly found in the intermediate French translation now lost, but which is evidently derived from the typographical error in the Florentine edition of the text, wherein the compositor had perverted the *Bahia* of Vespucci's MS. into the Italian word *Badia* (Abbey).—It is neither impossible nor improbable that Columbus had read the Soderini letter in print before his death.





Geographical Summary of Vespucci's Four Voyages.



First Voyage, or Expedition of King Ferdinand (four ships, probably under the command of Vincente Yañez Pinzon and Juan Diaz de Solis, with Juan de la Cosa as Pilot).

1497.

May 10. Started from Cadiz.

May 20-28. Reached the Canary Islands, where they stayed for eight days.

July 4. Reached the coast of Honduras thirty-seven days later, at 16 degrees north latitude, as Vespucci says, but probably near Cape Gracias a Dios (or about 15 degrees north latitude), on a difficult coast, which he thought lay 75 degrees west of the Canaries. It is really not much over 67 degrees.

July 6. Advanced north-west, and harboured two days later in a safe anchorage (? near Cape Cameron, or somewhere in the Bay of Honduras). From Vespucci's long and elaborate description of the people and their customs, the fleet must have remained some considerable time on this coast.

1497.

- ? August 6. Advancing again north-west, as he thought (really north and by east), they coasted Yucatan, changing their course according to the configuration of the shore, and frequently landing, until they reached a harbour, in which there was a village seated, "like Venice," on the water. This must have been in Campeachy Bay, a little north of Tabasco (about $18\frac{1}{2}$ degrees north latitude). After some fighting with the Indians, they went onwards next day, coasting west and north-west for about 400 miles [he says about 80 leagues, or 320 miles], and reached the province of Lariab (? Tampico, in Mexico), 23 degrees north latitude, where they found a friendly race of Indians, who were cooking and eating *iguanas* (which Vespucci describes as wingless serpents, and which the sailors supposed to be poisonous). The Spaniards baptised many of these people, and were themselves designated Carabi (which he says means *wise men*). Vespucci and others travelled into the interior, and from his details they must have been a month at this place.

- ? Nov. 1. Starting again north-west, they coasted the shore for 870 leagues [naturally, although he does not say so, changing the course according as the land trended], frequently touching on land, and at the

1498.

- April 30. the end of April [after having passed along the coasts of Mexico and Louisiana, they reached Cape Sable, *i.e.*, *Cabo do fim de Abril*]. Turning the cape, they advanced northward, and anchored in a fine large bay, the utmost northern limit of their voyage. This was presumably the *Cabo del Mar Usiano* (probably Cape Hatteras, in North Carolina, 35 degrees north latitude), where they stopped thirty-

? June 30.

1498. seven days, refitting their vessels for the home voyage. The natives were very friendly, and asked the Spaniards to protect them from a tribe which frequently came from islands across the sea to plunder and slay. The Christians took seven of the Indians with them as guides to the islands, and sailed east and by north-east [*infra greco e levante. Quære*, error for *infra siroco e levante*, or east and by south-east?], for about 100 leagues across the ocean,
- ? August 6. reaching, after seven days' sail, an archipelago partly inhabited, on the chief island of which, named Ity, they had severe fighting, which ended by their carrying away 250 prisoners. They then
- ? August 13. sent the seven Indians back, making them a present of seven prisoners, and sailed for Spain, reaching Cadiz on October 15, 1498.
- ? August 15.

ITY.—The island of Ity is a problem which Varnhagen has solved, but not very satisfactorily, by assuming that it referred to the Bermudas, and that the expedition sailed thither from Cape Cañaveral. This would explain the direction, but not the distance (of 100 leagues, equal to 400 miles), and we can hardly suppose that the Indian boatmen would have ventured much farther than 100 leagues across the ocean. The distance is reduced to about 200 leagues, but the direction is altered if we suppose that they started from Cape Hatteras; while it becomes too enormous, although the direction would then be right, if we assume that they went from Cape Cañaveral. However, the difficulty is cleared if we suppose that the word *greco* is, as suggested by Varnhagen, a typographical error for *siroco*, in which case we might take it for granted that Vespucci sailed from Cape Hatteras to the Bermudas,—twenty-four years earlier than the supposed first discovery of those islands. In any case, Vespucci's measurements and compass were at fault; but when we examine the map in the Strasburg Ptolemy of 1513, derived, like that in the Rome Ptolemy of 1508, from the *Charta marina Portugalensium* of 1504, it is impossible to resist the conviction that Cape Hatteras was the *Cabo del Mar Usiano* under which were inscribed the words "Hucusque naves Ferdinandi Regis Hispaniæ pervenerunt." The map seems, in fact, to derive in almost every way from Vespucci himself, its northern limit on the American side being evidently identical with the northern limit of his first voyage, and its South American coast, on the other hand, being plainly traced from the record of his

second, third, and fourth voyages, with the only exception that it does not show his discovery of the island of South Georgia. What makes this more striking is the mixture of languages in the 1513 map, the point of Florida being marked with a Portuguese name (C. do fim de Abril), Cape St. Bonaventura with an Italian name, and the rest in Spanish chiefly, with a few in Latin. It appears very probable that the *Charta marina* was Vespucci's own map. As already pointed out, a mistake made in the text of Vespucci, by the Florentine printer, is singularly repeated in the New-World Chart which forms portion of all the Ptolemy maps of 1507-8, 1513 (designed in 1507), 1522, 1525, 1535, in regard to Bahia. This port was discovered by Vespucci and his fellows on November 1, 1501, but he does not mention it by name in the narrative of his third voyage; merely allowing it to appear in the account of his fourth voyage that "the port which they had discovered in the preceding expedition and named *Badia di tucti e sancti*" was the appointed rendezvous for the vessels in case of separation. On the map, as in Waldseemüller's translation of the *Lettera*, the Italian typographical error *badia* is turned into a Latin one, *Abbatia omnium sanctorum*. Of course this might have simply arisen from the circumstance that the editors of Ptolemy had before them in 1507 the printed *Lettera* with its blunder of *badia* for *bahia* [*baia*], but it is evident that only a practical and experienced navigator had constructed the chart, which tacitly corrects and supplements the defective statements of Vespucci, showing that his specifications of courses of sailing chiefly refer to initial and not to continuous movements. We have in any case a clear case of connexion between Vespucci and the so-called "Admiral's" map (usually assigned to Columbus). A further evidence appears on the text of the editorial observations in the Ptolemy of 1513, for the originator of the map is there referred to as an Admiral of Ferdinand, King of *Portugal*. This has been considered an error of oversight,—not for Manuel, King of Portugal, but for Ferdinand, King of Spain,—and to refer to Columbus, in accordance with the inscription in the same map on the South American continent—"Hec terra inventa est per Columbum Januensem ex mandato Regis Castellæ"; but it is probably an error only in the King's name. In 1504, when Vespucci probably drew the chart which was used for the Ptolemies, he could be properly styled an Admiral (or Captain) in the service of the King of Portugal, notwithstanding that his first and most important voyage was made as a subordinate officer (? astronomer or hydrographer) in the service of Spain.



Second Voyage, also made in the Spanish Service (in a fleet of three ships under the command of Alonso de Hojeda, with Juan de la Cosa and Amerigo Vespucci as Pilots).

1499.

May 16. Departure from Cadiz.

Reached Fogo, one of the Cape Verde islands [there is no valid reason for supposing, with Varnhagen, that Vespucci meant Ferro, one of the Canaries], whence, departing south-west, after a voyage of

June 27.

forty-four days they reached, on June 27 [which, by the way, gives only forty-two days for the voyage], the American continent at 5 degrees of South latitude, that is about 150 miles west and by north of Cape St. Roque. Here Vespucci observed that the days and nights were equal at that date. The country being full of rivers and wholly inundated, so that they could not land, their first endeavour was to go east-south-east, but the current off Cape St. Roque was so strong to the north-west that they were obliged to turn again and sail with

? July 3-4.

it, after having proceeded east-south-east for some 40 leagues, probably approaching near the point of Cape St. Roque. [Varnhagen remarks that the equatorial currents are so powerful in that region during the months of June and July that it is extremely difficult even now to double Cape St. Roque in a southerly direction.] With the wind and the current they proceeded north-west, and harboured in a deep bay with an island at its mouth. Navarrete imagined that this referred

1499.

July 20-25.

to the mouth of the Marañon or Amazon, and Varnhagen supposed that it was the port of Cayenne, mistakenly, as I think; but, reasoning justly from the words of Vespucci, we can only conclude that the voyage was a long one to the north-west from the inundated land above mentioned; and while there is no reason either to believe or to doubt that the fleet may have touched in succession at some of the points named, we cannot acknowledge that there is really any allusion to them in Vespucci's narrative. Varnhagen's usual acumen seems to have failed him here. The first harbour mentioned by Vespucci after the fleet had quitted the region west of Cape St. Roque is the deep bay with an island at its mouth which, from its form, could only refer to the mouth of the Amazon, or to the great Gulf of Paria, in which lies the island of Trinidad. In view of the subsequent transactions, and judging also from the 1507-13 map, the last must be the correct ascription. It was a very lengthy run along the coast, but there is nothing in Vespucci's words "tanto navicammo" to invalidate the conclusion to which we are led by concurrent testimony. They had the winds and the waves in their favour, and eighteen or twenty days of such sailing would easily carry them so great a distance. In the map above referred to we find the two islands Trinidad and Tobago lying at the mouth of the gulf, with the inscription, *Ysla de los Canibales*, which may refer to either, and in his text Vespucci calls the people (whether in allusion to the natives of the island or of the mainland, but probably of the former) Camballi or Caniballi, mentioning that his

1499.

sailors saved four boys from being eaten. After a vain attempt to make friends with these Caribs, they penetrated further into the gulf, and harboured in a place where they stopped seventeen days, and purchased by barter some pearls and gold; hearing at the same time of a hostile tribe further west which possessed great numbers of pearls, and practised pearl fishery. Departing thence to return into the main sea again, and quitting the gulf on the western side of the island in the opposite way to that in which they had entered it, they pursued their western course, and at the end of several days, harboured to repair one of the ships. Proceeding again, they came in sight of the Island of St. Margaret, off the coast of Cumana (on the map it is named Y. de Larapossa). Such we may understand to have been the "island fifteen leagues out to sea from the mainland." Thence they proceeded to another island in which the people were of such a stature that they named it the *Isle of Giants* (Curaçao).

? August.

After a dangerous encounter, and a somewhat ignominious retreat, they quitted that island, and still went onwards, along the coast, finding the Indians generally hostile and having to fight them frequently. Judging from other sources of information, Alonso de Hojeda and Juan de la Cosa must have gone onward before the other two ships, which, however, followed more slowly in the same direction. It is, at least, certain that the flagship was wrecked, and Hojeda sailed in a small boat for San Domingo, where he arrived on September 5, 1499; while the other two ships, in one of which Vespucci remained,

September.

1499.

after having reached the point of Gallinas, sailed back along the coast they had already explored, and the leader had probably, at first, no intention of following Hojeda to Haiti. In the course of the westwardly voyage, the Gulf of Maracaibo was discovered (although Vespucci does not mention the fact). The land here is marked on the 1513 map as a peninsula between two bays (by which is meant the promontory which forms the eastern boundary of the Gulf of Venezuela), and is inscribed *Arcaybacoia*, in which we can easily recognise [*M*] *aracayb[o]*. Having reached, as Vespucci says, 15 degrees

1500.

January.

(properly 13) north latitude (and 72 degrees west longitude), and having been "about a year" (probably some ten months) at sea, the captains of the two vessels began to think it was time to begin a homeward course. In the hope, apparently, of renewing their dealings with the natives of the pearl-country, they made their way back along the northern shores of South America. In this return-voyage, which must have occupied a couple of months, they met, while seeking a harbour to

Feb.—March.

refit their vessels, with a friendly tribe of Indians, from whom they obtained a great number of pearls, by barter at an enormous advantage to the Spaniards. This was at a cape (marked, on the map already referred to, *Cabo de las Perlas*) off the coast of Caracas, and opposite the island of St. Margaret. Here they stopped forty-seven days, and then sailed for San Domingo to re-victual their

March.

