

LOUISE ANDREWS KENT

He Went With

Christopher Columbus





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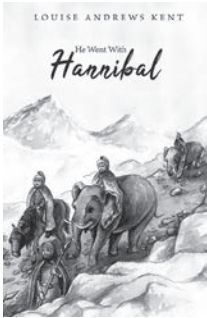


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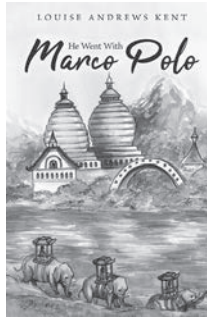
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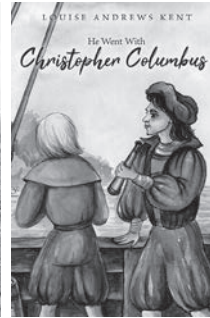
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Hannibal



Marco Polo



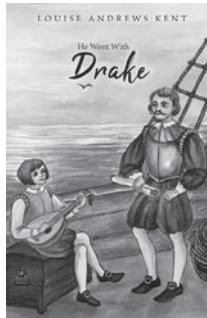
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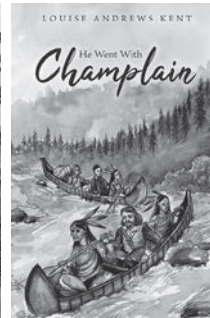
Vasco da Gama



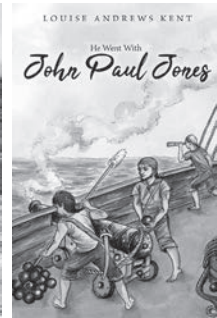
Magellan



Drake



Champlain



John Paul Jones

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TO J. A. J. JR

DEAR ALLEN:

After you moved out of your room it looked pretty empty—no model planes, no skiing posters, no harmonicas—so I moved in with my junk. I piled stacks of books about Columbus all over your bed and on the chest and on top of the red filing cabinet. I crammed the wardrobe full of papers (some of which I found again when I wanted them) and then I sat down to write.

The result is this book. I am amazed at how neat and handsome it looks. It doesn't say all I'd like to say about Columbus, but I hope people who read it may go on and read some of the books I studied. Since I finished writing my story, Professor Morison of Harvard has come back from sailing over the route that Columbus followed. I'm glad to hear that he thinks Columbus was a great navigator. Every now and then I would read a book that said Columbus was only a landlubber who happened to be lucky. I couldn't see how that could be true, and it's interesting to have someone who really knows what he is talking about travel where Columbus went and see what he was up against. I have tried in my book to tell about some of his difficulties. Probably no one has ever told them all—or ever will.

I got some advice that helped me very much from Miss Alice Bache Gould who has worked in Spain on documents about Columbus and his companions and who knows more about them than anyone else. I know she kept me from making one or two mistakes, and I am very grateful to her. If I made others, it is my fault. People do make them: even Columbus thought

he'd got to India. We are still calling the original inhabitants of this part of the world Indians as a result of that mistake.

It isn't necessary to tell all that Columbus went through to show that he was a great man—one of the men who change the world simply because they have an idea and won't let any amount of discouragement keep them from carrying it through.

I expect your reading is mostly larger and heavier books than this now, but as long as this one was written in your room, I thought I'd dedicate it to you. Now that I have cleared up the room so that it no longer looks as if the hurricane had struck it, it is ready for you any time.

A visit will please us all, especially

Yours sincerely,

LOUISE ANDREWS KENT

BROOKLINE, *April* 1, 1940



CHAPTER 1

BOOK AND TREE

HIGH up in a beech tree Peter Aubrey was reading his new book. On the green lawn below, his two uncles, the Englishman and the Spaniard, walked up and down. Don Diego's black velvet and Sir Henry Tallard's crimson cloth caught Peter's eye as they passed below his hiding place, but he did not look after them.

