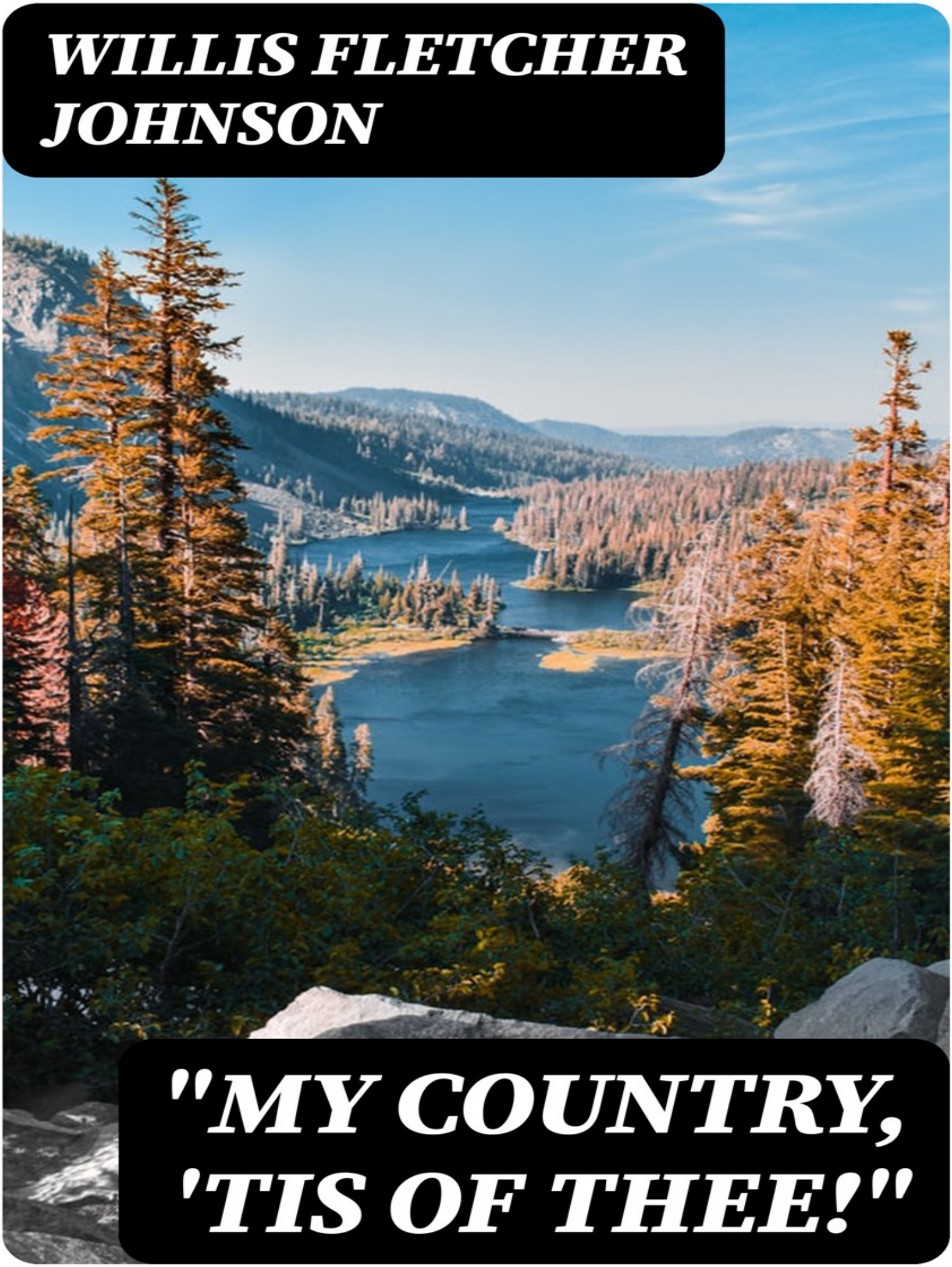
WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON



"MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE!"


WILLIS FLETCHER JOHNSON
"MY COUNTRY, 'TIS OF THEE!"

Willis Fletcher Johnson

"My country, 'tis of thee!"

EAN 8596547052326

DigiCat, 2022
Contact: DigiCat@okpublishing.info

Table of Contents

CHAPTER XXVI. OUR GREAT CONCERN.

CHAPTER I.

THE AGE OF DISCOVERY.

