

“COLUMBIAN ODE”

BY

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I

Four hundred years ago a tangled waste
Lay sleeping on the west Atlantic's side;
Their devious ways the Old World's millions traced
Content, and loved, and labored, dared and died,
While students still believed the charts they conned,
And revelled in their thriftless ignorance,
Nor dreamed of other lands that lay beyond
Old Ocean's dense, indefinite expanse.

II

But deep within her heart old Nature knew
That she had once arrayed, at Earth's behest,
Another offspring, fine and fair to view,—
The chosen suckling of the mother's breast.
The child was wrapped in vestments soft and fine,
Each fold a work of Nature's matchless art;
The mother looked on it with love divine,
And strained the loved one closely to her heart.
And there it lay, and with the warmth grew strong
And hearty, by the salt sea breezes fanned,

Till Time with mellowing touches passed along,
And changed the infant to a mighty land.

III

But men knew naught of this, till there arose
That mighty mariner, the Genoese,
Who dared to try, in spite of fears and foes,
The unknown fortunes of unsounded seas.
O noblest of Italia's sons, thy bark
Went not alone into that shrouding night!
O dauntless darer of the rayless dark,
The world sailed with thee to eternal light!
The deer-haunts that with game were crowded then
To-day are tilled and cultivated lands;
The schoolhouse tow'rs where Bruin had his den,
And where the wigwam stood the chapel stands;
The place that nurtured men of savage mien
Now teems with men of Nature's noblest types;
Where moved the forest-foilage banner green,
Now flutters in the breeze the stars and stripes!