

How This Land Was Found

by Helen Pierson

For a long time, in past years, it was not known that the world was round. If the men in those days had been told that a ship could start from a port and sail straight on for months and come round to the same place, it would have made them laugh as at a good joke. They did not know the real shape of the earth, but thought it was a flat plane.

In those days our land was the home of the In-di-ans, or red men, as we call them, from their dark skins. The red man does not live in a house, but in a sort of tent or hut. The tribes of red men had all this land for their own when Co-lum-bus was born. The great woods, the green plains, the bright streams, were all theirs. They made their wars in a strange and fierce style, and wore at their belts locks of hair, cut from the heads of those slain by their hands. These locks, cut from the head with part of the skin, they call a scalp. It was the pride of an In-di-an to have scalps hung at his belt. No one had taught him that this was wrong, and he did not have the Word of God to show him the right way.

When Co-lum-bus was a mere boy he was fond of the sea and ships. He would go and watch the waves, and think about how ships were made, and the best way to sail them. He was born in Gen-oa, which is by the blue sea; so when he was a small boy he could watch the white sails come in. Such queer ships they had there, with strange high prows! As time went on, and he grew of age, he made trips in these ships, and was in sea-fights, and once or twice he was in a wreck. So you see he had a chance to grow strong and brave for the work he had to do.

What he read in books taught him that the world was round, and not flat, as was thought in those times. So he knew that if he could sail west he would come to a new land. He thought of this a long time, and at last he grew more sure of it, but he could get no one else to think as he did. He spent ten years in this way. He was full of plans; but he could get no help and no gold. He was too poor to do all with no aid from his friends. At last he went to Spain.

There were a King and Queen there who were kind to Co-lum-bus; but at first they would not give their gold to help him. They thought this was a wild dream. At last, with a sad heart, he made up his mind to turn his back on the court of Spain.

While on his way, a man came to him from Queen Is-a-bel-la. She had sent him word that she would help him; "that she would pledge her own gems to give him aid." But she did not have to do this, as means were found when Co-lum-bus went back to the court. His heart was made glad; for they gave him a small fleet of three ships, and on the 3d of August, 1492, the sun rose on the fleet as it went forth on its way to the new land. All was strange to the new crew, and they had all sorts of queer thoughts and fears of the sea. They had not been out of sight of land in all their lives; and when they saw the deep, dark sea on all sides, they were full of fear that they would not see their homes again. The trade-wind which took them west so fast, would keep them, they thought, from their land when they had the wish to go back. At last they grew so full of fear, they swore they would not go on, and Co-lum-bus had hard work to make them. But soon there were signs of land, and some land birds flew by the ship; and one of the crew found a branch of a tree on the waves, which had some fresh red fruit on it.

Oh, how glad they were! Co-lum-bus felt so sure that he was near land, he gave word for the ships to lie by that night. No man thought of sleep. They all kept watch on deck to see this strange new

coast for which they had borne so much.

In the night a cry of joy was heard. Co-lum-bus had seen a light far off, and a shout of "Land! land!" soon came from all sides.

When the sun rose they all saw a green strip of shore some five miles long. The men fell at the feet of Co-lum-bus and shed tears of joy. Then they sang a hymn of praise to God, who had kept them and brought them safe and sound to this new place. They got out the small boats and put men and arms in them, with flags, and a band to play a march of joy, and the crews made their way to the shore. Co-lum-bus, in a rich dress with his drawn sword in his hand, sprang on the beach, and then the crew came next. They set up a cross, and all knelt at its foot and gave thanks for their safe trip. Then Co-lum-bus set up the flag of Cas-tile and Le-on, and took the new land for the crown of Spain.

While they stood there with shouts of joy and songs, some strange dark shapes stole up with soft steps to their side. The crew thought these men must have come from a new world, as they saw their dark skins and the gay paint and plumes they wore. Co-lum-bus gave them the name of In-di-ans, for he thought the new coast was part of In-dia. He did not know that he had found a new land. These men with red skins were glad to kiss the feet of the Span-iards, and change their gold chains and rude rings for the beads and pins the crew gave to them.

Co-lum-bus spent some time in the new land he had found, and then he set sail for home to take his friends and the Queen the great news. A wild storm came on the way home, and Co-lum-bus thought that all was lost, so he wrote his tale on a cake of wax and put the cake in a cask and threw it in the sea; so that if he had gone down in the storm, all that he had found would not be lost to the world.

But God took care of Co-lum-bus and his crew. They got back to their homes once more and had a grand time. The King and Queen gave them a new and fine fleet; and in time they came back and saw new points of land on which to build homes, and they found, too, South A-mer-i-ca.

There were some in Spain who did not like Co-lum-bus, for he had won gold and fame, while they had none. So they told false tales of him; and when his friend, Queen Is-a-bel-la, died, he was once brought back from the land he had found in chains. How sad that was!—was it not? At last he had to die old and poor, and this land did not have his name. It had no name for some time; but at last an I-tal-ian, who made a few trips there, and wrote of what he saw, gave his name to the new world. His name was A-mer-i-cus Ves-pu-ci-us. That is a hard name for you to say, but you can all say A-mer-i-ca, and that is the name of our land.

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