

Pinzon owed, as was related by an old sailor of Moguez, at the same trial, to the flight of a flock of parrots which he had observed in the evening flying toward the southwest, in order, as he might well have conjectured, to roost on trees on the land. Never has a flight of birds been attended by more important results. It may even be said that it has decided the first colonization in the New Continent, and the original distribution of the Roman and Germanic races of man.\*

The course of great events, like the results of natural phenomena, is ruled by eternal laws, with few of which we have any perfect knowledge. The fleet which Emanuel, king of Portugal, sent to India, under the command of Pedro Alvarez Cabral, on the course discovered by Gama, was unexpectedly driven on the coast of Brazil on the 22d of April, 1500. From the zeal which the Portuguese had manifested, since the expedition of Diaz in 1487, to circumnavigate the Cape of Good Hope, a recurrence of fortuitous circumstances similar to those exercised by oceanic currents on Cabral's ships could hardly fail to manifest itself. The African discoveries would thus probably have brought about that of America south of the equator; and thus Robertson was justified in saying that it was decreed in the destinies of mankind that the New Continent should be made known to European navigators before the close of the fifteenth century.

Among the characteristics of Christopher Columbus we must especially notice the penetration and acuteness with which, without intellectual culture, and without any knowledge of physical and natural science, he could seize and combine the phenomena of the external world. On his arrival in a new world and under a new heaven,† he examined with care the form of continental masses, the physiognomy of vegetation, the habits of animals, and the distribution of heat and the variations in terrestrial magnetism. While the old admiral strove to discover the spices of India, and the rhubarb (*rui-barba*), which had already acquired a great celebrity through

\* Navarrete, *Documentos*, No. 69, in t. iii. of the *Viages y Descubr.*, p. 565-571; *Examen Crit.*, t. i., p. 234-249 and 252; t. iii., p. 158-165 and 224. On the contested spot of the first landing in the West Indies, see t. iii., p. 186-222. The map of the world of Juan de la Cosa, made six years before the death of Columbus, which was discovered by Valckenaer and myself in the year 1832, during the cholera epidemic, and has since acquired so much celebrity, has thrown new light on these mooted questions.

† On the graphical and often poetical descriptions of nature found in Columbus, see *ante*, p. 66, 67.