



# History for Young Readers: Spain

*Frederick Albion Ober*

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As I pause in my work to pass in review the events of three thousand years, which I have tried to narrate in this little book, I probably anticipate my readers in wondering at the audacity, not to say presumption, which moved me to this undertaking. It came about quite naturally, to be sure, as the result of an interest awakened many years ago in a nation which had sent to America such discoverers as Columbus and Vespucci, such soldiers as Cortes and Pizarro, De Soto, and Ponce de Leon. At first I became curious to visit the scenes of their adventures, then to journey through the country whence they had come; and the result has been that I have devoted a portion of my life to a study of both people and country.

I do not, of course, assume that an interest in a subject should warrant one in writing about it, be he never so well equipped for the purpose; but with me, the seeing gives birth to a desire to convey to others the pleasure I feel, or the lesson I may derive, from the object under contemplation. Thus, while I never intended more than to make a few forays into the historic fields of Spain, when I visited that country ten years ago, it has eventuated that instead of skirmishing with the outposts, I have attacked the very citadel. That I have come off unscathed, and with spoil of some sort, is self-evident; but whether it might not have been to my readers' profit if I had not done so, is a question for them to decide. I feel it to be, indeed, as true to-day as it was a score of years ago that (in the words of a standard encyclopædia) "there is no good general history of Spain!" Without attempting to extenuate any possible errors, yet I would call attention to the fact that it is extremely difficult to clothe in picturesque language (and at the same time be faithful to the verities of history) the details of a story extending over so vast a range, and bring that story within the compass of a single volume. The best histories are those which treat of single episodes or periods, such as Prescott's Ferdinand and Isabella, Irving's Conquest of Spain, Spanish Voyages, and Conquest of Granada. To these, in truth, I would refer my young readers for a more extended acquaintance with Spain and her fascinating history. In those charming narratives the dry bones of fact are clothed in graceful drapery, and the reader moves and acts with their heroes, kings, and queens, in most distinguished company.

I do not like to allude to the recent events in Spanish history, by which our own country was forced into collision with Spain; and I will dismiss the subject merely with the statement that it has been my endeavour to present an accurate account of the unfortunate war, in which I have had the benefit of supervision by competent authorities.

To them, and to the silent companions of my voyages and excursions, drawn from the musty shelves of the library, and frequently exposed to peril "by flood and field," I would herewith express my heartfelt thanks.

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