Table of Contents

BEGINNING with the year 1492, the date of the first voyage of Columbus, necessarily leaves a great part of American history untold. Every nation’s story begins in the middle; back of Leonidas are the Homeric heroes; Romulus and Remus antedate the Tarquins. So, centuries before the clear glory of Columbus, we have tradition of various shadowy explorers whose strange barques visited our shores. Unless we grant the earliest inhabitants of America an autochthonic origin, it seems most reasonable to suppose that they came from Asia. Such authorities as Humboldt, Bancroft, and Prescott declare it their opinion that the monuments, the systems of cosmogony, the methods of computing time, etc., all point to an ancient communication with eastern Asia. It is certain that from time immemorial constant intercourse has been kept up between the natives of either side of Bering’s Strait, and it is very probable that the original immigrants came that way. There are other possible routes—the Aleutian Islands and Polynesia are the two next favored by the authorities.

There is a distinct trace of Japanese blood in many of the native tribes of the northwest coast, and we have too many modern instances of Japanese junks drifting upon the American coast, after floating for months at the mercy of the Pacific currents, to doubt the possibility of prehistoric visits of these people. What is known as the “black stream,”

or Japan current, runs northward past the eastern coast of the Japanese Islands, then curves to the east and south, passing the west coast of America and moving toward the Sandwich Islands. This current, it is said, would carry a drifting vessel toward the American coast at the rate of ten miles a day.

The theory which supposes the people, or at least the civilization, of America to be of Egyptian origin is based upon analogies existing between the architecture, hieroglyphics, and various customs of the two countries. But even where these analogies bear the test of close examination, they can scarcely be said to prove anything. In western Asia the Phœnicians—those bold voyagers—and their children, the Carthagenians, are given the honor of settling America. The records of their travels show that they knew of a country lying far to the west. In the writings of Diodorus Siculus is an elaborate account of a wonderful island in the Atlantic Ocean, far beyond the Pillars of Hercules, and many days' journey from the coast of Africa. This happy land, fertile of soil, beautiful of scenery, and perfect of climate, was accidentally discovered by Phœnician sailors, whose barque was driven thither by contrary winds. On their return they gave such glowing accounts of the new country that large colonies of Tyrians left their native land to settle there. This may have been America, but is more likely to have been the Canary Islands.

Volumes have been written to prove that America was settled by the Ten Lost Tribes of Israel.

In old Welsh annals there is an account of a colony established in the twelfth century by Madoc, one of the sons

of Owen Gwynedd, prince of North Wales. After the death of this monarch, his sons waged war against each other for the sovereignty. Madoc became disgusted with contention, and determined to leave his native country and establish a kingdom of his own, as far away as possible from the quarreling of his brothers. He set sail, with what followers he could muster, and for many months bore westward. At length they came to a large and favorable country, and, having sailed for some distance along the coast, they found a landing-place to their liking and disembarked. Some years later, Madoc returned to Wales and persuaded a large number of his countrymen to join the colony. Ten ships were fitted out with all manner of supplies, and many families set sail for the new land. Of their further adventures the records are silent.

An Irish discovery of America is also claimed. St. Patrick is said to have sent missionaries thither. There is every reason to believe that Irish sailors could have reached, by accident or otherwise, the shores of our continent, but there is no reason at all to believe that they did.

But these are all speculations, fairy stories, myths. Coming down to sober facts, there are but two historical documents of real value bearing upon the discovery of America before Columbus. One of these documents is Chinese, the other Scandinavian.

The Chinese document is an extract from the official records, and sets forth the adventures of a Buddhist priest named Hwui Shin, the same being related by him after his return from a country lying very far to the eastward. This country is claimed by some to have been Japan, but others

claim that it was America. The weight of evidence certainly inclines toward the latter theory. The historian begins his account with the statement that, in order to reach the new continent, it is necessary to set out from the coast of the province Leao-tong, to the north of Peking, reaching Japan after a journey of twelve thousand *li*—that is, about four thousand miles. Sailing northward seven thousand *li*, one reaches the kingdom of Wen-shin. Five thousand *li* eastward is the country of Ta-han. Twenty thousand *li* beyond is the new world—which the record names as the country of Fu-sang.

