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TALES
ABOUT
AMERICA AND AUSTRALIA.

BY
PETER PARLEY.

A New Edition,
BROUGHT DOWN TO THE PRESENT TIME.

REVISED BY
THE REV. T. WILSON.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY S. WILLIAMS.

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CHAPTER I.

PARLEY TELLS HOW AMERICA WAS FIRST DISCOVERED, AND ABOUT COLUMBUS THE DISCOVERER.

Now that I have given you an account of European cities in my "Tales about Europe," I shall now furnish you with some description of America, with its flourishing cities, and its multitude of ships, its fertile fields, its mighty rivers, its vast forests, and its millions of happy and industrious inhabitants, of which I am quite certain you must be very curious to know something, when you are told that though the world has been created nearly six thousand years, and many powerful nations have flourished and decayed, and are now scarcely remembered, yet it is only three hundred and seventy years ago since it was known that such a country as America existed.



It was in the year 1492, which you know is only 370 years since, on the third of August, a little before sunrise, that Christopher Columbus, undertaking the boldest enterprise that human genius ever conceived, or human talent and fortitude ever accomplished, set sail from Spain, for the discovery of the Western World.

I will now give you a short account of Columbus, who was one of the greatest men the world ever produced. He was born in the city of Genoa, in Italy; his family were almost all sailors, and he was brought up for a sailor also, and after being taught geography and various other things necessary for a sea captain to know, he was sent on board ship at the age of fourteen. Columbus was tall, muscular, and of a commanding aspect; his hair, light in youth, turned prematurely grey, and ere he reached the age of thirty was white as snow.

His first voyages were short ones, but after several years, desiring to see and learn more of distant countries, and thinking there were still new ones to be discovered, he went into the service of the King of Portugal and made many voyages to the western coast of Africa, and to the Canaries, and the Madeiras, and the Azores, islands lying off that coast, which were then the most westerly lands known to Europeans.

In his visits to these parts, one person informed him that his ship, sailing out farther to the west than usual, had picked up out of the sea a piece of wood curiously carved, and that very thick canes, like those which travellers had found in India, had been seen floating on the waves; also that great trees, torn up by the roots, had often been cast on shore, and once two dead bodies of men, with strange features, neither like Europeans nor Africans, were driven on the coast of the Azores.

All these stories set Columbus thinking and considering that these strange things had come drifting over the sea from the west, he looked upon them as tokens sent from some unknown countries lying far distant in that quarter: he was therefore eager to sail away and explore, but as he had not money enough himself to fit out ships and hire sailors, he determined to go and try to persuade some king or some state to be at the expense of the trial.

First he went to his own countrymen the Genoese, but they would have nothing to say to him: he then submitted his plan to the Portuguese, but the King of Portugal, pretending to listen to him, got from him his plan, and perfidiously attempted to rob him of the honour of accomplishing it, by sending another person to pursue the same track which he had proposed.

The person they so basely employed did not succeed, but returned to Lisbon, execrating a plan he had not abilities to execute.

On discovering this treachery, Columbus quitted the kingdom in disgust and set out for Spain, to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. He was now so poor that he was frequently obliged to beg as he went along.

About half a league from Palos, a sea-port of Andalusia in Spain, on a solitary height, overlooking the sea-coast, and surrounded by a forest of pines, there stood, and now stands at the present day, an ancient convent of Franciscan friars.



A stranger, travelling on foot, accompanied by a young boy, stopped one day at the gate of the convent, and asked of the porter a little bread and water for his child.—That stranger was Columbus, accompanied by his son Diego.

While receiving this humble refreshment, the guardian of the convent, Friar Juan Perez, happening to pass, was taken with the appearance of the stranger, and being an intelligent man and acquainted with geographical science, he became interested with the conversation of Columbus, and was so struck with the grandeur of his project that he detained him as his guest and invited a friend of his, Martin Alonzo Pinzon, a resident of the town of Palos, to come and hear Columbus explain his plan.

