

**CHRISTOPHER  
COLUMBUS: HIS  
LIFE AND HIS WORK**

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Christopher Columbus: his life and his work by Charles Kendall Adams

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THE LOTTO PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS.

“MAKERS OF AMERICA”

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# CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS

**His Life and His Work**

BY

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PRESIDENT OF CORNELL UNIVERSITY

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1892

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TO

J. J. HAGERMAN,

*Nobleman and Friend,*

THIS VOLUME IS AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY THE AUTHOR.



## PREFACE.

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IN this little volume I have made an attempt to present in popular form the results of the latest researches in regard to the life and work of Columbus.

While constant use has been made of the original authorities, it has been my effort to interpret the conflicting statements with which these sources abound, in the spirit of modern criticism. The principal authorities used have been the Letters and the Journal of Columbus, the History of the Admiral purporting to be by his son Fernando, the histories of the time by Las Casas, Bernaldez, Oviedo, Peter Martyr, and Herrera, and the invaluable collection of documents by Navarrete. Of the greatest importance are the writings of Columbus and Las Casas.

As will appear in the course of the volume, the writings of the Admiral abound in passages that are contradictory or irreconcilable. In the interpretation of conflicting statements, assistance has been received

from the numerous writings of Henry Harrisse. The researches of this acute critic in the manuscript records, as well as in the published writings of Italy and Spain, make his works indispensable to a correct understanding of the age of Columbus.

I have not, however, been able to adopt without reservation his views in regard to the work attributed to the son of the Admiral. The force of Harrisse's reasoning is unquestionable ; but, as it seems to me, there is internal evidence that the author of the book, whether Fernando or not, had unusual opportunities for knowledge in regard to the matters about which he wrote. While, therefore, I have used the work with great caution, I have not felt justified in rejecting it as altogether spurious.

The reader will not go far in the perusal of this volume without perceiving that I have endeavoured to emancipate myself from the thralldom of that uncritical admiration in which it has been fashionable to hold the Discoverer, ever since Washington Irving threw over the subject the romantic and bewitching charm of his literary skill. Irving revealed the spirit with which he wrote when he decried what he was pleased to call "that pernicious erudition which busies itself with undermining the pedestals of our national monuments." Irving's was not the spirit of modern

scholarship. We should seek the truth at whatever hazard. While directed by this motive in the course of all my investigations into the life and work of Columbus, I have tried, on the one hand, to avoid the common error of bringing him to the bar of the present age for trial, and, on the other, not to shrink from judging him in accordance with those canons of justice which are applicable alike to all time.

C. K. A.

CORNELL UNIVERSITY,  
March 10, 1892.