May.

ships; reaching that island early in May. Their leader Hojeda, who had arrived there eight months earlier, and taken an active part in the mutiny of

1500.

the Spanish colonists against Columbus, was already gone. Vespucci mentions the existing state of things, and says briefly that envy was the cause of it. The esteem in which Columbus afterwards held him, seems to show that he must have joined the party of his distressed and wronged compatriot during the time he remained in the island (between two and three months). He left San Domingo on

Sept. 8. July 22, and reached Cadiz on September 8, 1500.

NOTE.—We observe by the account of the two preceding voyages, summing the results together, that Vespucci had visited and coasted continuously the entire shore of the New World from Cape Hatteras, or about 35 degrees north latitude, to the coast of Brazil, 5 degrees south latitude, excepting only Nicaragua, Costa Rica, the Isthmus, and New Granada. The next two voyages will appear to have been confined to the South American coasts below Cape St. Roque (5 degrees south latitude).



Third Voyage, in the Service of Portugal (three ships, under the command of Dom Nuno Manoel, in one of which Vespucci was Captain).

1501.

May 10 or 14. They started from Lisbon, and navigated in sight of the Canaries towards the coast of Africa, landing and stopping eleven days at the port of Besechicce, or Bezenique (Gorée), $14\frac{1}{2}$ degrees north latitude.

June 10. They then struck across the Atlantic, south-west quarter by south, and in sixty-seven days, navigating through exceptionally bad weather, they made 700 leagues, and anchored off Cape St. Roque

August 17. in Brazil on August 17. They must have seen it and named it on the day before, August 16 being St. Roch's Day. After having lost three men by the treachery of the Indians, they started southwards on the 24th or 25th, and on (the 28th) St. Augustine's Day saw and named the cape which is still called after that saint. Still keeping the land in sight,

November 1. they went further south, and on All Saints' Day discovered and named *Bahia de todos os Santos* ;

1502.
January 1. on January 1, the harbour of Rio Janeiro. When they were 32 degrees south latitude (as Vespucci indicates, perhaps by error for 37 or 38), or 38 degrees (as Humboldt calculated), which leaves it uncertain whether they had reached the port of Rio Grande in Uruguay, or Cape Antonio or Cape Corrientes in Buenos Ayres, but in the latter case would imply that they had missed the mouth of

1501.

- February 15. La Plata*—it was February 15. By Vespucci's advice they then started out towards the south-east,
- April 7. into the ocean, and only stopped when, on April 7, they reached an island beyond 52 degrees of south latitude. This was South Georgia (re-discovered in 1775 by Captain Cook, who believed himself the first discoverer). Frightened by the dreadful storms, the intense cold, and the gloom of the atmosphere, they quickly turned again, and took a north-easterly course, scudding for some days under bare poles before the wind. On May 10 they reached Sierra Leone. Thence, after some delay, they sailed to the Azores, where they also stayed some time, and
- August 15. on August 15 sailed for Lisbon, reaching that port
- September 7. on September 7, 1502.

* It was perhaps the very northern point of the *embouchure* of Rio de la Plata, and they may have thought they had reached the end of the continent, misled by the enormous width of the river-mouth, and the sudden recession of the coast westwards.



Fourth Voyage, in the Service of Portugal (six ships, in one of which Vespucci was Captain, under the Admiralship of Gonzalo Coelho).

1503.

June 10. Vespucci says *May*, but it is evidently a mistake for June. They started from Lisbon, went to Cape Verde, staying there thirteen days, and thence proceeded south-east. This was for the purpose of touching at Sierra Leone, according to the Admiral's desire, but much against that of Vespucci. The ultimate object of the expedition was to reach Malacca, which was understood to be the richest emporium of the East; and the intention evidently was to seek it by a western passage, although Vespucci does not clearly say so. [It is possible that the place said to be 32 or 38 degrees of south latitude, from which they quitted the American continent in the third voyage, was really near Monte Video, and about $34\frac{1}{2}$ degrees south latitude, thus allowing them to discover the great expanse of water at the mouth of La Plata, and leading them to believe they had reached the southern end of the continent. In any case a notion seems to have existed that the Plata was the wished-for passage to the East which Columbus and others had sought in vain.] So far as Vespucci was concerned, he looked upon this voyage as a failure, through the misconduct of the admiral. Bad weather prevented them from landing at Sierra Leone. They turned south-west, and after sailing 500 leagues (Vespucci says 300 erroneously, or by

1503.

August 10.

a typographical error, for the "300" is in Arabic numerals) came in sight of the island of Fernando Noronha. He calls it Bad Island, for here the Admiral lost his ship on a rock, on August 10. The chief and his crew were saved, his men being distributed among the other crews. Here, however, the fleet was separated. Vespucci's ship harboured alone in a part of that island, with only half his crew (the rest having been called away in his boat at the time of the disaster, and so entirely lost to him). He was joined a few days later by one of the other vessels, and the two sailed thenceforward in company. Vespucci left Fernando Noronha and sailed south-south-west for Bahia, where, by the King's order, they had appointed a rendezvous in such a case of separation as had taken place. They waited at Bahia for over two months; but, seeing nothing of their companions, quitted that harbour, under the impression that the other ships, which had gone on with the Admiral, were all lost.

November.

1503-4

Dec.-April.

They next sailed 260 leagues southwardly and landed at Cape Frio, near Rio Janeiro. Here they stayed five months, building a fort, in which they placed a garrison of twenty-four men (part of the Admiral's crew saved from the wreck at Fernando Noronha), whom they furnished with weapons and ammunition, and provisions for six months. Varnhagen discovered a document which proved that this fort and garrison were still maintained by the Portuguese in 1511, and therefore makes light of the discrepancies of latitude and longitude between Vespucci's statement and the actual situation of Cape Frio. He is probably right, and the Florentine printer

1504.

may be responsible for the change of 23 into 18 (south latitude), and 31 into 37 (longitude west of Lisbon), mistakes easily made in the use of the old Roman type with its indistinct Arabic numerals.

- April 2. The two ships then sailed for Lisbon, making the voyage north-north-west in seventy-seven days, and
June 18. reaching that port on June 18, 1504.



American Words mentioned by Vespucci.

Page 13. IUCA.—This word, whether of Carib or Maya origin, was common to the West Indian islands and the eastern shores of Central America ; it probably represents the *ioc* of the word *mandioc* or *manioc*, which was afterwards adopted as the general term for the bread-fruit found to flourish within the tropics, from Brazil to Mexico.

This plant, *yuca* or *yuca*, though frequently met with in the early Spanish narratives, is mentioned in print for the first time in this *Lettera* of Vespucci.

„ 13. CAZABI.—Vespucci says “another [root] which they call *cazabi*”; but the *cazabi*, or *caçabe*, or *cassave*, is simply the flour which is made into bread from the *yuca* or *manioc*.

This word, probably of Carib origin, was first found in San Domingo, but was common also to the Carib populations which lined the western coast of America, from Vera Cruz in Mexico to the northern shores of Brazil. It appeared in print for the first time in Vespucci's *Lettera*.

„ 13. IGNAMI.—This word, so well known in English as *yam*, a sort of potato, has been assigned to an African origin. Even Varnhagen believed that it had been imported into America by the negroes who accompanied the early Spanish and Portuguese voyagers. In 1493, the root was called *age*, or *ages*, in Hispaniola, as is proved by Doctor Chanca's Letter concerning Columbus's second voyage, first printed by Navarrete. In Franck's *Weltbuch* of 1567, in the passage where it occurs in the account of Cabral's voyage, translated from the *Paesi* of 1507, there is added in brackets, “Das sind rote Wurzeln die die Negren oder Moren in Portugal sehr brauchen.” In an account of the island of St. Thomas (Gulf of Guinea) by an anonymous Portuguese pilot (about 1545), given in Ramusio, we find it stated that “*igname* is the San Thomé word for the root called *batata* in Hispaniola.” On the other hand, we have the following facts in earlier chronological order :—

In 1500, May 1, Pedro Vaz de Caminha wrote, at Porto Seguro in Brazil, the account of Cabral's discovery of the *Terra Veræ Crucis*, a few days before, which the latter sent home directly to King Manoel, and which the King cites (in print for the first time) in his Letter to the King of Castile (*Copia di una Lettera*, &c.), printed at Rome in 1505. In the King's abstract, nothing is mentioned but the discovery of Brazil. The text of the letter of Pedro Vaz was never printed till 1826 (in the *Noticias Ultramarinas* of the Portuguese Academy of Sciences), but its substance appeared in print for the first time in the *Paesi ritrovati* of 1507, and there we find *igname* used as an American word. In the original text of 1500-1826, it

appears twice as *inhame*, and, although not specially stated to be a native American word, nothing is said from which we should infer the contrary.

In 1504 we find it in Vespucci's *Lettera*, and in 1507 in the *Cosmographia*, specified apparently as an American word, used by people of Carib race.

In Fray Simon's *Conquistas* (1626) we find *ñame* without any reference to its being a foreign word, and the word is *ñambi* in Ruiz (1639) Dictionary of the Guarani language, which is related to the Carib.

It may, therefore, be supposed that the word *inhame*, *ñame*, *ihame*, *ihame*, *ignami*, *igname*, *yam*, was introduced from America into Africa, not *vice versâ*, the thing itself being common to both continents; and this is not invalidated by the fact that the name in Hispaniola was *ages*. The Portuguese pilot who, half a century afterwards, wrote the account of S. Thomé evidently did not know that there was any difference between the *batata* and the *inhame*, but the distinctness of the two varieties has been clearly pointed out by several early writers on the botany of the West Indies.

- Page 14. CANOA.—“Canoes, which are a kind of boat.” The word *canoa* appeared in print for the first time in Columbus's letter of 1493; for the second time in Vespucci's *Lettera* (1505). Like other Haytian words, it was probably of Carib origin, and therefore in common use along an enormous stretch of coast.
- „ 19. CARABI.—“They called us *Carabi*, which means men of great wisdom.” So says Vespucci, who was unaware that the word *Carib*, *Galib*, *Canib* [whence *Cannibal*]
—whether or not derived originally from the Quiche-Maya root *car*, to fish, fishing, and thence *fishermen*—implied, in its use at that time by the milder people of the continent and of some of the isles, a warrior, or a powerful and dreadful man.
- „ 19. LARIAB.—This is said to be the name of a province, which we assume to have been somewhere in the region of Vera Cruz in Mexico. The form is distinctively Quiche, not Maya proper, as the *r* and *ri*, which were customary in words of the former language, had been softened into *y* in the parent speech. In Quiche and Maya alike, *ab* is a plural termination, and sometimes the formal ending of an abstract noun. It might be imagined that Vespucci meant Xalapa or Jalapa, and that he wrote Cariab (for Caliab), altered by a typographical error to Lariab. But the truth is probably akin to the circumstance from which the name of Yucatan arose (from the Indian *Tectilan*), namely, that the Quiche natives misunderstood the Spanish inquiry as to the name of the province, and answered in their own speech, *Lar yáb* (Maya, *Lay yaab*, or *Ilá yaab*, “There is much”; there are many”; or “behold, there are many.”

Letter of Amerigo Vespucci
upon the isles newly
found in his
four Voyages.

Woodcut representing a King throned and pointing with his right hand, as if giving orders, on this side of a sea, upon which three ships are floating; the most distant of the three manned with sailors and touching upon a shore from which a crowd of natives are seen hurrying in flight inland.





[Letter of Amerigo Vespucci to Pier
Soderini, Gonfalonier of the Republic
of Florence.]

.....

Woodcut of
Vespucci at a
writing desk.

MAGNIFICENT Lord. After humble reverence and due commendations, etc. It may be that your Magnificence will be surprised by [*this conjunction of*] my rashness and your customary¹ wisdom, in that I should so absurdly bestir myself to write to your Magnificence the present so-prolix letter: knowing [*as I do*] that your Magnificence is continually employed in high councils and affairs concerning the good government of this sublime Republic. And will hold me not only presumptuous, but also idly-meddlesome in setting myself to write things, neither suitable to your station, nor entertaining, and written in barbarous style, and outside of every canon of polite literature:² but my confidence which I have in your virtues and in the truth of my writing, which are things [*that*] are not found written neither by the ancients nor by modern writers, as your Magnificence will in the sequel perceive, makes me bold.³ The chief cause which moved [*me*] to write to you, was at

p. 2.

