

COLUMBUS

Far away in a seaport town in Italy there lived many years ago a boy named Christopher Columbus. Columbus loved the sea with all his heart. He would sit on the docks day after day, watching the vessels sail out of the harbor and making pictures in his mind of the lands to which they were going.

When he grew to be a man, Columbus thought and studied and drew maps and plans, until he felt sure that the earth was round and that by sailing west he could reach the rich country of India, which really lay east of Italy. He longed to prove that his idea was right, but he had no money to buy vessels and food for such a long voyage.



He went from one place to another, trying to interest people in his plans. Some would listen to him; others would shake their heads and turn away; many would laugh and make fun of him, and call him foolish or mad; but no one would help him.

At last Columbus went to Spain and told his plans to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. They were interested in all he had to say; for they, too, wanted to find a new way of reaching India. When Columbus had finished speaking, King Ferdinand called in the wise men and bade Columbus show his plans to them.

But the wise men only made fun of poor Columbus. "Hear him! hear him!" they cried. "He believes that by sailing west he can reach the east. The man is mad."

Just as Columbus was turning sadly away, Queen Isabella spoke. "I believe in Columbus and his plan," she exclaimed. "I am willing to sell my jewels and give him the money to buy ships with which to sail the sea and prove that what he says is true."

When Ferdinand heard what his brave queen had said, he no longer listened to the wise men. He gave Columbus money to buy three ships and to supply them with men and food.

Then Columbus set sail far out over the great unknown ocean where no vessel had ever been before. On and on he sailed until it seemed that the voyage would never end. But at last land came in sight. It was not India but a new, strange country which no one had ever heard of before.

Can you guess what land it was? Can you tell now why the people of America set a day aside and call it Columbus Day?