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## TEXTS AND TRANSLATIONS OF THE JOURNAL OF COLUMBUS'S FIRST VOYAGE<sup>1</sup>

### 1. THE MANUSCRIPT

To this day there has been no critical examination of the Spanish texts and the English translations of the Abstract by Bartolomé de Las Casas of the Journal of the First Voyage of Christopher Columbus. In my efforts to lay down the Admiral's course and to identify the places that he discovered, I found so many errors in the standard English translation by Sir Clements Markham that I tried Cecil Jane's, only to find it almost equally unreliable, and consequently turned to the standard Spanish text edited by Martín Fernández de Navarrete. That, too, proving suspect at various points, I had recourse to the much more accurate text edited by Cesare de Lollis and printed in the *Raccolta Columbiana* of 1892. This led to a general examination of all English and French translations; and the results are presented herewith.

Columbus is known by several contemporary references<sup>2</sup> to have kept a Journal of his First Voyage, partly as a day-by-day record of events, and partly to show to Ferdinand and Isabella as evidence of what he had discovered. It was used by his son Ferdinand in the life of his father that first appeared in an Italian translation by Alfonso Ulloa at Venice

<sup>1</sup> In the analysis of the different translations, I have received much aid and assistance from Mr. Robert Jackson Cram, Jr., graduate student in Harvard University.

<sup>2</sup> These are reprinted in De Lollis's introduction to *Raccolta di Documenti e Studi pubblicati dalla R. Commissione Colombiana* (Rome, 1892), Pte. I, Vol. I, pp. v-vi. This volume is hereinafter simply referred to as *Raccolta*.

in 1571;<sup>3</sup> and by Bartolomé de Las Casas, in his famous *Historia de las Indias*, which remained in manuscript until 1875.<sup>4</sup> But no other of the early historians of the Indies seems to have had access to it.

Martín Fernández de Navarrete (1765-1844) retired from active service in the Spanish navy in 1789, and received a commission from D. Carlos IV to collect documents bearing upon the history of Spanish navigation and discovery, with the idea of creating a marine library and museum at Cadiz.<sup>5</sup> Shortly after 1790 he discovered in the library of the Duque del Infantado a manuscript of 76 folios, in the hand of Las Casas, which proved to be an Abstract of the Journal of Columbus's First Voyage.<sup>6</sup> This is the nearest thing to an original Journal that we have.<sup>7</sup>

There is some reason to believe, however, that the original

<sup>3</sup> *Historie . . . della vita, et de' fatti dell' Ammiraglio D. Christoforo Colombo*. A new edition was published in London in 1867. The best edition, edited by Rinaldo Caddeo, was published at Milan in two volumes in 1930, in the series *Viaggi e Scoperte di Navigatori ed Esploratori Italiani*. This work is hereinafter referred to as the *Historie*.

<sup>4</sup> *Historia de las Indias*, 5 vols., Madrid, 1875. A new edition in 3 volumes by Don Gonzalo de Reparaz, n.d. on title-page, but with the preface dated April 27, 1927, has appeared at Madrid with a variety of imprints, the publisher's name being simply stamped in. It is a mere reprint of the 1875 edition, with different pagination. In the meantime another and earlier holograph ms. of the work has turned up and is much in need of an editor and translator. This work is hereinafter referred to as the *Historia*.

<sup>5</sup> Navarrete, *Colección*, I, p. lix.

<sup>6</sup> The manuscript was in the Biblioteca Nacional at Madrid when De Lollis made his text for the *Raccolta*, but was reported in 1925 to have been "missing" for some years (see reference at end of note). The writer has had the benefit of photographs of four pages only, made before the war for the late Lieut-Col. John Bigelow, USA; and two pages are reproduced in facsimile in Carbia, *La Nueva Historia del Descubrimiento de América* (Buenos Aires, 1936), p. 56. There is no doubt that these are in Las Casas's handwriting. Navarrete, I, 166, mentions another old manuscript copy later than Las Casas's which he and Muñoz used for collation. Miss Alice Gould lists and describes several old copies of the Abstract in *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, LXXXVI (1925), 492-94. There are three manuscript copies, one of the sixteenth century, in the Sloane MSS. at the British Museum.

<sup>7</sup> It is strange that, in view of the enormous sum expended by American libraries and other learned institutions for photographs and other copies of documents bearing on American history, there is not in this country, so far as we can learn, a single photographic copy or even transcript of Las Casas's Abstract.