¹ Varnhagen suggests that *usada* is a corruption of the Spanish *osadia* (daring), but this would leave *vostra savidoria* inexplicable. ² *Humanità*.

³ Here *usato* is certainly the Spanish *osado*, or the Portuguese *ousado*.

the request of the present bearer, who is named Benvenuto Benvenuti our Florentine [*fellow-citizen*], very much, as it is proven, your Magnificence's servant, and my very good friend: who happening to be here in this city of Lisbon, begged that I should make communication to your Magnificence of the things seen by me in divers regions of the world, by virtue of four voyages which I have made in discovery of new lands: two by order of the King of Castile,¹ King Don Ferrando VI., across the great gulph of the Ocean-sea towards the west: and the other two by command of the puissant King Don Manuel King of Portugal, towards the south: Telling me that your Magnificence would take pleasure thereof, and that herein he hoped to do you service: wherefore I set me to do it: because I am assured that your Magnificence holds me in the number of your servants, remembering that in the time of our youth I was your friend, and now [*am your*] servant: and [*remembering our*] going to hear the rudiments of grammar under the fair example and instruction of the venerable monk friar of Saint Mark Fra Giorgio Antonio Vespucci: whose counsels and teaching would to God that I had followed: for as saith Petrarch, I should be another man than what I am. Howbeit soever,² I grieve not: because I have ever taken delight in worthy matters: and although these trifles of mine may not be suitable to your virtues, I will say to you as said Pliny to Mæcenas, you were sometime wont to take pleasure in my prattlings: even though your Magnificence be continuously busied in public affairs, you will take some hour of relaxation to consume a little time in frivolous or amusing things: and as fennel is customarily given atop of delicious viands to fit them for better digestion, so may you, for a relief from your so heavy occupations, order this letter of mine to be read: so that they³ may withdraw you somewhat from the continual anxiety and assiduous reflection upon public affairs: and if I shall be

¹ This lack of precision with regard to Ferdinand's title may be compared with similar carelessness on the early maps which refer to America.

² *Quomodo cunque sit.* Vespucci affected a little Latin. ³ "They" for "it."

prolix, I crave pardon,¹ my Magnificent Lord. Your Magnificence shall know that the motive of my coming into this realm of Spain was to traffic in merchandise: and that I pursued this intent about four years: during which I saw and knew the inconstant shiftings of Fortune: and how she kept changing those frail and transitory benefits: and how at one time she holds man on the summit of the wheel, and at another time drives him back from her, and despoils him of what may be called his borrowed riches: so that, knowing the continuous toil which man undergoes to win them, submitting himself to so many anxieties and risks, I resolved to abandon trade, and to fix my aim upon something more praiseworthy and stable: whence it was that I made preparation for going to see part² of the world and its wonders: and herefor the time and place presented themselves most opportunely to me: which was that the King Don Ferrando of Castile being about to despatch four ships to discover new lands towards the west, I was chosen by his Highness to go in that fleet to aid in making discovery: and we set out from the port of Cadiz on the 10³ day of May 1497, and took our route through the great gulph of the Ocean-sea: in which voyage we were 18 months [*engaged*]: and discovered much continental land and innumerable islands, and great part of them inhabited: whereas there is no mention made by the ancient writers of them: I believe, because they had no knowledge thereof: for, if I remember well, I have read in some one [*of those writers*] that he considered that this Ocean-sea was an unpeopled sea: and of this opinion was Dante our poet in the xxvi. chapter of the Inferno, where he feigns the death of Ulysses: in which voyage I beheld things of great wondrousness, as your Magnificence shall understand. As I said above, we left the port of Cadiz four consort ships:⁴ and began our voyage in a

p. 4.

¹ *Veniam peto.*

² *Parte* is used by Vespucci as plural as well as singular, and consequently this means properly "parts" or "various parts," as it appears in the Latin version.

³ The Latin version at the end of the *Cosmographiæ Introductio* has "20" instead of "10."

⁴ *Navi di conserva.*

direct course to the Fortunate Isles, which are called to-day *la gran Canaria*, which are situated in the Ocean-sea at the extremity of the inhabited west, [and] set in the third climate: over which the North Pole has an elevation of 27 and a half degrees¹ beyond their horizon:² and they are 280 leagues distant from this city of Lisbon, by the wind between *mezzo di* and *libeccio*:³ where we remained eight days, taking in provision of water, and wood, and other necessary things: and from here, having said our prayers, we weighed anchor, and gave the sails to the wind, beginning our course to westward, taking one quarter by south-west:⁴ and so we sailed on till at the end of 37⁵ days we reached a land which we deemed to be a continent: which is distant westwardly from the isles of Canary about a thousand leagues beyond the inhabited region⁶ within the torrid zone: for we found the North Pole at an elevation of 16 degrees above its horizon,⁷ and [it was] westward, according to the shewing of our instruments, 75 degrees from the isles of Canary: whereat we anchored with our ships a league and a half from land: and we put out our boats freighted with men and arms: we made towards the land, and before we reached it, had sight of a great number of people who were going along the shore: by which we were much rejoiced: and we observed that they were a naked race: they shewed themselves to stand in fear of us: I believe [it was] because they saw us clothed and of other appearance [than their own]: they all withdrew to a hill, and for whatsoever signals we made to them of peace and of friendliness, they would not come to parley with us: so that, as the night was now coming on, and as the ships were anchored in a dangerous place, being on a rough and shelterless coast, we decided

¹ The Latin has "27 $\frac{1}{2}$."

² That is, which are situate at 27 $\frac{1}{2}$ degrees north latitude.

³ South-south-west. It is to be remarked that Vespucci always uses the word *wind* to signify the course in which it blows, not the quarter from which it rises.

⁴ West and a quarter by south-west.

⁵ Latin has 27.

⁶ This phrase is merely equivalent to a repetition of *from the Canaries*, these islands having been already designated *the extreme western limit of inhabited land*.

⁷ That is, 16 degrees north latitude.

to remove from there the next day, and to go in search of some harbour or bay, where we might place our ships in safety: and we sailed with the maestrale wind,¹ thus running along the coast with the land ever in sight, continually in our course observing people along the shore: till after having navigated for two days, we found a place sufficiently secure for the ships, and anchored half a league from land, on which we saw a very great number of people: and this same day we put to land with the boats, and sprang on shore full 40 men in good trim: and still the land's people appeared shy of converse with us, and we were unable to encourage them so much as to make them come to speak with us: and this day we laboured so greatly in giving them of our wares, such as rattles and mirrors, beads,² *spalline*, and other trifles, that some of them took confidence and came to discourse with us: and after having made good friends with them, the night coming on, we took our leave of them and returned to the ships: and the next day when the dawn appeared we saw that there were infinite numbers of people upon the beach, and they had their women and children with them: we went ashore, and found that they were all laden with their worldly goods³ which are suchlike as, in its [*proper*] place, shall be related: and before we reached the land, many of them jumped into the sea and came swimming to receive us at a bowshot's length [*from the shore*], for they are very great swimmers, with as much confidence as if they had for a long time been acquainted with us: and we were pleased with this their confidence. For so much as we learned of their manner of life and customs, it was that they go entirely naked, as well the men as the women, without covering any shameful part, not otherwise than when they issued from their mother's womb. They are of medium stature, very well proportioned: their flesh is of a

p. 5.

¹ North-west. Latin has *vento secundum collem*.

² The word is *cente*, supposed to be a misprint for *conte*, an Italianised form of the Spanish *cuéntas*. *Spalline* is a word not given in the dictionaries. The Latin translator seems to have read the original as *certe cristalline*.

³ *Mantenimenti*. The word "all" (*tucte*) is feminine, and probably refers only to the women.

colour that verges into red like a lion's mane: and I believe that if they went clothed, they would be as white as we: they have not any hair upon the body, except the hair of the head which is long and black, and especially in the women, whom it renders handsome: in aspect they are not very good-looking, because they have broad faces, so that they would seem Tartar-like: they let no hair grow on their eyebrows, nor on their eyelids, nor elsewhere, except the hair of the head: for they hold hairiness to be a filthy thing: they are very light-footed in walking and in running, as well the men as the women: so that a woman reckons nothing of running a league or two, as many times we saw them do: and herein they have a very great advantage over us Christians: they swim [*with an expertness*] beyond all belief, and the women better than the men: for we have many times found and seen them swimming two leagues out at sea without any thing to rest upon. Their arms are bows and arrows very well made, save that [*the arrows*] are not [*tipped*] with iron nor any other kind of hard metal: and instead of iron they put animals' or fishes' teeth, or a spike of tough wood, with the point hardened by fire: they are sure marksmen, for they hit whatever they aim at: and in some places the women use these bows: they have other weapons, such as fire-hardened spears, and also clubs with knobs, beautifully carved. Warfare is used amongst them, which they carry on against people not of their own language, very cruelly, without granting life to any one, except [*to reserve him*] for greater suffering. When they go to war, they take their women with them, not that these may fight, but because they carry behind them their worldly goods: for a woman carries on her back for thirty or forty leagues a load which no man could bear: as we have many times seen them do. They are not accustomed to have any Captain, nor do they go in any ordered array, for every one is lord of himself: and the cause of their wars is not for lust of dominion, nor of extending their frontiers, nor for inordinate covetousness, but for some ancient enmity which in by-gone times arose¹ amongst them:

p. 6.

¹ The expression in the original is *e surta*, an error for *è surta*.

and when asked why they made war, they knew not any other reason to give us than that they did so to avenge the death of their ancestors, or of their parents: these people have neither King, nor Lord, nor do they yield obedience to any one, for they live in their own liberty: and how they be stirred up to go to war is [*this*] that when the enemies have slain or captured any of them, his oldest kinsman rises up and goes about the highways haranguing them to go with him and avenge the death of such his kinsman: and so are they stirred up by fellow-feeling: they have no judicial system, nor do they punish the ill-doer: nor does the father, nor the mother chastise the children: and marvellously [*seldom*] or never did we see any dispute among them: in their conversation they appear simple, and they are very cunning and acute in that which concerns them:¹ they speak little and in a low tone: they use the same articulations as we, since they form their utterances either with the palate, or with the teeth, or on the lips:² except that they give different names to things. Many are the varieties of tongues: for in every 100 leagues we found a change of language, so that they are not understandable each to the other. The manner of their living is very barbarous, for they do not eat at certain hours, and as oftentimes as they will: and it is not much of a boon to them that the will may come more at midnight than by day, for they eat at all hours:³ and they eat upon the ground without a table-cloth or any other cover, for they have their meats either in earthen basins which they make themselves, or in the halves of pumpkins: they sleep in certain very large nettings made of cotton,⁴ suspended in the air: and although this their [*fashion of*] sleeping may seem uncomfort-

¹ *Che loro cuple.* The Spanish word *complir*, with the sense of being important or suitable.

² He means that they have no sounds in their language unknown to European organs of speech, all being either palatals or dentals or labials.

³ The words from "and it is not much" down to "at all hours" omitted in the Latin. I have translated "et non si da loro molto" as "it is not much of a boon to them," but it may be "it matters not much to them."

