

# THE Boyhood of Columbus

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**I**N the beautiful old city of Genoa, Italy, there is standing a small wooden house, antique and quaint, as it may well be. It stands in a retired street, and the windows are high and narrow, which makes the rooms very dismal.

On the front there is an inscription, in Latin, which says:

No house more worthy! Here, under his father's roof, Christopher Columbus passed his boyhood and youth."

The house is at present owned by the municipal government, but during the middle of the fifteenth century it belonged to an industrious and well-to-do wool-carder—weaver, by some named Domenico Colombo.

Around him lived many others—wool-combers and weavers—for this quarter was wholly occupied by workers of woolen cloth. His father's name was Suzanna Fontanarossa. Their eldest son was the future discoverer of America.

It is not probable that Columbus was born in this house, a neighboring village claiming that honor; nor do we know the exact year of his birth, some historians placing it at 1451, while one sets it as late as 1447. But there is no doubt that the little Christoforo lived with his father in this house, wrought his father's trade, studied his lessons and dreamed his first dreams of ambition here in his very place, among the weavers and wool-carders of the great maritime city.

Young Christoforo Colombo—or, as we like better in its Anglicized form, Christopher Columbus—had two younger brothers and one sister, and, like all children of the middle classes at that time, they had to work for a living.

We can imagine the boys sitting in one of these gloomy rooms, or possibly in the sunshine before the door, carding wool on one of those rude frames such as can only be seen now in the antiquarian collections, and we can imagine them, too, running down to the extensive wharves and watching the ships coming and going, for the Genoese merchants and sailors were among the most enterprising of the world.

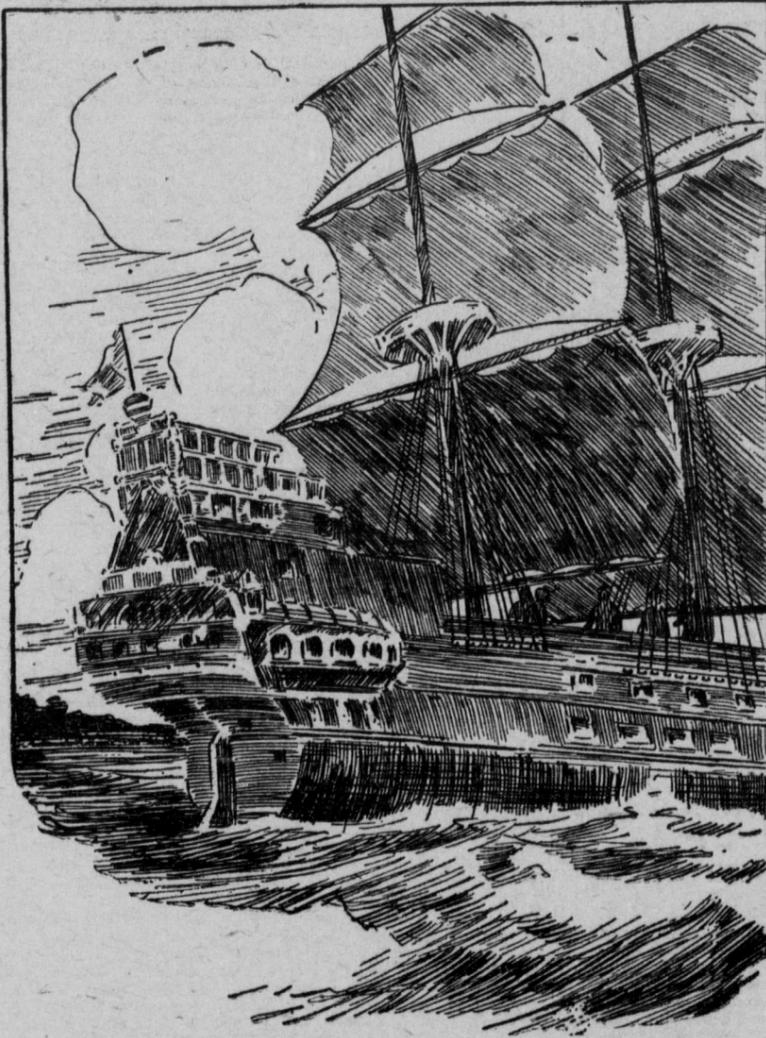
Very likely, on holidays, Christopher and his brothers, like the bare-legged Genoese boys of today, went out in the harbor in some fishing craft, and in this way he must have first learned how to navigate a vessel.

He could never have dreamed, however, as he mingled among the gray-bearded sailors, and listened to their stories of wild adventure, that he himself would one day be the greatest of all the world's great sea-captains.

The good wool-comber was ambitious for his eldest son, and so, at a proper age, Christopher was sent away to school at Pavia, where there was a famous university, and where young Columbus made good use of his time.