Perhaps we cannot do better than to present the original record, as translated by Professor S. Wells Williams:

“In the first year of the reign, Yung-yuen, of the Emperor Tung Hwăn-han, of the Tsi dynasty (A.D. 499), a Shaman priest named Hwui Shin arrived at King-chau from the kingdom of Fu-sang. He related as follows:

“‘*Fu-sang* lies east of the kingdom of *Ta-han* more than twenty thousand *li*; it is also east of the Middle Kingdom (China). It produces many *fu-sang* trees, from which it derives its name. The leaves of the *fu-sang* resemble those of the *tung* tree. It sprouts forth like the bamboo, and the people eat the shoots. Its fruits resemble the pear, but it is red; the bark is spun into cloth for dresses and woven into brocade. The houses are made of planks. There are no walled cities with gates. The (people) use characters and writing, making paper from the bark of the *fu-sang*. There are no mailed soldiers, for they do not carry on war. The law of the land prescribes a southern and a northern prison. Criminals convicted of light crimes are put into the former,

and those guilty of grievous offenses into the latter. Criminals, when pardoned, are let out of the southern prison, but those in the northern prison are not pardoned. Prisoners in the latter marry. Their boys become bondmen when they are eight years old and the girls bondwomen when nine years old. Convicted prisoners are not allowed to leave their prison while alive. When a nobleman (or an official) has been convicted of crime, the great assembly of the nation meets and places the criminal in a hollow (or pit); they set a feast, with wine, before him, and then take leave of him. If the sentence is a capital one, at the time they separate they surround (the body) with ashes. For crimes of the first grade the sentence involves only the person of the culprit; for the second it reaches the children and grandchildren; while the third extends to the seventh generation.

"'The king of this country is termed *yueh-ki*; the highest rank of nobles is called *tui-li*; the next, little *tui-li*; and the lowest, *no-cha-sha*. When the king goes abroad, he is preceded and followed by drummers and trumpeters. The color of his robes varies with the years in the cycle containing the ten stems. It is azure in the first two years; in the second two years it is red; it is yellow in the third, white in the fourth, and black in the last two years. There are oxen with long horns, so long that they will hold things—the biggest as much as five pecks. Vehicles are drawn by oxen, horses, and deer, for the people of that land rear deer just as the Chinese rear cattle, and make cream of their milk. They have red pears, which will keep a year without spoiling; water-rushes and peaches are common. Iron is not

found in the ground, though copper is; they do not prize gold or silver, and trade is conducted without rent, duty, or fixed prices.

“‘In matters of marriage, it is the law that the (intending) son-in-law must erect a hut before the door of the girl’s house, and must sprinkle and sweep the place morning and evening for a whole year. If she then does not like him, she bids him depart; but if she is pleased with him they are married. The bridal ceremonies are, for the most part, like those of China. A fast of seven days is observed for parents at their death, five for grandparents, and three days for brothers, sisters, uncles, or aunts. Images to represent their spirits are set up, before which they worship and pour out libations morning and evening; but they wear no mourning or fillets. The successor of the king does not attend personally to government affairs for the first three years. In olden times they knew nothing of the Buddhist religion, but during the reign Ta-ming of the Emperor Hiao Wu-ti, of the Lung dynasty (A.D. 458), from Ki-pin five beggar priests went there. They traveled over the kingdom, everywhere making known the laws, canons, and images of that faith. Priests of regular ordination were set apart among the natives, and the customs of the country became reformed.’”

There are several other narratives which relate to Fu-sang, or to countries near it in situation. This, of them all, seems to describe most truthfully a real country. Fu-sang may have been Japan, or it may have been Mexico. Hwui Shin’s account differs very widely in some of its details, from our knowledge of either.

All the literature of the subject of Chinese discoveries of America has been examined and reviewed in Mr. E. P. Vining's excellent book, *An Inglorious Columbus*. Mr. Vining believes Fu-sang to be Mexico, and the *fu-sang* tree, in his view, is the maguey.

When we come to the Scandinavian records, we find much that is not only plausible but indisputable evidence of the validity of their claims. We know that the Scandinavian vikings, splendid old rascals, in their many-oared galleys, often sailed far out into the waters of the Atlantic. In the year 860, one of these glorious cut-throats, Naddoddr (pronounce it if you can!), was blown upon the coast of Iceland. In 876 a similar experience befell another viking, and he reported having seen in the distance the coast of an unknown shore.

In the year 981, Eric the Red, an outlaw of Iceland, sailed in search of this coast, and, finding it, set a bad example to future real estate dealers by naming its bleak length Greenland.

Subsequent to this discovery, according to the sagas of Iceland, frequent visits to the south were made, and one Bjarni, distancing all previous explorers, found a fertile country to which he gave the name of Vinland. This was in the year 985, and, although the stories of these exploits are vague and untrustworthy enough in detail, there seems little doubt that Bjarni really visited the eastern coast of America at that date.