Journal was still in existence at the end of the last century; it may even be in existence today. About the year 1894 a woman, recognized as the widow of a late librarian to the Duque de Ossuna, brought to the then Duquesa de Berwick y de Alba<sup>8</sup> a parchment cover bearing the well-known though cryptic signature of Columbus, and the date 1492, with a few leaves enclosed, and stubs of others that had been torn out. On one leaf were six lines in the handwriting of Columbus complaining of certain *disfama-dores de my honrra*; and on the reverse of it and the recto of another leaf, was a tracing of the north coast of Hispaniola from Cape St. Nicolas to Cape Isabella, with six place-names in the Admiral's hand. The Duchess purchased the document, and after examination concluded that it was the cover of the original Journal. But the woman who sold it to her could not again be located. It seems probable that her husband had stolen it from the Duque de Ossuna's library, and that she, being ignorant and illiterate, tore out the part including the map to sell as a "picture," and destroyed the rest. Or perhaps it may yet turn up.<sup>9</sup>

Be that as it may, we have no older MS. or better text today than the well-known Abstract of the Journal beginning *Este es el primer viage*, in the hand of Las Casas. The original title was probably something like *El Libro de la Primera Navegación y Descubrimiento d'estas Yndias*, for Las Casas uses that title or a part of it twice when quoting the exact "words" of the Admiral.<sup>10</sup>

Las Casas did not have the original holograph Journal of the Admiral in his hands when he made the Abstract, but only a copy of it. This is proved by his complaints of the scribe,<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Mother of the present Duke (the Spanish Ambassador at London) and editor of the *Autógrafos* (1892) and *Nuevos Autógrafos de Cristóbal Colón* (1902).

<sup>9</sup> Reproduction of cover and map and description will be found in the Duchess's *Nuevos Autógrafos* (1902), pp. 1-6. The circumstances of the sale were told to me by Miss Alice Gould. (Cf. her article in *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, LXXXVIII, 1926, 762n.) I do not myself believe that this was the cover of the original Journal, but rather of a notebook that the Admiral kept.

<sup>10</sup> *Journal*, October 11 [12]; *Raccolta*, p. 16, l. 20. It is referred to as *El libro de la navegación* in Las Casas's *Historia de las Indias*, lib. i, ch. 67 (1927 ed., I, 305).

<sup>11</sup> The above reference to the *Historia*, and *Journal* for October 30, when Las Casas complains of the text.

as well as from internal evidence of the document itself. The manuscript that Las Casas used was evidently copied from the original Journal by some not very literate or intelligent scribe. Any close student of it will find many obvious copyist's errors of the type common in medieval manuscripts. Most frequent are the confusion of *leguas* (leagues) with *millas* (Roman miles)<sup>12</sup> and of *oueste* (west) and its compounds with *leste* (east) and its compounds. There are also several lacunae, probably representing words that the scribe could not make out, and intended to fill in later. It would have been natural for Columbus to have had several copies made of his original Journal, to present to Ferdinand and Isabella and to high officials of the court. One of these was evidently the copy from which Las Casas made his Abstract. Either the same copy or another was in the hands of Ferdinand Columbus when he wrote his *Historie della Vita*, and of Las Casas himself when he wrote his *Historia de las Indias*.

The Abstract of the Journal made by Las Casas has been vigorously attacked by Henry Vignaud<sup>13</sup> (whom various secondary writers of the "debunker" school have credulously followed), as a garbled document, systematically falsified. It was necessary for Vignaud to do this, since the Las Casas Abstract, as it stands, is a sufficient refutation of Vignaud's theory that Columbus was seeking for new lands, and not for the "Indies," or the Far East. He asserts that Las Casas, possibly with the collaboration of Ferdinand or of the Admiral himself, deliberately fixed up the Journal in order to support the thesis that Columbus had been looking for the Indies all along.

Professor Carbia of the University of Buenos Aires has reached conclusions similar to Vignaud's, and expressed them

<sup>12</sup> There are several of these cases in the *Journal* covering Hispaniola, as one can tell by following the Admiral's course (see S. E. Morison, "The Route of Columbus along the North Coast of Haiti, and the site of Navidad," not yet printed). Another obvious instance is in the *Journal* for January 22 (*Raccolta*, p. 102, l. 9), *seis leguas per ora* must be a mistake for *seis millas*; for a speed of 18 knots was never attained by any sailing ship until the clipper era. De Lollis does not notice the discrepancy, but Navarrete does; yet Jane translates it "six leagues an hour" without comment.

<sup>13</sup> Henry Vignaud, *Histoire critique de la grande entreprise de Christophe Colomb* (2 vols., Paris, 1911).

with more passion though less prolixity.<sup>14</sup> His emphasis is on the *fraudes*, *superchería*, the *fantasia*, and the *adulteraciones* of Las Casas, whilst Vignaud's is on the incompetence of Columbus and his manifest intentions to discover nothing more than Atlantic islands. Both works are highly charged with emotion, and both are excellent examples of ingenious dialectic. Neither author makes a thorough analysis of the Abstract Journal, but picks out isolated phrases and words to sustain his thesis.

Into this question I cannot go further here than to express my firm conviction that the Las Casas Abstract was well and honestly made, and that the Vignaud and Carbia theses must find their support elsewhere, if anywhere. A number of passages that are given in the third person and indirect discourse in the Abstract are given in direct discourse as quotations in the *Historia* and the *Historie*.<sup>15</sup> They all show that the abstract was correctly made, and that in transposing from the first to the third person Las Casas omitted nothing essential. Far from editing the Journal in order to present Columbus as a peerless discoverer, Las Casas preserved countless passages that reflect on his hero's credulity,<sup>16</sup> character,<sup>17</sup> and skill as a navigator.<sup>18</sup> The evidence of his seeking the Indies is found in many places, and is in the background of many days' entries. By sundry indirect references (as to the rhubarb on December 30, and the Isle of Women on January 13 and 15), it is clear that Columbus sailed with the Book of Ser Marco Polo in his head, if not in his hand; and that his daily and constant hope was to find some positive evidence that

<sup>14</sup> Rómulo D. Carbia, *La Nueva Historia del Descubrimiento de América* (Buenos Aires, 1936). On pp. 80n and 103n of this work will be found a bibliography of Carbia's other writings on the subject. For a refutation of Carbia see Emiliano Jos, "El Congreso Internacional de Americanistas de Sevilla y la historia del descubrimiento," *Tierra Firme*, Año II (1936), Núm. 1, pp. 47-71.

