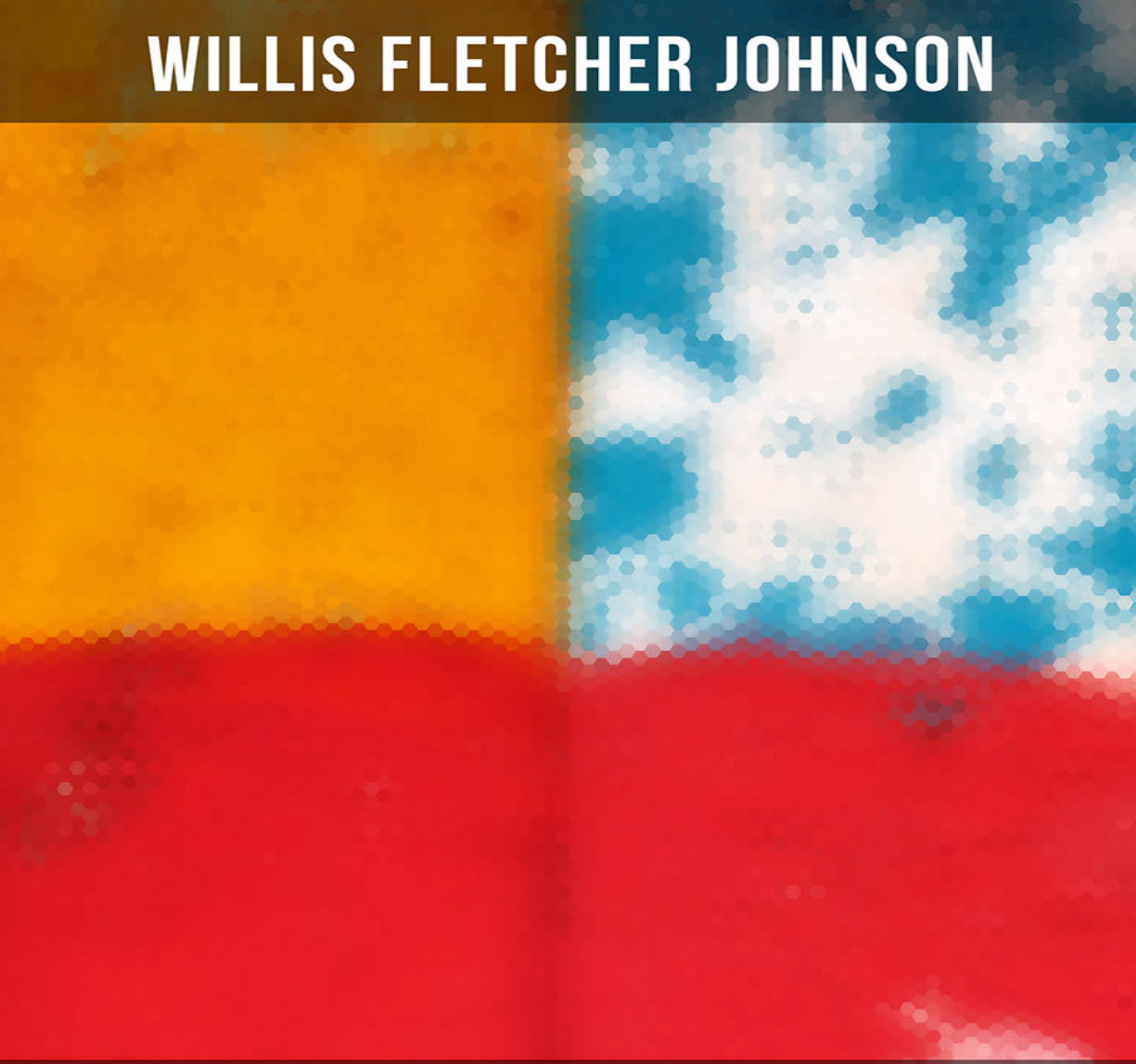
WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON



THE HISTORY OF CUBA

Willis Fletcher Johnson

The History of Cuba

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Table of Contents

VOLUME 1

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

THE HISTORY OF CUBA

Table of Contents

CHAPTER I

Table of Contents

CUBA; America: America; Cuba. The two names are inseparable. The record of each is in a peculiar sense identified with that of the other. Far more than any other land the Queen of the Antilles is associated with that Columbian enterprise from which the modern and practical history of the Western Hemisphere is dated. In Cuba the annals of America begin.