No attempt was made at colonization; indeed, it is not recorded that the galleys of Bjarni stopped at the new land at all. The wind which had carried them thither changed

suddenly, and they were borne back to Iceland, where it is safe to presume that they all got uproariously drunk, and did a great deal of bragging on the strength of their adventure.

The second voyage to the new country was made by Leif, son of Eric the Red, about the year 1000. He touched first a barren land covered with icy mountains which he named Helluland. Spreading sail again he turned the prow of his vessel southward until he reached a level country with trees and grassy slopes. This he called Markland. Two days sailing brought the vessel to an island at which the sailors disembarked, for the weather was warm and the sight of land alluring. They stayed here for a few hours and then steered for the mainland. A river flowed out from a lake, and in this lake they anchored, carried the luggage from the ship, and built themselves houses. It was the most beautiful, the most fertile land they had ever seen, and they resolved to spend the winter there. One of the boldest of them left his companions to the enjoyment of the salmon fishing in the river and lake, and devoted himself to exploring the surrounding country. He found quantities of wine-berries (probably grapes), and with these berries and with some wood they loaded their ship and set sail for Greenland.

Seven years later another expedition was fitted out with three ships, and under command of this same Leif. They sailed far to the southward and finally came to a promontory, to the right of which lay a long, sandy beach. On this beach, or rather on a tongue of land that ran out from it, they found the keel of a ship. They called this point,

Kjlarnes (Keel Cape), and the beach, Furdustrandir (Long Strand).

When the expedition set out, King Olaf Tryggvason gave Lief two famous runners, a Scotch man and woman, named Haki and Hekja. These people were set on shore shortly after they had passed Furdustrandir, and ordered to run to the south, explore the country and return in three days. At the end of the designated period they returned, the man bringing a bunch of wine-berries and the woman an ear of wheat. This was promising, and the expedition voted to continue the southward course.

Coming to a bay in which was an island around which flowed rapid currents, they gave it the name of Straumey (Stream Island). The island was so covered with the nests of eider ducks that it was difficult to step without treading on the eggs. Here they resolved to tarry, and, unloading the vessels, built habitations. Whether they stayed a long or a short time, and what adventures befell them, of good or evil, we know not.

A fuller record is that of Karlsefne, who with another hero, Snorro, and our old friend Bjarni, sailed southward a long time until they came to the river which ran out through the lake into the sea. The river was too shallow to allow the ships to enter without high water. Karlsefne sailed with his men into its mouth, and named the place Hop. Here were found fields of wild wheat, and on the high ground wine-berries grew abundantly. The woods were full of game and the men found plenty of amusement for a fortnight. The only remarkable thing they saw was a number of skin boats filled with swart, ugly people who rowed near the shore and

gazed in astonishment at the Northmen. They had coarse hair, large, wild eyes and broad faces. They remained gazing at Karlsefne’s men for a little and then rowed away to the southward.

With these people the explorers soon established communication, trading red cloth, which the natives seemed to prefer to anything else, for skins and furs. They wished to purchase swords and spears, but these the Northmen refused to part with. As long as the red cloth held out their relations with the Skraelings, as they had named the natives, continued friendly. But one day, as the saga has it, while they were trafficking, a bull which Karlsefne had with him ran out of the wood and bellowed so fiercely that the Skraelings were frightened out of their wits, and fled in their skin boats, back to the southland.

Three weeks later great numbers of them returned, and, with loud cries, sprang on shore, prepared to do battle. Their weapons were slings, and very uncomfortable weapons they proved to be, but the Northmen stood their ground valiantly, until all of a sudden they saw the Skraelings raise on a pole something that looked like an air-filled bag of a blue color. They threw this at the enemy, and when it struck the ground it exploded violently. At this Karlsefne and his men retreated, never stopping until they gained a rocky stronghold, where they made another stand, and at length succeeded in vanquishing the Skraelings.

Shortly afterward the expedition returned to Greenland. Many other Northmen visited Vinland, according to the sagas, but no effort was made at colonization. It is a matter of conjecture as to the exact location of the country

explored by them. Some writers believe it to have been Labrador, and others place it as far south as Rhode Island. The Skraelings, as they are described in the sagas, certainly resemble Esquimaux more nearly than Indians. But then we have no positive proof that the Northmen ever actually visited America at all. The presumption is that they did, but all matters of detail must necessarily remain doubtful, even if we accept their narratives in the main as true.