<sup>15</sup> These are all duly noted in the footnotes to De Lollis's text in the *Raccolta*, I. i.

<sup>16</sup> The several false landfalls on the outward passage.

<sup>17</sup> The carrying off of women from Cuba, upon which Las Casas reflects very severely.

<sup>18</sup> The bad calculations of latitude on October 30, November 2 and 21, and December 13; and on December 7 either he or the Admiral himself corrects an extravagant estimate of 48 Roman miles between two points thus: *verdad es que las veynte fueron*, "truth is that 20 were made" (*Raccolta*, p. 58, l. 16).

would prove his discoveries to be *Cipangu* or *Cataia*. Las Casas does interpolate his own remarks; but, as in the reference to Florida, which was not discovered until 1519, this is done honestly with no intent to deceive. I am satisfied that the Abstract is exactly what it purports to be, an honest précis in the third person, with long quotations in the first person, from a copy of the original Journal, nothing essential except details of navigation left out.

The original *Libro de la Primera Navegación* was something more than a simple seaman's journal or log. Columbus's extensive remarks on the people seen and the places visited, and on fauna and flora and other natural features, together with pious reflections, suggestions of a future colonial policy, remarks on the shortcomings of some of his companions, and reminders of his own great services to the Crown, were obviously intended to impress the Sovereigns of Castile and Aragon and their high officials, and to stimulate them to provide a more worthy expedition than that of 1492. These remarks make the document one of primary importance for students of American discovery and geography, of the Indians, of American fauna and flora, of the first impact of Europeans with a land and peoples unknown to the Ancients, of Columbus's own character and personality, and of the history of navigation. Strange it is that a document of such transcendent importance has never been accurately translated, and that only one really scholarly and accurate text of the original has been printed.

## 2. PRINTED TEXTS

Navarrete lost no time in communicating his discovery of the Abstract Journal to his friend, D. Juan Bautista Muñoz, who used it in completing his *Historia del Nuevo Mundo*, the first (and last) volume of which appeared in 1793. In the meantime, Navarrete's researches had been interrupted by the war with France, in which he served almost continuously in various naval and diplomatic capacities.<sup>19</sup> The restoration of D. Fernando VII allowed him to resume his historical and

<sup>19</sup> There is a good sketch of Navarrete by Ferdinand Denis in *Nouvelle Biographie Générale*, XXXVII (1863).

scientific interests once more. The fruits of these were many and rich, for Navarrete was an exceptionally industrious as well as gifted scholar; but the one that concerns us is the famous *Colección de los Viages y Descubrimientos, que hicieron por mar los Españoles desde fines del siglo XV, . . . coordinada é ilustrada por Don Martín Fernández de Navarrete, de la Orden de San Juan* (etc., etc.), Tomo I. Viages de Colon: Almirantazgo de Castilla. Madrid, en la Imprenta Real, 1825.<sup>20</sup> There, this Abstract Journal of the First Voyage, with no other title than the first words of the MS. *Este es el primer viage*, occupies pp. 1-166.

Navarrete's 1825 text is carefully and faithfully made in accordance with the editorial standards of a century ago. He expanded abbreviations and spelled out Arabic numerals, supplied punctuation, standardized proper names and modernized spelling. At times he undertook to correct the text; for instance, in the Journal for December 7, describing the circuit of Cape St. Nicolas Môle, the *Raccolta* text (p. 58, l. 23) says *el cerco .34. millas*; Navarrete, who remembered that cape, properly corrected it to *tres ó cuarto millas*. Positive errors are few, so far as we can ascertain without a rigorous collation; those that I have noticed are mostly the pardonable ones of confusing *leste* and *ueste*. One of these, however, was rather serious. The important passage on compass variation in the Journal for September 13 reads in the *Raccolta* text (I, 6):

*las agujas noruesteaban, y á la mañana nordesteaban  
algún tanto.*

<sup>20</sup> Hereinafter referred to as "Navarrete." Vol. II came out the same year, Vol. III in 1829, Vols. IV and V in 1837. Justin Winsor in his *Narrative and Critical History of America* (1886), II, p. v, n. 2, already reported the set difficult to come by, although the price when found was not more than £3; the only set I have been able to find, in two years' search, was a sumptuously bound one for some £20. A second edition, perhaps not of the entire set, came out in 1858; this is even scarcer than the first. A recent inquiry at the "old Americana" department of a leading second-hand bookstore in a former centre of American culture for works by Navarrete, Von Humboldt, Harriette and other giants of the past, was met by an incredulous stare and advice to "try the furrin' langwiche department." Navarrete is, however, generally found in the larger libraries, and students are advised not to be put off by some of the catalogues, since bibliographical pedantry requires the author known all his life and everywhere as Navarrete to be catalogued as Fernández de Navarrete.

