

1477 or 1492?



CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS
(From a Painting in the Metropolitan Museum, New York)



UNVEILING A NEW COLUMBUS STATUE
IN PHILADELPHIA



COLUMBUS BEFORE QUEEN ISABELLA

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

DOES the old familiar school-boy rhyme about the fact that "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue," need revision? Have we been wrong all these years in our annual celebration of October 12 as "Discovery Day"? The answer to both questions is "Yes," if we are to believe the results of researches made by a South American scholar.

A short time ago Prof. Luis Ulloa, director of the Peruvian national library at Lima, Peru, made an address before the congress of Americanists in Hamburg, Germany, which stirred up a world-wide discussion among historical scholars. In that address he declared that Christopher Columbus "discovered" America in 1477, that his voyage in 1492 was a second voyage, that this same Columbus was not the son of a Genoese wool weaver, as the world has come to believe him to have been, but that he was a Catalonian corsair and therefore a native of Spain and not of Italy.

"After eight months study among Spanish archives in Madrid, where I found much hitherto unknown, authentic and incontrovertible material, I can definitely assert that Columbus paid his first visit to the New World by way of Ireland, Greenland, Labrador and Newfoundland," said Professor Ulloa. "This was before America's official discovery, indeed before he was in contact with the Spanish king."

"This same Columbus, who later captained Spanish ships to the West Indies for a time, was a comrade of Danish corsairs with whom, without the aid of Spanish kings, he made the previous discovery of the American continent.

"Documents which I found further showed that Columbus was not identical with the son of the Genoese wool weaver, Domenico Columbus, but with a Catalonian corsair who rebelled against King Juan II of Aragon. He was also a relative of a corsair named Casanova-Couillon, who was in the services of Louis of France."

All of which is certainly revolutionary enough and adds further to the confusion that exists among scholars as to the nativity of Columbus.

But more interesting to Americans than the question of Columbus's nationality is the question of whether or not the history of this nation, which we have become accustomed to date from 1492, should date from an event 15 years earlier and whether the "landing of Columbus" should be pictured as taking place on a bleak northern shore of the mainland of North America instead of a palm-fringed island in the West Indies. According to the Peruvian scholar, the date should be 1477 and the place Labrador or Newfoundland, depending upon which you prefer to consider as the "shores of America."

And now as for the "discovery" in 1492, Professor Ulloa declares that our acceptance of that date arises from a distortion of historical fact made by a Spanish scholar, more than a century ago. Here is how it came about: On April 17, 1492, their Catholic Majesties, Ferdinand of Aragon and Isabella of Castile, rulers of Spain, signed a contract of "capitulations" with Columbus for the "official discovery" of America which took place in October of that year. The original document of these capitulations was preserved in the archives of the Duke of Veragua but its existence seems to have been unknown to scholars for more than three centuries.

In 1825 a certain Fernandez de Navarrete published the text of the capitulations, asserting that he took it from the original document. But in reproducing the text he arbitrarily changed an essential phrase in it for reasons which will be revealed later. The authentic text states that the concessions granted to Columbus were made "in recompense for what he has discovered (ha descubierto) in the seas of the ocean and of the voyage that he is now, with the help of God, to make upon them." Navarrete wrote it "In recompense for what he is to discover (ha de descubrir) and of the voyage that he is now, with the help of God, to make upon them." By inserting the word "de" and changing the letters in another word, the Spanish scholar put in the future what was already in the past, thus profoundly affected the writing of all future history and gave to Americans, as to the rest of the world, the date of 1492 to remember instead of some previous date.

As for the reasons which led Navarrete to make the grammatical alteration Professor Ulloa says: "The old Spanish chroniclers especially the official writers in the pay of the kings, did not try to write the real history of the discovery but rather the apologia of the monarchs Ferdinand and Isabella in the enterprise. The Inquisition contributed in great part to this warding off of criticism. As the Inquisition had been established by these rulers some years before 1492, its analysts and apologists have maintained that the discovery of America was only the recompense given by God to Ferdinand and Isabella for the foundation of this famous tribunal.

"Consequently, the chroniclers and inquisitors have presumed in general to take merit from Columbus and to add it to the Catholic monarchs, particularly Isabella. In this way it came about that she was made the real inspirer of the discovery and Columbus the instrument which she employed.

"The real history, as I have already shown by documents in my books, is contrary to this exaggerated apologia of the Catholic monarchs, and especially of Isabella, whom the inquisitors and modern admirers have regarded as a saint and the grand protectress of Columbus. Far from that, Isabella opposed even more than her husband the proposals and demands of Columbus, bending herself rather to win from him the secret he concealed. She did not consent to deal with Columbus until he was about to depart to seek the protection of a foreign king; she made up her mind when, through the intervention of her former confessor, Father Juan Perez (it was he who drew up the convention), she became convinced that the affair was absolutely certain, since the discovery had already been made. The Inquisition and the historians who served it could not make public the truth, which would so far reduce the credit of Isabella."

As for his evidence that Columbus discovered America before 1492 Professor Ulloa goes about it in this way:

After Queen Isabella died a high tribunal was established to adjust the wrongs which had been done to various persons through the failure of the queen to carry out promises she had made to them. Among them was Columbus and he presented a memorial to the tribunal in which he complained that neither Ferdinand nor Isabella had carried out the provisions of his now-famous "capitulations." In his memorial ap-

pears this significant paragraph: "And since from the age of twenty-eight years he (Columbus) had served in the enterprise and the conquest of the said Indies, doing for their Highnesses a so great and notable service without expense to the royal treasury and without danger to their subjects and with so much of profit and usefulness for these kingdoms, as is well known in all the world, and it was in his power to render this service to any other Christian king without burden to his conscience, and they have not carried out with him the said capitulations and they have not kept nor executed the said privileges, graces and confirmations as they had promised at the time of according them to him."

