

CLASSIC LIVING BOOK

THE MEN WHO  
FOUND AMERICA

Frederick Winthrop  
Hutchinson

COMPLETE AND UNABRIDGED

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# THE MEN WHO FOUND AMERICA

*by*

FREDERICK WINTHROP HUTCHINSON





“COLUMBUS WAS DRESSED IN SHINING STEEL, WITH A BEAUTIFUL RED CLOAK, AND HE CARRIED THE RED AND YELLOW FLAG OF SPAIN.”

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## THE MAN WHO FOUND AMERICA

**M**ore than four hundred years ago, when King Ferdinand and the wise, gentle Queen Isabella ruled over Spain, there came one day to the court, where the King and Queen and all the brave nobles and beautiful ladies stayed, a poor man named Christopher Columbus. He was poor, but he was very wise. He had a great plan, a plan to get heaps and heaps of shining pearls, and red rubies, and diamonds, and soft blue and white and yellow silks, and many other wonderful things for Spain and the good King and Queen. Columbus came to tell the King and Queen about his plan, and to ask them to help him.

In those days, even the wisest men believed that the earth was flat, like a table. They thought that if a ship sailed far, far across the wide ocean, it would fall off the edge of the earth, and down, down into a black hole that was so big and deep that it had no bottom. When Columbus was a little boy, he would often lie in the warm, sunny sands by the seashore and listen to the talk of the sailors, who came together and whispered stories of this far-off ocean. Once a sailor with

long black hair and a big black beard told Christopher how his ship had sailed into a sea that was so hot that it sometimes boiled up like water in a tea-kettle. Another very big sailor, with only one eye, said that he had seen a big serpent gliding through the water, and ugly black demons who lay in wait for ships and men. Another sailor told of a bird as big as the tallest house. This bird lifted ships in its claws and dropped them down into the ocean with a great splash, and all the poor sailors were drowned. There was an old, old sailor who said that he had seen a big, black hand come up out of the sea and catch the ships and drag them down into the deep ocean. This sailor had a big, sharp knife in his belt. Once he whispered to little Christopher that he had sailed and sailed to the edge of the earth and had looked over the edge into the deep, black hole. And he said he was so frightened that his hair, that was as brown as a tree before, got quite white. He told little Christopher that this ocean was so terrible that people called it "The Sea of Darkness."

After many years little Christopher grew up to be a brave, wise man. He said, "These stories are foolish. They are not true." He had sailed often on the ocean and he had never seen the great black bird, or the big hand that came out of the sea, or any of these terrible things. He had read books, and he thought all night about the sea and the earth. "The earth has no edge," he said at last; "the earth is round."

One of the books that Columbus read was about a brave sailor named Marco Polo. This Marco Polo had gone far away from his little white house by the sea. He went always towards the rising sun, sometimes walking, sometimes rid-



ing on queer-looking camels with humps on their backs. The book told how Marco Polo had found in that far-off country beautiful, shining cities, with people in them who had never heard of God. This country was called the Indies. Marco Polo had brought home with him big white pearls and soft silks, and spices that smelled strange and sweet, and he said that anyone who could reach the Indies could get these beautiful things. But it took years and years to get there, and there were fierce robbers on the road, so the people were afraid to go.

Columbus, too, wanted to reach this wonderful land. But he knew an easier way than the long journey Marco Polo had taken. Columbus knew that the earth was round, like an orange, because he was very wise. And he said, "If it is round, then I can sail around it and I won't fall off the edge of the ocean, because there is no edge. So I will sail around the earth until I reach the Indies."

Then it was that Columbus went to the King and Queen and told them about his plan. The King and Queen were much surprised at the strange stories that Columbus told them, and they called around them their wise men to talk about it. The wise men of Spain laughed at Columbus. They said: "Columbus says the earth is round. If it is round, how do the people on the other side live? They would have to stand on their heads; the rain and snow would fall up instead of down; the sun would never shine there, and it would always be dark. People could not live like that." The wise men told the King and Queen not to help Columbus, because he was crazy. And the little boys and girls made fun of Columbus and touched their foreheads when he passed

them in the streets, because their fathers had told them that Columbus was crazy.