Navarrete (I, 8) substitutes a second *noruesteaban* (north-wested) for *nordesteaban* (northeast); and as all the English translators followed Navarrete rather than the *Raccolta*, writers on compass deviation, for whom this passage is an important source, have been thrown completely off.<sup>21</sup>

In the Journal for September 9, Navarrete makes two mistakes. The *Raccolta* text (p. 5) has *Anduvo aquel dia .15. leguas*. Navarrete (p. 7) has *Anduvo aquel dia diez y nueve leguas*. All the translators except Cecil Jane have followed Navarrete. The same day's log ends with the famous passage about the Admiral scolding the helmsmen for their bad steering. The *Raccolta* text prints it thus: *los marineros gobernaban mal, decayendo sobre la quarta del norueste, y aun á la media partida; sobre lo qual les riñó el almyrante muchas veces*. Navarrete substitutes nordeste (NE) for norueste (NW). Now, even the worst helmsman could not let a vessel come up to NE when the course was W. Yet all the translators, including Cecil Jane, have followed Navarrete.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Curiously enough, Ferdinand's translator made the same mistake in the *Historie*, ch. 17; his latest editor, Rinaldo Caddeo, calls attention to it (1930 ed., I, 136), but confuses E and W in his diagram on p. 135.

<sup>22</sup> I cannot resist this opportunity to take a preliminary crack at the translators. The correct (or *a* correct) translation of this sentence in the Journal for September 9 is, "The seamen steered badly, letting her fall off to the W by N, and even to WNW, for which the Admiral scolded them many times." (I had almost said "bawled them out.") This is clear from a study of Columbus's manner of citing compass points; *quarta del norueste* (*lit.*, "point taken from the NW") means W by N; and *las medias partidas* on the old Spanish compass are NNE, ENE, ESE, SSE, SSW, WSW, WNW, and NNW; obviously the next to the last is meant here. As the fleet had entered the NE trades the day before, no helmsman, however incompetent, could have let a square-rigged ship come up to NE, and we should know that Navarrete's *nordeste* was a mistake for *norueste* even if the *Raccolta* did not tell us so. But what do the translators do with this passage? Kettell (1827): "The sailors steered badly, causing the vessels to fall to leeward toward the Northeast, for which the Admiral reprimanded them repeatedly." And NE was to windward! Markham (1893) and Markham-Bourne (1906): "The sailors steered badly, letting the ship fall off to N.E., and even more, respecting which the Admiral complained many times." A difficult clause omitted, and the last softened. Thacher (1903): "The sailors steered badly, falling off to the north-east quarter and even half of the quarter about which the Admiral many times reprimanded them." Jane (1930): "The sailors steered badly, letting her fall away to the north-east and even to half a point [!]; con-



Navarrete was well qualified by his naval career in the days of sail to edit and annotate the Journal. He and his readers were nearer in thought, feeling, and experience to the seamen of Columbus's day than we are to them, or indeed to any of the "iron men in wooden ships" who are now all but extinct. Navarrete, for instance, knew the difference between laying to and sailing off-and-on; his English readers saw in the phrase *andar á la bolina* the equivalent of their "sailing on a bowline," or what modern yachtmen call close-hauled. But Navarrete was not well equipped to identify the points where Columbus touched the shore. His naval experience in West Indian waters had been very brief, during the War of the American Revolution, when he was not interested in Columbus. Consequently he had little advantage over the average scholar when it came to checking up on Columbus's progress from point to point. Although his friend Muñoz with uncanny insight had already selected Watlings Island (San Salvador) as the first landfall, of which everyone is convinced today, Navarrete (I, 20) insisted that it was the Grand Turk of the Turks Islands group, and that Columbus missed the Bahamas (except Great Inagua) altogether. That, naturally, put him wrong on the Cuban landfall as well; and thereafter, Navarrete's identifications are good only for places that are unmistakable, like Nuevitas, Baracoa, St. Nicolas, Acul, and Samaná. Most of those between are wrong.<sup>23</sup>

Navarrete's footnotes, therefore, are untrustworthy; but his text may in general be used with confidence by those who are content to have the words of the Journal, and not the exact spelling. The modernization of the spelling makes it far easier to use than the *Raccolta* for those who, like ourselves, must have frequent recourse to a dictionary; and the format of the book lends itself to field work.

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cerning this the admiral many times rebuked them." None of these translations make sense.

<sup>23</sup> This is rather a sore subject with me, because most of the English translators and secondary works follow Navarrete in this respect slavishly, whereby I was seriously misled when checking up in the West Indies. Cf. S. E. Morison *Second Voyage of Christopher Columbus* (Oxford, 1939), esp. pp. 3, 81-82. Navarrete is worse on the Second than on the First Voyage, as he was completely unfamiliar with the Lesser Antilles.

que el manuscrito en sus propios lugares  
 delgado su viento y mas componer un libro  
 y poner todo por el semeiante por pintura por  
 latitud de equinocial y longitud del oriente  
 y sobre todo cumplir miso y yo ubide  
 el sueno y tiene miso el nadezar por  
 asi cumple las qualis sera gran trabajo.

