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George Bancroft

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CHAPTER I. EARLY VOYAGES. FRENCH SETl'LEMENTS IN AMERICA. THE enterprise of Columbus, the most memorable maritime enterprise in the history of the world, formed between Europe and America the communication which will never cease. Nearly three centuries before tlle Christian era, Aristotle, following the lessons of the Pythagoreans, had taught that the earth is a sphere, and that the water which bounds Europe on the west washes the eastern shores of Asia. Instructed by him, the Spaniard Seneca believed that a ship, with a fair wind, could sail from Spain to the Indies in a few days. The opinion was revived in the middle ages by A verroes, the Arab commentator of Aristotle. Science and observation assisted to confirm it; and poets of ancient and of more recent times had foretold that empires beyond the ocean would one day be revealed to the daring navigator. The genial country of Dante and Buonarotti ga.ve birth to Christopher Columbus, by whom these lessons were so re

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