So the King and Queen told Columbus that they would not help him. This made Columbus very sad. But he knew that he was right, and he kept on trying. He followed the King and Queen wherever they went. He went with them from city to city, always asking them for help. But there was a great war in Spain, and the King and Queen were too busy about the war to listen to Columbus.

At last Columbus said: "If the King and Queen of Spain will not help me, I will go to some other king and ask." He started to leave Spain. You can well believe that he was very sad. But then a very strange thing happened. On the way he stopped at a convent to beg some bread and water for his little son. This boy's name was Diego, which is the Spanish name for James. There was a good, wise old man at this convent. When he heard the story that Columbus told, he said he would help him. So the good old man from the convent went to see Queen Isabella and begged her to help Columbus. He told her how rich and great Spain would become if Columbus found the Indies. But still the Queen was afraid that Columbus was not right, and she said that she would not help him. Then Columbus was angry. He started again to leave Spain. This time he almost reached the end of Spain when he heard someone calling to him. It was a man sent by the Queen. "Good news! Good news!" cried the man. "Good Queen Isabella has promised to help you. She has said: 'I will give Columbus ships and men, even if I must sell my golden crown and my beautiful rings and chains to get the money.'"

How glad Columbus was! He had waited a long, long time, and now, at last, he could go on his voyage. Queen Isabella gave him three ships, and sailors to sail them, and she told Columbus that if he found the golden Indies she would give him barrels of shining gold and some of the pearls and diamonds and silks that he would find there. Columbus thanked her and kissed her hand, which is the way people do with Queens. The King and Queen and all the great lords, with their shining swords and velvet coats, and the pretty ladies came down to sea to say good-bye to Columbus, and he sailed away into the big, strange ocean.

For many days Columbus sailed and sailed and sailed. At first the sailors with him were happy and obedient, for Columbus said, "I will give you lots of beautiful things when we reach the Indies." But as they sailed day after day into this strange ocean, they grew very, very much afraid. At night, when Columbus could not see them, they got together and whispered to each other stories of the big black hand that pulled ships down into the sea, and of the great bird that lifted ships high into the air and then dropped them deep into the ocean, so that the poor sailors were drowned. Even the soft, gentle wind that blew always from the east frightened them. "How can we ever get back to Spain," they cried, "if the wind blows always away from Spain?" For in those days they had no steamers, with big engines that can send ships anywhere. They had only ships with sails, which went the way the wind blew.

At last the sailors begged Columbus to go back. "We shall all die in this strange sea," they cried, "and we shall never see

our wives and little babies. Let us go back.” But Columbus would not go back. Every day he told them stories of the rich, beautiful country which they would find. And he told them to be brave. But after a while they would not listen any more; and when they found that Columbus would not go back, some of them said: “Let us throw Columbus into the sea. Then we can go back to Spain, and if any one asks us, ‘Where is Columbus?’ we will say that he fell into the ocean.” Columbus knew what they said, but he was brave and was not afraid. He believed that if he sailed far enough he would reach the beautiful Indies.

Then, one day, they saw something on the far-off ocean, and the sailors joyfully shouted, “Land! Land!” But when they sailed near, they saw it was only a cloud. Then the sailors were sad again. Every day they all looked out for land. Queen Isabella had promised a handful of shining gold to the one who first saw land, and Columbus said he would also give a fine velvet coat.

How lonely the poor sailors were! Every day they saw nothing but the wide, wide ocean, with the rolling waves. At last, one day, some birds flew over the ships. “Look! Look!” the sailors shouted joyfully. And they said, “If there are birds, there must be land for them to rest on.” But although they looked and looked, and sailed quickly after the birds, they could not find land.