He did not listen to their talk either, though his ear caught his own name. He did not care what they said. He wanted only to be left alone with his book, to hide from his cousins, Gwen Tallard and Esteban Medina-Barrios, to hear only the rustle and swish of the beech leaves and the blackbird whistling in the hawthorn.

Peter was rather like a blackbird himself. His clothes were black, so was the straight hair that hung over his forehead, so were the eyes that followed Marco Polo's story...

'I will pass hence to the land of the Indies where I, Marco Polo, dwelt a long time, and now I will begin with the island

of Cipango. The people of this country are fair and of good manners though they worship idols. There is in this island a King frank and free, and he has great plenty of gold. He has a marvellous palace all covered with gold plate. The windows and pillars of this palace are all of gold. Also there are precious stones in great plenty...'

'It must be a fine sight,' Peter thought.

He shut the book and looked out through the beech leaves over the pleasant English country, almost hoping for a moment to see that shining palace standing among strange trees. Instead he saw fields where sheep slept in the shadow of the oaks, green hedges with their new branches gently waving in the summer sun, white clouds drifting lazily high up in the air, the blue and silver river slipping quietly towards the sea.

The sea itself—the road to Cipango—was hiding under a soft haze. Not even a gleam showed where it was. The mist hid the harbor, too, and his father's warehouses and the masts of his ships.

Peter thought, not with pleasure but with the dull ache that always came with this knowledge: 'They are my ships now.'

It was still hard to believe that his father was dead. Don Diego had brought the news less than a month ago. Don Luis de Medina-Barrios—known in England as Lord Aubrey—had been killed near the walls of Granada by a Moorish arrow.

Don Luis had come to England with King Henry the Seventh and had fought for the King at Bosworth Field against the humpbacked Richard the Third—the man who had had his nephews, boys no older than Peter, murdered in the Tower. King Henry had given his Spanish friend the estate over which Peter was now looking. Melcote was its name. The King had knighted Don Luis on the field of Bosworth and later had

made him a baron. English tongues had changed his Spanish name to Louis Aubrey. Names were easily changed in those days. Until Don Diego had come back from Spain bringing the news that Louis Aubrey had died there. Peter had almost forgotten that his own name was Pedro de Medina-Barrios in Spain, though in England it was Peter Aubrey.

‘He spends too much time with his nose in a book,’ Henry Tallard said in his big voice.

Don Diego made some answer, but as usual he spoke so softly that even if Peter had tried to listen he could not have heard the words. Besides, he did not care what they were. It was Don Diego who had brought him Messer Marco Polo’s book. It was in Latin, a printed book, not written by hand. His uncle had put it in the chest that he had brought back from Spain, the chest that contained Peter’s father’s clothes. Louis Aubrey’s sword was in it, and the suit of crimson velvet that he wore to court when the King had made him Baron Aubrey. Peter had not unpacked the chest. He had locked it and put the key under a book on the shelf near his bed. The only thing he had taken out was the copy of Marco Polo.

His Uncle Diego, Peter thought, might say what he liked as long as he gave him books like this. Perhaps when they went to London to see the lawyer, his uncle would take him to Master Caxton’s press and let him buy a book there. Master Caxton was dead now. He had printed books in English, stories of knights and gentle deeds. They were easier for Peter to read than Spanish or Latin, though the chaplain, Father Patrick, had taught him both. Peter’s father had promised, if he did well in his Latin, to buy him a book Master Caxton had printed, by a man named Geoffrey Chaucer. *The Canterbury Tales*, it was called. Only now his father—

It was better not to think about his father now.

Peter opened his book and read on...

‘In the midst of that hall is a cistern of fine gold that will hold ten hogsheads, which is always kept full of good drink. At dinner out of the cistern they draw, with pots of gold, wine to serve the great Khan. And everyone that sits at the table has a cup of gold. When the great Khan drinks all the musicians that are in the hall play on their instruments...’

Henry Tallard said: ‘We have been waiting for you, Hubert. Can you show us some sport?’

Peter looked down through the leaves. He saw Hubert the Falconer’s sandy red head, the scarlet sleeves under his black coat, his gloved left hand, the hooded falcon on his wrist.