This island was not, it is true, the first land discovered by Columbus after leaving Spain. It was at least the fifth visited and named by him, and it was perhaps the tenth or twelfth which he saw and at which he touched in passing. But in at least three major respects it had the unquestionable primacy among all the discoveries of his first, second and third voyages, while in his own estimation it was not surpassed in importance by the main land of the continent which he finally reached in his fourth and last expedition. It was the first land visited or seen by him of the identity of which there has never been the slightest question. It was the first considerable land discovered by him, the first which was worth while sailing across the ocean to discover, and it was by far the most important of all found by him in his first three adventures. It was, also, the first and indeed the only land which caused him to believe that the

theory of his undertaking had been vindicated and that the supreme object of his quest had been attained. Let us, in order to appreciate the transcendent significance of his discovery of Cuba, briefly consider these three circumstances.

We must remember with respect to the first that the identity of Columbus's first landing place has been much disputed, and indeed has never been determined to universal satisfaction: We know that it was an island of small or moderate size. Columbus himself called it in one place "small" and in another "fairly large." It was level, low-lying, well watered, with a large central lagoon, which may or may not have been a permanent feature, seeing that his visit was in the rainy season, when any depression in the land was likely to be flooded. It was certainly one of the Bahama archipelago. But that extensive group comprises 36 islands, 687 cays, and 2,414 rocks. Which of all these was it upon which the Admiral landed, which was called by the natives Guanahani, and which, with his characteristic religious fervor, Columbus immediately renamed San Salvador, the Island of the Holy Saviour?

The distinction has been claimed, by authorities worthy of respectful consideration, for no fewer than five. Down to the middle of the Nineteenth Century the weight of opinion and tradition favored Cat Island, and upon most maps and charts it was designated as "Guanahani, or San Salvador." It is by far the largest and the northernmost of the five islands in question. Next, to the southeast, lies Watling's Island, to which the distinction of having been the scene of Columbus's landfall has now for half a century been most generally given, and upon maps it is generally named San Salvador. It is the only one of the five which stands out in the Atlantic, beyond the generally uniform line of the Bahamas, as a sort of advance post to greet the voyager from the east. Samana, south by east from Watling's, also called Attwood's Cay, was selected as the true Guanahani by some officers of the United States Coast Survey. Mariguana, further in the same direction, was proclaimed "La Verdadera Guanahani" by F. A. de Varnhagen in a scholarly

treatise published in 1864 at Santiago de Chili. Finally, Grand Turk Island, at the southeastern extremity of the Bahama chain, and just north of the coast of Hayti, was designated by Navarrete, in 1825, and by various other authorities, chiefly American, at later dates.

MONUMENT ON SUPPOSED FIRST LANDING PLACE OF COLUMBUS, WATLING'S ISLAND

The chief interest of these speculations for present consideration in this writing is their bearing upon the subsequent course of Columbus, the identity of the next islands which he visited, and finally the point at which he first touched the coast of Cuba. If the original landfall was on Cat or on Watling's Island, then the second land visited, which Columbus called Santa Maria de la Concepcion, was probably either the tiny island now known as Concepcion or the larger Rum Cay; the third, called by him Ferdinandina or Fernandina, was either Great Exuma or Long Island; the fourth, Isabella, may have been either Long Island or Crooked Island, according to whether Fernandina was Great Exuma or Long Island; and the coast of Cuba was reached at some point between Punta Lucrecia and Port Nuevitas. On the other hand, if Grand Turk Island was first reached, the second land would naturally have been, as Navarrete held, at Gran Caico; the third at Little Inagua; the fourth at Great Inagua; and Cuba would have been reached somewhere between Cape Maysi and Sama Point. To me it seems decidedly the more probable that the former course was pursued, and I have accordingly adopted the theory that Columbus first landed in Cuba in the region between Nuevitas and Punta Lucrecia.

The second circumstance which I have mentioned scarcely requires discussion. The first, second and third voyages of Columbus were confined to discoveries and explorations of the West India Islands, and of all of these, even including Hayti and Jamaica, there can be no question of Cuba's primacy, whether in size, in wealth of resources, in political and strategical importance, or in historical interest. It was so recognized by Columbus himself, who indeed in one respect actually esteemed it more highly than it deserved. For after long and careful exploration he became convinced that it was not an island, but was the mainland of the Asian continent—Mangi, or Cathay: that country of the Great Khan of which Marco Polo had written and which Toscanelli had indicated upon his map, and the visiting of which was the supreme object of the Admiral's enterprise.

To understand this aright we must remember that Columbus was not seeking a new continent. He had no thought that one existed. He held, with Isidore of Seville, that all the lands of the world were comprehended in Europe, Africa and Asia, and that there was only one great ocean, the Atlantic, which stretched unbroken save by islands from the western shores of Europe and Africa to the eastern coast of Asia and the East Indies. Moreover, he considerably overestimated the extent of Asia and underestimated the circumference of the earth. Years later, long after the circumnavigation of the globe had been effected, Antonio Galvano, learned historian and geographer though he was, computed the equatorial circumference of the earth at only 23,500 miles, or about 1,400 miles too little; while the best maps of the sixteenth century indicated the Asian continent as extending far into the western hemisphere, and the Pacific Ocean as a narrow strip not nearly comparable with the Atlantic in extent. Schoener's globe, of 1520, which is still to be seen at Nuremberg, represents the "Terra de Cuba" as integral with the whole North American continent, with its western coast only five degrees of longitude or 300 miles from the shore of Zipangu or Japan, and only 30 degrees or 1,800 miles from the mainland of Asia.

