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# Story of Christopher Columbus for Little Children

Elizabeth Harrison

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For Harriet Young  
with the love of her friend  
Elizabeth Harrison



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OF  
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS  
FOR LITTLE CHILDREN

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## PREFACE.

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This story was first told at the request of the Third Year's Mothers' Class of the Chicago Kindergarten College, October 12th, 1892, to help them to prepare their children to understand the coming celebration as a World's homage to a great hero rather than as a huge show.

It was afterward printed by the Chicago Tribune on the morning of the Dedication of the World's Fair buildings, October 21st, 1892.

It is now put into pamphlet form with the hope that it may help the many mothers of America to see how they can lead up from a simple child life to a world-wide appreciation of heroism.

Such stories aid much in arousing the admiration of children for brave and noble lives, and in teaching them that honor does come, even if not in the lifetime of the hero.



# STORY OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

FOR LITTLE CHILDREN.

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BY ELIZABETH HARRISON.

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ONCE upon a time, far across the great ocean there lived a little boy named Christopher. The city in which he lived was called

Genoa. It was on the coast of the great sea, and from the time that little Christopher could first remember he had seen boats come and go across the water. I doubt not that he had little boats of his own which he tried to sail or paddle about on the small pools near his home. Soon after he was old enough to read books, which in those days were very scarce and very much valued, he got hold of an account of the wonderful travels of a man named Marco

Polo. Over and over again little Christopher read the marvelous stories told by this old traveler, of the strange cities which he had seen and of the dark-colored people whom he had met; of the queer houses; of the wild and beautiful animals he had encountered; of the jewels and perfumes and flowers which he had come across. All day long the thoughts of little Christopher were busy with this strange far-away land which Marco Polo described. All night long he dreamed of the marvelous sights to be seen on those distant shores. Many a time he went down to the water's edge to watch the queer ships as they slowly disappeared in the dim distance, where the sea and sky seemed to meet. He listened eagerly to everything about the sea and the voyages of adventure or of trade which the sailors who lived about him told.

When he was fourteen years old he went to sea with an uncle, who was commander of one of the vessels that came and went from the port of Genoa. For a number of years he thus lived on a vessel, learning everything that he could about the sea. At one time the ship on which he was sailing had a desperate fight with another ship; both took fire and

were burned to the water's edge. Christopher Columbus, for that was his full name, only escaped, as did the other sailors, by jumping into the sea and swimming to the shore. Still this did not cure him of his love for the ocean life.

We find after a time that he left Italy, his native country, and went to live in Portugal, a land near the great sea whose people were far more venturesome than had been those of Genoa. Here he married a beautiful maiden, whose father had collected a rich store of maps and charts, which showed what was then supposed to be the shape of the earth and told of strange and wonderful voyages which brave sailors had from time to time dared to make out into the then unknown sea. Most people in those days thought it was certain death to any one who ventured very far out on the ocean.

There were all sorts of queer and absurd ideas afloat as to the shape of the earth. Some people thought it was round like a pancake and that the waters which surrounded the land gradually changed into mist and vapor and that he who ventured out into these vapors fell through the mist and clouds down into—they knew not where.

Others believed that there were huge monsters living in the distant waters ready to swallow any sailor who was foolish enough to venture near them.

But Christopher Columbus had grown to be a very wise and thoughtful man and from all he could learn from the maps of his father-in-law and the books which he read, and from the long talks which he had with some other learned men, he grew more and more certain that the world was round like an orange, and that by sailing westward from the coast of Portugal one could gradually go round the world and find at last the wonderful land of *Cathay*, the strange country which lay far beyond the sea, the accounts of which had so thrilled him as a boy.

We, of course, know that he was right in his belief concerning the shape of the earth, but people in those days laughed him to scorn when he spoke of making a voyage out on the vast and fearful ocean. In vain he talked and reasoned and argued, and drew maps to explain matters. The more he proved to his own satisfaction that this must be the shape of the world, the more other people shook their heads and called him crazy.

He remembered in his readings of the book of Marco Polo's travels that the people whom he had met were heathen who knew little about the dear God who had made the world, and nothing at all about His son, Christ Jesus, and as Christopher Columbus loved very dearly the Christian religion, his mind became filled with a longing to carry it across the great seas to this far-away country. The more he thought about it the more he wanted to go, until his whole life was filled with the one thought of how to get hold of some ships to prove that the earth was round, and that these far-away heathens could be reached.

Through some influential friends he obtained admission to the court of the King of Portugal. Eagerly he told the rich monarch of the great enterprise which filled his heart. It was of little or no use, the King was busy with other affairs, and only listened to the words of Columbus as one might listen to the wind. Year after year passed by, Columbus' wife had died, and their one little son, Diego, had grown to be quite a boy. Finally Columbus decided he would leave Portugal and would go over to Spain, a rich country near by, and see if the Span-

ish monarchs would not give him boats in which to make his longed-for voyage.