The three men went out of the garden through the great gate. It was Peter’s chance to get to his own room without being seen. His cousins had hunted for him there already—he had seen them open the leaded casement and look out. He wrapped his book in his silk handkerchief and, carefully holding it under one arm, climbed higher in the tree to be sure Esteban and Gwen were nowhere in sight.

He could look down now into the courts and over the roofs of the new house his father had built. The tiles shone in the sun like small red shields. The new rusty pink brick walls with the pattern of dull blue brick running through them showed smooth and clean. The heavy oak doors, bolted and strapped with iron, stood open. So did the casement windows with their panes of painted glass. Not everyone had glass, especially painted glass, in his windows, but Lord Aubrey’s house had everything that was of the newest fashion: floors of wide oak boards laid as tightly as the sides of a ship, oaken panels on the wall carved to look like folded

linen, ceilings of carved wood and plaster brightened with touches of gold.

The garden seemed to be sleeping in the afternoon sun. Tom the Jester lay curled up asleep under a red rosebush. His yellow leg was twisted over his green one. His yellow arm was over his face and the green one under his head. He moved a little, and Peter could hear the bells on his clothes tinkle.

Father Patrick had said his prayers and now he, too, was dozing. His small brown book had slipped into the folds of his brown robe. He was smiling happily at something he was dreaming about. Two stableboys were asleep on a pile of straw in the yard. Even the red cattle outside in the field were only half awake.

It was so still that Peter could hear bees buzzing in the roses, a lamb in the field crying for its mother, and—suddenly—the squeaking twitter of frightened birds. He saw the falcon sail high above the trees, then dive so swiftly that he could hardly follow her flight. He could almost feel the rush of air past his cheek, hear it sing through the feathers, see the swooping shadow close above him, feel the clutch of the terrible claws.

Peter hated cruelty. Gwen Tallard had often laughed at him for turning such a strange color under his dark skin because a bear was baited or a bird torn to pieces. She had laughed when he had got the scar on his right arm—those five lumpy tooth—marks—where the deer hound had bitten him. Peter had snatched away a kitten that the dog had been shaking in his fierce jaws. Hubert had burned the wounds with a red-hot nail. Peter could not sleep that night and his arm ached for many days. The kitten, however, was chasing her tail spryly the next morning.

Even now, when there was a storm coming, his arm would

ache. It did now as he climbed down the tree. He only tucked his book under it tightly, swung by his left hand from a branch high above the ground, landed as lightly as the kitten could. She was a cat now, a handsome striped creature the color of Meg Sutherland's hair. Peter had named the cat Rusty Maggie—as a compliment to Meg, he said. Meg did not thank him for it...

No one was in sight as he slipped from the shade of the beech to the clump of dark yews near the house. Hidden behind them was a small door, so cleverly made to look like the rest of the brick wall that even Peter could not see where the joints were. He was the only one who knew about it now. His father had told him the secret. There was a ram's head carved in stone on the wall. The ram had a collar from which a stone ring hung among carved leaves and flowers.

Peter found the ring, pulled at it gently. A piece of the wall opened. He slid through, shutting the door behind him. It closed with a click that only a very sharp ear could have heard. He moved quietly through the cool darkness. His soft shoes made no sound on the stone steps. There were four of them, then a level place. He was back of the Great Hall now. He ran his left hand along the wall until he found the flap of canvas back of the peephole. He raised the flap, stood on his tiptoes, and looked into the Hall.

His mother was sitting in the carved chair that Lord Aubrey had brought from Spain. It was the first time that Peter had seen her since the news of his father's death had come. She had shut herself into her rooms. No one had seen her but Dame Butts, once her nurse, now the housekeeper, and Father Patrick.

She looked very white and ill. Her face was nearly as pale as the white linen around it. Her hands looked white and thinner

than ever against her black dress. She was holding the right one out now towards Meg Sutherland.