⁴ *Bambacia.*

p. 7.

able, I say that it is sweet to sleep in those [nettings]: and we slept better in them than in the counterpanes. They are a people smooth and clean of body, because of so continually washing themselves as they do: when, saving your reverence, they evacuate the stomach they do their utmost not to be observed: and as much as in this they are cleanly and bashful, so much the more are they filthy and shameless in making water: since, while standing speaking to us, without turning round or shewing any shame, they let go their nastiness, for in this they have no shame: there is no custom of marriages amongst them: each man takes as many women as he lists: and when he desires to repudiate them, he repudiates them without any imputation of wrong-doing to him, or of disgrace to the woman: for in this the woman has as much liberty as the man: they are not very jealous and are immoderately libidinous, and the women much more so than the men, so that for decency I omit to tell you the artifice they practice to gratify¹ their inordinate lust: they are very prolific women, and do not shirk any work during their pregnancies: and their travails in childbed are so light that, a single day after parturition, they go abroad everywhere, and especially to wash themselves in the rivers, and are [then] as sound and healthy as fishes: they are so void of affection and cruel, that if they be angry with their husbands they immediately adopt an artificial method by which the embryo is destroyed in the womb, and procure abortion, and they slay an infinite number of creatures by that means: they are women of elegant persons very well proportioned, so that in their bodies there appears no ill-shaped part or limb: and although they go entirely naked, they are fleshy women, and, of their sexual organ, that portion which he who has never seen it may imagine, is not visible, for they conceal with their thighs everything except that part for which nature did not provide, which is, speaking modestly, the pectignone.² In fine, they have no shame of their shameful parts, any more than we have in displaying the nose and the mouth: it is marvellously [rare] that you shall

¹ In the original, *contar* for *contentar*.

² Bigger bosom, *mons Veneris*.

see a woman's paps hang low, or her belly fallen in by too much childbearing, or other wrinkles, for they all appear as though they had never brought forth children: they shewed themselves very desirous of having connexion with us Christians. Amongst those people we did not learn that they had any law, nor can they be called Moors nor Jews, and [*they are*] worse than pagans: because we did not observe that they offered any sacrifice: nor even¹ had they a house of prayer: their manner of living I judge to be Epicurean: their dwellings are in common: and their houses [*are*] made in the style of huts,² but strongly made, and constructed with very large trees, and covered over with palm-leaves, secure against storms and winds: and in some places [*they are*] of so great breadth and length, that in one single house we found there were 600 souls: and we saw a village of only thirteen³ houses where there were four thousand⁴ souls: every eight or ten years⁵ they change their habitations: and when asked why they did so: [*they said it was*] because of the soil⁶ which, from its filthiness, was already unhealthy and corrupted, and that it bred aches in their bodies, which seemed to us a good reason: their riches consist of birds' plumes of many colours, or of rosaries⁷ which they make from fishbones, or of white or green stones which they put in their cheeks and in their lips and ears, and of many other things which we in no wise value: they use no trade, they neither buy nor sell. In fine, they live and are contented with that which nature gives them. The wealth that we enjoy in this our Europe and elsewhere, such as gold, jewels, pearls, and other riches, they hold as nothing: and although they have them in their own lands, they do not labour to obtain them, nor do they value them. They are liberal in giving, for it is

p. 8.

¹ *Nec etiam non.*

² Waldseemüller has "bell-towers," having misread *campane* for *capanne*, huts or cabins.

³ Latin has *eight*. ⁴ Latin, *ten thousand*. ⁵ Latin has *seven* for *ten*.

⁶ *Suolo*, the ground or flooring, which Waldseemüller absurdly misread *sole*, the sun. Varnhagen, no less strangely, translates it "the atmosphere."

⁷ *Paternostrini*.

rarely they deny you anything : and on the other hand, liberal in asking, when they shew themselves your friends : the greatest sign of friendship which they shew you is that they give you their wives and their daughters, and a father or a mother deems himself [*or herself*] highly honored, when they bring you a daughter, even though she be a young virgin, if you sleep with her : and hereunto they use every expression of friendship. When they die, they use divers manners of obsequies, and some they bury with water and victuals at their heads: thinking that they shall have [*whereof*] to eat: they have not nor do they use ceremonies of torches¹ nor of lamentation. In some other places, they use the most barbarous and inhuman burial,² which is that when a suffering or infirm [*person*] is as it were at the last pass of death, his kinsmen carry him into a large forest, and attach one of those nets³ of theirs, in which they sleep, to two trees, and then put him in it, and dance around him for a whole day : and when the night comes on they place at his bolster, water with other victuals, so that he may be able to subsist for four or six days : and then they leave him alone and return to the village : and if the sick man helps himself, and eats, and drinks, and survives, he returns to the village, and his [*friends*] receive him with ceremony : but few are they who escape : without receiving any further visit they die, and that is their sepulture : and they have many other customs which for prolixity are not related. They use in their sicknesses p. 9. various forms of medicines,³ so different from ours that we marvelled how any one escaped : for many times I saw that with a man sick of fever, when it heightened upon him, they bathed him from head to foot with a large quantity of cold water : then they lit a great fire around him, making him turn and turn again every two hours, until they tired him and left him to sleep, and many were [*thus*] cured : with this they make much use of dieting, for they remain three days without eating, and also of blood-letting, but not from the arm, only

¹ *Lumi*, lights, tapers, candles, as in Catholic ceremonies

² *Interramento* is the word, but he means only "funeral rite."

³ That is, "medical treatment."

from the thighs and the loins and the calf of the leg : also they provoke vomiting with their herbs which are put into the mouth : and they use many other remedies which it would be long to relate : they are much vitiated in the phlegm and in the blood because of their food which consists chiefly of roots of herbs, and fruits and fish : they have no seed of wheat nor other grain : and for their ordinary use and feeding, they have a root of a tree, from which they make flour, tolerably good, and they call it *Iuca*, and another which they call *Cazabi*, and another *Ignami* :¹ they eat little flesh except human flesh : for your Magnificence must know that herein they are so inhuman that they outdo every custom [*even*] of beasts : for they eat all their enemies whom they kill or capture, as well females as males with so much savagery, that [*merely*] to relate it appears a horrible thing : how much more so to see it, as, infinite times and in many places, it was my hap to see it : and they wondered to hear us say that we did not eat our enemies : and this your Magnificence may take for certain, that their other barbarous customs are such that expression is too weak for the reality : and as in these four voyages I have seen so many things diverse from our customs, I prepared to write a common-place-book² which I name *LE QUATTRO GIORNATE* : in which I have set down the greater part of the things which I saw, sufficiently in detail, so far as my feeble wit has allowed me : which I have not yet published, because I have so ill a taste for my own things that I do not relish those which I have written, notwithstanding that many encourage me to publish it : therein everything will be seen in detail : so that I shall not enlarge further in this chapter : as in the course of the letter we shall come to many other things which are particular : let this suffice for the general. At this beginning, we saw nothing in the land of much profit, except some show of gold : I believe the cause of it was that we did not know the language : but in so far as concerns the situation and condition of the land, it could not be better : we decided to leave that place, and

¹ *Iuca, Cazabi, Ignami.* See reference to these words in the preliminary notice.

² *Zibaldone*, miscellany, *omnium-gatherum*.

p. 10. to go further on, continuously coasting the shore : upon which we made frequent descents, and held converse with a great number of people : and at the end of some days we went into a harbour where we underwent very great danger : and it pleased the Holy Ghost to save us : and it was in this wise. We landed in a harbour, where we found a village built like Venice upon the water : there were about 44 large dwellings in the form of huts erected upon very thick piles,¹ and they had their doors or entrances in the style of drawbridges : and from each house one could pass through all, by means of the drawbridges which stretched from house to house : and when the people thereof had seen us, they appeared to be afraid of us, and immediately drew up all the bridges : and while we were looking at this strange action, we saw coming across the sea about 22 canoes, which are a kind of boats of theirs, constructed from a single tree : which came towards our boats, as they had been surprised by our appearance and clothes, and kept wide of us : and thus remaining, we made signals to them that they should approach us, encouraging them with every token of friendliness : and seeing that they did not come, we went to them, and they did not stay for us, but made to the land, and, by signs, told us to wait, and that they should soon return : and they went to a hill in the background,² and did not delay long : when they returned, they led with them 16 of their girls, and entered with these into their canoes, and came to the boats : and in each boat they put 4 of the girls. That we marvelled at this behaviour your Magnificence can imagine how much, and they placed themselves with their canoes among our boats, coming to speak with us : insomuch that we deemed it a mark of friendliness : and while thus engaged, we beheld a great number of people advance swimming towards us across the sea, who came from the houses : and as they were drawing near to us without any apprehension : just then there appeared at

¹ Waldseemüller has 20 instead of 44, and repeats his error of "bell-towers" for "huts."

² Varnhagen says "went straight to land," evidently mistaking *drieto* (*dietro*) for *driceto*, and ignoring *monte*.

the doors of the houses certain old women, uttering very loud cries and tearing their hair to exhibit grief: whereby they made us suspicious, and we each betook ourselves to arms: and instantly the girls whom we had in the boats, threw themselves into the sea, and the men of the canoes drew away from us, and began with their bows to shoot arrows at us: and those who were swimming each carried a lance held, as covertly as they could, beneath the water: so that, recognizing the treachery, we engaged with them, not merely to defend ourselves, but to attack them vigorously, and we overturned with our boats many of their *almadie* or canoes, for so they call them, we made a slaughter [*of them*], and they all flung themselves into the water to swim, leaving their canoes abandoned, with considerable loss on their side, they went swimming away to the shore: there died of them about 15 or 20, and many were left wounded: and of ours 5 were wounded, and all, by the grace of God, escaped [*death*]: we captured two of the girls and two men:¹ and we proceeded to their houses, and entered therein, and in them all we found nothing else than two old women and a sick man: we took away from them many things, but of small value: and we would not burn their houses, because it seemed to us [*as though that would be*] a burden upon our conscience: and we returned to our boats with five prisoners: and betook ourselves to the ships, and put a pair of irons on the feet of each of the captives, except the little girls: and when the night came on, the two girls and one of the men fled away in the most subtle manner possible: and next day we decided to quit that harbour and go further onwards: we proceeded continuously skirting the coast, [*until*] we had sight of another tribe distant perhaps some 80 leagues from the former tribe: and we found them very different in speech and customs: we resolved to cast anchor, and went ashore with the boats, and we saw on the beach a great number of people amounting probably to 4000 souls: and when we had reached the shore, they did not stay for us, and

¹ *Two* men: the Latin has *three*, which agrees better with the mention of five prisoners, a little lower down.

betook themselves to flight through the forests, abandoning their things: we jumped on land, and took a pathway that led to the forest: and at the distance of a bow-shot we found their tents, where they had made very large fires, and two [*of them*] were cooking their victuals, and roasting several animals, and fish of many kinds: where we saw that they were roasting a certain animal which seemed to be a serpent, save that it had no wings,¹ and was in its appearance so loathsome that we marvelled much at its savageness: Thus went we on through their houses, or rather tents, and found many of those serpents alive, and they were tied by the feet and had a cord around their snouts, so that they could not open their mouths, as is done [*in Europe*] with mastiff-dogs so that they may not bite: they were of such savage aspect that none of us dared to take one away, thinking that they were poisonous: they are of the bigness of a kid, and in length an ell and a half:² their feet are long and thick, and armed with big claws: they have a hard skin, and are of various colours: they have the muzzle and face of a serpent: and from their snouts there rises a crest like a saw which extends along the middle of the back as far as the tip³ of the tail: in fine we deemed them to be serpents and venomous, and [*nevertheless, those people*] ate them: we found that they made bread out of little fishes which they took from the sea, first boiling them, [*then*] pounding them, and making thereof a paste, or bread, and they baked them on the embers: thus did

p. 12. they eat them: we tried it, and found that it was good: they had so many other kinds of eatables, and especially of fruits and roots, that it would be a large matter to describe them in detail: and seeing that the people did not return, we decided not to touch nor take away anything of theirs, so as better to reassure them: and we left in the tents for them many of our things, placed where they should see them, and returned by night to our ships: and the next

¹ *Alia*—wings or fins. Vespucci must have been thinking of the fabulous dragon.

² *Braccia e mezo*. This animal was the iguana.

