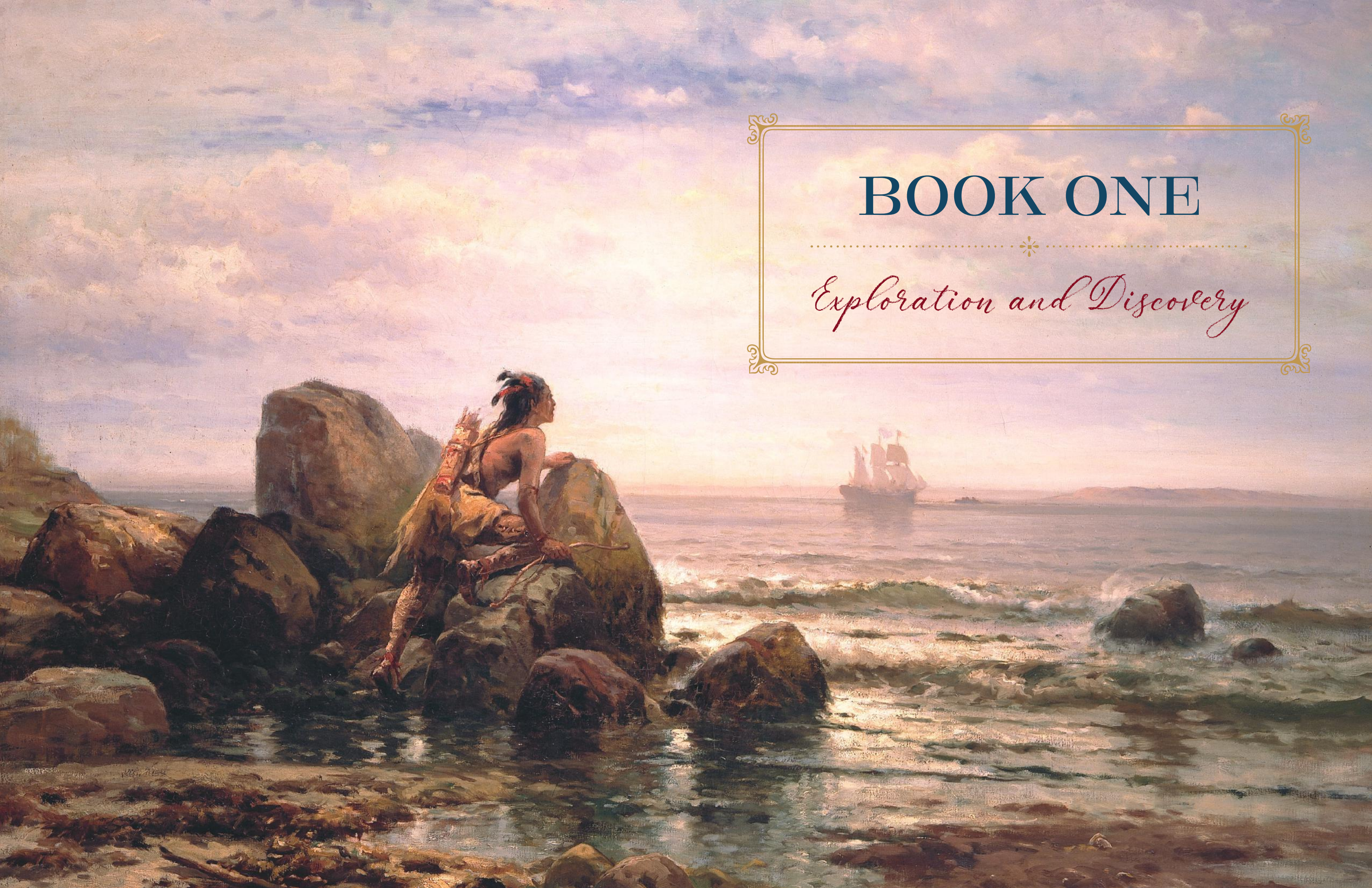




BOOK ONE

Exploration and Discovery

CHAPTER 1

Marco Polo

— **HIS LIFE** In the beginning of the thirteenth century Genghis Khan, the leader of a Mongol or Tartar tribe in northern Asia, conquered with his enormous army of horsemen the larger part of Asia and some lands in Russia.

Thousands of cities and millions of lives were sacrificed to him, and his rule was so powerful that there was a saying, “In Asia and Europe scarcely a dog might bark without Mongol leave.”

Kubla Khan, the grandson of Genghis Khan, was a much more gentle man than his grandfather. He ruled over China or Cathay as it was then called.

His magnificent capital or city of the khan was Cambaluc, now Peking.

During his reign two gentlemen from Venice belonging to the ancient Polo family visited the East. They were merchants, but they were adventurous explorers too. We cannot trace their long and difficult routes. Sometimes they turned aside to avoid a mountain or a desert or a river, or because they did not wish to pass through a country where war was raging.

In due time, however, they arrived at the court of Kubla Khan, the “Lord of the Earth.”

The khan had never before seen any Europeans and he welcomed them cordially, asking them many questions about their country. He gave them tablets of gold, such as were often presented to messengers, and sent them back to Rome to the Pope.

He wished the Pope to send him one hundred missionaries, and some of the oil burning in the lamp which hangs over the Holy Sepulcher at Jerusalem. Besides these, he wished the Polos to instruct him in the seven arts, which in those days formed a perfect education. These were arithmetic, astronomy, grammar, music, geometry, rhetoric, and logic.

The Polos could find but two missionaries; they obtained the oil, but we are not sure about the seven arts.

When the Polos were preparing to return to Cathay, Marco, the son of one of these nobles, now fifteen years old, begged that he might go with them. They all started, but it was not long before the two priests were so frightened by the perils of the way that they returned home. After surmounting many dangers the Polos finally reached Cathay, and the khan was delighted to welcome them. He was pleased to receive the holy oil, but disappointed about the missionaries, for he was eager to introduce a new religion into his country.