The Spanish King was named Ferdinand, and the Spanish Queen was a beautiful woman named Isabella. When Columbus told them of his belief that the world was round, and of his desire to help the heathen who lived in this country, they listened attentively to him, for both King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella were very earnest people and very desirous that all the world should become Christians; but their ministers and officers of state persuaded them that the whole thing was a foolish dream of an enthusiastic, visionary man; and again Columbus was disappointed in his hope of getting help.

Still he did not give up in despair. *The thought was too great for that.* He sent his brother over to England to see if the English King would not listen to him and give the necessary help, but again he was doomed to disappointment. Only here and there could he find anyone who believed that it was possible for him to sail round the earth and reach the land on the other side. Long years passed by. Columbus grew pale and

thin with waiting and hoping, with planning and longing.

Sometimes as he walked along the streets of the Spanish capital people would point their fingers at him and say: "There goes the crazy old man who thinks the world is round." Again and again Columbus tried to persuade the Spanish King and Queen that if they would help him his discoveries would bring great honor and riches to their kingdom, and that they would also become the benefactors of the world by helping to spread the knowledge of Christ and His religion. Nobody believed in his theory. Nobody was interested in his plan. He grew poorer and poorer.

At last he turned his back on the great Spanish court, and in silent despair he took his little son by the hand and walked a long way to a small seaport called Palos, where there was a queer old convent in which strangers were often entertained by the kind monks who lived in it. Weary and footsore he reached the gate of the convent. Knocking upon it he asked the porter, who answered the summons, if he would give little Diego a bit of bread and a drink of water.

While the two tired travelers were resting, as the little boy ate his dry crust of bread, the prior of the convent, a man of thought and learning, whose name was Juan Perez, came by and at once saw that these two were no common beggars. He invited them in and questioned Columbus closely about his past life. He listened quietly and thoughtfully to Columbus and his plan of crossing the ocean and converting the heathen to Christianity.

Juan Perez had at one time been a very intimate friend of Queen Isabella ; in fact, the priest to whom she told all her sorrows, and troubles. He was a quiet man and talked but little. After a long conference with Columbus, in which he was convinced that Columbus was right, he borrowed a mule and getting on his back rode for many miles across the open country to the palace in which the Queen was then staying. I do not know how he convinced her of the truth of Columbus' plan, when all the ministers and courtiers and statesmen about her considered it the absurdly foolish and silly dream of an old man ; but, somehow, he did it.

He then returned on his mule to the old

convent at Palos, and told Columbus to go back once more to the court of Spain and again petition the Queen to give him money with which to make his voyage of discovery. The State Treasurer said the Queen had no money to spare, but this noble-hearted woman, who now, for the first time, realized that it was a grand and glorious thing Columbus wished to do, said she would give her crown jewels for money with which to start Columbus on his dangerous journey across the great ocean.

This meant much in those days, as queens were scarcely considered dignified or respectable if they did not wear crowns of gold inlaid with bright jewels on all public occasions, but Queen Isabella cared far more to send the gospel of Christ over to the heathen than of how she might look, or what other people might say about her. The jewels were pawned and the money was given to Columbus. With a glad heart he hastened back to the little town of Palos where he had left his young son with the kind priest Juan Perez.

But now a new difficulty arose. No sailors could be found who would venture their lives by going out on this unknown voyage

with a crazy old man as they thought Columbus to be. At last the convicts from the prisons were given liberty by the Queen on condition that they would go as sailors with Columbus. So, you see, it was not a very nice crew of sailors, still it was the best he could get, and Columbus' heart was so filled with the great work that he was willing to undertake the voyage no matter how great or how many the difficulties might be. The ships were filled with food and other provisions for a long, long voyage.

Nobody knew how long it would be before the land on the other side could be reached, and many people thought there was no possible hope of its ever being found.

Early one summer morning, even before the sun had risen, Columbus bade farewell to the few friends who had gathered at the little seaport of Palos to say good-by to him. The ships spread their sails and started on the great untried voyage. There were three boats, none of which we would think, nowadays, was large enough or strong enough to dare venture out of sight and help of land and run the risk of encountering the storms of midocean.

The names of the boats were the Santa

Maria, which was the one that Columbus himself commanded, and two smaller boats, one named the Pinta and the other the Nina.

Strange, indeed, must the sailors have felt, as hour after hour they drifted out into the great unknown waters, which no man ever ventured into before. Soon all land faded from their sight, and on, and on, and on they went, not knowing where or how the voyage would end. Columbus alone was filled with hope, feeling quite sure that in time he should reach the never before visited shores of a New World, and should thus be the means of bringing the Christian religion to these poor, ignorant people. On and on they sailed, day after day—far beyond the utmost point which sailors had ever before reached.

Many of the men were filled with a strange dread and begged and pleaded to return home. Still on and on they went, each day taking them further and further from all they had ever known or loved before. Day after day passed, and week after week until two months had elapsed.

The provisions which they had brought with them were getting scarce, and the men now dreaded starvation. They grew angry

with Columbus, and threatened to take his life if he did not command the ships to be turned back towards Spain, but his patience did not give out, nor was his faith one whit the less. He cheered the hearts of the men as best he could. Often telling them droll, funny stories to distract their thoughts from the terrible dread which now filled all minds.