Columbus therefore expected to find the coast of Asia in about the longitude in which he actually found America. When he reached the Bahamas he confidently assumed them to be the group of islands which Toscanelli had indicated as lying off the coast of Cathay; and when he learned from the natives of a much larger island lying to the south, which they called Colba, Cuba, or Cubanacan, he believed it to be none other than Cipango, or Zipangu, which Toscanelli had shown as by far the largest of the East Indian islands. It has been commonly assumed, apparently with little dispute or attempt at investigation, that Cipango was Japan. But the distance—1,500 miles—at which it was said to lie from the coast of China, the southerly latitude assigned to it, and the multitude of small islands which were clustered about and near it, are circumstances which suggest that instead of Japan the island

meant may have been Luzon, the northernmost and largest of the Philippines. However that may be, Columbus promptly decided to steer straight for Cipango, with the result that he reached the northern shore of the eastern part of Cuba.

The third circumstance which I have mentioned was then developed. It was a great triumph, and a vindication of his enterprise, that he had reached Cipango. But even that was not enough. He was in quest of the mainland of Mangi or Cathay, the land of the Great Khan. He found in Cuba no traces of the opulence and splendor of which Marco Polo had written. Yet the natives frequently referred to "Cuba-nacan" as a great place somewhere in the interior. The phrase merely meant the central part of the island, but the final syllable was identified by Columbus with "Khan," and, with the wish as father of the thought, he presently conceived the notion that it was not the island of Cipango upon which he had landed, but the shore of Cathay itself. Further explorations, including coasting along the northern shore to within a few miles of the western extremity, confirmed him in this belief, which became absolute conviction. To the end of his life, therefore, he believed that Cuba was the eastern extremity of the Asian continent, which indeed Toscanelli had delineated upon his map as terminating in a long, narrow cape; and it was upon the strength of this belief and report of Columbus that Schoener in 1520 and Muenster in 1532 identified Cuba with the whole North American continent, while various other cartographers of that time made it integral with Cathay itself. The maps of La Cosa and Ruysch, in 1508, hinted at this. The Nancy Globe, and a notable map in the Sloane MSS. in the British Museum, dated 1530, do, it is true, indicate Cuba to be an island, but they also make India Superior and Tibet contiguous with Mexico at the northwest, with the latter country fronting directly upon the Indian Ocean. We know, of course, that during his second voyage, in 1494, while off the southern coast of Cuba, Columbus required his companions to sign with him a formal declaration that they were off the coast of Asia. Such, then, was the Admiral's estimate of Cuba, in which there is no

reason to doubt he persisted to the end of his life. He had achieved the object of his great adventure: He had reached the country of the Great Khan.

Despite these delusions and vagaries, however, the facts remain that he did discover and partly explore Cuba, and that it was the first land in the Western Hemisphere of which that can confidently be said. Cuba is therefore the starting point of the history of the Columbian discovery and exploration and the subsequent colonization and civilization of America. With Cuba the history of the New World begins.

Similarly, and with equal truth, we may say that the history of Cuba begins with the Columbian discovery of America. That is not true of all parts of the American continents. Some of them had already had important histories. The northeastern coast of North America had been visited and temporarily colonized by the Norsemen, and the northwestern coast by the Chinese; and both of those peoples had left enduring traces of their enterprise. The Iroquois and Algonquins had for centuries enjoyed a degree of social, political and industrial development, the records of which still survive. The Toltecs, the Mayas and the Incas had risen to a height of culture not unworthy to be compared with that of Egypt, Persia, Greece and Rome, the remains of which to this day command the wonder and admiration of the world. But not so Cuba. Carlyle might well have had this island in mind when he said, "Happy the people whose annals are blank in history books."

The physical history of Cuba indicates that in some remote period the two mountainous ends of the island were two separate and distinctly different islands, separated by a considerable stretch of sea, and that they were afterward united by a rising of the bottom of the sea, to form the central plain of Cuba. It is observed that the two ends are unlike each other on geological structure and composition, in soil, and in indigenous flora. Indeed, they have ever differed from each other radically in their cultivated crops. At what date the union of them occurred, and by what means it was effected, we can

only guess. But it is a reasonable assumption that the raising of the sea-floor to form the central plain of the island was caused by one of the seismic disturbances to which this general region of the earth's surface has from time immemorial been subject. There are, moreover, reasons for suspecting that this occurred at a time subsequent to the creation of man, and indeed after both of the original islands had become inhabited. That is because the two ends of the island appear, in Columbus's day, to have been occupied by different races. Of the inhabitants of the western end we know comparatively little, save that they were more warlike and adventurous than those at the east, and several authorities have likened them either to the Caribs or to the Mayas of Yucatan. That they were Mayas seems, however, doubtful, since they left no traces of the high degree of civilization which formerly prevailed among that distinguished race in Yucatan.

