

24. The situation of Columbus was daily becoming more and more critical. In proportion as he approached the regions where he expected to find land, the impatience of his crews augmented. The favourable signs which increased his confidence were decided by them as delusive ; and there was danger of their rebelling and obliging him to turn back, when on the point of realizing the object of all his labours. They beheld themselves with dismay still wafted onward over the boundless wastes of what appeared to them a mere watery desert surrounding the habitable world. What was to become of them should their provisions fall ? Their ships were too weak and defective even for the great voyage they had already made, but if they were still to press forward, adding at every moment to the immense expanse behind them, how should they ever be able to return, having no intervening port where they might victual and refit? Were they to sail in until they perished, or until all return became impossible ? In such case they would be the authors of their own destruction.



On the other hand, should they consult their safety and turn back before too late, who would blame them ? Any complaints made by Columbus would be of no weight ; he was a foreigner, without friends or influence ; his schemes had been condemned by the learned and discountenanced by people of all ranks. He had no party to uphold him, and a host of opponents whose pride of opinion would be gratified by his failure. Or, as an effectual means of preventing his complaints, they might throw him into the seas and give out that he had fallen overboard while busy with his instruments contemplating the stars, a report which no one would have either the inclination or the means to controvert.

Columbus was not ignorant of the mutinous disposition of his crew, but he still maintained a serene and steady countenance—soothing some with gentle words, endeavouring to stimulate the pride or avarice of others, and openly menacing the refractory with signal punishment, should they do anything whatever to impede the voyage.

As the great Roman statesman Cicero, in his celebrated treatise on Friendship, remarks with truth that it in-

Columbus' Leadership and his Disillusioned Crew

When Columbus' Voyage failed to find the destined lands in expected region, the crew demoralized which increased possibility of revolt against him. Columbus was hopeful hence he continued the voyage, so the crew had to follow him. Sailors considered it to be foolish act to sail further in seemingly endless ocean. Their ships were already weak, hence further venture would make their return impossible. For the crew, Columbus was mere a foreigner with minimum support and his failure would not impact anything. Some sailors even willing to push him into the ocean. Although Columbus was aware of the crew's condition, he remained calm and lead the voyage with great wisdom and firm leadership where needed.

Total words = 355

Pre-cis words = 116

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