

In the evening, when, according to custom, the mariners had sung the vesper hymn to the Virgin, Columbus made an impressive address to his crew, pointing out the goodness of God in thus conducting them by soft and favouring breezes across a tranquil ocean to the promised land. He expressed a strong confidence of making land that very night, and ordered a vigilant lookout should be kept from the forecabin, promising to whomsoever should make the discovery a doublet of velvet, in addition to the pension to be given by the sovereigns.

The breeze had been fresh all day, with more sea than usual; at sunset they stood again to the west, and were ploughing the waves at a rapid rate, the *Pinta* keeping the lead from her superior sailing. The greatest animation prevailed throughout the ships; not an eye was closed that night. As the evening darkened, Columbus took his station on the top of the castle or cabin on the high poop of his vessel. However he might carry a cheerful and confident countenance during the day, it was to him a time of the most painful anxiety; and now, when he was wrapped from observation by the shades of night, he maintained an intense and unremitting watch, ranging his eye along the dusky horizon, in search of the most vague indications of land. Suddenly, about ten o'clock, he thought he beheld a light glimmering at a distance. Fearing that his eager hopes might deceive him, he called to one of his companions, and demanded whether he saw a light in that direction. The latter replied in the affirmative. Columbus, yet doubtful whether it might not