The people of the eastern end of Cuba, when the island was discovered by Columbus, were doubtless of Antillan stock, or "Tainan" as some have called them, with possibly a slight admixture of Carib, though not sufficient materially to affect them in any respect. They were physically a handsome, stalwart people, of a light reddish brown color, somewhat lighter than the North American Indians. They wore no clothing, with the exception of the married women, who wore breech clouts, and confined their adornments to slight necklaces and bracelets. They lived in neatly constructed cabins of cane or bamboo and thatch, rectangular or circular in form and generally of two or three rooms each; equipped with furniture of cane or of handsomely carved wood. For beds, however, they used hammocks, of woven cotton or plaited grass; the name, hammock, being of Antillan or Carib origin. These houses were, according to early Spanish testimony, kept scrupulously clean and neat. They were grouped in villages, around a central square which served as a market place and playground.

They were agriculturists, tilling the ground with considerable skill and producing yuca, corn, beans, peanuts, squashes, peppers and various other crops, besides fruits and tobacco. They were singularly expert fishermen, and for the purpose of that pursuit they constructed fine canoes, of the hollowed boles of large trees, but unlike the Caribs they do not seem to have resorted to navigation for any other purpose. They also hunted game on the land, solely for food, but their hunting was much restricted, since there were no large animals of any kind on the island. Their manufactures were confined to primitive cotton weaving, wood carving, basketry, pottery—of a pretty good quality of decorated ware—and various stoneware implements.

In disposition and manners they were friendly, hospitable, courteous, and confiding. Despite their nudity they had the unconscious modesty of nature, and their morals were superior to those of most primitive peoples. The tradition that venereal diseases prevailed among them and were thus first made known to European peoples through their having been acquired from the natives by Columbus's men, seems to be quite void of foundation; indubitable proof exists of the prevalence of those diseases in both Europe and Asia at an earlier date than Columbus's time. They practised but recognized domestic, social and civic equality of the sexes. They were almost universal tobacco smokers, and it was from them that the use of that plant was first learned. They were pleasure loving, much given to dancing, to games of ball, and to swimming.

Their form of government was patriarchal, though there seem to have been chiefs of some sort over whole villages or even districts. The laws were, however, mild and humane. In religion they presented a striking and most grateful contrast to the Toltecs, Aztecs and other peoples of the continent, having none of the human sacrifices and atrocious tortures that disfigured their worship. They believed in a Supreme Being and a future and immortal life. They had a form of worship in which the use of idols as symbols, and the smoking of tobacco, largely

figured. They had a regularly constituted priest-hood, the members of which they credited with powers of divination and of healing. There were none of the revolting practises and superstitions, however, which have been common to many primitive peoples. They were not warlike, and had no military organization, but they certainly were not cowards, as some of the early Spanish conquistadors had cause to know.

They had, it is obvious, nothing which could survive them as a memorial of their existence. Their architecture, if so it may be called, was most perishable. They had no art, save in pottery, and that was not highly developed. They had no literature. The result was that when they perished through unfavorable contact with a more powerful and aggressive race they left scarcely a trace of themselves behind, save in the records and testimony of their conquerors and destroyers. Some specimens of their pottery have been preserved: the words "hammock" and "canoe" come to us from them; and the use of tobacco is their universal memorial.

Such were the aborigines, if not the absolute autochthones, of Cuba. Their only history lives in the brief and scanty records of them made by their destroyers. They left no enduring impress upon the island, save its name. How many they were is unknown, and estimates which are mere guesses differ widely. In a single generation they disappeared, partly through slaughter and partly through such diseases as small pox and measles, which were introduced to the island—of course, not intentionally—by the Spaniards, and which the natives were unable to resist. The only significant history of Cuba begins, therefore, with the landfall of Christopher Columbus upon its shores.

CHAPTER II

Table of Contents

SUNDAY, October 28, 1492, was the natal day of Cuba; the day of its advent into the ken of the civilized world. At the island which he called Isabella—either Long Island or Crooked Island—Columbus had heard of a very great land which the natives called Cuba, and which, the wish being father to the thought, he instantly identified with Cipango. Toward it, therefore, his course had thereafter been directed. Progress was slow, because of contrary winds and calms, and there were numerous small islands along the way to engage at least passing attention. Particularly was there a group of seven or eight, lying in a row extending north and south, which he called the Islas de Arena, and which we may confidently identify with the Mucaras. Early on the morning of Saturday, October 27, he had left the last of the Sandy Isles behind, and from a point considerably to the eastward of them, probably near what is now known as Rocky Heads, he had set his course a little west of south for the shore of Cuba. Thus he had passed across the southeastern end of the Great Bahama Bank, since most appropriately called the Columbus Bank, until just at nightfall he had seen looming before him on the southern horizon the mountainous form of a vast land. It was too late, however, to continue the voyage that night, so he lay to, and at earliest daybreak of Sunday morning, leaving behind him the islet fittingly called Caya Santo Domingo, completed his course to the land which he fondly but vainly hailed as the much-sought Cipango.