Then, on another day, Columbus fished out of the sea a hawthorn branch with berries on it, and a carved stick. The sailors crowded around to look at the branch and the stick, and laughed and sang for joy. “There must be land for the

hawthorn to grow on,” they said, “and there must be people who carved this stick.” Everyone was glad and happy and watched eagerly for land.

Columbus watched too. One night he stood alone on his ship, looking out over the black ocean. All at once he saw a little light in the darkness. It was so little he could not be sure it was a light. So he called two of his men and asked them whether they could see the light. “Yes! yes!” they cried, “we can see it. It seems to move up and down.” Still, they could not be quite sure until, about two hours afterwards, when the morning began to grow brighter, one of the other ships fired a gun. This meant that they had seen land.

When the sun came up, everyone could see the land. It was a beautiful land, with waving green trees and flowers. But it seemed even more beautiful than it really was to brave Columbus and his poor, tired sailors, because they had seen nothing but the wide ocean for so many days. They quickly rowed their boats to the shore and landed. Columbus was dressed in shining steel, with a beautiful red cloak, and he carried the red and yellow flag of Spain. His captains also carried flags. They all knelt down on the shore and thanked God for bringing them to this beautiful place.

They did not see any of the beautiful cities that Marco Polo had written about, but men came out of the woods and ran up to them on the beach. These men had straight black hair and brown skins, with bright-colored feathers in their hair, and they had hardly any clothes on. “Look! Look at the people from heaven!” they cried, when they saw Columbus and his men, with their white skins and beautiful clothes, and their

ships, which looked like big white birds. These people were Indians—not fierce like the Indians we know, but very kind and gentle. Columbus had never seen an Indian before, and the Indians had never seen a white man in all their lives. So both Columbus and the Indians were very much surprised and looked at each other for a long time. Columbus was very kind to the Indians. He gave them little red caps and pretty glass beads and little tinkling bells. The Indians liked these things very much, and they gave Columbus fresh fruits and beautiful red and green parrots and little bits of gold.

Columbus called these people Indians because he thought this country was part of the Indies that Marco Polo had written about. He did not know that he had discovered a wonderful new world, far richer and more beautiful than the golden Indies. This new world was our own America, the beautiful land where we all live now.

After a while, Columbus went back to Spain to tell the King and Queen about this land. When Columbus sailed up to the city by the sea, the people in Spain cheered and rang bells and fired guns to show their joy. When Columbus came to the throne, the King and Queen made him sit down beside them. This was a great honor, because no one is allowed to sit down when a king or queen is in the room. So Columbus sat down and told them how he had sailed across the Sea of Darkness and at last found this beautiful country. How glad now was the good Queen Isabella that she had sent Columbus! She made him a great lord in Spain and gave him gold and jewels; and she kept his little son Diego always with her, to hold up her long silken train and to carry her fan and handkerchief.