"Thus," says Professor Ulloa, "Columbus had begun to discover and even to conquer the Indies—that is, our present-day America—when he was not more than twenty-eight years old. Furthermore, for this enterprise he had no support from the Spanish monarchs, either in money or men. It is evident that these circumstances cannot be related to the expedition of 1492, because it is well known that at this later date Columbus was much more than twenty-eight years old, and also because, by virtue of the capitulations, the monarchs supplied him with money, men and ships."

"When could this conquest of which Columbus speaks in his memorial which we have quoted have had its beginning? We have known for a long time and in a positive manner that his son Diego was born about 1480 and that from this date Columbus had not left Portugal and Spain until August, 1492, when he set out on the 'official discovery.' Consequently, it was before 1480 that the prediscovery was made. I should add that when he died, in 1506, he was more than sixty years old. Therefore, one must put his age at twenty-eight between 1470 and 1480."

As for the Peruvian scholar's method of fixing 1477 as the date of Columbus's "first discovery" of America he bases it upon a passage in the "Historie," attributed to Don Fernando, the son of Columbus, which was a biography of Columbus. One passage in it, came, according to the book, from Columbus himself and in it Columbus declared that in February, 1477, he sailed as far as Tile (Iceland) and even "one hundred leagues beyond."

"Let us now mark that Columbus says that at this date he went 100 leagues beyond Iceland," says Professor Ulloa. "Those who deny the veracity of the great mariner assume that this 100 leagues should be measured toward the north and that Columbus then would have come near the pole, as far as 78 degrees, which is impossible. But as early as the first year of the Seventeenth century the Italian annalist Casoli correctly interpreted, as I have done, the phrase of Columbus, the true meaning of which places this 100 leagues to the west. Casoli thus understood that it was Greenland which the discoverer had touched."

So the time may come when our schoolbook histories may tell us a different tale of the discovery of America from the one we now know. And perhaps American schoolboys will repeat a couplet different from "In fourteen hundred and ninety-two, Columbus sailed the ocean blue." Will it be "Christopher Columbus, by the grace of heaven, reached North America in fourteen seventy-seven?"

Surely Must Have Been Extreme Limit in Cars

Frank E. Curran of the Department of Commerce was talking about his recently completed road survey, which shows that the United States, with 3,016,000 miles of roads, leads the world in road mileage, the world total being only 7,806,000 miles. "You see some amazing cars on our roads," Mr. Curran said. "Some are amazing for their beauty, and some are like the story. "Where did you get that car?"

one man asked another on a Georgia road. "My cousin gave it to me," said the other man. "The first man studied the car for a minute. Then he said: "You've been robbed."

A monogram is one of those things nobody can decipher except the man to whom it belongs.

People who write have to read the most stuff they don't care for.

NEURALGIA

THE agonizing aches from neuralgia can be quieted in the same way you would end a headache. Take some Bayer Aspirin. Take enough to bring complete relief. Genuine aspirin can't hurt anybody.

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More and More

Publisher George Doran said in a literary talk: "Novels get more and more passionate, don't they? A novel like 'Three Weeks' was considered terrific when it came out, but the girl of today would consider 'Three Weeks' dull.

"A class of coeds were asked to make out a list of subjects that they'd like to write essays on. One girl began a list with: "My Ideal Man," "A Divine Hour," "Moonlight Love," "One Hour of Love," "Desert Love," "Life's Happiest Hour." Then she broke off.

"I'm not satisfied with this list," she said. "It seems so darn practical."

Big Coast County

The county of San Bernardino, Calif., is larger than the combined area of Vermont, Massachusetts and Rhode Island.

Hands

"Ever hold a perfect hand?" "At bridge, or in the moonlight."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

Another milestone passed.

Women at a ten party no more ask for the recipe for anything.

Los Angeles Boy Needed Help

Leroy Young, 1116 Georgia St., Los Angeles, is a "regular fellow," active in sports, and at the top in his classes at school. To look at him now, you'd think he never had a day's sickness but his mother says: "When Leroy was just a little fellow, we found his stomach and bowels were weak. He kept suffering from constipation. Nothing he ate agreed with him. He was fretful, feverish and puny.

"When we started giving him California Fig Syrup his condition improved quickly. His constipation and biliousness stopped and he has had no more trouble of that kind. I have since used California Fig Syrup with him for colds and upset spells. He likes it because it tastes so good and I like it because it helps him so wonderfully!"

California Fig Syrup has been the trusted standby of mothers for over 50 years. Leading physicians recommend it. It is purely vegetable and works with Nature to regulate, tone and strengthen the stomach and bowels of children so they get full nourishment from their food and waste is eliminated in a normal way.

Four million bottles used a year shows how mothers depend on it. Always look for the word "California" on the carton to be sure of getting the genuine.

Indictment of Bridge

(a) Dr. Alfred Adler, noted psychiatrist, declares that ardent bridge playing encourages the development of the inferiority complex.

(b) Dr. Maurice Lebon, eminent heart specialist, reports that the playing of bridge results in more fatalities among the aged than any other single cause.

(c) Bridge playing is a direct incentive to perjury. Mathematicians inform us that the chance of a perfect bridge hand occurring is one in 40,000,000,000 deals, nevertheless "perfect hands" are reported weekly.

Youthful Friskness

"Would you like to play and sing the way I do?" "Oh, please, no, ma'am," quickly responded the child. "I wouldn't like people to say things about me."

As one grows older, the chief obstacle to taking a vacation is the absence of a desire to take it.

Sleep is the greatest blessing when there is no one who has the right to break into it.

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