The coast at the point at which he reached it seemed specially designed by nature for his favorable and auspicious reception. There lay before him what seemed the estuary of a large and beautiful river, free from rocks or other impediments, and with a very gentle current. It had an ample depth of water for his vessels, and was sufficiently broad, even at a considerable distance inland, for them to beat about in. It was encircled by lofty and picturesque hills, the aspect of which reminded him of the "Pena de los Enamorados" near Granada, in Spain; and upon the summit of one of them was what he described as another little hill, shaped like a graceful mosque. Enchanted with the vision, and gratified beyond expression at what he confidently assumed to be the reaching of his goal and the vindication of his enterprise, he gave to the spot a repetition of the name which he had devoutly bestowed upon his first landfall, calling the port San Salvador.

The identity of this spot has been much questioned and disputed; perhaps even more than that of Columbus's first landing in the Bahamas; and it is not to be regarded as entirely certain. Washington Irving pretty confidently placed it at Caravelas Grandes, far to the west of Nuevitas del Principe, while others insist that it was at Nuevitas itself. Navarrete, on the other hand, with his theory that the first landfall was at Grand Turk Island, held that Cuba was reached at Nipe Bay, east of Holguin; while Las Casas and Herrera insisted that the port of San Salvador was at Baracoa, near Cape Maysi, at the extreme eastern end of the island. Midway between the extremes, that most scholarly and judicious of geographers, Sir Clements Markham, selected the natural harbor of Naranjo, a little to the west of Punta Lucrecia and Punta Mulas. Other historians and geographers, after painstaking research,

declare that they do not believe the place can be determined.

With this, in the ultimate analysis, I would agree. It is probably impossible to establish indisputably the identity of the place. Yet it does seem to me that the arguments in favor of Naranjo, as selected by Markham, are so strong as to be all but entirely convincing, and that it will be judicious, therefore, to assume that it was there that the Admiral first reached the shore of Cuba. A glance at the map shows this to be the region which was nearest and which he was likeliest to reach first, coming from either Long Island or Crooked Island, eastward of the Mucaras, on a south-southwest course, which, we are told, is what he steered. The port of Naranjo answers to his description in depth and breadth more nearly than any other on that part of the coast. It is the estuary of a considerable river, as was Columbus's San Salvador, though how large the river really was he does not appear to have undertaken to ascertain, though he did ascend the stream some little distance on his first day's visit. Finally, it is to be observed that Naranjo is girt about by hills, precisely as was his San Salvador, and on the crest of one of them there is a huge rock, jutting up like "another little hill" and roughly resembling in shape a mosque, because of which the hill is called "Loma del Temple." This, then, and not Nuevitas, Nipe, nor Baracoa, I believe to have been the scene of Columbus's discovery of Cuba.

QUEEN ISABELLA

We have seen that Columbus at first unhesitatingly believed it to be Cipango which he had reached. Despite that fact, and also despite the fact that the natives called it Cuba, he insisted upon renaming it. In accordance with his previous practice in nomenclature, it must have a very noble and distinguished name. His first landfall he had named for the Holy Saviour Himself; the second for the Holy Virgin; the third for the King, and the fourth for the Queen of Leon and Castile. The next name in order, in dignity and distinction, was that of the heir to the dual throne, wherefore he named the land Juana. Most writers, including Irving, have made the curious but facile mistake

of saying that this name was given "in honor of Prince Juan, the son of Ferdinand and Isabella." It was, in fact, in honor of Princess Juana, the daughter of those sovereigns. She was that unhappy princess who because of her insanity was called "La Loca," and who by her marriage with Philip of Burgundy and of Hapsburg brought a new dynasty to the Spanish throne and greatly involved the monarchy in the politics and wars of Central Europe. Juana was mentally incompetent to succeed to the throne of Castile which she inherited upon the death of her mother, wherefore she was compelled to relinquish it to the regency of her father; and when he united Castile with Aragon, and conquered and annexed Navarre and Granada, and thus became the first King of Spain, Cuba was renamed in his honor and known no longer as Juana but as Ferdinandina, or Fernandina. Still later it was called San Diego, or Santiago; and again Ave Maria Alfa y Omega. But these names were transitory. The natives never accepted one of them, but clung to the old name of Cuba, and there was a fine touch of poetic justice in the fact that that name survived the extinction of the race that had cherished it. Under the ruthless rule of the Conquistadores the aboriginal population of the island almost entirely vanished, and with them practically all traces of their existence save four. These were the name and use of tobacco, the name and use of hammocks, the name and use of canoes, and the name of the island itself.