Young Marco Polo was a bright and observing lad. He learned the language, and he told a story well. Kubla Khan became very fond of him, and constantly

employed him on missions to every part of his dominions. When Marco returned, he had always such a pleasant way of describing the curious cities and countries which he had seen that the khan listened to him with the greatest interest. He liked him far better than his other messengers, for on their return they could talk only of the business on which they had been sent.

Many years passed—full of wondrous sights and marvelous adventures for Marco Polo.

The khan was growing old, and the Polos were anxious to go home to see their friends and to carry their treasures. But they all were useful to the khan, and he wished them to remain. Finally an opportunity

offered, and the khan reluctantly gave his consent for them to depart.

Our story now shifts to the beautiful Venice of that romantic and adventurous age.

One day, in the year 1295, three sunburned men, in shabby Tartar dress, appeared in the streets of the city. The Venetians gazed on them with curiosity, and laughed them to scorn when the travelers told who they were. How could the people believe them to be the same Polos who had gone so many years before into the land of darkness in the far East?

The three men made their way through the city to the gates of the handsome residence of the Polos, but



we are not told how they succeeded in quickly gaining admittance.

Shortly afterwards the Venetian nobles were summoned to a splendid feast in their grand palace.

The guests were received by the three travelers arrayed in rich robes of crimson satin. At the beginning of the feast their robes were exchanged for crimson damask ones, and when they were taken off, they were cut up and divided among the servants.

Later in the feast the damask robes were exchanged for those of crimson velvet, and the damask ones were divided. At the close of the feast the velvet robes were taken off and divided like the others, and now the three men appeared dressed like the rest of the company.

After the meal, the servants having gone out, Marco Polo brought in the three shabby dresses. The guests recognized them as the ones in which the curious strangers had arrived. And now for the greatest surprise of all!

Sharp knives were taken, the coats were ripped open, and out rolled quantities of jewels of the greatest value—diamonds, emeralds, rubies, and sapphires.

These had been carefully stitched between the linings that no one might suspect what the travelers carried. Then the Polos told their guests about their adventures in the far East, and how Kubla Khan had given them treasures in gold and stuffs which they could not carry. They had exchanged all for precious gems. What a fascinating and bewildering entertainment!

The guests now recognized that their hosts were the Polos, and ever afterwards they treated them with the greatest honor.

Two or three years later there was a war between Venice and Genoa. Marco Polo fought, and was taken prisoner by the Genoese and put into prison. His fellow-prisoner was Rusticiano of Pisa, who, besides being a war-captain, was a clever writer. Marco Polo told Rusticiano about his wonderful adventures and the strange things which he had seen and heard, and Rusticiano wrote them on parchment and made a book which others copied. For many years copies of the book were very precious, even until printing was invented.

In this book of travels Marco Polo describes wonderful things, among them a bird in Madagascar so

large that it can carry an elephant in its talons, and fine Persian horses able to travel one hundred and ten miles a day. He tells, too, of jugglers who can make dishes and cups of gold fly through the air; and of a sorcerer in the vale of Cashmere who had magic power over the weather and was able to bring rain and snow.

In the book we learn that Marco Polo had been told that Noah's ark was still on Mount Ararat in Armenia, but that the mountain was so covered with snow that no one could ever ascend to see it.

He had seen the circular houses of the Tartars made of wands covered with felt. When the Tartars traveled, they filled their houses with women and children and drew them along with oxen and camels.

Many pages of the book are devoted to the magnificence of the court of Kubla Khan. Those who waited upon this lord had their mouths covered with napkins of silk and gold so that their breath might not taint the contents of a dish or goblet presented to the king. The khan's most famous feast was on New Year's Day. On this occasion he appeared in robes of beaten gold. Before the feast all the officials passed in review before the khan, bowing their faces four times to the floor. The palaces of Kubla Khan were most magnificent. In one of them six thousand people could dine.

In the parks were trees of all kinds brought by elephants from all parts of the khan's dominions. Rows of trees were constantly being planted, for in Cathay there was an old saying, "He who plants trees lives long."

The whole book of Marco Polo is full of entertainment and amusement. It describes absurd things and true things, and gives us a curious glimpse into the early geography and customs of the people of Asia. It is one of the most important books of the Middle Ages. Difficult as it was to procure it then, we may find it now in every public library.

Shortly after Marco Polo had told his tales to Rusticiano, and Rusticiano had preserved it for the world, peace was made between Genoa and Venice.

Marco Polo went home and married and had three daughters. What interesting stories he must have told his children!

He lived to be an old man. Before his death he was

asked to take back some of the strange things which he had reported, but he refused, saying: —

"I have told the truth!"

—••**HIS STORY** Very wonderful stories were told of the countries in the East—of Cathay, and Mangi, and Cipango—which had been visited by the great traveller, Marco Polo, and the man who could find the shortest way thither, would, of all men, receive the highest honor from the King of Spain. And so every one who sailed from Spain looked first toward America and then beyond it to the East. And no wonder, for these countries were richer than Mexico and Peru, more fertile than Florida, and more beautiful than Fairyland itself. There was nothing in the world that one might want that could not be found within the borders of these lands. For ages and ages this kingdom had been ruled by the great race of Kubla Khan, and these monarchs had no other thought than to make their kingdom the most beautiful and glorious of the whole earth. They had built great cities, and strong forts, and extensive highways; it was said that within the Province of Mangi alone were twelve thousand cities, all within a short distance of one another. Chief of these cities was Quinsai, which covered a hundred miles of ground. On one side of it was a river, and on another side a lake, and through it flowed clear, winding streams spanned by twelve thousand beautiful bridges, which were so lofty that ships passed under them with ease. The streets were wide and bordered with palm trees, and fragrant flowers bloomed all the year round in the gardens and parks. All the dwellings were of marble, and the temples and palaces were ornamented with precious stones. Warehouses of stone stood in different parts of the city, filled with costly merchandise, silks and velvets, and cloth of gold, and all manner of rare articles made of gold and silver and mother-of-pearl, curiously and beautifully beaten and engraved. And crystal fountains kept the air pure and fresh, and great birds with gold and silver wings flew lazily from tree to tree, and one could not tell whether the city was more beautiful by day, when the sun shone down upon it and brightened the marble roofs and charming gardens, or by night, when the moon and stars were reflected in the lakes and

ivers, and when the fountains glistened white in the moonlight, and the great squares and lofty palaces were illumined with a million crystal lamps.