Viernes 3. de agosto

Partimos viernes 3. dia de agosto de diez  
 horas de la barra de Salto das ocho horas  
 andamos un fuerte viento hasta el ponaz  
 del sol hacia el sur se forma nubes con 14.  
 leguas. despues al sudueste <sup>12</sup> <sup>15</sup> <sup>18</sup> <sup>21</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>27</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>33</sup> <sup>36</sup> <sup>39</sup> <sup>42</sup> <sup>45</sup> <sup>48</sup> <sup>51</sup> <sup>54</sup> <sup>57</sup> <sup>60</sup>  
 sudueste <sup>63</sup> <sup>66</sup> <sup>69</sup> <sup>72</sup> <sup>75</sup> <sup>78</sup> <sup>81</sup> <sup>84</sup> <sup>87</sup> <sup>90</sup> <sup>93</sup> <sup>96</sup> <sup>99</sup> <sup>102</sup> <sup>105</sup> <sup>108</sup> <sup>111</sup> <sup>114</sup> <sup>117</sup> <sup>120</sup>  
 con el viento <sup>123</sup> <sup>126</sup> <sup>129</sup> <sup>132</sup> <sup>135</sup> <sup>138</sup> <sup>141</sup> <sup>144</sup> <sup>147</sup> <sup>150</sup> <sup>153</sup> <sup>156</sup> <sup>159</sup> <sup>162</sup> <sup>165</sup> <sup>168</sup> <sup>171</sup> <sup>174</sup> <sup>177</sup> <sup>180</sup>  
 El sábado 4. de agosto

mediamos al sudueste quenta del sur  
 Domingo 4. de agosto.

mediamos fu via currieda y nade mas  
 de quenta leguas.  
 Lunes 6. de agosto.

dele quatro Salto se desenfusi el quinario  
 ala carabela quinta donde ya ~~mostraba~~  
 se praron al <sup>6</sup> <sup>12</sup> <sup>18</sup> <sup>24</sup> <sup>30</sup> <sup>36</sup> <sup>42</sup> <sup>48</sup> <sup>54</sup> <sup>60</sup> <sup>66</sup> <sup>72</sup> <sup>78</sup> <sup>84</sup> <sup>90</sup> <sup>96</sup> <sup>102</sup> <sup>108</sup> <sup>114</sup> <sup>120</sup>  
 sustria delo gomez Bascon y repunt quin  
 tero mya era la carabela por que pesaba  
 ya a el viento y dije el almirante <sup>126</sup> <sup>132</sup> <sup>138</sup> <sup>144</sup> <sup>150</sup> <sup>156</sup> <sup>162</sup> <sup>168</sup> <sup>174</sup> <sup>180</sup>  
 parrisen adrian hallado en ciertos redise.  
 y quisquetos anno diez años <sup>186</sup> <sup>192</sup> <sup>198</sup> <sup>204</sup> <sup>210</sup> <sup>216</sup> <sup>222</sup> <sup>228</sup> <sup>234</sup> <sup>240</sup> <sup>246</sup> <sup>252</sup> <sup>258</sup> <sup>264</sup> <sup>270</sup> <sup>276</sup> <sup>282</sup> <sup>288</sup> <sup>294</sup> <sup>300</sup>  
 el almirante un gran turbacion por un golpe  
 ayudando ala de la carabela sin su peligro  
 y dije al almirante para pedir un favor <sup>306</sup> <sup>312</sup> <sup>318</sup> <sup>324</sup> <sup>330</sup> <sup>336</sup> <sup>342</sup> <sup>348</sup> <sup>354</sup> <sup>360</sup> <sup>366</sup> <sup>372</sup> <sup>378</sup> <sup>384</sup> <sup>390</sup> <sup>396</sup> <sup>402</sup> <sup>408</sup> <sup>414</sup> <sup>420</sup>  
 mi almirante quien era persona ofendida y debia  
 juzgarse en fin mediamos entre dia y nade  
<sup>426</sup> <sup>432</sup> <sup>438</sup> <sup>444</sup> <sup>450</sup> <sup>456</sup> <sup>462</sup> <sup>468</sup> <sup>474</sup> <sup>480</sup> <sup>486</sup> <sup>492</sup> <sup>498</sup> <sup>504</sup> <sup>510</sup> <sup>516</sup> <sup>522</sup> <sup>528</sup> <sup>534</sup> <sup>540</sup>  
<sup>546</sup> <sup>552</sup> <sup>558</sup> <sup>564</sup> <sup>570</sup> <sup>576</sup> <sup>582</sup> <sup>588</sup> <sup>594</sup> <sup>600</sup>  
 de diez y nade leguas

Martes 7. de agosto

3-8 agosto]

DI CRISTOFORO COLOMBO

3

« día passare y el día lo que la noche navegare, tengo propósito de hazer  
 « carta nueva de navegar, en la qual situaré toda la mar & || tierras del mar  
 « Océano en sus propios lugares; debaxo su viento, y más componer un libro,  
 « y poner todo por el semejante por pintura, por latitud del equinocial y lon-  
 5 « gitud del occidente; y sobre todo cumple mucho que yo olvide el sueño, y  
 « tiene mucho el navegar, porque así cumple. las quales serán gran trabajo.

c. 2 A

« Viernes .3. de agosto.