³ *Sommità* in original, which might mean the root of the tail; but the translation given is the correct one.

day, when it was light, we saw on the beach an infinite number of people: and we landed: and although they appeared timorous towards us, they took courage nevertheless to hold converse with us, giving us whatever we asked of them: and shewing themselves very friendly towards us, they told us that those were their dwellings, and that they had come hither for the purpose of fishing: and they begged that we would visit their dwellings and villages, because they desired to receive us as friends: and they engaged in such friendship because of the two captured men whom we had with us, as these were their enemies: insomuch that, in view of such importunity on their part, holding a council, we determined that 28 of us Christians in good array should go with them, and in the firm resolve to die if it should be necessary: and after we had been here some three days, we went with them inland: and at three leagues from the coast we came to a village of many people and few houses, for there were no more than nine [*of these*]: where we were received with such and so many barbarous ceremonies that the pen suffices not to write them down: for there were dances, and songs, and lamentations mingled with rejoicing, and great quantities of food: and here we remained the night: where they offered us their women, so that we were unable to withstand them: and after having been here that night and half the next day, so great was the number of people who came wondering to behold us that they were beyond counting: and the most aged begged us to go with them to other villages which were further inland, making display of doing us the greatest honour: wherefore we decided to go: and it would be impossible to tell you how much honour they did us: and we went to several villages, so that we were nine days journeying, so that our Christians who had remained with the ships were already apprehensive concerning us: and when we were about 18 leagues in the interior of the land, we resolved to return to the ships: and on our way back, such was the number of people, as well men as women, that came with us as far as the sea, that it was a wondrous thing: and if any of us became weary of the march, they carried us in their

p. 13. nets very refreshingly : and in crossing the rivers, which are many and very large, they passed us over by skilful means so securely that we ran no danger whatever, and many of them came laden with the things which they had given us, which consisted in their sleeping-nets, and very rich feathers, many bows and arrows, innumerable popinjays¹ of divers colours : and others brought with them loads of their household goods, and of animals : but a greater marvel will I tell you, that, when we had to cross a river, he deemed himself lucky who was able to carry us on his back : and when we reached the sea, our boats having arrived, we entered into them : and so great was the struggle which they made to get into our boats, and to come to see our ships, that we marvelled [*thereat*] : and in our boats we took as many of them as we could, and made our way to the ships, and so many [*others*] came swimming that we found ourselves embarrassed in seeing so many people in the ships, for there were over a thousand persons all naked and unarmed : they were amazed by our [*nautical*] gear and contrivances, and the size of the ships : and with them there occurred to us a very laughable affair, which was that we decided to fire off some of our great guns,² and when the explosion took place, most of them through fear cast themselves [*into the sea*] to swim, not otherwise than frogs on the margins of a pond, when they see something that frightens them, will jump into the water, just so did those people : and those who remained in the ships were so terrified that we regretted our action : however we reassured them by telling them that with those arms we slew our enemies : and when they had amused themselves in the ships the whole day, we told them to go away because we desired to depart that night, and so separating from us with much friendship and love, they went away to land. Amongst that people and in their land, I knew and beheld so many of their customs and ways of living, that I do not care to enlarge upon them : for Your Magnificence must know that in each of my voyages I have noted the most wonderful things, and I have indited it all in a volume after the manner of a

¹ *Pappagalli*, perroquets.

² *Artiglierie*.

geography : and I intitle it LE QUATTRO GIORNATE: in which work the things are comprised in detail, and as yet there is no copy of it given out, as it is necessary for me to revise it.¹ This land is very populous, and full of inhabitants, and of numberless rivers, [and] animals: few [of which] resemble ours, excepting lions, panthers, stags, pigs, goats, and deer:² and even these have some dissimilarities of form : they have no horses nor mules, nor, saving your reverence, asses nor dogs, nor any kind of sheep or oxen : but so numerous are the other animals which they have, and all are savage, and of none do they make use for their service, that they could not be counted. What shall we say of others [such as] birds? which are so numerous, and of so many kinds, and of such various-coloured plumages, that it is a marvel to behold them. The soil is very pleasant and fruitful, full of immense woods and forests : and it is always green, for the foliage never drops off. The fruits are so many that they are numberless and entirely different from ours. This land is within the torrid zone, close to or just under the parallel described by the Tropic of Cancer: where the pole of the horizon has an elevation of 23 degrees, at the extremity of the second climate.³ Many tribes came to see us, and wondered at our faces and our whiteness : and they asked us whence we came : and we gave them to understand that we had come from heaven, and that we were going to see the world, and they believed it. In this land we placed baptismal fonts, and an infinite [number of] people were baptized, and they called us in their language Carabi, which means men of great wisdom. We took our departure from that port : and the province is called Lariab : and we navigated along the coast, always in sight of land, until we had run 870 leagues of it, still going in the direction of the maestrale [north-west] making in our course many halts, and holding inter-

¹ *Conferirla.*

² In the text the colon follows "few," which alters the sense considerably, and makes the statement run thus, "Numberless rivers and few animals: they resemble ours," &c. ; but the real intention is evidently better conveyed by adding the words in brackets, and displacing the colon in question.

³ That is, 23 degrees north latitude.

course with many peoples : and in several places we obtained gold by barter but not much in quantity, for we had done enough in discovering the land and learning that they had gold. We had now been thirteen months on the voyage : and the vessels and the tackling were already much damaged, and the men worn out by fatigue : we decided by general council to haul our ships on land and examine them for the purpose of stanching leaks,¹ as they made much water, and of caulking and tarring them afresh, and [*then*] returning towards Spain : and when we came to this determination, we were close to a harbour the best in the world : into which we entered with our vessels : where we found an immense number of people : who received us with much friendliness : and on the shore we made a bastion² with our boats and with barrels and casks, and our artillery, which commanded every point :³ and our ships having been unloaded and lightened,⁴ we drew them upon land, and repaired them in everything that was needful : and the land's people gave us very great assistance : and continually furnished us with their victuals : so that in this port we tasted little of our own, which suited our game well :⁵ for the stock of provisions which we had for our return-passage was little and of sorry kind : where [*i.e., there*] we remained 37 days : and went many times to their villages ? where they paid us the greatest honour : and [*now*] desiring to depart upon our voyage, they made complaint to us how at certain times of the year there came from over the sea to this their land, a race of people very cruel, and enemies of theirs : and [*who*] by means of treachery or of violence slew many of them, and ate them : and some they made captives, and carried them away to their houses, or country : and how they could scarcely contrive to defend

p. 15.

¹ *Stancharle* (? *stagnarle*).

² Fort or barricade. The Latin misreads it "a new boat."

³ *Che giocavano per tutto*.

⁴ *Allogiate* is slurred over by the Latin and Varnhagen. I take it to be intended for *allegiate*, and this to be an old form, corresponding to the French *alléger*, of *allegérite* or *alleviate* : lightened, eased.

⁵ *Che ci feciono buon giuoco*.

themselves from them, making signs to us that [*those*] were an island-people and lived out in the sea about a hundred leagues away: and so piteously did they tell us this that we believed them: and we promised to avenge them of so much wrong: and they remained overjoyed herewith: and many of them offered to come along with us, but we did not wish to take them for many reasons, save that we took seven of them, on condition that they should come [*i.e., return home*] afterwards in [*their own*] canoes because we did not desire to be obliged to take them back to their country: and they were contented: and so we departed from those people, leaving them very friendly towards us: and having repaired our ships, and sailing for seven days out to sea between north-east and east: and at the end of the seven days we came upon the islands, which were many, some [*of them*] inhabited, and others deserted: and we anchored at one of them: where we saw a numerous people who called it Iti: and having manned our boats with strong crews, and [*taken ammunition for*] three cannon-shots in each, we made for land: where we found [*assembled*] about¹ 400 men, and many women, and all naked like the former [*peoples*]. They were of good bodily presence, and seemed right warlike men: for they were armed with their weapons, which are bows, arrows, and lances: and most of them had square wooden targets: and bore them in such wise that they did not impede the drawing of the bow: and when we had come with our boats to about a bowshot of the land, they all sprang into the water to shoot their arrows at us and to prevent us from leaping upon shore: and they all had their bodies painted of various colours, and [*were*] plumed with feathers: and the interpreters² who were with us told us that when [*those*] displayed themselves so painted and plumed, it was to betoken that they wanted to fight: and so much did they persist in preventing us from landing, that we were compelled to play with our artillery: and when they heard the explosion,

¹ *Alpie di 400.*

² *Le lingue, a Portuguese idiom.*

and saw some of them fall dead, they all drew back to the land : wherefore, forming our council, we resolved that 42 of our men should spring on shore, and, if they waited for us, fight them : thus having leaped to land with our weapons, they advanced towards us, and we fought for about an hour, for we had but little advantage of them, except that our arbalasters and gunners killed some of them, and they wounded certain of our men : and this was because they did not stand to receive us within reach of lance-thrust or sword-blow : and so much vigour did we put forth at last, that we came to

p. 16. sword-play, and when they tasted our weapons, they betook themselves to flight through the mountains and the forests, and left us conquerors of the field with many of them dead and a good number wounded : and for that day we took no other pains to pursue them, because we were very weary, and we returned to our ships, with so much gladness on the part of the seven men who had come with us that they could not contain themselves [*for joy*] : and when the next day arrived, we beheld coming across the land a great number of people, with signals of battle, continually sounding horns, and various other instruments which they use in their wars : and all [*of them*] painted and feathered, so that it was a very strange sight to behold them : wherefore all the ships held council, and it was resolved that since this people desired hostility with us, we should proceed to encounter them and try by every means to make them friends : in case they would not have our friendship, that we should treat them as foes, and so many of them as we might be able to capture should all be our slaves : and having armed ourselves as best we could, we advanced towards the shore, and they sought not to hinder us from landing, I believe from fear of the cannons : and we jumped on land, 57 men in four squadrons, each one [*consisting of*] a captain and his company : and we came to blows with them : and after a long battle [*in which*] many of them [*were*] slain, we put them to flight, and pursued them to a village, having made about 250 of them captives, and we burnt the village, and returned to our ships with victory and 250

prisoners,¹ leaving many of them dead and wounded, and of ours there were no more than one killed, and 22 wounded, who all escaped [*i.e., recovered*], God be thanked. We arranged our departure, and the seven men, of whom five were wounded, took an island-canoe, and, with seven prisoners that we gave them, four women and three men, returned to their [*own*] country full of gladness, wondering at our strength: and we thereon made sail for Spain with 222 captive slaves: and reached the port of Calis [*Cadiz*] on the 15 day of October 1498, where we were well received and sold our slaves. Such is what befel me, most noteworthy, in this my first voyage.

ENDS THE FIRST VOYAGE.

BEGINS THE SECOND.

¹ Varnhagen thought we ought to read "25" (not 250), like the Latin version, and to correct the figures "222" lower down into "22," in both the text and the Latin. But he was in error, having omitted to observe that the figures "250" occur *twice*. He evidently looked more on the Latin than the text. Besides, a capture of only 25 savages would be very little indeed for the European force to make, whether we reckon it at 57 men or 228 men, as he and the Latin read it (four squadrons, each of 57 men, with its captain), especially when they had entered into hostilities with the express intention of making captives. [He afterwards corrected himself.]





Second Voyage.

[Woodcut of two Ships at Sea.]

.....

p. 17. **A**S for the second voyage, and what I saw in it most worthy of record, it is as follows here. We started from the port of Calis [*Cadiz*], three ships in company, on the 16 day of May 1499¹ and began our voyage in a direct course to the islands of Cabo Verde, passing in sight of the island of Great Canary: and so much way did we make that we dropped anchor at an island which is called the Island of Fire:² and having here taken in our provision of water and firewood, we resumed our voyage going south-westwards:³ and in 44 days⁴ we touched upon a new land: and we deemed that it was [*part of*] a continent, and continuous with that [*land*] of which mention is made above:⁵ the which [*new land*] is situated within the Torrid Zone, and southwardly beyond the equinoctial line: above which the southern pole rises to the elevation of 5 degrees, beyond every climate:⁶ and it is 500 leagues distant south-westwardly⁷ from the said islands:⁸ and

¹ 1499. Latin has 1489, by error. ² *Lisola del fuoco.* ³ *Per illibeccio.*

⁴ The Latin has "19 days," and so has Varnhagen, notwithstanding that his *text* is correct.

⁵ *I.e.*, in the preceding relation of the first voyage. The Latin makes a blunder here, and says, "opposite to," instead of "continuous with." The translator must have read "*contraria*" for "*continua*."