But whatever credit is to be given to the Asiatic, Norse, or other early discoverers of America, or whatever knowledge of this hemisphere may have been possessed by Europeans in classic times, to Christopher Columbus must be ascribed the honor of opening the Western World to actual settlement by civilized man. This illustrious man was born in 1436, in all but the lowest rank of life. His father was a woolcomber of Genoa. But the education of the lad was made as complete as the scanty means of his parents and the limited knowledge of that day would permit. At an early age he learned to read and write, and obtained some knowledge of arithmetic, drawing, and painting. Then he was sent to the college at Pavia, one of the best institutions of learning of those times. Here he studied grammar and the Latin language; but his attention, fortunately for the world, was directed principally to studies bearing upon the maritime profession, which he intended to follow. He was instructed in geometry, astronomy, and navigation. Like many of the young men of Genoa, he had an irresistible inclination toward the sea. This was but natural, as that city was one of the chief ports of the world. Later in life, Columbus ascribed this inclination to a direct impulse from

God, but this was only after his career had been crowned with such brilliant success.

Geography was at this time the fashionable fad of the day. The world was just beginning to recover the lost geographical knowledge, limited as it was, of the Greeks and Romans. Monks and churchmen were still splitting hairs over absurdly unimportant problems: How many angels could stand on the point of a needle? whether a lie, under certain circumstances, was not truth? whether black might not, in certain cases, be truly called white? and other questions of equal vitality. But Arabian philosophers, at the same time, were measuring degrees of latitude and calculating the circumference of the earth. Their studies and achievements inevitably found their way to the minds of many Christians in Europe, who, although detesting the religious creed of the Mohammedans, were able to see that their science was not to be despised. The works of Ptolemy and Strabo had also just come into popular circulation, and created as much of a sensation as any realistic novel of the present day. Prince Henry of Portugal had made voyages of important discovery along the African coast, and thus had inspired all the nations of Western Europe with the hope of lighting upon some yet unknown region of fabulous wealth.

All these circumstances made the time particularly fitting for the most important event of the ages since the Christian era. The hour had come and the man also. At fourteen years of age Columbus left the school at Pavia, and began the life of a sailor. This simply meant to cruise from one port of the Mediterranean Sea to another, half as a merchantman, half as a man-of-war. Every vessel was hourly exposed to the

attacks of pirates, especially those of the Barbary States, or of the war vessels of hostile countries. In the midst of such dangers and difficulties Columbus spent his early years. But the coarseness, ignorance, and violence with which he was surrounded did not degrade his noble mind. He had within him the seeds of greatness, a fine tone of thought, an ardent imagination, and a loftiness of aspiration. Every leisure hour was spent in study and profitable observation, thus improving the too meagre educational advantages of his brief school life.

The year 1470 found Columbus at Lisbon, drawn thither with hundreds of other navigators and scientific men by the fame of Prince Henry's discoveries. Strange tales were told of unexplored regions in the fiery South, where the rocks were red hot and the water of the ocean forever boiling. Even to these extravagant tales Columbus gave some heed, but his thoughts were principally fixed on the possibility of finding a new world far to the west. Our hero was now in the prime of life, a tall, muscular man of commanding aspect. His light brown hair was already prematurely gray, and his expression of countenance was grave and scholarly. He was simple and abstemious in his diet, affable and engaging in his manners and a devout Roman Catholic. But under this exterior was concealed a nature of the most ardent enthusiasm, not less energetic than that of Peter the Hermit or Ignatius Loyola. His religious temperament led him often to the services of the Church, and it was there that he first met a lady of high rank who soon afterward became his wife. She was the daughter of Don Bartolomeo Monis de

Palestrello, an Italian cavalier, one of Prince Henry’s most distinguished officers. The use of his father-in-law’s

THE LANDING OF COLUMBUS.

fine collection of maps and charts was of great service to Columbus, who now gave his attention to geographical studies more thoroughly than ever. He talked or corresponded with all the learned men of the day. He began to trace charts of his own, correcting the popular errors and traditions by the aid of his own greater knowledge and experience. Rumor, inspired by the stories of early adventures, had studded the far western ocean with wondrous islands, on one of which seven Christian bishops, fleeing from Pagan persecution, had founded seven splendid cities. There were tales of a lofty mountainous country to be seen on clear days far to the westward from the Canary Islands. Plato had told of the ancient continent of Atlantis, which had been sunk beneath the waves of the ocean. Marco Polo, the Venetian adventurer, had told of the great wealth of the East Indies, which he said could be reached by sailing westward from Europe.