He promised a rich reward to the first man who should discover land ahead. This somewhat renewed their courage, and day and night watches were set and the western horizon before them was scanned at all hours. Time and again they thought they saw land ahead, only to find they had mistaken a cloud upon the horizon for the longed-for shore. Flocks of birds flying westward began to be seen. This gave some ground for hope. For surely the birds must be flying toward some land where they could find food, and trees in which to build their nests. Still fear was great in the hearts of all, and Columbus knew that he could not keep the men much longer in suspense, and that if land did not appear soon they would compel him to turn around and retrace his steps whether he wished to or not.

Then he thought of all the benighted heathen who had never heard of God's message of love to man through Christ, and he prayed almost incessantly that courage might be given him to go on. Hour after hour he looked across the blue water, day and night, longing for the sight of land. In fact, he watched so incessantly that his eyesight became injured and he could scarcely see at all.

At last one night as he sat upon the deck of the ship he was quite sure that a faint light glimmered for a few moments in the distant darkness ahead. Where there is a light there must be land, he thought. Still he was not sure, as his eyesight had become so dim. So he called one of the more faithful sailors to him and asked him what he saw. The sailor exclaimed:

“A light, a light!”

Another sailor was called, but by this time the light had disappeared and the sailor saw nothing, and Columbus' hopes again sank. Still he felt they must be nearing land. About 2 o'clock that night the commander of one of the other boats started the cry:

“Land! land ahead!”

You can well imagine how the shout was

taken up, and how the sailors, one and all, rushed to the edge of their ships, leaning far over, no doubt, and straining their eyes for the almost un hoped-for sight.

Early the next morning some one of the sailors picked up a branch of a strange tree, lodged in the midst of which was a tiny bird's nest. This was sure evidence that they were indeed near land, for branches of trees do not grow in water.

Little by little the land came in sight. First it looked like a dim ghost of a shore, but gradually it grew distinct and clear. About noon the next day the keel of Columbus' boat ground upon the sand of the newly discovered country. No white man had ever before set eyes upon it. No ship had ever before touched this coast.

At last after a long life of working and studying, of hoping and planning, of trying and failing, and trying yet again, he had realized his dream.

The great mystery of the ocean was revealed, and Columbus had achieved a glory which would last as long as the world lasted. *He had given a new world to mankind!* He had reached the far distant country across the ocean, which scarcely any of his coun-

trymen had even believed to have any existence. He now *knew* that the whole round world could in time have the Christian religion.

He sprang upon the shore, and dropping on his knees he first stooped and kissed the ground, and then he offered a fervent prayer of thanks to God.

A learned attorney who had come with him across the water next planted the flag of Spain upon the unknown land, and claimed the newly discovered country in the name of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Spain.

Wonderful, wonderful indeed were the things which Columbus and the sailors now saw! Strange naked men and women of a copper or bronze color, strange new birds with gorgeous tails that glittered like gems such as they had never seen before; beautiful and unknown fruits and flowers met their gaze on every side.

The savages were kind and gentle and brought them food and water. They had little else to offer as they had no houses, nor streets, nor carriages, nor cars, nor conveniences of any kind. Do you know, my dear child, that this strange, wild, savage coun-

try which Columbus had traveled so far and so long to discover was *our country, America?*

But it was not until long after Columbus had gone back to Europe and told the people there of the wonderful things which he had seen in this far, far away land that shiploads of white people, who were educated and who had been taught to love God and to keep his commandments, came over and settled in this wild, new country. They plowed the land and planted seed; they built houses for themselves, their wives and little ones, and in time they made school-houses for the children, and churches in which to worship God. Long and hard was the struggle which these first white men had to make in this strange, new country.

Year after year more and more white men came. These new settlers prospered, and new towns were built, and roads were made from one town to another, and stores and manufactories began to be seen.

At last the little handful of people had grown so strong that they established a government of their own, which welcomed all newcomers, providing they were law-abiding citizens. The poor and oppressed, the per-

secuted and discouraged in other lands came to this new shore, where they found wealth if they were willing to work for it.

Here they need no longer fear the persecutions from which they had suffered. Here they gained new hope and became honored and respected citizens.

Little by little the small country grew into a great nation, the greatest on earth, because it is the freest, and each citizen in it has his rights respected. But for the courage and determination and self-sacrifice of Columbus this great new world might have remained for hundreds of years unknown to men.

And now, 400 years have gone by and we, the children of the children's children of these early settlers, are going to have a grand celebration in honor of the brave old man, Christopher Columbus, whom the people of his day called crazy, and all the nations of the earth have been invited to bring their most beautiful, their richest and rarest products to this celebration, in order that not we of America alone, but *the whole world may celebrate the wisdom and the courage of the great Columbus, "the finder of America."*

In our rejoicing and in our celebration let us not forget the good Queen Isabella, who was willing to give up her most precious jewels in order that she might help Columbus in his voyage of discovery.







