

# Columbus Day Greetings

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## “Columbus”

Behind him lay the gray Azores,  
Behind the Gates of Hercules;  
Before him not the ghost of shores,  
Before him only shoreless seas.  
The good mate said: “Now must we pray,  
For lo! the very stars are gone.  
Brave Adm’r’l, speak; what shall I say?”  
“Why say: ‘Sail on! sail on! and on!’”

“My men grow mutinous day by day;  
My men grow ghastly wan and weak.”  
The stout mate thought of home; a spray  
“What shall I say, brave Adm’r’l, say  
If we sight naught but seas at dawn?”  
“Why, you shall say, at break of day:  
‘Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!’”

They sailed and sailed, as winds might blow,  
Until at last the blanched mate said:  
“Why, now not even God would know  
Should I and all my men fall dead.  
These very winds forget their way,  
For God from these dread seas is gone.  
Now speak, brave Adm’r’l; speak and say” —  
He said: “Sail on! sail on! and on! ”

They sailed. They sailed. Then spake the mate:  
“This mad sea shows his teeth to-night;  
He curls his lips, he lies in wait,  
With lifted teeth, as if to bite:  
Brave Adm’r’l, say but one good word;  
What shall we do when hope is gone?”  
The words leapt like a leaping sword:  
“Sail on! sail on! sail on! and on!”

Then, pale and worn, he kept his deck,  
And peered through darkness. Ah, that night  
Of all dark nights! And then a speck—  
A light! a light! a light! a light!  
It grew, a starlit flag unfurled!  
It grew to be Time’s burst of dawn.  
He gained a world; he gave that world  
Its grandest lesson: “On! sail on!”  
—Cincinnatus Hiner Miller  
(known as Joaquin Miller), d. 1913

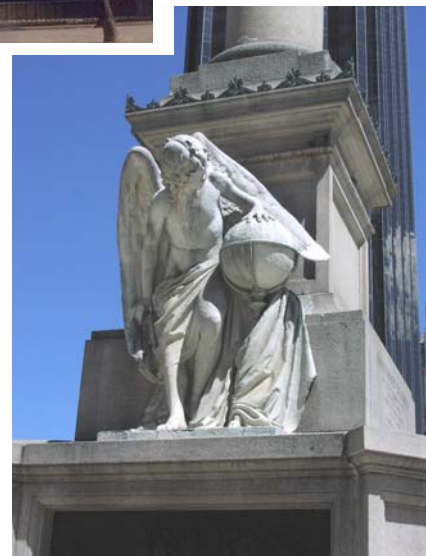


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