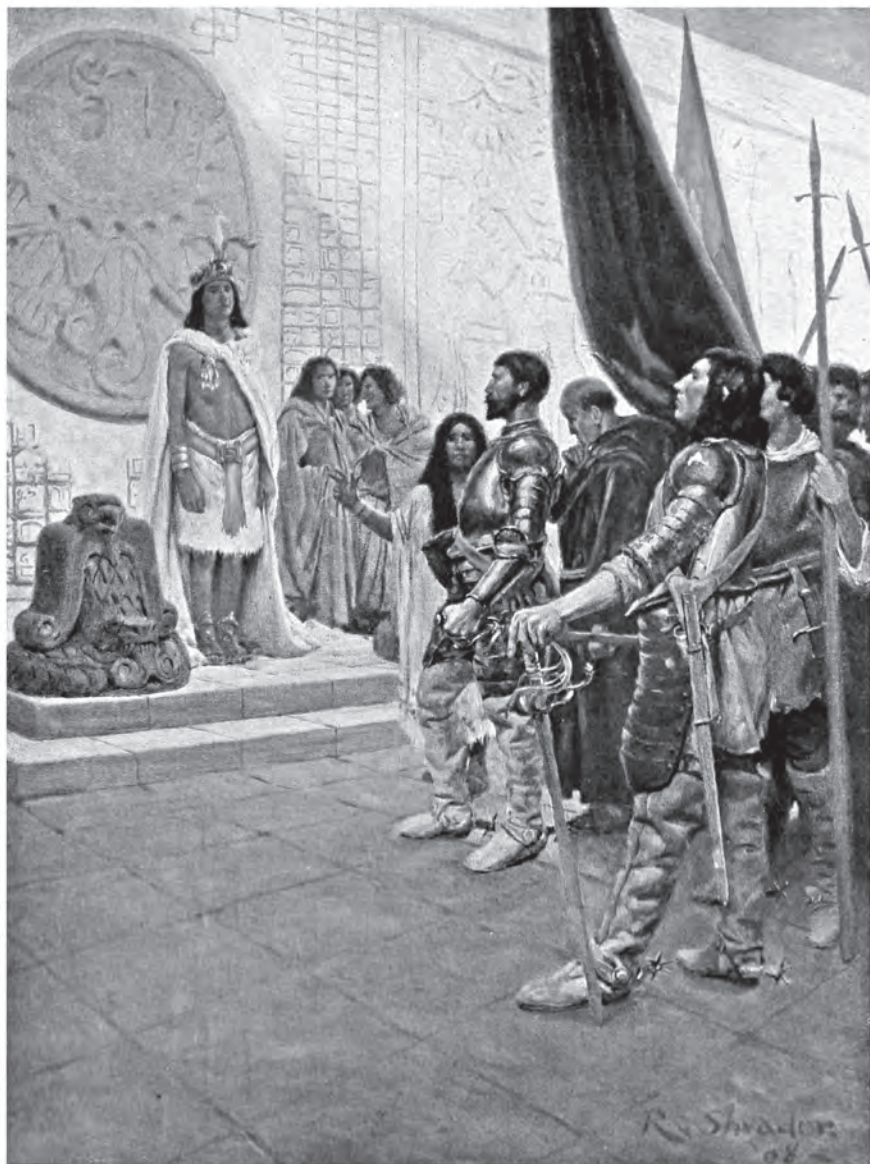
Columbus was happy now. But he wanted to see more of this new land, and he sailed across the ocean again three times. Once, while he was away, some wicked men told the King and Queen lies about Columbus. The King and Queen believed what these wicked men said, and they ordered their soldiers to put big iron chains on Columbus' hands and feet and send him back to Spain. Poor Columbus! How sad he felt! When they came to Spain and Columbus saw Queen Isabella, she soon found that he was a good man and that the stories about him were not true, and she told the soldiers to take the chains off Columbus, and said she was sorry. But Columbus was still sad, because after he had found this beautiful country for Spain, they had put chains on him. So he always kept the chains, and when he died, he asked the people to bury the chains with him.

There was another thing that happened that was not fair to Christopher Columbus. When a man finds a new country, it always ought to be named after him. But our country was never called Columbia. About seven years after Columbus found the new country, an Italian, named Amerigo Vespucci, sailed across the ocean and wrote a little book about the new land. He did not say one word about Christopher Columbus being there first. So many foolish people thought that Amerigo was the man who found the new country, and they called it America, in honor of Amerigo. And this is its name to-day; and this, I think, will always be its name.

Columbus was old when he died, and he was poor, too. Good, kind Queen Isabella had died, and the King forgot that Columbus had found a beautiful new country for him, and he

did not give him any more money. So Columbus was sad and poor. After he was dead the people knew that the country he had found was not the Indies, but a rich, wonderful country, our own America. And that is why all good Americans love the name of Christopher Columbus, because he came and found America.





“THE KIND KING MONTEZUMA WANTED PEACE, AND SAID THAT HE WOULD GIVE THE SPANIARDS MORE GOLD IF THEY WOULD ONLY GO BACK TO THEIR OWN COUNTRY.”