

COLUMBUS AND HIS TIMES

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Columbus and His Times by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

COLUMBUS AND HIS TIMES

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AND HIS TIMES.

"DONE IN VAIN
HIS SPIRIT TRAVELED OVER THE ATLANTIC MAIN;
WITH SAILORS, AN OBSCURE NAME FROM NOBILITY,
REDAINED A NEW WORLD THROUGH HIS STEERING'S GUIDANCE."
Montgomery.

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CHAPTER I.

DIFFICULTIES OF EARLY NAVIGATION — INVENTION OF THE MARINER'S COMPASS — THE ENTERPRISES OF THE PORTUGUESE — CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS.

In early times, the efforts of navigators were very inconsiderable; their voyages consisted chiefly in a timid creeping along the coast, and rarely did they venture beyond sight of land. The light of the sun by day, and of the stars by night, was their only guide; and its absence, as in the voyage of the apostle Paul from Cesarea to Rome, was productive of great perplexity and alarm. This infancy of the art of navigation continued for ages; but at length the means

were found by which its maturity was secured. To adopt the words of Montgomery :

"Long lay the ocean paths from man concealed;
Light came from heaven—the magnet was revealed,
A surer star to guide the seaman's eye
Than the pale glory of the northern sky;
Alike ordained to shine by night and day,
Through calm and tempest with unsetting ray;
Where'er the mountains rise, the billows roll,
Still with strong impulse turning to the pole;
True as the sun is to the morning true,
Though light as film, and trembling as the dew."

The discovery of the wonderful property of the magnet, by which a needle is made to point to the poles of the earth, was a new era in the history of navigation. The application of this power to its progress was immediately perceived, and the mariner's compass, now so familiar, was at once constructed. The north and the south could be found easily by this instrument, with sufficient accuracy, in every place and at all seasons, though the day were cloudy and the night were dark; and thus the domain of the ocean was opened to mankind.

But though the use of the compass, which was first employed by the Italians, might enable them to perform more safely and