However much he discounted the more extravagant of these tales, Columbus was deeply impressed by them all. He became well convinced that far to the west there lay an unexplored region, probably a part of the East Indies, and he believed, with an intense religious zeal, that God had specially commissioned him to discover and explore it. Thereupon he consecrated the whole of his remaining life to the execution of this task. No hazard, nor obstacle, nor disappointment for a moment daunted him. He first applied to the Portuguese Court, stating the grounds of his belief in the existence of an undiscovered country in the western ocean, and asking for the means of ascertaining the truth of it. His proposition was received with indifference, and finally rejected under the influences of jealousy and intrigue. Then he returned to his native Genoa, and there sought the same aid and encouragement; but Genoa was already declining under the stress of domestic discord and foreign war, and was unable to do anything for him.

The fortunes of Columbus were now at a low ebb. He had exhausted his private means, and was in actual destitution. Downcast and disappointed, often begging his food from door to door, he made his way on foot from Genoa to the Court of Spain. Leading his little son by the hand, he one day approached the Spanish capital, and asked for bread and water at a convent door. The prior saw him, talked with him, became interested in him and his schemes, and offered to introduce him at Court. Thus Columbus obtained an interview with Cardinal Mendoza, the chief minister and confidential adviser of the King and Queen, Ferdinand and Isabella. The Cardinal was a man of extensive information

and liberal mind, who perceived at once the value of Columbus's theories and commended them to the sovereigns. The King, also, was apparently a good judge of men, and appreciated the character and ability of Columbus. But he was not willing to embark hastily in so great an enterprise as that proposed. He first called together a council of all the most learned astronomers and geographers in his kingdom, and to them referred Columbus, with his maps and charts and theories.

This council met at Salamanca. It was entirely composed of friars, priests, and monks, who monopolized all the learning, both secular and religious, of that age. Some were men of large and philosophic minds; others, narrow bigots; but all were imbued with the notion that geographical discovery had reached its limits long before. In the presence of this learned body, Columbus, a simple seaman, strong in nothing save the energy of his convictions and the fire of his enthusiasm, had to appear to defend a scheme which to them must have appeared the dream of a madman. The difficulties of his position may be guessed from the nature of some of the objections made to his undertaking. His mathematical propositions and demonstrations were met with quotations from the Book of Genesis, the Psalms, the Prophets, the Epistles, the Gospels, and half a dozen of the Fathers of the Church. When he argued that the earth was spherical, his opponents quoted one of the Psalms, where the heavens are said to be extended like a hide. Some members of the council, for the sake of argument, would admit the rotundity of the earth, but denied the possibility of circumnavigating it, first, because of the intolerable heat

of the torrid zone, and second, because it would take at least three years to accomplish the voyage, in which time the explorers would die of hunger, it being impossible to carry provisions sufficient for so long a time. Still others said that if a ship did reach India, she could never return, for the roundness of the globe would place a hill in her way, up which the strongest wind could not blow her.

Such were the absurd notions held by the foremost scholars of those days. It is needless here to recount such arguments further, or the arguments, now familiar to every school-boy, used by Columbus in support of his theory. It is enough to say that he was treated with incredulity, suspicion, and contempt, and narrowly escaped being condemned for heresy. After a long consultation the assembly broke up without arriving at any decision. Then the war with the Moors of Granada absorbed the attention of the Court for several years and exhausted its financial resources. But after years of weary waiting the wish of Columbus was granted. Queen Isabella pledged some of her jewels and in other ways raised a sufficient sum to equip his expedition. In the month of April, 1492, an agreement was drawn up making him Viceroy and Governor-General of all the lands he might discover and placing a number of ships and men at his disposal. On the morning of August 3d, 1492, he and his 120 comrades embarked in three small ships, the Nina, the Pinta, and the Santa Maria, and set sail from the little port of Palos, in Andalusia, on the most important voyage in history.

In a few days the expedition reached the Canary Islands, the then western boundary of the known world. Beyond this

all was speculation. And of all the members of the expedition Columbus alone had unquestioning faith in the object of the enterprise. Many of the sailors believed, when they had lost sight of the European shore, that they were doomed to inevitable destruction. Thus doubting and murmuring they sailed onward week after week. At one time their discontent and fears culminated in actual mutiny, and they proposed to put Columbus in irons or throw him overboard and return, if possible, to Europe. But he alternately calmed their discontent by promises of rich rewards and awakened their fears by threats of immediate punishment. Thus for two months he kept them in hand. Then as they again grew desperate and bade fair to defy his authority altogether, indications of land not far ahead began to appear. Birds hitherto unknown were seen flying above the waves and wheeling about the ships, and plants and bits of wood were seen in the water. Then the branch of a tree bearing red berries, and a curiously carved instrument, were picked up. These things inspired even the common sailors with hope that they were indeed approaching a shore.