⁶ This means, simply, at 5 degrees south latitude.

⁷ *Per el vento libeccio.*

⁸ *I.e.*, the Canaries.

we found that the days were equal with the nights : for we reached it on the 27 day of June, when the sun is at the Tropic of Cancer : which land we found to be all overflowed with water and full of very large rivers.¹ As yet² we saw no people : we brought our ships to anchor and put out our boats : in them we pulled to the land, and as I have said, we found it full of the largest rivers and inundated by very great floods which we met with : and we attempted p. 18. it in many places to see if we could enter therein : and because of the great floods poured by the rivers, however strenuously we strove, we could find no spot that was not inundated : we observed on the waters many tokens that the land was inhabited : and seeing that in this quarter we could not enter it, we decided to return to the ships and to attempt landing in another place : and we weighed our anchors, and sailed east-south-east,³ always coasting the shore which trended in that direction, and in a space of 40 leagues we made attempts to land in several places : and it was all lost time : we found on that coast the sea-currents so strong that they did not allow us to navigate, and they all ran from south-east to north-west : consequently seeing so many impediments to our navigation, we held a council, and decided to turn our course to the north-west : and we sailed along the land till we arrived at a very fine port : which was formed by a large island that was situated at the mouth, inside of which there was a bay, very deeply indented : and while sailing by the side of the island to enter into the harbour, we beheld many people : and rejoicing thereat, we directed our vessels thither, so as to drop anchor where we saw the people, being probably [*then*] about four leagues away to seaward from them :⁴ and proceeding thus we had sight of a Canoe that was coming from the high sea : in which there were coming

¹ Varnhagen inserts here (from the Latin) a statement about the greenness of the land, and that it was full of large trees; which does not at all appear in the text.

² *In questo principio.*

³ *Infra levante e sciloccho.*

⁴ There is some confusion here ; they could hardly have been able to see a crowd of people at four leagues' distance.

many persons: and we resolved to seize it:¹ and we turned our vessels round to meet it navigating in such order that we should not lose it: and sailing towards it with a brisk breeze,² we observed that they were at a stand-still, with their oars lifted, I believe in wonder at our ships: and when they perceived that we were advancing to approach them, they dipped their oars in the water and began to row towards the land: and as in our company there was a caravel of 45 tons, a very quick sailer, she took station to windward³ of the canoe: and when it seemed to be time to bear down upon it, [*the caravel*] shook out⁴ full sail and made for [*the canoe*] and we likewise: and when the caravel came abreast of it and did not seek to board [*the canoe*], she passed by, and then stood still against the wind: and when they saw themselves at a vantage, they began to struggle hard with their oars to escape: and we, who had our boats already astern manned with good crews, thinking that they would take it [*the canoe*], and they laboured for more than two hours, and at last, if the little caravel had not tacked again upon them, we should have lost it [*the canoe*]: and when they found themselves hemmed in by the caravel and the boats, they all flung themselves into the sea, probably some 70 men [*in number*]:⁵ and they were at a distance of about two leagues from land: and following them with our boats, the whole day, we were unable to take more than two of them, for, certain it was, all the others reached the land in safety: and in the canoe there remained four boys: who were not of their tribe: for they brought them as captives from another land: and they had castrated them, for they were all without the virile member, and had the wound still fresh: whereat we marvelled much: and being taken into the ships they told us by signs that [*the men of the canoe*] had castrated them in order to eat them: and we learned that those were a people who are called Camballi, very savage, who ate human flesh. Towing the canoe astern, we made in our ships for

p. 19.

¹ *Haverla alla mano.*² *Fresco tempo.*³ *Barlovento.*⁴ *Allargho li apparechi.*⁵ Latin has "20 men."

the land and anchored at [*the distance of*] half a league : and as we saw great numbers of people on the shore, we rowed to the land in our boats, taking with us the two men we had captured : and having landed, all the people fled away, and betook themselves to the forests : and we let go one of the [*two*] men, giving him several little bells,¹ and [*indicating*] that we desired to be their friends : which he [*whom*] we sent to them effected very well, and brought with him all the tribe, who were about 400 men and many women : who came without any weapons to where we were [*standing*] with our boats : and having made good friendship with them, we restored to them the second captive, and sent to the ships for their canoe and gave it back to them. This canoe was 26 paces long and two yards² broad, and entirely hollowed out of a single tree, and very elaborately made : and when they had docked it in a river and put it in a safe place, they all fled away, and would no further hold intercourse with us, which seemed to us a quite barbarous action, so that we deemed them a people of little faith and ill condition. With them we saw some little gold which they had in their ears. We departed from these, and made our way to the inner part of the bay :³ where we found such a multitude of people, that it was marvellous : with whom on landing we made a friendship : and many of us went with them to their villages, very safely, and well-received. In this place we obtained 150 pearls⁴ which they gave us in exchange for a little bell, and some little gold which they gave us for nothing :⁵ and in this land we found that they drank a wine made of their fruits and grain, in the manner of beer, both white and red : and

¹ *Sonagli*, little bells or rattles.

² *Braccia*.

³ Instead of the simple statement, "and made our way," &c., the Latin inserts "having voyaged along that coast for about eighty leagues we came to a safe harbour," which is absurd, but has apparently influenced Varnhagen, who evidently made the mistake of incautiously referring sometimes to the Latin and sometimes to the Italian text, thus failing to see all the discrepancies.

⁴ *Rischattanmo*. The Latin has 500, instead of 150.

⁵ *Di gratia*.

p. 20.

the best was made of *myrobalans*,¹ and was very good : and they ate infinite numbers of these, it being then the season for them. It is a very good fruit, pleasant to the taste, and healthful to the body. The soil abounds greatly with everything they need for subsistence, and the people [*were*] of polite behaviour and the most pacific we had as yet met with. We remained in this harbour for seventeen days with much pleasure : and every day fresh people, from the interior of the country, came to see us, wondering at our appearance and whiteness, and our clothing and arms, and at the shape and great size of the ships. From those people we had information of a tribe that lived further to the west of them, who were their enemies, who had an infinite quantity of pearls : and that those [*pearls*] which they [*our friends*] had were what they had taken from them [*the enemies*] in their wars : and they told us how they fished for them, and in what manner they [*the pearls*] were produced, and we found that they spoke with truth, as Your Magnificence shall hear. We departed from this harbour and navigated along the coast : on which we continually saw clouds of smoke² arising, with people on the beach : and at the end of several days we came to anchor in a harbour, for the purpose of repairing one of our ships, which had sprung a great leak :³ where we found that there was a large population : with whom we were not able, neither by force nor for love to obtain any conversation whatever : and when we went on land, they struggled fiercely to prevent us from doing so : and when they could hold out no longer, they fled through the forests and did not await us. Finding them so barbarous, we went away from hence : and proceeding on our voyage we had sight of an island distant 15 leagues out to sea from the [*main-*] land : and we decided on going to see if it were inhabited. We found therein the most brutish and loathsome people that were ever seen, and they were on this wise. In behaviour and looks, they were very repulsive : and they

¹ *Mirabolani.*

² *Fumalte*, by error for *fumate*. Varnhagen has transcribed *fumatte*.

³ *Faceva molta acqua.*

all had their cheeks swollen out with a green herb inside, which they were constantly chewing like beasts, so that they could scarcely utter speech : and each one had [*suspended*] upon his neck, two dried gourds, one of which was full of that herb which they kept in their mouths, and the other [*full*] of a white flour, which looked like powdered chalk, and from time to time, with a small stick which they kept moistening in their mouths, they dipped it into the flour and then put it into their mouths inside both cheeks, thus mixing with flour the herb which they had in their mouths : and this they did very frequently : and marvelling at such a thing, we were unable to comprehend this secret, nor with what object they acted thus. These people when they saw us, came to us as familiarly as if we had been united with them in friendship : going with them along the beach, talking, and desirous of drinking fresh water, they made signs to us that they had none, and offered us some of that herb and flour of theirs, so that we concluded by inference that this island was poor in water, and that it was to preserve themselves against thirst they kept that herb in their mouths, and the flour for the same [*reason*]. We went through the island for a day and a half without ever finding any flowing water : and we observed that the water which they drank was of a dew which fell by night on certain leaves that looked like asses' ears, and [*which*] became full of water, and hereof they drank : it was most excellent water : and [*i.e., but*] they had not those leaves in many places. They had no form of victuals, nor roots, as on the main-land : and they subsisted on fish which they took in the sea ; and of these they had very great abundance, and they were most expert fishermen : and they presented to us many turtles, and many very excellent fish of great size : their women did not use to keep the herb in their mouths like the men, but all carried a gourd with water and drank thereof. They had no villages, neither of houses nor huts, save that they dwelt underneath [*a kind of*] arbours, which protected them from the sun, and not from the water ; for I believe it rained very seldom in that island : when they were at sea fishing, they

p. 21.

all had a leaf of great size and so broad, that they were quite in shadow beneath it, and they [*used to*] fix it in the ground : and as the sun revolved so did they turn the leaf : and in this manner they protected themselves from the sun. The island contains many animals of various kinds : and they drink marsh-water : and seeing that they had nothing profitable [*for us*] we departed, and took our course to another island : and we found [*afterwards*] that a race of very great stature dwelt therein : we then landed to see if we found [*could find*] fresh water : and imagining that the island was not inhabited because we saw no people, going along the shore, we beheld very large foot-prints of men on the sand : and we judged, if their other members were of corresponding size, that they must be very big men : and proceeding onwards, we came upon a pathway which led to the interior of the land : and nine of us agreed : and concluded that the island being small could not contain within itself many people : and thereupon we went onward through it, to see what manner of people they were : and after we had gone for about a league, we beheld in a valley five of their huts, which appeared uninhabited : and we made

p. 22. our way to them and found only five women, two old ones and three girls so lofty in stature that we gazed at them in astonishment : and when they saw us, so much terror overcame them that they had not even spirit to flee away : and the two old women began to invite us with words, bringing us many things to eat, and they put us in a hut : and they were in stature taller than a tall man, so that they would be quite as big of body as was Francesco degli Albizi, but better proportioned : insomuch that we were all of a mind to take away the three girls from them by force : and to carry them to Castile as a prodigy : and while thus discoursing, there began to enter through the door of the hut full 36 men much bigger than the women : men so well built that it was a famous sight to see them : who put us in such anxiety that we would much rather have been in our ships than in the company of such people. They carried very large bows and arrows, with large knobbed clubs : and they spoke among themselves in such

a tone as though they meant to lay hands upon us: seeing that we were in such danger, we debated of various plans among ourselves: some [*of us*] said that we ought to attack immediately in the house: and others that it were better on the open ground [*outside*]: and others who said that we ought not to begin the quarrel until we should see what they meant to do: and we agreed to go forth from the hut and to make our way slily towards the ships: and so we did: and having taken our way we returned to the ships: those [*savages*] however came following behind us, always at the distance of a stone's throw, speaking amongst themselves: I believe that they were no less afraid of us, than we were of them: because we halted sometimes, and they did the same without approaching nearer, until we reached the shore where the boats were awaiting us: and we entered into them: and when we were at some distance, they danced about and shot many arrows at us: but we had little dread of them now: we fired two gunshots at them, more to terrify them than to do any hurt: and at the explosion they all fled to the hill:¹ and so we departed from them, having as it seemed to us escaped from a perilous day's work. They went entirely naked like the others. I call that island, the Isle of Giants, because of their great size: and we proceeded onward still skirting the coast on which it befel us many times to have to fight them, as they sought not to allow us to take anything from the land: and since it was our desire to return now to Castile, as we had been about a year at sea, and we had [*but*] a small stock of provisions [*remaining*], and that little damaged by reason of the great heats that we endured: because from the time when we started for the isles p. 23. of Cabo Verde till now, we had continually navigated in the torrid zone, and twice crossed the equinoctial line: for as I have said above we had gone to 5 degrees below it southwardly: and here we were at 15 degrees north of it. Being in this mind, it pleased the Holy Ghost to give us some relief for

¹ *Al monte*. Perhaps it means "in a heap" or "in a confused rout."

so much travail: which was, that while we were seeking a harbour wherein to repair our vessels, we met with a nation which received us with great friendliness: and we found that they had a great abundance of very fine oriental pearls: with whom we stayed for 47 days: and we bought from them 119 marks¹ of pearls for very little merchandise: for I believe they did not cost us the value of forty ducats: since that which we gave them was nothing but little bells and looking-glasses and beads, *dieci-palle*,² and sheets of tin, indeed, for a single little bell a man gave as many pearls as he had. From them [*the natives*] we learned how and where they fished for them [*the pearls*]: and they gave us many [*of the*] oysters in which they grew: we bought [*also*] an oyster in which 130 pearls were growing, and others with less: the Queen took³ from me that with the 130: and others I took care she should not see. And Your Magnificence must know that unless the pearls are matured, and drop out of themselves, they do not last: because they perish quickly: and of this I have had actual experience: when they are mature, they lie within the shell detached and set in the flesh:⁴ and these ones are good: whatsoever bad ones they had, though the most of them were rough and ill-pierced, still they were worth good money: because the mark sold for⁵: and at the end of 47 days we quitted the people, leaving them great friends towards us. We departed, and through the necessity of our victualling we made for the island of Antiglia⁶ which is the same that Christophal Colombo discovered several years ago: where we took in much store of provision:

¹ *Marchi, marco*—a weight of eight ounces.