« Partimos viernes .3. días de agosto de .1492. años de la barra de Saltes,  
 « á las ocho oras. anduvimos con fuerte virazón, hasta el poner del sol, hazia  
 10 « el sur sesenta millas, que son .15. leguas; después al sudueste y al sur, quarta  
 « del sudueste, que era el camino para las Canarias ».

El sábado .4. de agosto.

Anduvieron al sudueste, quarta del sur.

Domingo .5. de agosto.

15 Anduvieron su vía, entre día y noche, más de quarenta leguas.

Lunes .6. de agosto.

Saltó ó desencasóse el governario á la carabela Pinta, donde iba Martín  
 Alonso Pinçón, á lo que se creyó ó sospechó, por industria de un Gómez  
 Rascón y Christóval Quintero, cuya era la caravela, porque le pesava yr  
 20 aquel viaje; y dize el almyrante que, antes que partiesen, avían hallado en  
 ciertos reveses y grisquetas, como dicen, á los dichos. vídose allí el almy-  
 rante en gran turbación por no poder ayudar á la dicha caravela, sin su  
 peligro, y dize que alguna pena perdía con saber que Martín Alonso Pinçón  
 era persona esforçada y de buen ingenio. en fin anduvieron, entre día y noche,  
 25 veynte y nueve leguas.

Martes .7. de agosto.

Tornóse á saltar el governalle á la Pinta, y adováronlo, y anduvieron en  
 demanda de la || isla de Lançarote, qu'es una de las islas de Canaria. y and-  
 30 uvieron, entre día y noche, .xxv. leguas.

c. 2 B

Miércoles .8. de agosto.

Obo entre los pilotos de las tres caravelas opiniones diversas donde estaban;  
 y el almyrante salió más verdadero, y quisiera yr á Gran Canaria, por dexar

3. CH de bazo de sa 17-24. Questo incidente, secondo F, ebbe luogo di sabbato a' .viii. di Agosto. E a questa data s'ottiene H, che segue per questo passo fedelmente F, per desumendo da CH l'incio segun se sospechó por industria de Gomez Rascon, y Christoval Quintero marineros 18. NY y sospechó

In 1888, when the four-hundredth anniversary of the discovery of America was approaching, the Italian government appointed a commission, in collaboration with the Istituto Storico Italiano and the Societa Geografica Italiana, to provide a fitting celebration of the *mervigliosa entrapresa* of Columbus. This commission, after coöpting numerous distinguished foreigners (among them John Carter Brown of Providence and Bellamy Storer of Newport), wisely decided on the initiative of one of its members, Cesare De Lollis, Professor of Neo-Latin Literature in the University of Genoa, to direct its main efforts toward publishing documents and historical monographs. The result was that noble monument of Italian scholarship, the *Raccolta di Documenti e Studi . . . pel quarto centenario dalla Scoperta dell' America* (6 parts in 14 volumes, Rome, 1892-94). The first three volumes are devoted to the extant writings of Columbus, two of them are edited by De Lollis himself. It was all done in the best manner; the volumes are folios, printed in large, clear type on hand-made paper with wide margins. Unfortunately this very sumptuousness of the format defeated one purpose of the *Raccolta* by making it so bulky and expensive that only large libraries could afford the price or the space. The *Raccolta* is difficult to come by, and impossible to carry about. Hence the majority of publications on Columbus and the Discovery since 1892 betray neither use nor knowledge of this really indispensable corpus.

In Part I, Volume I, of the *Raccolta* De Lollis printed a text of the Las Casas Abstract of Columbus's Journal, from the same manuscript that Navarrete had used. De Lollis, trained as a classical scholar, treated the Journal and other writings of Columbus as he would have done a text of Virgil or of Cicero. All the scholarly apparatus is there. First, there is an introduction with notes in double columns, giving the history of the manuscript and comparing it with the *Historia* of Las Casas and the *Historie* of Ferdinand. The Journal itself occupies 119 pages in folio. All important variants between this text and Navarrete's are duly noted, and relevant passages from the *Historie* and *Historia* are incorporated in the

notes. Following the best usage of editors of classical texts, De Lollis expanded all abbreviations, and supplied the punctuation. Usually, but by no means invariably, he respected the spelling;<sup>24</sup> and he supplied modern accents and capitalized proper names. If one accepts, as we do, the principle that old documents should be treated by this "expanded" method, rather than printed with all their abbreviations and contractions *literatim et verbatim*, there is little to say in criticism of De Lollis's text. His only shortcoming was his unfamiliarity with fifteenth-century Spanish. Thus, in expanding contractions, he did not always employ a form that was good spelling in 1492, or in 1892.<sup>25</sup> But the collation was done by a Spanish scholar, Julián Paz y Espeso,<sup>25a</sup> and together they did a magnificent job. The *Raccolta* text is so much better than Navarrete's that it should have been the basis of every English translation printed since 1892; yet that of Cecil Jane is the only one that betrays any knowledge of the *Raccolta* text.