Most beautiful of all the palaces was that of the king, which stood in the centre of the city on a hill overlooking all the country round. It was so large that it covered ten acres, and its wide, lofty corridors, beautified with groups of magnolia and palm, seemed like magnificent avenues stretching from one palace to another.

Within the enclosure were groves of pine and oak and many rare trees, and gardens filled with choicest flowers, and lakes on which swans floated, and in whose waters rainbow-hued fishes darted hither and thither. The palace itself was of the purest white marble, its roof was wrought in gold and supported by hundreds of pillars of pure gold, wonderfully adorned in azure arabesque, and having the capitals studded with precious stones; and all the air was sweet with perfumed fountains, and everywhere it was continual summer from the abundance of flowers and the songs of birds.

And the king and all his people enjoyed their beautiful city as much as possible, for they were so rich they had to work very little, and spent the greater part of every day in pleasant amusements. At any hour one might see pleasure parties on the lakes and rivers, which were always covered with gilded boats, and barges with silken awnings, under which tables were prepared for banquets. And everywhere through the city were scattered inviting bowers, where the people sat when tired with walking, and watched the long procession of elegant chariots, luxuriously fitted up with cushions of silks and velvet and drawn by richly caparisoned horses. And besides these everyday amusements there were a great many days held sacred to the gods, when there were great feasts lasting ten or twelve days, and when ten thousand guests were entertained at a time.

And the health and comfort of the people were provided for as well as their amusement, for there were elegant marble baths, and a number of fine hospitals for the care of the sick, and a wonderful system of lighting the houses and palaces, so that the night seemed almost turned into day again, and a well-trained fire-department, always ready to act at any moment,

and in fact, everything that could be done to make the people healthy and happy, and to protect their lives and property, was done. And all the children went to school in the public parks and gardens, for in that beautiful climate it never rained or was cold, and so there was no need of school-houses, and the boys and girls studied botany, and geology, and astronomy out of doors, and no doubt found it very pleasant.

And Marco Polo, summing up his description of the wonderful place, says, “And this city, for the excellence thereof, hath the name of the city of Heaven; for in the world there is not the like, or a place in which are found so many pleasures, that a man would think he were in Paradise.”

And all the other countries ruled by the great Khan were as rich as Mangi. In Armenia were tens of thousands of beautiful cities filled with works of art, and out in the open country were wonderful hot springs which cured all manner of diseases, and on the top of one of the high mountains Noah’s ark still rested. And Cathay also held many rich towns. Among them, Cambalu, where the king had a marble palace with a roof of gold, as in Quinsai. And here, ten thousand soldiers guarded the palace, and the royal stables, wherein stood five thousand elephants. Great public roads led out from Cambalu to all the other cities in the empire, and along these roads were stationed post-houses where the king’s messengers could find rest and refreshment, and where there were elegant apartments in which the king himself might rest when on his journey through the empire. All the king’s errands were done by swift messengers, who ran from one post-house to another. These messengers wore belts from which hung gold and silver bells, and as soon as one station was reached, the letters and messages were given to another messenger and carried on to the next station, and so on, the tinkling of the bells notifying the waiting messenger to be in readiness. And so, not a moment was lost; the messengers ran swiftly over the fine roads, scarcely noticing, in their haste, the beautiful scenery or the many works of art that adorned the way, which led through deep, shady forests, and wide, pleasant meadows, and over the numerous rivers and canals, spanned by lofty bridges built of rare stone and costly marble,

and ornamented with rows of polished columns and great stone lions, and curiously graven images of gods, and men, and animals. The roads extended from one great city to another, joining the most distant places together, and the Khan spent a summer in one place and a winter in another, and every city tried to outshine the rest. In the summer months the Khan spent much of his time in his palace at Ciandu, which was as magnificent as Cambalu. Here the palace extended over sixteen miles, and ten thousand white horses stood in the king’s stables.

All this country was guarded by soldiers, who were like the sands of the sea for number, and the great generals were held in such esteem by the king that they were allowed to live in the most magnificent style. They all sat in golden chairs, and rode on milk-white horses, and travelled in gorgeous chariots, or in beautiful barges with silk and velvet awnings to keep off the heat of the sun. And so mighty was the Khan, and so great were his generals, that all the other countries round were very glad to live peaceably, and try in every way to please such a powerful monarch. The riches of this country were beyond description; mountains of turquoises reached to the clouds; the lakes were full of pearls; everywhere were gold and silver mines; the rivers sparkled with gold, and the valleys were rich in diamonds. And everywhere, too, there was an abundance of choice fruits and nuts, and rare spices which grew in the gardens all the year round, so there was no lack of them summer or winter. And the people dressed in the richest stuffs, silk and velvet, and cloth of gold, embroidered with pearls and turquoises and diamonds.

And in Cipango, too, which lay east of Mangi, out in the sea, could be found the same magnificence. Here were palaces and temples, with roofs covered with golden plates and floors paved with gold and silver, and here also the people were rich and prosperous and happy.

And when the news of all this wealth reached Europe it was at once determined to seek those far lands, and, if possible, to bring the gold and pearls and diamonds to Spain and France, and other European countries, and many expeditions were sent out; but none of them ever reached Cathay, for all the American Continent and the great Pacific Ocean lay in the way,

and the short passage to the East was never seen except in the dreams of some daring adventurers.

CHAPTER 2

Christopher Columbus

From very early times there existed overland routes of trade between Europe and Asia. During the Middle Ages traffic over these routes greatly increased, so that by the fifteenth century a large and profitable trade was carried on between the West and the East. Merchants in Western Europe grew rich through trade in the silks, spices, and precious stones that were brought by caravan and ship from India, China, and Japan. But in 1453 the Turks conquered Constantinople, and by frequent attacks upon Christian vessels in the Mediterranean made the old routes unsafe. A more practicable one became necessary.