Pinzon was one of the most intelligent sea captains of the day, and a distinguished navigator. He not only approved of his project, but offered to engage in it, and to assist him.

Juan Perez now advised Columbus to repair to court. Pinzon generously furnished him with the money for the journey, and the friar kindly took charge of his youthful son Diego, to maintain and educate him in the convent, which I am sure you will think was the greatest kindness he could have done him at that time.

Ferdinand and Isabella gave him hopes and promises, then they made difficulties and objections, and would do nothing. At last, after waiting five years, he was just setting off for England, where he had previously sent his brother Bartholomew, when he was induced to wait a little longer in Spain.

This little longer was two years, but then at last he had his reward, for queen Isabella stood his friend, and even offered to part with her own jewels in order to raise money to enable him to make preparations for the voyage, so that he contrived to fit out three very small vessels which altogether carried but one hundred and twenty men.

Two of the vessels were light *barques*, or barges built high at the prow and stern, with forecastles and cabins for the crew, but were without deck in the centre; only one of the three, the Santa Maria, was completely decked; on board of this, Columbus hoisted his flag. Martin Alonzo Pinzon commanded the Pinta, and his brother, Vincente Yanez Pinzon, the Nina. He set sail in the sight of a vast crowd, all praying for the success, but never expecting and scarcely hoping to see either him or any of his crews again.

Columbus first made sail for the Canaries, where he repaired his vessels: then taking leave of these islands, he steered his course due west, across the great Atlantic ocean, where never ship had ploughed the waves before.

No sooner had they lost sight of land than the sailors' hearts began to fail them, and they bewailed themselves like men condemned to die: but Columbus cheered them with the hopes of the rich countries they were to discover.

After awhile they came within those regions where the trade-wind, as it is called, blows constantly from east to west without changing, which carried them on at a vast rate; but he judiciously concealed from his ignorant and timid crews the progress he made, lest they might be alarmed at the speed with which they were receding from home. After some time, they found the sea covered with weeds, as thick as a meadow with grass, and the sailors fancied that they should soon be stuck fast,—that they had reached the end of the navigable ocean, and that some strange thing would befall them.

Still, however, Columbus cheered them on, and the sight of a flock of birds encouraged them: but when they had been three weeks at sea and no land appeared, they grew desperate with fear, and plotted among themselves to force their commander to turn back again, lest all their provisions should be spent, or, if he refused, to throw him overboard.

Columbus, however, made them a speech which had such an effect upon them that they became tolerably quiet for a week longer; they then grew so violent again that at last he was

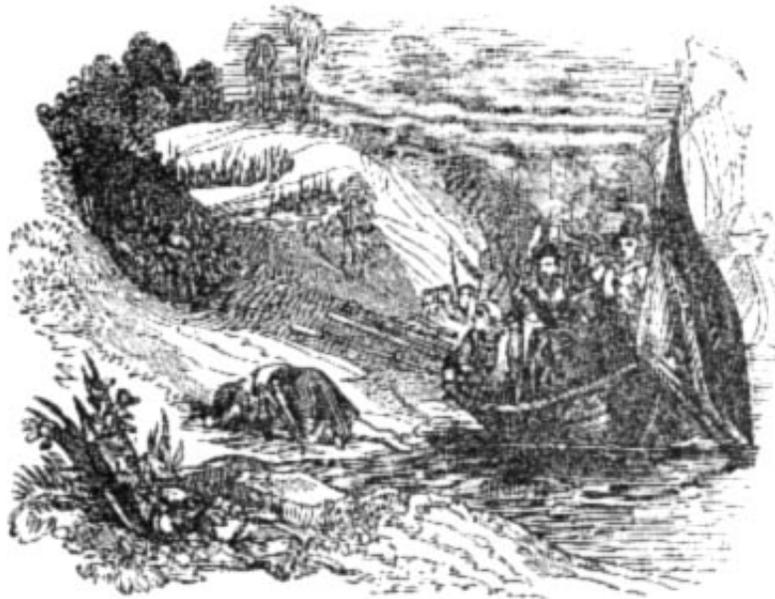
obliged to promise them that if they did not see land in three days, he would consent to give it up and sail home again.