It would not have been surprising, and it would have been quite pardonable, had Columbus seen everything in the New World through glasses of *couleur de rose*. Naturally of a romantic and imaginative temperament, he experienced in the realization of his long-cherished ambition such a degree of spiritual and mental exaltation as seldom has come to mortal man. Yet quite apart from this, the native beauty of Cuba, as seen to our eyes to-day, abundantly justifies the rhapsodies in which he indulged in describing

it. On that first memorable Sunday he wrote in his diary, "This is the most beautiful land ever beheld by human eyes." From the quarter-deck of the *Santa Maria* he gazed with rapture upon the profuse verdure of the shore and of the hills which rose in the back-ground, observing with admiration and surprise that the trees grew down to the very water's edge, as did also the herbage, as he had never seen it elsewhere. The palms and other trees were largely of different kinds from those which he had seen in Spain, in Guinea, and elsewhere, and they bore flowers and fruit in great profusion, while among them were innumerable birds, beautiful to the eye and with songs entrancing to the ear.

Two canoes, containing each several natives, put out from a recess in the harbor shore to meet the Spanish ships, but when a boat was lowered from one of the latter, to proceed ahead and take soundings, they incontinently fled. Columbus himself then entered a small boat and went ashore, where he found two houses, which he assumed to belong to the owners of the two canoes. No persons were to be found upon the premises, and the only living things were "a kind of dog that never barks," which we may assume to have been some small animal of the ant bear tribe, now probably extinct or at any rate no longer domesticated. The houses were notably neat and clean, and were evidently the abode of fishermen, since in them were nets and cordage of palm fibre, fish-hooks of horn, and harpoons of bone. All about the houses the herbage was as profuse, at the end of October, as it was in Andalusia in May. Most of the herbs as well as the trees were strange to Columbus, but he found some wild amaranth, and much common purslane. He went some distance up the harbor, or river as he called it, at every step or stroke of the oars seeing something new to excite his admiration.

The natives of Guanahani whom he had brought on his ship informed him that Cuba was a very large island, which could not be circumnavigated in twenty days; that it contained ten large rivers and that its whole expanse was well watered. They were also understood by Columbus to say that gold mines and pearls were to be found in the island, and that large ships came thither from the mainland domains of the Grand Khan, ten days' sail away. The bulk of this "information" was of course quite mistaken by Columbus, his vivid imagination and his eager desires easily misleading him into interpreting anything which the natives might say, largely in sign language, as meaning just what he wished to be true.

The next day Columbus left San Salvador and sailed westward along the coast. That was the direction in which, according to the natives of Guanahani, the mainland and the capital of the King or the Grand Khan were to be found. That, too, was the direction in which Mangi and Cathay were to be found according to the map of Toscanelli, assuming Cuba to be Cipango: which Columbus at this stage of his enterprise confidently believed. Of the researches of the great voyager along the Cuban coast we have a detailed account in his journal. Unfortunately, there is no certain means of identifying the points at which he landed. They are described as being so many leagues from his starting point, San Salvador; wherefore it is obvious that all depends upon the identity of the latter. Yet it seems to me that his account of his coastwise explorations strongly confirms the theory that his San Salvador was Port Naranjo and not Nuevitas. For we are told that six leagues westward he found a cape or point of land extending toward the northwest; ten leagues further another point, extending toward the east; one league further a small river, which he called the Rio de la Luna; and beyond it another much larger river, which he called the Rio de Mares. This

latter river had for its estuary a broad basin resembling a lake, and its entrance was marked by two round mountains on the one side and a lofty promontory on the other.

Now, making reasonable allowance for lack of accuracy in measurements and for discrepancies in descriptions, this account may readily be applied to the coast westward from Port Naranjo to Nuevitas, while it is altogether inapplicable to the coast westward from Nuevitas. For a score of leagues westward from Naranjo there are capes and mountains and rivers, and there is more than one river with precisely such a lagoon-like estuary as that which Columbus found at his Rio de Mares. Indeed, Port Padre, with its extensive lagoon into which several rivers flow, or Port Manati, with the Cramal and Yarigua rivers, might either of them be identified, in approximate distance and in topography, with the Rio de Mares. On the other hand, if we were to assume Nuevitas to have been the starting point, what should we find? Either he must have been skirting the outer side of the Sabinal and Romano keys, and Guajaba Island, which do not at all coincide with the description given, or he must have been navigating the great littoral lagoon between those keys and the mainland of Cuba; in which latter case it is to be observed that that part of the Cuban coast does not correspond with his description, and that it is certainly extraordinary that he made no mention of his voyage having been in what is practically an inland sea. That he could have passed in through the Nuevitas Channel, or the Carebelas Channel, or the Guajaba Channel, without observing and remarking upon Sabinal Key, Guajaba Island, or Romano Key, is simply not supposable. Such a feature of "Cipango" could not have escaped notice on his first arrival there, though it might easily have been ignored or passed over as of no special significance in subsequent explorations.

