

There are some things that do not advertise their essential badness till they have come to their growth.

Guiteau is simply the naked, filthy incarnation of political place-seeking. His case simply publishes the possibilities of evil that lurk in every man that has a mind to make country servant to his private interest. The air has been cleared. Eyes have been opened. We see in Guiteau the untinselled deformity of this whole breed of political cormorants. In him the fact has been shown to us without its disguises, and the fact has been burned into the heart of the American people by eighty days of waiting and weeping. "Almost all things are by the law purged with blood." The precious blood has been shed, may it be applied by us to the end that we may be cleansed.

And may this tenderness of the general heart go on issuing—as it has already begun to do—go on issuing in completer consecration to country and to God, prompting us to regard our civil obligations in the light of Christian duties, to controvert every kind of political evil with Christian bravery and resoluteness, to range ourselves with Christian alacrity on the side of every force that makes for national righteousness, to carry the interests of our country in tender and devout hearts; especially to accord our hearty fellowship and to yield our warmest sympathies to our new Executive in the position of delicacy and difficulty in which he now finds himself placed—these months have disciplined him just as they have disciplined us all—and to prayerfully expect from him great and good things, and to stand by him cordially in every effort of his to administer this country justly and in the fear of God.

## JOHN FISKE



JOHN FISKE, eminent American historian, philosopher, and lecturer, was born at Hartford, Conn., March 30, 1842, and died at Gloucester, Mass., July 4, 1901. Though he was the only son of Edmund Brewster Green, of Smyrna, Del., his family name being Edmund Fiske Green, he later took the name of his maternal great-grandfather, John Fiske, and was afterwards known by the latter name. He graduated from Harvard College in 1863, and from the Law School in 1865, having been already admitted to the Bar in 1864. Mr. Fiske never practiced law, but began his literary career in 1861, by writing a notable article in the "National Quarterly Review," and from that time until his death was a frequent contributor to American and British periodicals. In 1869-71, he was university lecturer on philosophy at Harvard; in 1870 instructor in history, and in 1872-79 assistant librarian. For a number of years he was a member of the board of overseers of Harvard College, and in 1884 was appointed professor of American history at Washington University, St. Louis, Mo. The greater part of Mr. Fiske's life was devoted to the study of history, and he delivered numberless lectures, mainly upon that subject, in the chief cities of the United States and at the Royal Institution and University College, London, England. He made an elaborate study of the doctrine of Evolution, and published many works on the subject. His "Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy" is deemed the best interpretation of the Spencerian doctrine of evolution; while his "Idea of God" and his "Destiny of Man" supply, from the evolutionary point of view, an admirable defence of Theism, as well as of faith in personal immortality. In history, also, he was a luminous interpreter and expositor, as those know who are familiar with his writings, such as: "The Discovery of America," "The Beginnings of New England," "The American Revolution," "The Critical Period of American History—1783-89," "The Dutch and Quaker Colonies in America," and "The War of Independence." His other writings embrace, besides those above mentioned, "The Unseen World," "The Destiny of Man," "Darwinism, and other Essays," and "Through Nature to God." In 1901, a posthumous work appeared from Dr. Fiske's pen, entitled "Life Everlasting." (441)



## ORATION ON COLUMBUS

DELIVERED IN BOSTON, OCTOBER 21, 1892

WE HAVE met here this morning to commemorate the four hundredth anniversary of one of the greatest events in the history of the world. The first crossing of the ocean by Christopher Columbus was an achievement of which Americans are not likely to underrate the importance, and which no one with a due sense of the relation of cause and effect in human affairs can for a moment fail to recognize as supremely important. When we duly consider what America already means to the world while the development of European civilization upon this fresh soil is still in its earliest stages, when we take sober thought of what the future must have in store if this early promise is only partially fulfilled, we shall be inclined to pronounce the voyage that led the way to this New World as the most epoch-making event of all that have occurred since the birth of Christ.

But I do not propose to take up your time with glittering generalities. The best way to do homage to Columbus, or to show our appreciation of the real grandeur of his achievement, is to try to understand it in its relations to what went before it; and that is a kind of understanding which people surely do not commonly show when speaking or writing on the subject. In order to appreciate the significance of any historical event we must look at it in perspective, and the greater the event the more is the need of such perspective.

Now, the discovery of America was simply a part of a great and sudden outburst of maritime activity the like of

which had never been seen before, and which within the limits of a single century discovered not only America, but nearly all the rest of the world outside of Europe. Down to that time the great wanderings of mankind had been by land; no people but the Northmen had ventured far into the trackless ocean, and the knowledge of civilized Europeans extended but little way beyond their own continent. Perhaps it is not always remembered that the first European ship crossed the Equator in 1471, when Columbus was a man grown, and that no European ship ever sailed to the eastern coast of Asia until 1517, after Columbus had been eleven years in the grave. When that great navigator was in his childhood, European knowledge of the surface of our planet was bounded on the south by the Tropic of Cancer, and to the east it was extremely hazy about everything beyond the Caspian Sea and the Persian Gulf. The globe made in 1492 by Martin Behaim, one of the most learned geographers of his time, may still be seen in the Town Hall of Nuremberg. It cuts off two-thirds of Hindustan and puts in place of it an island of Ceylon magnified ten-fold. But within half a century after 1492, the Antarctic ocean had been visited, the earth had been circumnavigated once, the flag of Portugal was supreme in the East Indies, and the Spaniards ruled in Mexico and Peru.