Already in the early part of the fifteenth century Portuguese sea-captains had skirted the western coast of Africa, and by the close of the century others of their number had rounded the Cape of Good Hope, in their search for a water route to the Indies. But Spain, at that time the most powerful nation of Europe, adopted a plan quite different from that of the Portuguese. What this plan was and how it was carried out, we can best understand by an acquaintance with the life and work of the great sea-captain and navigator, Christopher Columbus.

More than four hundred and fifty years ago there lived in the city of Genoa a poor workingman, who made his living by preparing wool for the spinners. Of his four sons, the eldest was Christopher, born in 1451. Young Christopher was not, so far as we know, very different from most other boys in Genoa. He doubtless joined in their every-day sports, going with them to see the many vessels that sailed in and out of that famous sea-port, and listening for hours to the stories of sailors about distant lands.

But he did not spend all his time in playing and visiting the wharves, for we know that he learned his father’s trade, and in school studied, among other things, reading, arithmetic, grammar, geography, and map-drawing. We can easily believe that he liked geography best of all, since it would carry his imagination far out over the sea and to lands beyond the sea. In map-drawing he acquired such skill that when he became a man he could earn his living, when occasion demanded, by making maps and charts.

Beyond these facts little is known about the boyhood and youth of Columbus. Very likely much of his early life was spent upon the sea, sailing on the Mediterranean and along the west coast of Africa. Once he went as far north as England and perhaps even farther, but of this we are not certain.

In the course of many voyages he heard much of the work done by Portuguese sailors and discoverers, for Portugal was at that time one of the greatest sea-powers of the world. As Lisbon, the capital of Portugal, was naturally a centre for sea-faring men, and as it was also the home of his brother Bartholomew, Columbus, at the age of about thirty-five, went there to live.

Columbus was a man of commanding presence. He was large, tall, and dignified in bearing, with a ruddy complexion and piercing blue-gray eyes. By the time he was thirty his hair had become white, and fell in wavy locks about his shoulders. Although his life of hardship and poverty compelled him to be plain and simple in food and dress, he always had the air of a gentleman, and his manners were pleasing and courteous. But he had a strong will, which overcame difficulties that would have overwhelmed most men.

While at Lisbon, Columbus married a woman far above him in social position, and went with her to live on a little island of the Madeiras, where her family had business interests. Meanwhile he was turning over in his mind schemes for a future voyage to the countries of the Far East. His native city, Genoa, had grown rich in trading in the silks, spices, and precious stones of the Indies, but the journey overland was dangerous, and a water route was much desired.

This need the Portuguese had felt along with the rest of Europe, and for a long time Portuguese sea-captains

had been slowly but surely finding their way down the west coast of Africa, in search of a passage around the southern cape. This route would be easier and cheaper than the old one through the Mediterranean and across Asia. But Columbus thought out a more daring course, by which he planned to sail directly west from the Canary Islands, across the Atlantic Ocean, expecting at the end of his voyage to find the far-famed Indies.

Columbus was so full of his plan that it became the great thought of his life. A water route which would safely bring the wealth of the East to the doors of Europe would be the greatest discovery of the age. Moreover, his ambition was spurred by the thrilling account of a noted traveller, Marco Polo, who two centuries before had brought back from far-off China wonderful tales of golden palaces, of marvellous rivers crossed by marble bridges, and of countless treasures of gold, silver, and jewels.

About 1484 Columbus laid his scheme before King John of Portugal. The king would not promise his assistance, but he borrowed hints from the charts of Columbus, and sent men of his own to learn whether they could reach land by sailing west. Meeting with stormy weather, and fearing the unknown expanse of ocean, the sailors soon put back to port, and brought word that there was no land to be seen.

When Columbus heard what the king had done he was very indignant, and at once quitted Portugal for Spain. The future appeared gloomy enough to the poor navigator without a helping friend. With bitter memories he shook off the dust of Lisbon, and, leading by the hand his little son Diego, four or five years old, trudged wearily on his journey. Columbus took Diego to the home of the boy's aunt, who lived not far from Palos, and, leaving him in her care, went in search of the king and queen of Spain, Ferdinand and Isabella.

The king and queen were at that time so much occupied in driving the Moors out of Spain that Columbus found difficulty in securing a hearing. When at last he was permitted to unfold his plans to a council of learned men they ridiculed him, because, forsooth, he said that the world was round like a globe, and people lived on the opposite side of the earth. "Such a thing," they declared, "is absurd, for if people live on

the other side of the earth their heads must be down. Then, too, if it rains there the rain falls upward; and trees, if they grow there, must grow upside down."

Some of the learned men, however, agreed with Columbus, and thought the carrying out of his plan by the aid of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella would bring honor and countless wealth to Spain. But their authority was not sufficient to affect those who believed Columbus to be a crazy dreamer or a worth-less adventurer.

Month after month, year after year, Columbus cherished his ambitious scheme, encouraged by the few friends who were ready to use their influence for him. He followed the king and queen from place to place, as they moved their camp in the course of the war, and he sometimes fought bravely in the Spanish army. But in face of scorn and ridicule he never gave up hope of success. These were days of great trial, when even the boys in the streets tapped their foreheads as he passed by, and pointed their fingers at him with a peculiar smile.

In the autumn of 1491 Columbus made up his mind to leave Spain and try his fortune in France. So he went to the home of Diego's aunt, and once more taking his boy with him, started on foot out of the country which had so little befriended him. We can easily picture him, pale and wayworn, his clothes threadbare, his long white hair streaming over his shoulders. The travellers had gone but a short distance when they stopped at the gate of the Convent of St. Mary, which was only a mile and a half from Palos, to beg bread and water for the boy. At this moment the good prior of the convent happened to pass by. He was a man of learning and, on conversing with Columbus, became much interested in his story, and arranged a meeting of other learned men, among them the well-known sea-captain, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, who lived in Palos. The plans of Columbus appealed so strongly to this sea-captain that he promised not only to furnish money for an expedition, but to accompany it himself.

Moreover, the prior, who had been father-confessor to Isabella, won her over to the sailor's cause. The queen sent what would now be nearly \$1,200 to Columbus, and summoned him back to Court.