He learned Latin and made considerable progress in mathematics and the natural sciences. He also learned to write a good hand and to draw maps and charts—accomplishments that were of great use to him in after years.

He could not have attended school a great while, for before he was fourteen he was back in Genoa helping his father; but not long. The sea seemed to have had an attraction for him from his earliest years, and he now



*It was Evening, and the Trick was not discovered until the next Morning, when they found themselves within the Cape of Carthage*

entered upon his nautical career under a battle-scarred veteran, a distant relative, who bore the same surname as himself.

With this navigator, who was alike a trader, soldier and sailor, Columbus was unconsciously being trained for the great work before him.

He is described at this period as a tall, slender boy, with light-gray eyes, abundant auburn hair and a complexion as fine as that of a girl. Dress this slim, agile figure in trunk hose, a short doublet or pourpoint, with the sleeves slashed so as to show his white shirt of fine needlework, and the shoulders well padded out, place a tall cloth cap

upon his head and a pair of broad-toed shoes on his feet, and you will see something how Columbus looked when he set out on his first voyage.

The life of a sailor was filled with danger and hardships in those days. The Mediterranean Sea was the highway of corsairs and adventurers as well as of the maritime merchants.

The feudal Italian states and republics were generally at war with each other, and their squadrons were continually scouring the narrow main—a source of annoyance or danger to other ships.

The expeditions of commerce resembled

fleets of war, and a merchant voyage meant running the gantlet of innumerable foes.

For several years Columbus was an active participant in this wild and adventurous life. While yet a young man he became captain of a small vessel.

In this ship, under the command of his old captain, the veteran Colombo, he fought both Turks and Venetians, and at one time narrowly escaped with his life. His vessel happened to take fire, and Columbus, forced to leave it, had to swim two miles to the shore, which he reached in an exhausted condition.

All this time he was still learning from books. An extract from a letter of his, written after his wonderful discoveries, gives us a pleasant insight into his life.

"In my early youth, I served on board ship, and have kept on navigating the sea until this day. Navigation is the art which all men pursue who wish to know the secrets of this world. I have studied it much without neglecting astronomy, geometry and arithmetic. I have a hand skillful enough, and sufficient knowledge to draw a map of the world, and to mark correctly its cities, mountains, rivers, islands and harbors. In my youth I studied the books which treat of geography, history, philosophy and other sciences. These were the studies which aided me in my enterprises."

So you see that not only his early seafaring life and the hardships he underwent, but his training at home and the books that he studied, each in turn was fitting him in mind and body for the great part he was to act in the drama of discovery.

At one time we find him in Portugal, with his brother Bartholomew, supporting himself by drawing maps and charts. At another time he has the command of three or four ships, and is dispatched on a separate enterprise against a portion of the enemy's squadron that had taken refuge in the harbor of Tunis.

It was on this occasion that he first exhibited that blending of courage, determination and tact which was subsequently so marked in his voyages to the New World.

His crew refused to proceed against the enemy, and finding himself unable to compel them, he yielded apparently to their wishes, resorting to stratagem to carry out his purpose, by altering the point of the compass as they hoisted sail to flee away.

It was evening, and the trick was not discovered till the next morning, when they found themselves within the Cape of Carthage, and too late to turn back then.

It is unnecessary to state that this adventure was wholly successful, and that he returned with the prestige of a great commander.

It is customary to speak of Columbus as a dreamer and a man of thought rather than of action, but though a man of books and a scholar, no one of that age was better qualified to deal with men than was the little Italian boy who used to comb wool in his father's cottage, and whose earliest maritime adventure was rowing the boat of a swarthy Genoese fisherman.

Just when he conceived the feasibility of crossing the ocean is not certain, but he first gave expression to such an idea in 1474. From that time forward he appears to have thrown all his wonderful energy into the accomplishment of that purpose, and though he was forced to wait nearly twenty years, meanwhile plodding wearily from court to court, he at last entered upon that career which was to place his name high on the roll of the eminent men of all time.

## Miniature Fountain

**T**AKE an ounce vial and fill it three-quarters full of water, then make a hole in the cork and insert a small tube or a stout piece of straw. The opening must be as small as possible, the tube must reach nearly to the bottom of the vial and the cork must be pushed in tight.

Now, if you blow into the tube, the air will be compressed in the upper part of the bottle, and when your lips are taken away, a little fountain will play from the tube for a short time.

That is one way. Another more scientific and pleasing method is as follows:

Take a glass jar, with the mouth large enough to go over the small vial, and heat the inside over the flame of a lamp or candle; place the small vial on a plate upon several layers of blotting paper, which have been soaked in water for a moment; then take the heated jar and invert it over the vial, pressing it down as tightly as you can upon the blotting-paper, and watch the result.