At last, on October 8th, 1492, after sixty-five days of navigation on unknown seas, they discovered land. It was not the American continent, but one of the Bahama Islands, to which Columbus reverently gave the name of St. Salvador. It was inhabited by Indians who received the strangers kindly. Columbus formally took possession of the country in the name of the Christian religion and the King and Queen of Spain. And thus the dream of his youth was fulfilled and the ambition of his manhood was accomplished. The Western World was discovered. Subsequently he visited

Cuba, Jamaica, Hayti, Porto Rico, and other islands, but did not reach the main land until his third voyage, when he visited Venezuela. He named the islands the West Indies, supposing them to be a part of the great East Indian Archipelago.

In the month of April, 1493, he returned to the Spanish Court. The City of Barcelona was ablaze with flags and the air was vocal with the roar of artillery, while all the bells of the churches rang peals of triumph in his honor. Years before Columbus had come thither on foot and in rags, begging his bread. Now he rode the streets in more than royal pomp, crowned with the admiration and acclaim of all the populace. Seven natives of the Western World marched in his train, and there was an almost endless display of gold and gems, of carven idols and sculptured masks, of birds and beasts and reptiles, of trees and plants and fruits. Above all waved two banners, one that of Spain which he had unfurled above the new continent, and the other the admiral's flag bearing in golden letters the inscription,

> Por Castilla y por Leon
> Nuevo Mundo hallo Colon,[A]

or, For Castile and Leon Columbus has discovered a new world.

Thus he came to the Court where the King and Queen awaited him, and was greeted by them as their equal. There, seated among the nobles of Spain, he gave a brief account of the most striking events of his voyage. The sovereigns listened to him with profound emotion and then fell on their knees to give thanks to God for so great an

achievement. For the time being no honor was too great to bestow upon Columbus. He was commissioned to make other voyages to the New World and to take possession of all lands there in the name of Spain. Yet it was only a few years after that that the memory of his splendid services was outweighed by the malice of his foes. He was actually arrested, imprisoned and loaded with irons, and at the end died in disgrace and neglect, at Valladolid, May 20th, 1506.

The discovery made by Columbus was followed up by the Spaniards with the greatest enthusiasm. Within twenty years the four largest of the West Indian Islands were the seats of flourishing colonies, while as yet other nations were contenting themselves with occasional voyages of discovery along the coasts of the continent. The great fertility of the soil, the mildness of the climate, but above all the finding of gold and precious stones, kept the Spaniards alive to the importance of their new possessions and encouraged immigration. Columbus himself made four voyages to the New World, discovering, in his third voyage, the South American continent near the mouth of the Orinoco River, and reaching in his fourth, Honduras and the coast to the south of this region. He never knew what a great discovery he had made and to his death rested under the delusion that he had found the eastern shore of Asia.

In 1499 Alonzo de Ojeda, who had previously accompanied Columbus to the new country, made a voyage on his own account and explored four hundred leagues of the coast of South America. With him sailed Amerigo Vespucci, who afterward made three independent voyages to America and wrote the first account of it; this was

published in 1507, and popular prejudice has supposed that his name came thus to be given to the New World.

At the recent Congress of Americanists in Paris, this point was discussed with much warmth. M. Jules Marcon asserted that Vespucci's name was Alberico instead of Amerigo, and that he changed it after the new continent was named. The true derivation of the name America is Amerique, that being the Indian name of a range of mountains in Central America. Still, some historians declare that very range of mountains to have been called Amerisque, and it is true that in the Florentine language Alberico and Amerigo are identical. Then there is extant a map of the world prepared by one Vallescu of Majorca in 1490, on the back of which is a note to the effect that the map was purchased for one hundred and twenty ducats in gold by *Amerigo* Vespucci, the merchant. This proves that even if his name was not Amerigo, he sometimes wrote it so.

Other voyagers were Pedro Alonzo Nigno and Vincent Pinzon, the latter being the first Spaniard to cross the equinoctial line. He discovered the mouth of the Amazon River and from there sailed north to the Carribean Sea and the Gulf of Mexico. In the same year (1499), Diego Lope explored the coast of South America far to the southwest.