Supplying himself with a mule and suitable clothing, Columbus, with lightened heart, sought the queen's presence. She approved his plan, but Columbus demanded so great a reward for his services as leader of the expedition that the queen refused to come to any agreement with him, and let him go.

Columbus in disgust mounted his mule, and started once more for France. At this juncture, however, one of the queen's advisers hurried into her presence, and put the case so earnestly that she sent a swift courier, who overtook Columbus in a mountain pass not far away, and brought him back. An agreement was soon reached, and Columbus accepted his commission with tears of joy.

He at once went to Palos to get men and vessels for the expedition. But here he met with serious difficulties. Sailors called the Atlantic Ocean the Sea of Darkness, and believed that it contained frightful sea-monsters, ready to dash in pieces all vessels that might come within reach. Moreover, we must remember that the vessels in those days were not safe against storms like the great ships of our day. To venture out upon this trackless sea signified to sailors almost certain death. Hence, they were unwilling to sail, and a royal decree had to be issued to compel them. Even then it became necessary to release criminals from prisons to supply the number required for the expedition.

The three caravels that were at length got ready for the perilous expedition westward in search of the Indies were not larger than many of the fishing-boats of today. The largest of the three—the flagship of Columbus—was called the Santa Maria. The other two were the Pinta and the Niña ("Baby"). The Santa Maria alone had a deck covering the entire hold of the vessel.

At last all was ready, and a half-hour before sunrise on Friday morning, August 3, 1492, this little fleet, with one hundred and twenty men and provisions for a year, sailed out of the port of Palos. It was a sorrowful hour for the poor sailors, who felt that they had looked upon their homes and their friends for the last time. Columbus steered for the Canaries, where he delayed three weeks to repair the rudder of the Pinta.

On September 6th he set sail again. When once out of sight of land the sailors, overcome with fear, cried

and sobbed like children. But new trials awaited them. At the end of a week the compass needle no longer pointed to the North Star, and this strange fact filled the superstitious sailors with alarm.

Great was their consternation when a few days later the vessels entered vast stretches of sea-weed. At first the little fleet easily ploughed its way through this mass of floating green, but at the end of three days, on account of a light wind, the vessels moved more slowly. In their dismay the sailors feared that the vessels might never get through this immense sea of grass, but might have to lie there and rot, or, perhaps, escaping this danger, run upon rocks and shoals lying just beneath the grass and be broken in pieces. Though they were in the midst of obstacles apparently insurmountable, they were also in the path of the trade winds that steadily bore them onward. But in their terror, the sailors imagined they could never return because the wind would not allow them to sail in the opposite direction. When the wind began to blow from the southwest they were once more relieved of their fears.

After many days all hearts were gladdened by the sight of birds, which indicated that land was near. It was an idle hope. Again and again some eager-eyed sailor shouted "land," but found later that he was looking at distant clouds.

The crews were in despair. Now in the belt of trade-winds that were steadily blowing them farther and farther from home and friends they cried in dismay: "We can never return to Spain. We are lost! What shall we do?" They begged Columbus to turn back. They became angry when he refused, and declared he was crazy and was leading them all to destruction. They even plotted to throw him overboard some night and say that he fell into the sea while looking at the stars. Columbus felt that dangers were growing thick about him, but he never faltered in his purpose. His strong will and his abiding faith in success kept him stanch in face of difficulties that would have caused an ordinary mind to give way.

On October 11th unmistakable signs of land appeared. A thorn branch with berries on it, a reed, and a carved stick came floating by. New life stirred in every heart, and the sailors looked eagerly in every

direction for land.

The king and queen had promised a reward equal to nearly \$600 of our present money to the sailor who should be the first to see land. Columbus had promised in addition a velvet cloak. Accordingly, all were on the alert to catch the first glimpse of land, and kept on the watch during the entire night after the appearance of the thorn-branch and carved stick.

About ten o'clock Columbus himself saw in the distance a light, which looked like a torch in the hands of some one moving along the shore. About two o'clock next morning, Friday, October 12th—or October 21st, according to our present method of reckoning time—a sailor on the Pinta saw, about five miles off, a low strip of land. This was an island of the Bahama Group. Just ten weeks had elapsed since the voyage began at Palos, and with intense eagerness Columbus and his men awaited the coming of daylight.

At dawn the boats were lowered, and all went on shore. Columbus, dressed in a rich robe of scarlet, carried the royal standard. His followers also bore banners, on each of which was a brilliant green cross with the letters F. and Y.—the Spanish initials for Ferdinand and Isabella—on each side. Above the letters were crosses. Columbus threw himself, kneeling, upon the ground. He wept for joy, and, kissing the earth, took possession of the land in the name of the king and queen of Spain. The sailors now fell upon their knees at Columbus's feet. They kissed his hands, and begged him to forgive them for their evil thoughts toward him.

At first the natives, whom Columbus called Indians because he thought he was in the East Indies, fled to the woods in fear of the Spaniards; but later they returned and worshipped the white men as beings from the sky. They thought the vessels were great birds and the sails wings. The Spaniards at once began to trade with the Indians, giving them such trifles as tiny bells, red caps, and glass beads, in exchange for tame parrots, cotton yarn, and a few small ornaments of gold, such as the natives wore in their noses.

According to the interesting description of the natives that Columbus wrote in his journal, they were very poor, dark-skinned, and naked. All of them seemed to be young and of strong build, with coarse

black hair hanging long behind, but cut short over their foreheads. Their bodies were painted with various colors and in all manner of ways. The men carried sticks, pointed with fish-bones, for javelins, and moved their canoes with paddles that looked like wooden shovels.

The canoes, made out of single trunks of trees, were in some cases large enough to carry forty men. The dwellings, which were clustered together in groups of twelve to fifteen, were shaped like tents and had high chimneys. Inside the tents, hanging between posts, were nets used as beds and called "hammocks."

Columbus called the island upon which he had landed San Salvador (Holy Saviour). He wrote of the new country: "I know not where first to go, nor are my eyes ever weary of gazing at the beautiful verdure. The singing of the birds is such that it seems as if one would never desire to depart hence. There are flocks of parrots that obscure the sun, and other birds of many kinds, large and small, entirely different from ours; trees, also, of a thousand species, each having its particular fruit, and all of marvellous flavor."