The accompanying facsimiles of the original manuscript, and of the corresponding parts of De Lollis and Navarrete will both show the nature of the differences better than any minute description.

### 3. TRANSLATIONS

We have examined five independent translations of the whole of Columbus's Journal: one French, and four English (Kettell, Markham, Thacher, and Jane). In addition there are two Italian and one German translation which we have not examined.

The French translation was a very ambitious work, which proposed to cover Navarrete's entire *colección*; but only three volumes covering Navarrete's first, were actually printed.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>24</sup> Note, for instance, in the example reproduced: August 3, Las Casas's *myllos* became *millas*; but (August 6) Las Casas's *yr* is not modernized as *ir*.

<sup>25</sup> A few instances of this sort have been called to our attention by Professor J. D. M. Ford.

<sup>25a</sup> Alice Gould, in *Boletín de la Real Academia de la Historia*, LXXXVI (1925), 492n.

<sup>26</sup> *Relations des Quatre Voyages entrepris par Christophe Colomb pour la découverte du nouveau-monde . . . publiées . . . par Don M. F. de Navarrete . . . traduit de l'espagnol, par MM. F. T. A. Chalumeau de Verneuil . . . et De La*

Navarrete himself supervised the translation, which was made by MM. Chalumeau de Verneuil and De La Roquette, both Spanish scholars and members of the Real Academia of Madrid and of several geographic societies. Volume I is taken up with a translation of Navarrete's introduction, and with abundant new notes; the Journal of the First Voyage, with notes, occupies pp. 1-345 of Volume II.

This Verneuil and De La Roquette translation is the one used by almost all French writers on Columbus and the Discovery of America, with the exception of Vignaud and HARRISSE, who seem consistently to have used the text of Navarrete. It has been reprinted, in whole or in part, in various popular editions which need not concern us here. In general, the vice of the French translation consists in the effort of the editors to turn Columbus's simple, almost illiterate narrative into literary French. Little damage was done to the essential meaning by these literary embellishments; but occasionally, despite Navarrete's supervision, the meaning was radically altered.<sup>27</sup> One good feature was the inclusion of Spanish words and phrases of which the meaning was doubtful, in parentheses in the text. But on the whole the French translation is untrustworthy.

The really useful features of it were the notes by the collaborators, especially those of the Baron Cuvier, the eminent naturalist, on the fauna and flora that Columbus mentioned. But no effort was made to improve on Navarrete's identifica-

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*Roquette . . . et accompagné de notes des traducteurs et de MM. Abel Rémusat, Adrien Balbi, baron Cuvier, Jomard, Labouderie, Letronne, de Rossel, Saint-Martin, Walckenaer, etc. 3 vols., Paris, 1828.*

<sup>27</sup> One mistake of the French translators, which none of the English repeated, had unexpected consequences. The Journal for November 27 (*Raccolta*, p. 50, ll. 9-10) speaking of Puerto Baracoa in Cuba, says *y entrando por ella tanto como longura de la barca, tenía cinco brazas, y ocho de hondo*. The correct translation is "and entering it for a boat's length it had a depth of 5 and 8 fathoms." The French translators (II, 146) rendered this, "et lorsqu'on y était arrivé, on voyait qu'elle avait une largeur de cinq brasses, se qui était la dimension en longueur de la chaloupe; elle en avait huit de profondeur." Thus it was the ship's boat that was 5 fathoms long, not the harbor that was 5 fathoms deep. From this imaginary length of the boat, one writer has deduced the size of the *Santa Maria!* Of course Columbus, like all seamen, used *brazas* (fathoms) only for depth of water.

tions of places. It is evident that none of the French translators or collaborators had ever visited the scenes of this voyage. None of them were acquainted with maritime matters, and their translations of the Admiral's nautical phrases leave much to be desired.

The earliest translation of Columbus's Journal, and for sixty-six years the only English translation, was published in Boston in 1827.<sup>28</sup> The translator, Samuel Kettell, was a Boston schoolteacher, newspaperman, and hack-writer for S. G. Goodrich ("Peter Parley").<sup>29</sup> He translated the whole of the Journal, and did it fairly well. Kettell knew both Spanish and nautical English, but he had no knowledge to correct Navarrete's notes on places. His fault was that of the French translators, though in a lesser degree; he tried to express Columbus's simple Spanish in literary English, and to vary the Admiral's monotonous repetitions of certain words and phrases by a variety of synonyms. He transposed persons, tenses, and voices freely, and abbreviated unnecessarily. For instance, in the Journal for October 24, Columbus names the sails that he set on the *Santa María*; a most valuable passage because it is the only evidence we have of the flagship's sail-plan or appearance. Kettell contented himself with "set all sail." In other passages that offered some difficulty he was apt to make rather wild guesses. The Kettell translation is, therefore, untrustworthy; yet as corrected in the edition of 1931, it becomes one of the best.