But he was now almost sure that land was not far off: the sea grew shallower, and early every morning flocks of land birds began to flutter around them, and these all left the ship in the evening, as if to roost on shore. One of the vessels had picked up a cane newly cut, and another a branch covered with fresh red berries; and the air blew softer and warmer, and the wind began to vary.

That very night, Columbus ordered the sails to be taken in, and strict watch to be kept, in all the ships, for fear of running aground; he and all his men remained standing on the deck, looking out eagerly: at length he spied a distant light; he showed it to two of his officers, and they all plainly perceived it moving, as if carried backwards and forwards, from house to house.

Soon after the cry of "*Land! land!*" was heard from the foremost ship, and, at dawn of day, they plainly saw a beautiful island, green and woody, and watered with many pleasant streams, lying stretched before them.

As soon as the sun rose, the boats of the vessel were lowered and manned, and Columbus, in a rich and splendid dress of scarlet, entered the principal one. They then rowed towards the island, with their colours displayed, and warlike music, and other martial pomp.



Columbus was the first to leap on shore, to kiss the earth, and to thank God on his knees: his men followed, and throwing themselves at his feet they all thanked him for leading them thither, and begged his forgiveness for their disrespectful and unruly behaviour.

CHAPTER II.

PARLEY DESCRIBES THE INHABITANTS.

The poor inhabitants, a simple and innocent people, with copper-coloured skins and long black hair, not curled, like the negroes, but floating on their shoulders, or bound in tresses round their heads, came flocking down to the beach and stood gazing in silent admiration.

The dress of the Spaniards, the whiteness of their skins, their beards, their arms, and the vast machines that seemed to move upon the waters with wings, which they supposed had, during the night, risen out of the sea, or come down from the clouds; the sound and flash of the guns, which they mistook for thunder and lightning: all these things appeared to them strange and surprising; they considered the Spaniards as children of the sun, and paid homage to them as gods.

The Europeans were hardly less amazed at the scene now before them. Every herb, and shrub, and tree, differed from those which flourished in Europe: the inhabitants appeared in the simple innocence of nature, entirely naked; their features were singular, but not disagreeable, and their manners gentle and timid.



The first act of Columbus was to take solemn and formal possession of the country in the name of his sovereign; this was done by planting the Spanish flag on the coast, and other ceremonies, which the poor natives looked upon with wonder, but could not understand.

Nor could there be an act of greater cruelty and injustice; for the Spaniards could not have any right to drive these gentle and peaceful inhabitants (as they afterwards did) from their peaceful abodes, which had been theirs and their fathers before them, perhaps for thousands of years, and in the end, utterly to destroy them, and take their land for themselves.

After performing this ceremony, of which Columbus himself could not foresee the consequences to the Indians, for he was very kind to them, he made them presents of trinkets and other trifles, with which they were greatly delighted, and brought him in return the fruits of their fields and groves, and a sort of bread called cassada, made from the root

of the yuca; with whatever else their own simple mode of life might afford.

Columbus then returned to his ship, accompanied by many of the islanders in their boats, which they called canoes; these simple and undiscerning children of nature having no foresight of the calamities and desolation which awaited their country.

This island was called by the natives Guanahini, and by the Spaniards St. Salvador: it is one of that cluster of West India Islands called the Bahamas, and if you look on the map you will see that it is the very first island that would present itself to a ship sailing direct from Spain.

Columbus did not continue his voyage for some days, as he wished to give all his sailors an opportunity of landing and seeing the wonders of the new-discovered world, and to take in a fresh supply of water, in which they were cheerfully assisted by the natives, who took them to the clearest springs and the sweetest and freshest streams, filling their casks and rolling them to the boats, and seeking in every way to gratify (as they believed) their celestial visitors.

Columbus having thus refreshed his crews, and supplied his ships with water, proceeded on his voyage. After visiting several smaller islands he discovered a large island which the natives called Cuba, and which still retains that name. This was so large an island that he at first thought it to be a new continent.