Columbus sailed along the coast of Cuba and Hayti, landing here and there, and sent parties inland to find out what they could about the land and its people. Everywhere he was on the lookout for the cities of Asia—those wonderful cities of wealth and beauty described in such glowing colors by Marco Polo. He never doubted that he was in the land he had sought—the East Indies.

On Christmas morning (December 25, 1492), while it was still dark, as he was cruising along the shores of Hayti (or Hispaniola), the Santa Maria went aground on a sand-bar, where the waves soon knocked her to pieces. As the Pinta had already deserted, there now remained but one ship, the Niña. This little vessel was too small to accommodate all the men, and forty of the number, wishing to stay where they were, decided to build a fort out of the timbers of the wrecked vessel and put her guns in the fort for their defence. These men had provisions for a year, and constituted the first Spanish colony in the New World.

On January 4, 1493, the Niña sailed for Spain. All went well with the sailors until February 12th, when a great storm suddenly threatened to break the frail





vessel into pieces. Poor Columbus! His heart grew faint within him. Had he and his men endured such peril and hardship to perish unknown in the sea? Would the world never know of their great achievement?

In his anxiety he wrote on parchment two separate accounts of his discovery, which he sealed and addressed to Ferdinand and Isabella. He then wrapped each in a cloth and, enclosing them in large cakes of wax, put them into barrels. One of these barrels he flung into the sea, and the other he kept on deck. The *Niña* passed safely through the storm, however, and on March 15th, after an absence of nearly seven and a half months, cast anchor in the harbor of Palos.

The successful voyager lost no time in reaching Barcelona, where he was received by the king and queen with triumphal honors. Everybody was ready to praise the man who had become so famous. There was a great procession in his honor in the streets of Barcelona.

Leading this street parade were six Indians whom Columbus had brought back with him. These were smeared with paint, decked with feathers of tropical birds, and ornamented with bits of gold. Following them came men carrying stuffed and live birds of brilliant plumage, and the skins of different animals, all products of the New Land. Columbus rode on horseback, attended by many of Spain's great men, mounted on horses.

When the procession reached the house in which King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were, Columbus went into the room where they sat on the throne. They did him the honor to rise as he entered, and when he knelt to kiss their hands, they again honored him, by bidding him rise and sit, like an equal, in their presence.

The poor sailor, once despised as an idle dreamer, had become a distinguished personage, honored alike by kings and princes and people. It was no longer

necessary to force men by royal decree to sail with the great admiral. Many were now eager to go where they might reap wealth and honor.

In September, 1493, Columbus again sailed, this time with a fleet of seventeen vessels and fifteen hundred men. Many of the latter were young men of noble birth, and belonged to families of wide influence. All supposed they were going to the East Indies, the land of jewels and spices and precious metals. With the purpose of founding a colony, Columbus took with him not only horses, mules, and cattle, but vines, vegetables, and seeds of many kinds.

When the fleet reached the island of Hayti, and the place where he had in the previous winter left the little colony of forty men, he found that the fort and provisions had been destroyed, and that eleven corpses had been buried near by; but not one of the forty men was ever again seen alive. After building a little town, called Isabella in honor of the queen, Columbus began exploring by land and sea. He found much that was beautiful and interesting, but much more that was disappointing. Moreover, the Indians were sometimes unfriendly, and his own men were often unruly and treacherous. At length, after four years of varying fortune, he started home, and after a long, hard voyage, during which provisions gave out, he and his men, weak with hunger, finally reached Spain in June. He was kindly received, and was promised more ships for another voyage.

In May, 1498, with six vessels and two hundred men besides the sailors, Columbus started on a third voyage, this time directing his course more to the south than he had done before. He landed on an island which he named Trinidad, and then sailed along the northern coast of South America.

He was not well, however, and in August turned his course for Santo Domingo, where he found things were going badly. Trouble with the Indians had arisen, and even more serious trouble in the colony itself had broken out. For two years Columbus struggled to set things right. But he was not successful as a colonizer. Besides, many people were beginning to lose faith in him because he did not get expected treasures for Spain. Many others were jealous of his fame, and plotted to ruin him. At length an official was sent from Spain to

Hayti to look into the situation. When he reached the island he confiscated Columbus's property, put him in chains, and sent him as a prisoner to the country from which he had but recently sailed with high honor.

In Spain the people were in sympathy with the admiral in his disgrace; so too was the queen, who sent money and summoned him to court. She received him there with tears in her eyes, and he broke down and wept at her feet.

In 1502 Columbus started on a fourth voyage, sailing along the eastern coast of Central America. But he was not able to accomplish much, and finally suffered shipwreck on the island of Jamaica, where he spent a year of misery. At last he set out for home, arriving there only a short time before Queen Isabella, his only protector, died.

Poor, sick, and discouraged, Columbus dragged out a weary life for eighteen months longer. He died in Spain of a broken heart, May 20, 1506, in utter ignorance of the greatness of his discovery. So little appreciated was he that the city annals make no mention of his death. It remained for succeeding generations to lift his name from obscurity and to give faithful acknowledgment of his achievements in the advance of human progress.

CHAPTER 3

Amerigo Vespucci

— **HIS STORY** Amerigo Vespucci was a native of Florence, Italy, and a friend of Columbus. He was an educated man and very fond of study.

At the time in which he lived it was difficult to find the latitude and longitude of places, and few people were able to calculate either correctly. Vespucci was skillful in the work of computing longitude, and he was also well versed in the history of all the voyages that had been made. He was familiar with the facts of astronomy and geography then known, and was well

able to conduct the sailing of a ship into strange waters. It is believed that Vespucci made six voyages. He did not command his own vessels, as Columbus did, but he went with the expedition as assistant or adviser to the captain, keeping records of the voyage and making maps and charts.

In his first voyage, made in 1497, Vespucci reached the coast of Honduras, and sailed into the Gulf of Mexico. Here he found, probably on the coast of Yucatan, a queer little sea village which reminded him of the great city of Venice near his home.