The discovery and conquest of Mexico and Peru followed. The New World became the Mecca of every reckless and adventurous spirit in Europe. Ojeda sailed under a grant from the King of Spain to found a colony at San Sebastian, and with him went Francisco Pizarro, who thus made the first step in his adventurous career. The colony at San Sebastian was abandoned, and on the return voyage one

vessel foundered. The other, commanded by Pizarro, reached Carthagena, where it was met by a fleet conveying men and provisions to the colony. On one of these ships was the adventurer Balboa, who had smuggled himself on board to escape his creditors. Learning that the colony toward which they were sailing had been deserted, Balboa proposed going to Darien, which coast he had already visited. The proposal met with favor and a new town was founded under the name of Santa Maria de la Antigua del Darien. Trouble began immediately, as usual. The man who had brought the fleet thither, Encisco, a lawyer of San Domingo, was imprisoned and Balboa was made alcade of the colony.

The natives of Darien viewed their visitors with anything but favor, and endeavored by strategy to induce them to move on. They represented the neighboring district of Coyba to be much richer in gold and provisions than their own, and Pizarro, with only six men, went on an exploring expedition. The natives were found to be hostile, and on one occasion the Spaniards were surrounded by four hundred warriors, with whom they had a very bloody battle. One hundred and fifty natives were killed, many more wounded, while the Spaniards all escaped with their lives, one man only being too badly hurt to fly. Retreating to Santa Maria, they reported their misfortune, and it is to the credit of Balboa that he obliged them to return and bring back their wounded companion. Coyba was conquered, and an alliance formed with its ruler. Adjacent to it was a range of mountains, at the foot of which was a very rich and highly civilized country called Comagre. The chief invited the

Spaniards to his domain, treated them with hospitality, and astonished them with the splendor of his possessions. His palace was a wonderful structure of wood, divided into many apartments. In one of these chambers, the dried and embalmed bodies of the chieftain's ancestors, clothed in cotton robes, richly embroidered with gold and precious stones, were suspended from the walls. A large amount of gold and seventy slaves were presented to the Spaniards. One-fifth of the gold was set apart for the King, and over the remainder the Christians held such a dispute that the savages were aghast. Finally the young chieftain scornfully remarked that if they were so greedy for gold, he could direct them to a country where it was more common than iron was in their land. "When you have passed this range of mountains," he continued, "you will behold another ocean, on which are vessels only inferior to those which brought you hither, equipped with sails and oars, but navigated by people naked like ourselves." Undoubtedly the chief alluded to Peru. This certain proof of the existence of another ocean filled Balboa with delight. He imagined that the country described formed a part of the vast region of the East Indies. Preparations for the enterprise were immediately begun, but in the midst of it all Balboa was summoned to court to answer the charges brought against him by Encisco. Instead of obeying the command, however, he determined to effect the passage to the South Sea before his successor could arrive from Spain. The Isthmus of Darien is only sixty miles in breadth, but a chain of mountains, a continuation of the Andes, runs through its whole extent. Its valleys are marshy and unhealthy, being inundated by rains which

prevail nearly two-thirds of the year. These marshes are even more impenetrable than the forests which cover the mountains, and to this day the crossing is not much easier than it was then.

No man but Balboa could have accomplished it. He was not any more courageous than his followers, but he possessed great powers of magnetism as well as prudence, sagacity, and amiability; in a word, he had genius, the genius of leadership. His soldiers were his children. He wished to bear the heaviest burdens himself; his post in battle was the most dangerous of all; his endurance surpassed that of the strongest men. His army consisted of one hundred and ninety Spaniards, one thousand Indians, useful to carry baggage, and some fierce blood-hounds.

Balboa set forth on the 1st of September, 1513. The journey was estimated to be of six days' duration, but it was only after twenty-five days of desperate fighting, and of struggles with disease and fatigue, that they reached the summit of the mountain from which Balboa had been informed the great ocean could be seen.

Commanding his army to halt, Balboa advanced alone to the apex and there beheld the South Sea stretching before him in boundless extent. Amid great exultation he took formal possession of land and sea, cutting the king's name on trees and erecting crosses and mounds of stones as records thereof.

Leaving the greater part of his men where they were, Balboa proceeded with eighty Spaniards, and under the guidance of a friendly chief, toward the coast. Arriving at the borders of one of the vast bays, he rushed into the