In proceeding along the coast, having observed that most of the people whom he had seen wore small plates of gold by way of ornament in their noses, he eagerly inquired, by signs, where they got that precious metal.

The Indians, as much astonished at his eagerness in quest of gold as the Europeans were at their ignorance and simplicity, pointed towards the east, to an island which they called Hayti, in which this metal was more abundant.

Columbus ordered his squadron to bend their course thither, but Martin Alonzo Pinzon, impatient to be the first who should take possession of the treasure which this country was supposed to contain, quitted his companions with his ship, the Pinta, and though Columbus made signals to slacken sail, he paid no regard to them.

When they came in sight of Hayti, which you will see was no great distance, if you look on the map, Columbus having had no sleep the night before, had gone to his cabin to lie down and rest himself, having first given the charge of the vessel to an experienced sailor.

This careless man, (this lazy lubber, the sailors would call him,) instead of performing his duty, and watching over the safety of the ship and the lives of his companions, which were entrusted to him, deserted his post and went to sleep, leaving the vessel to the management of a young and thoughtless boy.

The rapid currents which prevail on that coast soon carried the vessel on a shoal, and Columbus was roused from his sleep by the striking of the ship and the cries of the terrified boy.

They first endeavoured, by taking out an anchor, to warp the vessel off, but the strength of the current was more than a match for them, and the vessel was driven farther and farther on

the shoal; they then cut away the mast and took out some of the stores to lighten her; but all their efforts were vain.

Before sunset the next evening the vessel was a complete wreck. Fortunately the Nina was close at hand, and the shipwrecked mariners got on board of her; the inhabitants of the island came in their canoes and assisted them in preserving part of their stores.

They found Hayti a very beautiful island, and were treated with the greatest kindness by the inhabitants; but, though delighted with the beauty of the scenes which everywhere presented themselves, and amazed at the luxuriance and fertility of the soil, Columbus did not find gold in such quantities as was sufficient to satisfy the avarice of his followers; he was nevertheless anxious to prolong his voyage, and explore those magnificent regions which seemed to invite them on every hand.

But as the Pinta had never joined them again after parting from them, he had no vessel now left but the Nina; he did not therefore think it prudent to pursue his discoveries with one small vessel, and that a very crazy one, lest, if any accident should befall it, he might be left without the means of returning to Europe, and both the glory and benefit of his great discoveries might be lost; so he determined to prepare for his return.

But as it was impossible for so small a vessel as the Nina to contain the crew of the ship that was wrecked in addition to its own, Columbus was greatly perplexed what to do.

Many of his men were so delighted with the island and its inhabitants, that they begged of him to let them remain there, and Columbus consented to leave forty of them on the island, while he and the remainder made the voyage back.

He promised to return to them speedily. He now built them a fort with the timber of the wreck, and fortified it with the guns of the Santa Maria, and did every thing in his power to provide for their comfort during his absence, particularly enjoining them to be kind and peaceful towards the Indians.

This was the first colony of Europeans that settled in the new world, and Columbus gave it the name of Navidad.



CHAPTER III.

COLUMBUS SETS SAIL TO RETURN TO SPAIN, AND ENCOUNTERS A DREADFUL STORM.

Having obtained a certain quantity of the precious metals, and other curious productions of the countries he had discovered, he set sail to recross the wide Atlantic Ocean.

It was the second day after they had left the island that they saw a sail at a distance, which proved to be the Pinta.

On joining the admiral, Pinzon made many excuses and endeavoured to account for his desertion, saying he had been separated by stress of weather. Columbus admitted his excuse, but he ascertained afterwards that Pinzon parted company intentionally, and had steered directly east in quest of a region where the Indians had assured him that he would find gold in abundance.

They had guided him to Hayti, where he had been for some time, in a river about fifteen leagues from the part of the coast where Columbus had been wrecked.

He had collected a large quantity of gold by trading with the natives, and on leaving the river he had carried off four Indian men and two girls to be sold in Spain.