² *Conte, dieci palle et foglie di octone. Dieci palle* must be some sort of balls or playing-marbles.

³ From "the Queen took" down to "she should not see" omitted in Latin.

⁴ The text is obscure; the Latin is explicatory, and I presume correct, in its account of the nature of pearls.

⁵ A blank in the text. From "good" to "sold for" omitted in Latin.

⁶ Hispaniola.

and remained two months and 17 days:¹ where we underwent many perils and troubles with the very Christians who were in this island along with Colombo:² I believe through envy: but, in order not to be prolix, I refrain from narrating them. We departed from the said island on the 22 day of July: and we navigated during a month and a half: and entered into the port of Calis [*Cadiz*], which was on the 8 day of September, by daylight, my second voyage: God [*be*] praised. .

ENDED THE SECOND VOYAGE.

BEGINS THE THIRD.

¹ The Latin "2 months and 2 days."

² "Along with Columbus," omitted in Latin and not noted by Varnhagen.





Third Voyage.

[Woodcut of a Ship at Sea.]

.....

p. 24. **B**EING afterwards in Seville, resting myself from so many travails that I had in those two voyages undergone, and purposing to return to the land of the pearls: when Fortune not contented with my labours, for I know not how it came into the mind of this most serene King Don Manuel of Portugal, to wish to employ me: and being in Seville without any thought of coming to Portugal, there comes to me a messenger with a letter of his royal crown,¹ which entreated me to come to Lisbon to speak with his Highness, promising to give me recompense. I was not of opinion that I should come: I sent away the messenger, saying that I was ill in health, and that when I should be well and his Highness still desired to employ me, that I would do whatever he should command me. And seeing that he could not have me, he decided to send for me [*i.e.*, to fetch me] Giuliano di Bartholomeo del Giocondo, residing here in Lisbon, with a commission to bring me by whatever means. The said Giuliano came to Seville: through whose coming and entreaty I was compelled to come:² but my coming was regarded with ill-favour by so many as knew me: because I

¹ *I.e.*, an official letter from the Crown.

² He means "go," and in the next line "going," but was led to say "come" and "coming" from the consciousness that he was writing his letter in Lisbon.

quitted Castile where honour had been done me, and the King kept me in ample competence:¹ the worst was that I went *insalutato hospite*:² and having presented myself before this King [of Portugal], he shewed himself pleased with my coming: and prayed me to join the company of three of his ships which were ready to go in discovery of new lands: and as a King's request p. 25. is a command, I had to consent to whatever he desired of me: and we sailed from this port of Lisbon, three ships in company, on the 10 day of May 1501, and took our route directly for the Island of Great Canary: and we passed in sight of it without halting: and from hence we went skirting along the coast of Africa on the west side: on which coast we exercised our fishing-skill on a kind of fish which are called Parchi:³ where we stopped three days: and from hence we made for the coast of Ethiopia, to a port which is called Besechicce,⁴ which is within the Torrid Zone: over which the North Pole is at an elevation of $14\frac{1}{2}$ degrees, situated in the first climate:⁵ where we remained 11 days, taking in water and firewood: because my intention was to make our seaway southerly through the Atlantic gulf.⁶ We quitted this Ethiopian port, and navigated south-westwardly,⁷ taking one quarter by south, until after a course of 67 days we anchored at a land which was 700 leagues to the south-west of the said port: and in those 67 days we had the worst weather that ever any seafarer had, through numerous storm-showers,⁸ whirlwinds, and tempests which struck us: for we passed through much adverse weather, because the greater part of our navigation was continually close to the equinoctial line, for in the month of June it is winter: and we found that the day was equal with the night: and we found that the shadows fell constantly towards the south: it pleased God to shew us new land, and [*this*] was on the 17 day of August: when we anchored at half

¹ *In buona possessione* (? "in high consideration," as Latin has it).

² "Without bidding adieu to my host."

³ Portuguese *Pargos*.

⁴ Latin has *Besilicca*.

⁵ That is, $14\frac{1}{2}$ degrees north latitude.

⁶ Ocean.

⁷ *Libeccio*.

⁸ *Aguazeri* (? waterspouts).

a league [*from the shore*]: and put out our boats: and went to inspect the land, whether it was inhabited by people, and who these were: and we found that it was inhabited by a people who were worse than animals: however Your Magnificence must understand that as yet¹ we saw no people, but we perceived well that it was inhabited from many signs that we observed therein: we took possession of it for this most serene King [*Don Manuel*]:² which land we found to be very pleasant and green, and of goodly appearance: it was 5 degrees towards the south beyond the equinoctial line: and for the present³ we returned to the ships: and because we were in great want of water and firewood, we determined the next day to return to the shore to provide ourselves with what was needful: and, when on land, we beheld some people on the top of a hill, who stood gazing and did not venture to come down: they were naked, and of the same colour and fashion as were the other former [*savages we had met with elsewhere*]: and although we strove to induce them⁴ to come and speak with us, we were totally unable to reassure them, for they had no trust in us: and seeing their obstinacy, and [*as*] it was already late, we returned to the ships, leaving on the ground for them several little bells and looking-glasses, and other things within their ken: and when we were at a distance on sea, they descended from the hill and came for the things we had left them, displaying great wonderment at these: and for that day we provided ourselves only with water: the next morning we saw from the ships that the land's people were making great clouds of smoke: and thinking that they were calling us [*to them*] we went on shore where we found that great numbers of them had come, and yet they remained aloof from us: and they made signs to us that we should go with them into the interior of the land: wherefore two of our Christians were moved to ask the captain that he would give them leave as they wished to undertake the risk of going with those [*savages*] into the land, to see

p. 26.

¹ *In questo principio.*² The Latin says, by mistake, "King of Castile."³ *Per questo: ita* in Latin. He means probably "for this day."⁴ By signals, of course.

what [*manner of*] people they were, and whether they had any riches, or spices, or druggeries: and so much did they beseech that the captain was pleased [*to allow it*]: and they prepared themselves with many things for barter [*and*] quitted us with the order that they should not be more than 5 days before returning: because we would wait for them just so long: and they took their way through the country: and we [*remained*] by the ships awaiting them: and almost every day people came to the beach and would never hold speech with us: and the seventh day we went on land, and found that they had brought their women with them: and when we leaped to shore, the land's men sent many of their women to speak with us: and seeing they did not seem confident, we decided to send one of our men to them, who was a young fellow given to feats of strength; and, to reassure them,² we entered into our boats: and he went among the women: and when he reached them, they made a great circle around him, touching him and gazing at him in wonderment: and while he was thus [*encircled*] we saw a woman come from the hill, and she carried a great stake in her hand: and when she reached to where our Christian stood, she came behind him: and, lifting the club, gave him such a tremendous blow that she stretched him dead on the ground, in an instant the other women took hold of him by the feet and dragged him along by his feet towards the hill: and the men bounded towards the beach, and with their bows and arrows [*began*] to shoot at us: and they put our people into such terror, the boats being held fast by the small anchors which were sunk in the ground, that, because of the numerous arrows [*the natives*] shot into the boats, no one had courage to snatch up his arms: however we fired 4 gunshots at them, and they took no effect, save that on hearing the explosion, they all fled towards the hill and to where the women were already [*cutting*] the Christian into bits: and at a great fire which they had made, they were roasting him before our eyes, holding up several pieces towards us and [*then*] eating them: and

¹ *Che molto faceva lo sforzo.*

² Text has "him," by a typographical error of "lo" for "le."

p. 27. the men [*were*] making signs to us by their gestures how they had killed the other two Christians and eaten them: which grieved us greatly, seeing with our eyes the cruelty they were exercising on the dead man, to all of us it was an intolerable offence: and more than 40 of us being determined to jump on land and revenge such a cruel death, and an action [*so*] bestial and inhuman, the Admiral¹ would not give his consent, and so they [*the natives*] remained glutted with so monstrous an act of wrong:² and we departed from them ill-willingly, and with much shamefulness because of our Captain. We quitted that place, and began our navigation east-south-east, and thus the land trended: and we made many descents on land, and never did we meet a tribe that was willing to hold parley with us: and thus we navigated onward till we found that [*the line of*] the land was turning to south-westward:³ when we doubled a cape, to which we gave the name of Cape St. Augustine,⁴ we began to sail south-west, and this cape is 150 leagues distant to the east of the aforesaid land which we saw, where they slew the Christians: and this cape is 8 degrees south of the equinoctial line: and while [*thus*] sailing we had sight one day of many people who were standing on the beach to behold the wondrous apparition of our ships and the manner of our navigation, we directed our course towards them, and anchored in a good place, and made in our boats for land, and found them a better-conditioned people than the last: and although it was a toil to us to tame them, yet we made them our friends and held intercourse with them. We stayed 5 days in this place: and here we found *canna fistola*⁵ very thick and green, and dry on the tops of the trees. We decided to take in this place a couple of [*native*] men, so that they should explain for us the language: and there came three of their own free will to come to Portugal: and for the present, tired [*as I am*] already of so much writing, Your Magnificence shall know, that

¹ *Capitano maggiore.*

² *Di tanta ingiuria,* wrong-doing.

³ *Libeccio.*

⁴ The Latin has St. Vincent.

⁵ *Canna fistola* (? cassia, or wild cinnamon).

we departed from that port, navigating always within sight of land in a south-west direction, frequently making descents upon shore,¹ and speaking with an infinite number of peoples: and so far did we proceed southwards that we were now beyond the Tropic of Capricorn, where the South Pole was at an elevation of 32 degrees above the horizon: and we had already quite lost [sight of] Ursa Minor, and [Ursa] Major was very low, and appeared to us to be almost on the line of the horizon, and we guided ourselves by the stars of the other pole [that] of the South: which are numerous, and much larger and more brilliant than those of our pole: and I drew diagrams of most of them, and especially of those of the first and greater magnitude, with an exposition of the orbits which they describe around the southern pole, and a declaration of their diameters and semidiameters, as may be seen in my 4 Giornate:² we ran along this coast to the length of 750 leagues, 150 leagues from the cape called [Cape] St. Augustine towards the west, and 600³ leagues to the south-west: and if I wished to narrate the things which I saw on this coast, and what we underwent, twice the number of leaves [of paper] would not suffice me: and on this coast we saw nothing of value,⁴ except an infinite number of dye-wood and cassia-trees, and those which beget myrrh, and other wonders of nature which cannot be recounted: and having already been fully 10 months voyaging, and seeing that in this land we found nothing of mineral [wealth] we decided to hasten away from there, and to put to sea for some other quarter: and having held our council, it was resolved that the course should be followed which I should think fitting: and the command of the fleet was entirely handed over to me: and I then ordered that all the crews and the fleet should provide themselves with water and wood for six months, as the masters of the ships judged that we might navigate in them for so much

p. 28.