When you heated the inside of the jar, the air inside was expanded and partly driven out. The blotting-paper makes a hermetic joint, and the jar contained in the upper part of the vial forces the water up through the tube to the bottom of the jar, and it falls in a little cascade down the sides.

## EARLY SPRINGTIDE

The year has changed; three months ago 'Twas winter time; the trees were bare, the fields were still enwrapped in snow, At night a white mist filled the air; No song-birds fluttered through the hedge, The frost made bold the timid fox; Long icicles weighed down the hedge, Close gathered stood the shivering flocks.

But now along the river's banks There buds the creamy meadow-sweet; And iris flags in glittering ranks Wave gently as the breeze they meet. Though 'tis but spring, the soft south wind Blows warm as if 'twere pleasant June; Come, hoist the sail; we've left behind Cold winter—summer's coming soon.

## Lost in Alaska

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Beach proposed to take a look at his traps on the way, and told us each to pick out a firearm from his rather formidable armament and take it along with us, as "something might happen that we'd need them."

What boy would refuse to handle a gun, even if there was no shooting in prospect? So Tom and I accepted the invitation gladly.

We followed the shore of the inlet around to its northern side. Beach stopping every once in a while to examine his traps. This was before that part of the country about Mount St. Elias had been hunted-out, as it has been now to a great extent, and the amount of Beach's catch that morning was something surprising.

Our search was unsuccessful all that forenoon, although it was extended to some distance beyond the inlet. Beach had already proposed that we stop for dinner, when Tom startled both the trapper and myself by a loud shout.

We had reached an eminence overlooking a deep hollow, through which ran a clear, sparkling mountain brook. On the opposite slope of the hollow the figures of four men were clearly outlined.

"There they are! there they are!" shouted Tom, and was about to break into a run down the slope when I grasped his arm.

"How do you know who it is?" I demanded. "They're too far away for you to see. They may be Indians."

"They're not Indians," interposed Beach; "but I don't know who they are."

"Don't you suppose I know old Bill Timmins when I see him?" cried Tom.

"Come, let's go down and find out who they are, but all keep together," advised Beach.

We hurried down the slope and were quickly within hailing distance of the quartet, who were approaching from the opposite direction.

Both Tom and I were now sure that the party were from the Concord. It was made up of old Bill, the mate, a sailor named Tompkins, and Captain Beansole himself.

All three of us waved our caps and shouted, and the other party quickly recognized us and responded.

Not long after we were shaking hands and laughing over our adventure, serious though it had been. Old Bill fairly hugged Tom and me. It seemed that the remainder of the crew of the wrecked whaleboat got ashore just above the inlet, and all quite near each other.

A few hours later a couple of boats from the Concord came feeling their way through the fog and took the castaways off. Captain Beansole had finally ended the whale and had sent the boats to pick us up.

The captain, who was a deal more impetuous and thoughtless than he was intentionally cruel, was very anxious over Tom's and my disappearance.

He had brought the Concord into a natural cove above the inlet, and since early morning he and most of the men had been searching the shore for us two boys, just as we had been searching for them.

Beach, the trapper, went aboard the Concord with us, and the captain presented him, with five pounds of tobacco, and some New York papers only nine months old.

The trapper was very sorry to part with us, for he admitted to Tom and me that being with "white folks" once more made his life in the wilds seem very lonely.

He made Tom and me keep the skin suits we were wearing to remember him by, and we have them yet.

## A Disappointed Dog

**A** YOUNG lady came into one of our large city dry goods stores the other day, on a shopping expedition, having for a companion a large, handsome dog. He was a pointer, and the manner in which he trotted sedately along and kept out of everybody's way showed that he was as intelligent as handsome. In fact, you would hardly have known there was a dog in the store, until the young lady having made her purchase, the shop-girl put the check and the money in a wooden ball and sent it along the "cash railway."

At the first "whiz" the dog pricked up his ears, and the next instant he started after the ball as if he were morally sure it was some new kind of bird.

Past the crowds of buyers, in and out and between hundreds of people, the pointer dashed until the ball disappeared from view. Then he looked puzzled and then humiliated, and was coming back to his indignant mistress when the ball came whizzing on its return trip.

This time the dog expressed his feelings by short yelps as he flew after his game, and this time he took the short route along the counter and fetched up in front of the shop girl, leaving behind him a trail of dismayed shoppers. Then the ball was given him to investigate, and a more disappointed dog was never seen.

## INDIAN HONESTY

One of the Indian boys at Hampton, Virginia, did not like to take his medicine, and his nurse agreed to pay him so much every time he took it. At first he was pleased with this arrangement, but one evening the nurse found that he had made no marks on the card where he kept record of the number of times he had taken medicine. She asked what it meant, and received an explanation from which many a white boy might learn a lesson, and spare his mother much trouble and annoyance:

"Me lay here all day doing nothing; you pay me for it—not right. Me take medicine; me not take money."