‘I dropped my needle, Meg,’ she said in her low, clear voice. ‘Can you find it for me, Sweet? I am so clumsy today.’

All the ladies were working on the big tapestry for the west wall of the room. Usually they talked and sang while they worked, but today they made their stitches of blue and green and rose in silence. They were working as if the tapestry must be finished that afternoon, though it had been years in the making and there was another winter’s work still to be done. Louis Aubrey would never see it now.

Meg Sutherland knelt down hunting for the lost needle. Her rusty red hair, Peter thought, looked ugly against a crimson patch that was a king’s robe on the tapestry. Her dress was the same old dress that Peter had often seen her wear. It had been chosen, not to look well with her hair. and freckles and bright hazel eyes, but because brownish-greenish yellow was a practical color. It had been pale blue when it belonged to Gwen. Dame Butts had dyed it.

‘Poor Meg!’ Peter thought. ‘Hunting needles instead of riding!’

Meg found the needle and stood up. She moved quickly and easily. Peter had noticed that before. She was pleasanter to watch when she was running or riding than Gwen Tallard was, though Gwen was known as a beauty as far as Chelmsford and Meg was not known, even in their own village, except as a poor girl from the north somewhere, that Lady Aubrey had taken in out of charity. The Tallard family had property up north, near Lincoln, some said. Meg’s father was a Scottish knight. That was why, people in the village thought, she was so wild and strange. Climbed trees like a boy, she did. Stole

Master Peter's clothes and rode a young colt bareback. Ran away to go fishing, too. Dame Butts had no end of trouble with her.

The good wives of Upper Melcote clicked their tongues over such doings. They did not stop when Hubert the Falconer said that if a girl rode a colt bareback she was wise to leave her petticoats at home. A girl, they said, should be happy at home, sewing or learning to make venison pasty and oaten cake. There was no one who understood curing hams and bacon better than Dame Butts. Meg ought to be glad to know how, and also to learn about turning a cheese so it would ripen properly.

Meg's lack of interest in these secrets was a pity. Even worse, the village considered, was her way of going about with her hair uncovered. And such hair! The color of a bay horse in the sunshine, only curly! A girl of fourteen ought to wear folds of linen over her hair and under her chin and a cap of velvet on top of the linen. Even Gwen Tallard, whose hair was like ripe corn, real English hair, kept it covered now with fine linen and velvet. Well, anyway, mostly covered. Gwen was always a lady. It was a pity Meg was not more like her.

Peter wished he could open the door in the panelling and go in to see his mother, but naturally he could not, since it was a secret, even from her. She was moving her needle now, but slowly, as if stitching hurt her. Meg was yawning. She tried to hide the yawn, but Dame Butts saw it and twitched her bushy gray eyebrows. Meg swallowed the yawn, took a piece of blue wool, licked the end of it, and tried to push it through the eye of her needle.

It went through the third time she tried. Instead of beginning on the leaf she was shading, Meg began to yawn again. Dame Butts did not see her this time, but the yawn stopped suddenly, became a strange sound: half gasp, half squeak.



'What is it, Meggie?'

Meg was staring, Peter realized, straight at the peep hole, straight into his eyes.

He dropped the flap.

His mother's voice said: 'What is it, Meggie? Did you prick yourself?'

'No, my lady,' Meg said. 'I fear I was falling asleep. I—I dreamed the eyes in the portrait—in his portrait moved.'

'I wish they could,' Lady Aubrey said gently, and Meg gasped: 'Oh, my lady, I should not have spoken of him.'

'I am glad you did, Meg. Now that I am stronger I see that—as Father Patrick said—I was wrong to shut myself away from you all, and not to speak of this sorrow. It was shutting my dear lord away from me. I am glad that you spoke of him, and that his picture hangs there, showing how he looked when the King first named him Baron Aubrey. And now, sing to us, my sweetheart. Your voice always makes our needles fly faster.'

Meg's voice—it made Peter think of the blackbird in the pink hawthorn—began an old Scottish ballad. He did not stop to hear it, but went quietly to the stair that led to his own room.