On Tuesday of that memorable week, October 30, Columbus left the Rio de Mares and sailed to the northwest for fifteen leagues, and there discovered a point which he named the Cape of Palms. Beyond it was a river, the entrance of which was said to be four days' journey from what the natives called Cubanacan, meaning the heart of the island, the centre of Cuba. With his characteristic habit of interpreting native names and statements in accordance with his own desires, Columbus at once assumed this to mean Kublai Khan, or the City of the Khan, of which he was in quest; and accordingly he bent all his energies and gave all his attention to getting thither, disregarding the things which he passed by on the way. It was probably at this time, therefore, that he sailed through one of the channels among the keys, and entered the great coastal sound which stretches from Nuevitas to Caibarien, if not indeed to Cardenas. He reached the river on Wednesday, but found it too shallow for his ships, and therefore, after some fruitless cruisings, returned to the Rio de Mares.

It was on November 12 that he again sailed from the Rio de Mares, and on the next day that he sailed south-westward into a great gulf, which he supposed to divide Cuba from another island called by the natives "Bohio"—the word really meaning not an island at all but "home." Thereafter for some time he was obviously cruising around Guajaba Island and Romano Key, which, with Sabinal Key, he supposed to be the mythical "Bohio." Some port, possibly Boca de la Yana, he called Puerto Principe, and the water, presumably between Thiguano Island and Cocos Key, he called the Mar de la Nuestra Senora. Rounding Guillermo Key, as we may suppose, he swung into the Old Bahama Channel, and by wind and tide was carried backward to Guajaba Island and perhaps to Nuevitas. Thence he made his way westward and southward, rounding Point Sama and Point Lucrecia, and reaching Port

Nipe and Port Banes on the morning of November 27. Those two capacious bays he did not attempt to enter. He regarded them indeed not as bays but as straits, or arms of the sea, and the promontory between them he supposed to be an island. At Taco he landed for a few moments, and then pursued his way, and at nightfall dropped anchors at what he called Puerto Santo, which we may probably identify with the modern Baracoa. There he remained until December 4, when he sailed to the southeast, and the following day passed out of sight of Cape Maysi and left Cuba behind him; crossing the Windward Passage to reach "Bohio" or "Babeque," where there were said to be pearls and gold, and reaching Hayti, or Santo Domingo, which he called Espagnola. He did not revisit Cuba during the remainder of his first American voyage.

Espagnola, Latinized by us into Hispaniola, became thereafter the chief care of the Admiral. It was there that he planted, on his second voyage, the first European colony in the western hemisphere. But after various operations in Hayti, marked with both trials and triumphs, during his second American expedition he returned to the Cuban coast for further explorations of what he still thought to be Cipango. It was at the end of April, 1494, that he sailed from Mole St. Nicholas, Hayti, across the Windward Passage toward Cape Maysi, which he himself had called Cape Alpha and Omega. Instead, however, of retracing his way to Baracoa and along the north coast, he went to the left of Cape Maysi and began skirting the southern coast of Cuba. This route would, according to Toscanelli's map, take him to the southward of Mangi and Cathay, but it would lead him to the Golden Chersonesus, around the southern shore of Asia, and so home to Europe by circumnavigating the globe.

The points visited by him on this excursion are more easily and surely to be identified than those of his first voyage. His first landing was at Guantanamo, which he called Puerto Grande. He found an entrance passage, winding but deep, leading in to a spacious land-locked lagoon, surrounded by hills covered with verdure. Here he established friendly relations with the natives, and remained for two or three days. Thence he sailed westward, as close to the shore as safety would permit, and frequently entered into friendly intercourse with the natives who thronged the strand to gaze in wonderment at his strange ships. At Santiago de Cuba he spent a night, and during his stay he diligently inquired of the natives for the land in which gold was to be found. They indicated it to lie farther to the south and west, doubtless meaning South America. Columbus thereupon set sail in that direction, partly because gold was most desirable to obtain, and partly because he assumed the land of gold to be the land of the Great Khan, which he was still intent upon reaching. The result was his discovery of Jamaica. A fortnight later, however, on May 18, he returned to Cuba, reaching it at Cabo de la Cruz, or Cape Cruz. Here he found a large village, whose chief and indeed all whose inhabitants had heard of him as one descended from heaven. He was hospitably received, and was able to make many inquiries about the country. He was told that Cuba was an island, but of so vast extent that nobody had ever sailed around it. He thereupon set out to circumnavigate it and sailed from Cape Cruz northward into the Gulf of Guacanabo. There he found a multitude of small islands, which he named the Queen's Gardens, and there, remembering that Marco Polo and Sir John Mandeville had both reported the coast of Asia to be fringed with a crowded archipelago, he was again confirmed in his belief that he was approaching the shore either of Cathay or of the Golden Chersonesus.