Columbus immediately sailed back for this river, and ordered the four men and two girls to be dismissed well clothed and with many presents, to atone for the wrong they had experienced. This resolution was not carried into effect without great unwillingness and many angry words on the part of Pinzon.

Columbus, being now joined by the *Pinta*, thought he might pursue his discoveries a little further, and on leaving this part of the coast he took with him four young Indians to guide him to the Carribean Islands, of which they gave him a very interesting account, as well as of another island said to be inhabited by Amazons.

A favourable breeze, however, sprang up for the voyage homewards, and seeing gloom and impatience in the countenances of his men, he gave up his intention of visiting these islands, and made all sail for Spain, the young Indians having consented to accompany him that they might learn the Spanish language, and be his guides and interpreters when they should return.

His voyage homeward was much more tedious; for those trade winds which had wafted him so rapidly westward, across the Atlantic, still blew from east to west, and Columbus did not then know that their influence only extends to a certain distance on each side of the Equator, so that if he had sailed a little farther north, on his return, he would very likely have met with a south-west wind, which was just what he wanted.

On the 12th of February they had made such progress as led them to hope they should soon see land. The wind now came on to blow violently; on the following evening there were three flashes of lightning in the north-east, from which signs Columbus predicted an approaching tempest.

It soon burst upon them with frightful violence. Their small and crazy vessels were little fitted for the wild storms of the Atlantic; all night they were obliged to scud under bare poles, at the mercy of the elements; as the morning dawned there was a transient pause and they made a little sail, but the wind rose with redoubled fury from the south and increased in the night, threatening each moment to overwhelm them or dash them to pieces.

The admiral made signal-lights for the Pinta to keep in company, but she was separated by the violence of the storm, and her lights gleamed more and more distant till they ceased entirely.

When the day dawned the sea presented a frightful waste of wild and broken waves. Columbus looked round anxiously for the Pinta, but she was nowhere to be seen, and he became apprehensive that Pinzon had borne away for Spain, that he might reach it before him, and by giving the first account of his discoveries, deprive him of his fame.

Through a dreary day the helpless bark was driven along by the tempest.

Seeing all human skill baffled and confounded, Columbus endeavoured to propitiate heaven by solemn vows, and various private vows were made by the seamen. The heavens, however, seemed deaf to their vows: the storm grew still more furious, and every one gave himself up for lost.

During this long and awful conflict of the elements, the mind of Columbus was a prey to the most distressing anxiety.

He was harassed by the repinings of his crew, who cursed the hour of their leaving their country.

He was afflicted also with the thought of his two sons, who would be left destitute by his death.

But he had another source of distress more intolerable than death itself. In case the Pinta should have foundered, as was highly probable, the history of his discovery would depend upon his own feeble bark. One surge of the ocean might bury it for ever in oblivion, and his name only be recorded as that of a desperate adventurer.

At this crisis, when all was given up for lost, Columbus had presence of mind enough to retire to his cabin and to write upon parchment a short account of his voyage.

This he wrapped in an oiled cloth, which he enclosed in a cake of wax, put it into a tight cask, and threw it into the sea, in hopes that some fortunate accident might preserve a deposit of so much importance to the world.

But that being which had preserved him through so many dangers still protected him; and happily these precautions were superfluous.

At sunset there was a streak of clear sky in the west; the wind shifted to that quarter, and on the morning of the 15th of February they came in sight of land.

The transports of the crew at once more beholding the old world, were almost equal to those they had experienced on discovering the new. This proved to be the island of St. Mary, the most southern of the Azores.

After remaining here a few days, the wind proving favourable he again set sail, on the 24th of February.

After two or three days of pleasant sailing, there was a renewal of tempestuous weather.

About midnight of the 2nd of March the caravel was struck by a squall, which rent all her sails and threatened instant destruction. The crew were again reduced to despair, and made vows of fasting and pilgrimages.

The storm raged through the succeeding day, during which, from various signs they considered that land must be near. The turbulence of the following night was dreadful; the sea was broken, wild, and mountainous, the rain fell in torrents, and the lightning flashed and the thunder pealed from various parts of the heavens.