The houses in this village were made of wood, and were built on piles running out into the water. These houses were connected with the shore by bridges, which were constructed in such a manner that they could be drawn up, thus cutting off all connection with the land. In one house Vespucci found six hundred people. A very large family, was it not?

Continuing the voyage around the Gulf of Mexico, many strange and wonderful sights were seen. The natives roasted and ate frightful animals, which from the description given us we now know to have been alligators. They also made cakes, or patties, out of fish, and baked them on red-hot coals. The Spaniards were invited to taste these dainties, and those of the sailors who did so found the strange food very palatable.

After sailing round the coast of Florida, the ships headed northeast, landing every now and then for the purpose of trading with the Indians. The Spaniards, finding but little gold and none of the rich spices for which they were looking, at last decided to return home.

Just before sailing, some friendly Indians helped the Spaniards to make an attack upon a cannibal island. The attack was successful, and about two hundred cannibals were taken prisoners and carried to Spain, where they were sold as slaves. [This seems a very cruel act now, but in these times it was thought to be quite right to sell captives taken in war, and so Vespucci only did what he thought as perfectly fair.]

Vespucci made a second voyage in 1499, in which he sailed down the African coast to the Cape Verde Islands, and then headed his ship almost directly west. He sighted land at Cape St. Roque, and then sailed northwest, exploring the north coast of South America, then called the Pearl Coast. After this he returned to Spain.

Shortly after the return of Vespucci to Spain, he accepted an offer to take service under the Portuguese flag.

In 1501 he set sail from Lisbon with three caravels, under this flag. He reached the coast of South America near Cape St. Roque, and sailed south as far as the South Georgia Islands.

As he proceeded southward, he found the country was inhabited by fierce Indians, who ate their fellow-creatures. He did not like the natives, as you may suppose; but he thought the country was beautiful, with the wonderful verdure and foliage of the tropics, and the queer animals and bright-colored birds.

Great was the joy of Vespucci when he discovered in the forests large quantities of a sort of red dye-wood which was prized very highly by Europeans. This wood, which had hitherto been found only in Eastern countries, was called brazil wood; and because

of its abundance there, he gave the name Brazil to that part of the country.

The expedition sailed slowly on and at length lost sight of land. It is thought that Vespucci headed the ships southeast because he wished to find out whether there was land or not in the Antarctic Ocean.

As they sailed farther and farther south, the climate became very disagreeable. The winds grew cold and forbidding, fields of floating ice hindered the progress of the vessel, and the nights became very long.

The sailors grew frightened, fearing that they were entering a land of constant darkness. Their fear became greater when a terrific storm arose. The sea grew rough, and the fog and sleet prevented the sailors from seeing whether land was near or not. The land which they had hoped to find now became an added danger.

One day, through the sleet and snow, the sailors saw with terror a rocky, jagged coast in front of them.

This land proved to be the South Georgia Islands, and was a wretched and forlorn country composed of rocks and glaciers, and entirely deserted. For a day and a half they sailed in sight of this frightful shore, fearing each moment that their ship would be cast on the rocks and that they would all perish. As soon as the weather permitted, therefore, Vespucci signaled his fleet, and the ships were headed for home, reaching Portugal in 1502.

This voyage secured Brazil for Portugal, and added greatly to the geographical knowledge of the day.

The ancients had said that no continent existed south of the equator. But the great length of coast along which Vespucci had sailed proved that the land was not an island. It was plainly a continent, and south of the equator.

Vespucci called the land he found the New World. For a time it was also called the Fourth Part of the Earth, the other three parts being Europe, Asia, and Africa. In 1507 a German writer published an account of the discovery, in which he called the new country America, in honor of Americus Vespucius, the discoverer.

This land was not connected in any way with the discovery of Columbus, for he was supposed to have found Asia.

The name America was at first applied only to that

part of the country which we now call Brazil, but little by little the name was extended until it included the whole of the Western Continent.

You will be glad to know that Vespucci, in the time of his success, did not forget his old friend Columbus, who was then poor and in disgrace. Vespucci visited him and did all he could to assist him.

After Vespucci had made three other voyages to the New World, he was given an important government position in Spain, which he held during the remainder of his life.

CHAPTER 4

John Cabot

— **HIS EARLY LIFE** Some years ago I had the good fortune to visit the fair land of Italy. While in that country I spent several days in the city of Genoa, the birthplace of John Cabot, the great navigator and discoverer of the mainland of North America.

I tried in every possible way to find out something about his early life: I inquired among the people, I talked with many school-teachers, and I visited the public library; but I got no definite information.

Though I failed to obtain historical facts about Cabot's youth, I heard a number of legendary stories which have been associated with his name. Some of these told about his childhood, the games he played, and the things that interested him most. Others gave an account of his school days, and the eagerness with which he studied geography, history, and navigation. Still others made known the many hours that he spent reading the thrilling account of the East handed down to posterity by the famous Italian traveler, Marco Polo. All these, however, are not to our purpose.

History tells us that John Cabot, the celebrated discoverer of the mainland of North America, was born during the first half of the fifteenth century in the city of Genoa. Some years later, in 1461, he removed to



Venice, where he began an eventful career as a seaman and a trader.

In those days the city of Venice carried on an extensive trade with Asiatic countries, such as India, China, and Japan. The spices, gold, and precious stones from these nations were brought to Europe partly by land and partly by sea. When the Turks rendered it almost impossible for Europeans to travel through Asia, every sailor and trader set to work to find a water route to the East.

—••**A WONDERFUL ISLAND** In the “Travels of Marco Polo,” we read: “Cipango is an island towards the East about 1500 miles from Europe. The people of this land are white and civilized. I can tell you, the quantity of gold there is endless, for the people find it in their own island, and the King of the place does not allow it to be exported. Few merchants, moreover, visit the country, because it is so far from the mainland. Thus it happens that gold is abundant there beyond measure.

“I will tell you a wonderful thing about the residence of the Lord of Cipango. His palace is roofed with gold, the corridors and the floors of the different rooms are paved with gold slabs two fingers thick, and the windows are also made of gold: so that altogether the richness of this building is beyond belief. The island has, moreover, an abundance of pearls of a rose color, and large quantities of other precious stones.”