Navigation among these islands, however, was difficult, dangerous and slow, particularly when tropical thunderstorms were raging, as they then were almost daily, and it was with much relief that the expedition at last reached the Cuban coast, probably at or near Santa Cruz del Sur. There they were told that they were in the province of Ornofay; the province which they had formerly visited, at Cape Cruz, was Macaca; and to the west there lay the important province of Mangon, where they could secure much fuller information on all subjects. They were again assured that Cuba was an island, but so vast in extent that nobody could hope ever to go around it. The mention of the province of Mangon again stimulated the hopes and fancy of Columbus. He identified it with Mangi, the southernmost and richest province of the Great Khan, and in this he was confirmed by the fantastic statement of the natives, that the people of Mangon had tails and wore long robes to conceal them! Columbus recalled that Sir John Mandeville had related a similar story as current among some tribes in Eastern Asia. He therefore set out with renewed eagerness and expectation for the coast of Mangon.

Emerging from the archipelago, he sailed for many miles along the southern coast of Cuba, through an open sea, with the mountain ranges of Santa Clara at his right hand and at his left the open expanse of the Caribbean, its intense blue attesting its depth. After passing the Gulf of Xagua, however, there came a sudden change. The sea became shallow, and thickly dotted with small islands, keys, and banks, while the water was white as milk. The voyagers had crossed the Gulf of Cazones and were among the Juan Luis Keys, where the water is shallow and where at times the agitation of the water by storms causes it to be whitened and rendered opaque with the calcareous deposit with which the sea floor is there thickly covered. This character of the bottom also made it impossible for the

vessels to find anchorage. The anchors dragged and the water became more white and turbid. To the members of the crews these phenomena caused great terror, which was by no means ill founded, since there was imminent danger of the vessels being driven ashore and wrecked. To Columbus, in his state of mental exaltation and high expectancy, however, they were full of inspiration and encouragement to proceed, indicating to him that he was entering strange regions where extraordinary discoveries were to be made. For we must remember that, far as he was in advance of his time in geographical vision, he still thought that the earth was not globular but pear-shaped, and he expected to find tribes of men with tails, and with only one eye and with their heads growing beneath their shoulders!

Finding anchorage at last upon the shore of a small island, he sent the smallest of his vessels forward to explore the archipelago and also to visit the coast of the mainland. The report which was brought back to him was that the archipelago was as dense and as intricate as the Gardens of the Queen which they had left behind them, and that the coast of the mainland was flat, marshy, and covered with almost impenetrable mangrove forests, far beyond which fertile uplands and mountain ranges were to be seen, while numerous columns of smoke ascending gave token of a considerable population. At this the entire expedition proceeded, to retrace the course which had been pursued by the pilot caravel, and after much difficulty and occasional groundings of the vessels, the coast of Cuba was reached, doubtless near the eastern extremity of the great Zapata Peninsula. The vast marshes gave little encouragement for landing, and the expedition continued eastward until Punta Gorda was reached, to which Columbus gave the name of Punta Serafina.

Rounding this point and heading northward, the fine expanse of Broa Bay confronted them, with the coast of the Province of Havana far beyond, and with another archipelago at the west. The mountains which lie between Guines and Matanzas fringed the horizon, and toward them the Admiral steered, presently reaching good anchorage off a most inviting coast. The mangrove swamps of Zapata had been left behind, and here the shore was high and dry, and covered with groves of palm and other trees. Here a landing was made, and copious supplies of fresh water were found for the refilling of their casks, while some of the archers strayed into the forest in quest of game. One of the latter presently returned in haste and fear, crying for help. He reported that he had seen in a forest glade three men of white complexion, clad in long white tunics, leading a company of about thirty more, armed with clubs and spears. They did not attack him, but one of them advanced alone as if to speak with him; whereupon he fled. At this report all his companions joined him in hastening back to the ships for safety.

When Columbus heard these things he was much pleased. He saw in them confirmation of what he had been told about the Province of Mangon, with its men who had tails and who wore long robes to hide them. He at once sent a strongly armed party inland to seek these men and parley with them; directing them to go as much as forty miles inland, if necessary, to find them, and to find the populous cities which he confidently believed to exist in that region. These explorers readily enough traversed the open palm forest which bordered the coast. But then they came to extensive open upland plains or savannahs, with few trees but with rank grass and other herbage as high as their heads and so dense as to be almost impenetrable. No roads or paths were to be found, and it was necessary to cut a trail through the herbage. For a mile they struggled on, and