

**THE FIRST LETTER OF
CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS TO
THE NOBLE LORD RAPHAEL
SANCHEZ ANNOUNCING THE
DISCOVERY OF AMERICA**

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The First Letter of Christopher Columbus to the Noble Lord Raphael Sanchez Announcing the Discovery of America by Christopher Columbus

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CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

THE FIRST LETTER OF CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS TO THE NOBLE LORD RAPHAEL SANCHEZ ANNOUNCING THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

⊙ THE FIRST LETTER

OF

CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

TO THE NOBLE LORD

RAPHAEL SANCHEZ

ANNOUNCING

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA

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BOSTON

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1891

THE LATIN VERSION OF 1493
OF THE
FIRST LETTER OF COLUMBUS
TO
RAPHAEL SANCHEZ, ANNOUNCING THE
DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

[Reproduced in fac-simile by the heliotype process; with a bibliographical note and a translation.]

THE Bulletin of the Boston Public Library for April, 1890 (vol. ix., p. 207), gave an account of the purchases made for the Library in the preceding February, at the sale in New York city of the books of the late Mr. Barlow. Among them was a copy of *The Latin Version of the First Letter of Columbus announcing the Discovery of America*. Nothing is known about the history of this volume before its purchase in 1831 by Colonel Thomas Aspinwall, formerly American consul at London. It was included in that portion of his library sold to Mr. Barlow, by whom a photographic fac-simile of it was issued in 1875, in an edition limited to fifty copies.

A bibliographical notice of the various editions of this celebrated letter can be found in the Bulletin for April, 1875 (vol. ii., p. 340). In 1886 this was greatly expanded by Justin

Winsor into a note upon *The Letters of Columbus*, contained in *The Narrative and Critical History of America* (vol. ii., pp. 46-51), where a full account is given of all that was then known about seven editions in Latin, and one in Spanish. Afterwards, in the *Proceedings of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, February, 1890 (second series, vol. v., p. 306), he reported that an eighth in Latin had very recently been discovered; also two more in Spanish, one in folio, the other in quarto. The latter has since passed into the possession of Mr. Brayton Ives of New York. A notice of the three editions in Spanish, based upon an article in the London *Athenaeum*, August 31, 1889, appeared in the New York *Nation*, November 14, 1889. Besides these three editions, several varieties of the Spanish text are known to exist in manuscript; but none is believed to represent the original from the hand of Columbus.

This letter was immediately translated from the Spanish into Latin by a certain Leander de Cosco (whose name in some editions is erroneously given as Aliander). Opinions differ as to whether this translation was made in Spain or in Italy. A. H. Major (*Select Letters of Columbus*, 2d edit., 1870, p. cxxxiii) thinks De Cosco was a Spaniard, and that the translation was made in Spain. Henry Harrisse (*Bibliotheca Americana Vetustissima*), p. 13, believes it was made in Italy, principally for the reason that a Latin epigram, appended to all the printed editions of it, was written by an Italian bishop.

Within a year, eight different editions of this translation were issued, in thin quartos, or octavos, in black-letter type; — five in Rome, two in Paris, and one in Antwerp. Of the five Roman editions, that one printed by Stephen Planck, to which the Aspinwall-Barlow copy belongs, is regarded as the earliest by

Harrisse (*Bib. Amer. Vet.*, No. 1). This claim, however, is contested by other eminent authorities. Lenox considers it the second (Reprint of Nickolaus Syllacius *De insulis Meridiani atque Indici Maris super inventis*, Append. B, p. xliii); while Bartlett classes it as the third (*Catalogue of the Carter-Brown Library*, Part i, No. 7). This is also Major's opinion (*Select Letters of Columbus*, p. cix).

Whatever the truth may be in regard to its rank in priority, the volume is of very great rarity, as only four other copies of this edition are known, two in the British Museum, one in the Royal Library at Munich, and one in that of Mr. Brayton Ives in New York.