In the first watch of this fearful night, the seamen gave the usual welcome cry of land—but it only increased their alarm, for they dreaded being driven on shore or dashed upon the rocks. Taking in sail, therefore, they endeavoured to keep to sea as much as possible. At day-break on the 4th of March they found themselves off the rock of Cintra at the mouth of the Tagus, which you know is the principal river of Portugal.

Though distrustful of the Portuguese, he had no alternative but to run in for shelter. The inhabitants came off from various parts of the shore to congratulate him on what they deemed a miraculous preservation, for they had been watching the vessel the whole morning with great anxiety, and putting up prayers for her safety. The oldest mariners of the place assured him that they had never during the whole course of their lives known so tempestuous a winter.

Such were the difficulties and perils with which Columbus had to contend on his return to Europe. Had one tenth part of them beset his outward voyage, his factious crew would have risen in arms against the enterprise, and he never would have discovered the new world.

The king of Portugal must have been greatly mortified when he heard of the arrival of Columbus and the wonderful discoveries he had made, for he could not but reflect that all the advantages of these discoveries might have belonged to him if he had not treated Columbus as he did.

But notwithstanding the envy which it was natural for the Portuguese to feel, he was allowed to come to Lisbon, and was treated with all the marks of distinction due to a man who had performed things so extraordinary and unexpected. The king admitted him into his presence, and listened with admiration to the account which he gave of his voyage, while Columbus enjoyed the satisfaction of being able to prove the solidity of his schemes to those very persons who had with disgraceful ignorance rejected them as the projects of a visionary adventurer.

Columbus was so impatient to return to Spain that he remained only five days in Lisbon. On the 15th of March he arrived at Palos, seven months and eleven days from the time when he set out from thence upon his voyage.

When the prosperous issue of it was known, when they beheld the strange people, the unknown animals, and singular productions brought from the countries he had discovered, the joy was unbounded; all the bells were rung, the cannons were fired, and he was welcomed with all the acclamations which the people are ever ready to bestow on great and glorious characters. They flocked in crowds to the harbour to see him land, and nothing but Columbus and the New World, as the Spaniards called it, was talked of.

He was desired by Ferdinand and Isabella in the most respectful terms to repair to court, that they might receive from his own mouth, an account of his wonderful discoveries.

On his arrival at Barcelona the king and queen received him clad in their royal robes, seated upon a throne, and surrounded by their nobles.



When he approached, they commanded him to take his seat upon a chair prepared for him, and to give a circumstantial account of his voyage, which he related with a gravity suitable to the dignity of the audience he addressed, and with that modesty which ever accompanies superior merit.

Every mark of honour that gratitude or admiration could suggest, was conferred upon him; his family was ennobled, and, as a mark of particular favour, Isabella appointed his son Diego, the boy, who, you remember, had been left at the convent, page to prince Juan, the heir apparent, an honour only granted to sons of persons of distinguished rank.

The king and queen, and, after their example, the courtiers treated him with all the respect paid to persons of the highest rank. Yet some of these courtiers were his bitterest enemies, and did every thing they could, in his absence, to poison the minds of the king and queen against him, and to cause his downfall.

The favour shown Columbus by the sovereigns insured him for a time the caresses of the nobility, for in court every one is eager to lavish attentions upon the man "whom the king delighteth to honour."

At one of the banquets which were given him occurred the well known circumstance of the egg.



A shallow courtier present, impatient of the honours paid to Columbus, and meanly jealous of him as a foreigner, abruptly asked him, whether he thought that, in case he had not discovered the Indies, there would have been wanting men in Spain capable of the enterprise.

To this Columbus made no direct reply but, taking an egg, invited the company to make it stand on one end. Every one attempted it, but in vain; whereupon he struck it upon the table, broke one end, and left it standing on the broken part; illustrating, in this simple manner, that when he had once shown the way to the new world, nothing was easier than to follow it.



CHAPTER IV.

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