It is an interesting question, why should this wonderful outburst of maritime activity have come just at that time? why should the discovery of America by Columbus have happened in the fifteenth century? and why did Europe have to wait until then for such an event? The answer is easy to find; but first we shall do well to ask another question, and then we may answer the two together. There is no doubt that toward the end of the tenth century people from Iceland



founded a colony in Greenland, or that ships from Greenland a few years later made voyages along the American coast, chiefly for the purpose of cutting timber, and in all probability came as far south as Massachusetts Bay. Icelandic chronicles have fortunately preserved the story of these interesting voyages, but Europe took no heed of them whatever, and they lapsed into utter oblivion until about the time of Henry Hudson, when the Arctic world began again to be explored, and long after the death of Columbus. Now, why was this? What was the difference between the eleventh century and the fifteenth, such that in the latter case a visit to the western shores of the Atlantic ocean soon led to the revelation of a new world, while in the former case it did not? The differences between the two ages were many, but the chief difference with which we are concerned is this: in the time of Columbus there was a propelling power at work which in the earlier time was absent, and that propelling power was furnished by a great and unprecedented disturbance of trade between Europe and Asia. That disturbance was caused by the Ottoman Turks. There is one other date in the fifteenth century almost as famous as 1492; that is, 1453, that year of mourning and humiliation when the grandest city of Christendom was captured by the robber bands whose descendants to this day have been allowed to hold it. But for nearly a century before Constantinople fell, the Turks had been strangling trade on the eastern shores and in the eastern waters of the Mediterranean. Their aggressions closed up old routes of trade and forced Europe to seek new routes; and thus I say it was chiefly and primarily the Turks that set in motion the current of events that carried Columbus across the Atlantic.

In the thirteenth century the Mongol conquests brought

the whole vast territory from China to Poland, from the Yellow Sea to the Euphrates, under the sway of a single monarch; the Mongol policy was liberal to foreigners, and in the course of a hundred years, from 1250 to 1350, a good many Europeans—chiefly merchants and Franciscan monks—visited China. Now came the first step toward the discovery of America. Soon after 1250 it became positively known, as a matter of personal experience, that China was a maritime country with seaports looking out upon an open ocean. By those Europeans who pondered upon this information it was at once assumed that this ocean must be the Atlantic, because of the spherical shape of the earth. Here I must pause for a moment to remark upon a gross historical blunder which vitiates most of the talk and a good deal of the popular writing about Columbus. It is evidently supposed by many people that the spherical shape of the earth was a new idea in his time; some seem to think that he originated it, or that it was opposed and ridiculed by most of his learned contemporaries, and especially by the clergy. Nothing could be further from the truth. The globular form of the earth was proved by Aristotle, and after him accepted by nearly all the ancient philosophers; and seventeen hundred years before the time of Columbus the geographer Eratosthenes declared that it would be easy enough to sail from Spain to India on the same parallel were it not for the vast extent of the Atlantic ocean. But that vast extent was all a matter of guess-work, and other ancient writers, such as Seneca, maintained that the distance was probably not so very great, and that with favoring winds a ship might make the voyage in a few days. This question of distance, as we shall see in a few moments, was the main



difficulty which Columbus had to meet. Objections arising from a belief in the earth's flatness were made by ignorant clergymen, as by uneducated people in general; but learned clergymen, familiar with Aristotle and Ptolemy, did not for a moment call in question the roundness of the earth. Knowledge of such scientific points, however, was in those days apt to lie stagnant, and some striking experience was needed to vivify it. When the news of Chinese seaports was first brought to Europe, that far-sighted monk, Roger Bacon, in 1267 suggested that a ship might sail westward across the Atlantic to China, and he fortified his opinion by extracts from Aristotle and other ancient writers. There is nothing to show that Columbus ever saw Roger Bacon's book; but in 1410 a certain archbishop of Cambrai, named Pierre d'Ailly, wrote a book called "The Image of the World," which was widely circulated in manuscript and was printed in 1483; and in this very popular book that passage about sailing westward to China was cribbed—or perhaps it would be more amiable to say quoted—from Bacon. This book was diligently read by Columbus, and his own copy of it, with marginal notes in his own handwriting which show how powerfully it influenced him, may be seen to-day in the Columbian library at Seville.

Thus we see that Roger Bacon's suggestion, though it found no practical response in his own time, was transmitted to Columbus two centuries later and sank deep into his heart. Things changed greatly between the thirteenth century and the fifteenth. So long as Asia was more accessible than ever by the old routes, men had no motive for undertaking the strange and difficult work of finding new ones. Such new and strange work must wait until men were in a measure driven to it. Meanwhile, among the educated Euro-

peans who found their way to the eastern ocean, there was one, the Venetian Marco Polo, who lived in the service of the Mongol emperor for five-and-twenty years and made journeys to and fro in the heart of Asia. In 1299, after his return to Europe, he wrote down his experiences in what is doubtless the greatest book of travels that has ever been written. It carried European thought still farther eastward than the Chinese seaports, for Marco Polo had heard a good deal about Japan, an island kingdom a thousand miles out in the ocean, which he called Cipango, and about which he told things which led many of his readers to set him down as a liar, but which we now know to have been for the most part true.

During the next century Marco Polo's book was widely read.

Thus upon men's minds began to dawn the question whether an outside route, an indirect path over the ocean, could be found to the land whence silks and spices came. Perhaps civilized mankind had never asked of itself a more startling question. It involved a radical departure from the grooves in which the minds of sailors and merchants had been running ever since the days when Solomon's ships were laden with treasure brought from Ophir. The age that could propound such a problem was ripe for new venture in other directions, too—for a renaissance in science, in art, and in religion. The man who could solve it will always be remembered as one of the mightiest innovators of all time.

A whole generation passed while the question was gradually getting propounded, and the answer, as with all such great questions, came by slow stages. Portuguese navigators first gave shape to the problem; and here, as throughout the story, we never get far away from the conflict be-