As the Spanish letter is addressed to Luis de Santangel, and the Latin to Gabriel Sanchez (who, in this edition and some others, is improperly called Raphael Sanxis), it seems highly probable that the Spanish and Latin printed texts were derived from different, though similar, originals; this is confirmed by the circumstance that the two texts differ considerably from each other. Harrisse, however, states that the Latin, "with the exception of variations in the use of the contracted letters, . . . is the same for all" (*Bib. Amer. Vet.*, p. 7). I have not found this to be the case. In comparing this text with that of the fac-simile recently published by Mr. John S. Kennedy, from the copy of the edition, with woodcuts, now in the Lenox Library at New York, I have noticed several differences, besides one that has been often instanced, that the heading of the Lenox copy reads *in mari Indico*, instead of *Indie supra Gan-gem*. Thus, on fol. i it reads *Guanahanym*, instead of *Guanahanim*. On fol. 2 it reads ungrammatically, *His per tres dies*, instead of *Hi per tres dies*. At the bottom of fol. 2 it reads,

seri pacisque, instead of *seri pascique*. This same error is also found in the Paris editions. Near the middle of fol. 4 the abbreviated word *tñ* (tamen) is inserted between *mecum* and *qui semper putant*. Near the middle of fol. 5 is the reading *cologna*, instead of *colonia*. At the bottom of this same fol. 5 there is an important variation; after *discrimine* the word *populari* is omitted; while the words *facile detinere* are inserted after *excedunt*. Finally, at the bottom of fol. 6 the Lenox copy has the erroneous reading of the Roman Silber, and Paris editions, *hydophilatorum* instead of *hydolatrorum*.

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As it originally appeared in the Bulletin for October, 1890 (vol. ix., p. 392), a translation by Mr. R. H. Major was prefixed to it; but as that was made from a different Latin text, at the request of my colleagues, I have prepared a careful literal translation of this particular text.

HENRY W. HAYNES.

BOSTON, February, 1891.

A letter of Christopher Colom, to whom our age is much indebted, about the recently discovered islands of India beyond the Ganges; in search of which he had been sent eight months before under the auspices and at the expense of the most invincible Ferdinand, King of the Spains; sent to the illustrious Lord Raphael Sanxis, Treasurer of the same most serene King; — which Aliander de Cosco, a noble and learned gentleman, has translated from the Spanish language into the Latin; April 29, 1493; in the First year of the Pontificate of Alexander the Sixth.



S I know that it will afford you pleasure that I have brought my undertaking to a successful result, I have determined to write you this letter to inform you of everything that has been done and discovered in this voyage of mine.

On the thirty-third day after leaving Cadiz I came into the Indian Sea, where I discovered many islands inhabited by numerous people. I took possession of all of them for our most fortunate King by making public proclamation and unfurling his standard, no one making any resistance. To the first of them I have given the name of our blessed Saviour, trusting in

whose aid I had reached this and all the rest; but the Indians call it Guanahani. To each of the others also I gave a new name, ordering one to be called Sancta Maria de Concepcion, another Fernandina, another Hysabella, another Johana; and so with all the rest. As soon as we reached the island which I have just said was called Johana, I sailed along its coast some considerable distance towards the West, and found it to be so large, without any apparent end, that I believed it was not an island, but a continent, a province of Cathay. But I saw neither towns nor cities lying on the seaboard, only some villages and country farms, with whose inhabitants I could not get speech, because they fled as soon as they beheld us. I continued on, supposing I should come upon some city, or country-houses. At last, finding that no discoveries rewarded our further progress, and that this course was leading us towards the North, which I was desirous of avoiding, as it was now winter in these regions, and it had always been my intention to proceed Southwards, and the winds also were favorable to such desires, I concluded not to attempt any other adventures; so, turning back, I came again to a certain harbor, which I had remarked. From there I sent two of our men into the country to learn whether there was any king or cities in that land. They journeyed for three days, and found innumerable people and habitations, but small and having no fixed government; on which account