After reading this and other glowing accounts of the East, every sailor and trader could not help being desirous of finding a water route to the rich countries of Asia.

Another incident, moreover, had a great influence in bringing about Cabot’s voyage of discovery. He had heard of Christopher Columbus’ journey across the Atlantic Ocean in the service of the King and the Queen of Spain. He had read of his wonderful discovery. What was to prevent him from making as daring a voyage as his fellow-countryman, Columbus? He felt that he knew just as much as Columbus, and that his knowledge of navigation was as great, if not greater.



—• **HOW HE SET TO WORK** Prompted by these and other considerations, Cabot, who was then living in England, went to see King Henry VII, and obtained his permission “to seek out, discover, and find whatsoever islands, countries, regions, or provinces, which before this time have been unknown to all Christians.”

Cabot then hastened back to Bristol, chartered a small sailing vessel, the *Matthew*, and with a crew of eighteen hardy and courageous sailors, embarked at that port in May, 1497.

Strange as it may appear, there was no particular demonstration of the people to mark the event. The object of Cabot’s voyage may not have been publicly known.

We can imagine the feelings which filled the breasts of the sailors aboard the *Matthew*. How they must have doubted the prudence of sailing into the “Sea of Darkness”! What misgivings they must have had as to the outcome of the expedition! But the great courage and daring spirit of John Cabot counteracted all this. He acted as if he were sure of reaching the shores of Asia.

The Result of His Voyage. — After a long, adventurous voyage of fifty days, Cabot reached the mainland of the North American continent about June, 1497. What great joy must have filled his heart as he beheld a vast country in the distance (Cape Breton or Labrador)! How eager he must have been to make a landing! Surely he must have offered up a fervent prayer of thanksgiving to his Creator.

After going ashore, Cabot’s first act was to erect a large cross from which were unfurled the flag of England, and the flag of St. Mark, the patron saint of Venice. He then looked around to see if he could find any evidence that the place was inhabited. As a result of his observations, he found snares set to catch wild animals. This showed him that people lived in the territory.

Having thus taken possession of the country in the name of the King of England, Cabot began his homeward journey with all haste, and reached the port of Bristol in August, 1497.

—• **HIS ROYAL RECEPTION** It is natural to suppose that John Cabot, after landing in England, went at once to King Henry VII and told him about the success of his undertakings. The English King was so pleased with his discovery that he gave orders for another voyage to start early in the following year, 1498.

When the news of Cabot’s arrival in Bristol became generally known, there was great rejoicing among all classes of people; for they felt that England had “gained a part of Asia without a stroke of the sword.” The merchants and traders were overjoyed at the prospect of carrying on business with a country where gold, gems, and aromatic spices were to be found.

There is hardly a doubt but that Cabot thought he had discovered a part of China, or as it was called at that time the “Territory of the Grand Khan.” He was sure that the abundance of gold and precious stones which Marco Polo had told about would soon be brought back to England.

While waiting for the second voyage, Cabot and his hardy sailors had time to tell the people of England about the terrible hardships which they underwent in their daring trip across the Atlantic, and about some of the wonderful things they had seen in the newly found land. They reported that the soil was fertile and the climate temperate, that redwood grew there, and that the surrounding sea was full of fish which could be caught not only with nets but with baskets.

—• **THE SECOND VOYAGE** Some time in the first half of the year 1498, Cabot, in command of five ships and about three hundred men, set sail from Bristol on a second expedition. The vessels at first steered to the north and then to the west. On reaching the American coast somewhere near Newfoundland, Cabot wished to go farther north; but the sailors, seeing the large bodies of ice found in the ocean thereabouts, were afraid. It is said that he then sailed to the south, skirting the Atlantic coast of North America as far as Cape Hatteras.

After this no one seems to know what happened to the expedition. We cannot say for certain that it returned to England; neither can we affirm that the ships were lost at sea.

—• **HIS MEMORY FORGOTTEN** For many years after Cabot’s voyages, his memory was almost forgotten. This accounts in a measure for the scanty amount of facts of his early life and his unaccountable death which history possesses.

The people of his age regarded a voyage of exploration and discovery purely as a business venture. It can be truly said that if this great Italian sailor had brought back to England a ship-load of gold, or if he had procured for the English people a cargo of precious stones, his name would have been heralded in the history of all times as one of the greatest discoverers and navigators of the world. The mere finding of a new country, however, was hardly worth mentioning.

No matter what has been thought or written about the great expeditions of John Cabot, every inhabitant of North America owes him a debt of gratitude for the daring voyages which he made to our continent.

—• **COLUMBUS AND CABOT**

We do not wish to take away one iota of the glory which rightfully belongs to Columbus. He, it is true, showed the way to cross the Atlantic, but Cabot first landed on the mainland of North America. It makes no difference to us under what auspices these discoveries were made. Columbus sailed under the Spanish flag, while Cabot flew the English flag. Both of these men were capable seamen. They were gifted with logical minds; and they did their own thinking. They surmounted all obstacles and they knew no such thing as fear. They were at heart practical Catholics and, when they landed on the newly found countries of Central and North America,

they erected the cross of Jesus Christ as a token of their religious belief.

CHAPTER 5

Vasco La Gama

—• Both the Spaniards and the Portuguese were cut off from trade with the East, because the Turks had taken possession of Constantinople. In consequence of this, the navigators of both countries were making earnest efforts to find a water route to India.

Spain, as you know, had faith in Columbus, and helped him in his plan of trying to reach India by sailing westward. But the Portuguese had a different idea. They spent their time and money in trying to sail round the African coast, in the belief that India could be reached by means of a southeast passage.

This southeast passage could be found only by crossing the “burning zone,” as the part of the earth near the equator was called; and all sailors feared to make the attempt.

It was thought almost impossible to cross this burning zone, and the few navigators who had ventured as far as the equator had turned back in fear of steaming whirlpools and of fiery belts of heat.

In 1486, six years before Columbus discovered America, the King of Portugal sent Bartholomew Diaz,