¹ *Di continuo facendo di molte scale.*

² "*Le Quattro Giornate*," the projected book to which he has already made more than one reference.

³ Latin has 700.

⁴ *Proficito.*

time. Having taken in our stores from this land, we began our voyage towards the south-east; and it was on the 15¹ day of February, when the sun was already nearing the Equinox, and turning towards this our northern hemisphere: and so long did we sail by that wind, that we found ourselves [at] so high² [a latitude] that the southern pole stood quite 52 degrees above our horizon, and we no longer beheld the stars either of Ursa Minor or Ursa Major: and we were already at a distance of full 500 leagues south-east from the harbour whence we had set out: and this was on the 3 day of April, and on that day there arose a tempest of so much violence upon the sea that we were compelled to haul down all our sails, and we scudded under bare poles before the great wind, which was south-west with enormous waves and a very stormy sky: and so fierce was the tempest that all the fleet was in great dread: the nights were very long: so that on the seventh day of April we had a night which was 15 hours long: for the sun was at the end of Aries: and in that region it was winter [then] as Your Magnificence may well consider, and while in this tempest on the seventh³ day of April, we had sight of a new land, along which we ran for about 20 leagues, and found that it was wholly a wild rough coast: and we beheld therein neither any harbour nor any people, because, as I believe, of the cold which was so intense that no one in our fleet could fortify himself against it or endure it: insomuch that, finding ourselves in so great a danger and in such a tempest that one ship could hardly see another for the great billows that were running [between us] and for the deep gloominess⁴ of the weather, we deliberated with the Admiral⁵ to signal to [the rest of] the fleet to approach and that we should abandon [this] land: and turn round in the direction of Portugal: and it was a very good resolve: for it is certain that if we had delayed that night, we had all been lost: because when we turned a-stern,⁶ both that

¹ Latin has 13.

³ 2nd April, Latin.

⁶ *Capitano maggiore.*

² So high—that is, so far south.

⁴ *Serrazon*, from the Portuguese *cerração*.

⁶ *Come arrivammo a poppa*, from Spanish *arribar*.

night and the next day, the tempest grew to such a height that we were in fear of being lost: and we had to make [*vows of*] pilgrimage and other ceremonies, as is the custom of sailors at such times: we scudded for 5 days,¹ and kept still drawing nearer to the equinoctial line, with the weather and the sea [*becoming*] more temperate: and it pleased God that we should escape from so great a peril: and our course was with the wind between north and north-east:² because our intention was to go and reconnoitre the coast of Ethiopia,³ as we were distant therefrom [*only*] 300 leagues across the gulf of the Atlantic Sea: and by the grace of God on the 10 day of May we came to a land therein, [*lying*] southward, which is called La serra liona:⁴ where we stayed 15 days, taking our refreshment: and from here we departed taking our course towards the islands of the Azores, which are distant about 750 leagues from this place of the Serra: and we reached the islands at the end of July: where we stayed 15 days more, taking some recreation: and we quitted them for Lisbon: being [*then*] 300 leagues to the west [*of it*]: and we entered into this port of Lisbon on the 7 day of September 1502, in good condition, God be thanked, with two ships only: because we [*had*] burnt the other in the Serra liona: as it was disabled from further navigation, for we were about 15⁵ months on this voyage: and for 11 days we navigated without seeing the Polar Star, or the Greater and Lesser Bear, which are called the Corno:⁶ and we steered by the stars of the other hemisphere. This is what I saw in this voyage or giornata.

¹ In Latin there is added here "in which five days we made 250 leagues of sea-passage."

² *Tramontano* and *greco*. ³ Africa. ⁴ Sierra Leone. ⁶ Latin has 16.

⁶ *Corno*—*quare* a typographical error for *carro*, the Wain.



Fourth Voyage.

[Woodcut of a Ship at Anchor, two figures in it, and one on land ; towers in the background.]



p. 30.

IT remains for me to tell the things seen by me in the fourth voyage, or giornata : and as I am already wearied, and also because this fourth voyage was not carried out in accordance with the purpose I [*had*] formed, through a mishap which befel us in the gulf of the Atlantic sea : as Your Magnificence shall learn in the sequel, briefly, I will endeavour to be brief. We departed from this port of Lisbon 6 ships in company, with the intention of going to discover an island towards the east, which is called Melaccha : of which there are news that it is very rich, and that it is as it were the storehouse of all the ships which come from the Gangetic sea and from the Indian sea, just as Calis [*Cadiz*] is the waiting-room¹ of all the vessels which pass from east to west, and from west to east by the route of Galigut,² and this Melaccha is more westerly than Caligut, and much more to the southward :³ for we know that it lies at the level⁴ of 33⁵ degrees of the antarctic hemisphere. We departed on the 10 day of May 1503 and made directly for the isles

¹ *Camera*.

² This is a puzzling sentence, like the statement that Malacca lay to the west of Calicut. ³ Mistranslated in the Latin. ⁴ *Paraggio*.

⁵ As Varnhagen justly corrects, this must have been meant for "3."

of Cape Verde, where we careened, and took some manner of refreshment, where we stayed 13¹ days: and from here we departed on our voyage, sailing by the south-east wind: and as our Chief Captain was a presumptuous and very obstinate man, he would go to examine Serra liona, a land of Southern Ethiopia, without having any need except to make it be seen that he was Captain of six ships, against the wish of all the rest of us Captains: and thus navigating, when we reached the said land, so great were the whirlwinds that struck us, and with them the weather so adverse, that [although] we were in sight of it [the shore] quite three days, the foul weather never allowed us to land: so that we were compelled to return to our proper course, and to quit the said Serra: and navigating hence to the *suduest* which is the wind between south and south-west:² and when we had sailed full 300 leagues through the immensity³ of the sea, being then quite 3 degrees south of the equinoctial line, we became aware of a land from which we were probably 22⁴ leagues distant: whereat we marvelled: and we found that it was an island in the middle of the sea and was very lofty, a very marvellous work of nature: since it was no more than two leagues in length and one in breadth: in which island, never had there been inhabitation by any people: and it was Bad Island⁵ for all the fleet: for Your Magnificence must know that by the ill-counsel and steering of our Chief Captain, he lost his ship here: since he struck with it upon a rock, and it split open on St. Laurence's night, which was on the 10 day of August, and went to the bottom: and there was nothing saved thereof except the crew. It was a ship of 300 tons: in which went all the importance of the fleet: and when all the fleet had laboured to save it, the Captain commanded me to make with my ship for the said island to seek a good anchorage, where all the ships might anchor: and as my boat manned with 9 of my sailors was in service and aiding to

p. 31.

¹ Latin has "12," and misunderstands the *careenage*.

² *Infra mezzo di e libeccio*. He evidently did not quite understand the Portuguese term, or else *suduest* is a typographical blunder for *sudsudueste*.

³ *Mōstro* (?).

⁴ Latin has "*duodecim*."

⁵ *La mala isola*.

belay¹ the ships, he willed that I should not take it, and that I should proceed without it: telling me that they should take it to me at the island: I quitted the fleet for the island as he ordered me, without a boat, and with the deficiency of half my crew, and I went to the said island, which was about 4 leagues distant: in which I found an excellent harbour, where all the ships could anchor very safely: where I awaited my Captain and the fleet fully 8 days, and they never came: so that we were very discontented, and the men that had remained with me in the ship were in such dread, that I was unable to console them: and being thus, the eighth day we beheld a ship coming upon the sea, and from fear that it might not see us, we weighed with our ships,² and made for it, thinking that it brought me my boat and crew: and when we came alongside of it, after having saluted, they told us how the admiral's ship had gone to the bottom, and how the crew had been saved, and that my boat and crew had remained with the fleet, which was gone further on that sea, which was to us so great an annoyance as Your Magnificence may conceive, finding ourselves 1000 leagues away from Lisbon, and on the ocean,³ and with a little crew: however we set our prow⁴ at Fortuné, and went still onward: we returned to the island, and provided ourselves with water and timber by means of my companion's boat: which island we found uninhabited, and it contained many fresh and sweet waters,⁵ innumerable trees, [and was] full of so many sea and land birds that they were beyond count: and they were so tame, that they allowed themselves to be taken with the hand: and so many of them did we take that we loaded a boat with those animals: we saw none [other] except very large rats and lizards with two tails, and some snakes: and having made our provision, we departed by the wind betwixt south and south-west, for we had an ordinance of the

¹ *Ligare* (? bind together).

² Ship (?). He had only one (see *supra*).

³ *Golfo*.

⁴ *Facemmo rostro*.

⁵ That is, streams or springs.

King which commanded us that whichever of the ships should lose sight of the fleet or of its Captain, should make for the land that we discovered in the previous voyage, at a harbour to which we gave the name of *Badia di tucti e sancti*:¹ and it pleased God to give us such good weather, that in 17 days we reached land therein, which was distant from the island full 300 leagues: where we found neither our Captain nor any other ship of the fleet: in which harbour we waited quite two months and 4 days: and seeing that there came no arrival, we agreed, my partner and I, p. 32. to run the coast: and we sailed 260 leagues further on, till² we arrived in a harbour: where we decided to construct a fort, and we did so: and left therein 24 Christian men whom my partner had for us, whom she had collected from the flagship³ that had been lost: in which port we stayed full 5 months making the fortress and loading our ships with verzino:⁴ as we were unable to proceed further, because we had not men [*enough*] and I was deficient of many pieces of ship-tackle. All this done, we determined to turn our course towards Portugal, which lay in the direction of the wind between north-east and north:⁵ and we left the 24 men who remained in the fort with provision for six months, and [*with*] 12 big guns⁶ and many other arms, and we pacified all the land's people: of whom no mention has been made in this voyage: not because we did not see and traffic with an infinite number of them: for we went, quite 30 men of us, 40 leagues inland: where I saw so many things that I omit to tell them, reserving them for my 4 Giornate. This land lies 18 degrees south of the equinoctial line, and 37 degrees to the west of the longitude of Lisbon, as is demonstrated by our instruments. And all this being done, we took leave of the Christians and the land: and began our navigation to *nornordeste*,⁷ which is the wind between

¹ Mistake for *Bahia de todos os Santos*. This confusion of *d* and *h* in Vespucci's handwriting led to a long-continued error in the maps.

² *Tlão*, for *tão*, so far that, until.

³ *Nave capitana*.

⁴ Brazil-wood, or dye-wood.

⁵ *Greco and tramontano*.

⁶ *Bombarde*.

⁷ It is printed *nornodeste*.

north and north-east, with the intention of making our navigation in a direct course to this city of Lisbon : and in 77 days, after so many travails and perils, we entered into this port on the 18 day of June 1504. God [*be*] praised : where we were received very well and beyond all belief : because all the city believed us lost : since the other ships of the fleet had all been lost through the arrogance and folly of our Captain, for so does God reward pride : and at present I find myself here in Lisbon, and I know not what the King will want to do with me, for I desire much to take repose.¹ The present bearer, who is Benvenuto di Domenico Benvenuti, will tell Your Magnificence of my condition, and of some things which, for prolixity, have been left unsaid : for he has seen and felt them, God be.....² I have gone on compressing the letter as much as I could, and there have been omitted to be told many natural things,³ because of avoiding prolixity. May Your Magnificence pardon me : whom I beseech to hold me in the number of your servants : and I recommend to you Ser Antonio Vespucci, my brother, and all my house. I remain, praying of God that he may increase the days of your life, and that the state of this sublime Republic and the honour of Your Magnificence may be exalted, etc. Given in Lisbon on the 4 day of September 1504.

[*Your*] servant AMERIGO VESPUCCI in Lisbon.

¹ The Latin substitutes "this messenger in the meantime commending much to your Majesty. Americus Vesputius. In Lisbon," for all the text which follows the word "repose."

² *Dio sia ò di*, followed by a blank. This is incomprehensible, and may be "God be . . ." (something not understood by the printer), or *di sui occhi . . .* ("with his own eyes . . ."), which would imply that Benvenuto had accompanied Vespucci in this voyage.

³ Things relating to natural history.

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