Kettell's translation has twice been reprinted, once without credit to him. Albert and Charles Boni, a now extinct New York publishing house, brought out in 1924 *Journal of First Voyage to America by Christopher Columbus. With*

<sup>28</sup> *Personal Narrative of the First Voyage of Columbus to America. From a manuscript recently discovered in Spain. Translated from the Spanish.* Boston: 1827. The Journal occupies pp. 9-238, the Letter to Rafael Sanchez [*sic*] pp. 240-64; Notes and Appendix, including the Toscanelli Letter, and the Capitulations, pp. 67-303. The translator's name nowhere appears in the book, but there is no doubt of his identity. Markham states (*Journal*, Hakluyt Society, LXXXVI, 1893, p. vi, note) that George Ticknor the Spanish scholar suggested the translation, which may well be; but I find no mention of Kettell in Ticknor's *Life, Letters, and Journals* of Columbus, except in Vol. I (7th ed., Boston, 1877), p. 380.

<sup>29</sup> See sketch in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

*an Introduction by Van Wyck Brooks.* This turns out to be a complete and literal reprint of the Kettell edition of 1827, notes, appendix, mistakes and all, without any mention of Kettell's name. Mr. Brooks, whose brief introduction is an excellent appraisal of the Journal's character and importance, never knew whose translation it was, and performed no editorial function. The publishers merely sent him the proof and he wrote the introduction.

Once more the Kettell translation appeared in new dress, in A. W. Lawrence and Jean Young, eds., *Narratives of the Discovery of America* (New York: Jonathan Cape and Harrison Smith, 1931). Kettell's translation occupies the major part of the book, and here the obscure Samuel rates a credit line; the editors explain in the preface that they used his translation because it was sounder than Markham's, "though it was found necessary to subject it to drastic revision." The revision, it may be said, is not very thorough; a hasty comparison only seems to have been made with the Navarrete text and with other translations. Some of Kettell's omissions—such as the names of sails set on October 24—have been supplied, some of his bad guesses<sup>30</sup> properly retranslated, and some but not all his mistakes corrected. On the other hand, new mistakes have been made. The little *pardelas* (petrels), which Kettell had wisely left untranslated, since he could not make them out, because Sir Clements's "sandpipers," endowed with an extraordinary power of off-shore flight.<sup>31</sup> And some of the revisions proved to be little more accurate than the 1827 text.<sup>32</sup> The net result is a considerable improvement over the original Kettell, yet a far from trustworthy translation.

<sup>30</sup> One of these is the closing passage to February 18, about concealing the course from the pilots.

<sup>31</sup> January 8 and February 5; "terns" on January 31 and on February 2.

<sup>32</sup> A passage in the Journal of February 7, of which several translators have made heavy weather, *y al este passava de barloviento de la isla de la Madera, doze leguas de la parte del norte* (*Raccolta*, p. 105, ll. 10-11), which Kettell translated "and to the East, twelve leagues beyond the meridian of Madeira," Lawrence and Young made "and to the East, twelve leagues to windward of the meridian of Madeira." For "meridian" read "parallel." Some but not all of Navarrete's notes, and a few others, are introduced.



Samuel Kettell's original translation held the field until 1893, when the Hakluyt Society brought out a new one by its president, Clements R. Markham (1830-1916).<sup>33</sup> This is the best known of all English translations, the most widely reprinted, and the most inaccurate.

Shortly after this translation appeared, Markham was knighted. His high reputation as a Spanish scholar is a mystery. In his lifetime "Don Clemente" was accepted in Latin America as an able interpreter of the Conquistadores to the English-speaking world; both in Britain and the United States the name of "Sir Clements" was mentioned with awe and reverence.<sup>34</sup> And although the unsoundness of his translations of the Peruvian chronicles has been convincingly demonstrated in this REVIEW,<sup>35</sup> his reputation is still high both in the British Isles and in America, and his translations are the "standard" ones dear to students and reference librarians.

Markham was well qualified by experience, if not by temperament, to do an excellent translation of the Columbus Journal. He had served in the Royal Navy in the days of sail, and was familiar with the old-time nautical nomenclature and ways of doing things. He had traveled extensively in many parts of the world, although not, apparently, on the path of Columbus's First Voyage. His Spanish, although self-taught, was sufficient. He had been secretary to the Royal Geographical Society for twenty-five and to the Hakluyt Society for twenty-nine years, both of which gave him much practical editorial experience.<sup>36</sup> In the 1912 "Who's Who"

<sup>33</sup> *The Journal of Christopher Columbus (During his First Voyage, 1492-93), and Documents relating to the Voyages of John Cabot and Gaspar Corte Real. Translated, with Notes and an Introduction by Clements R. Markham, C.B., F.R.S.* London: Hakluyt Society, 1893 (No. LXXXVI of "Works issued by The Hakluyt Society").

<sup>34</sup> Professor J. D. M. Ford of Harvard, who was one of the first to see through "Don Clemente", has amusingly described to the writer his difficulty in getting a review that called attention to his inaccuracies, printed in the *New York Outlook* some forty years ago.

<sup>35</sup> Harry Bernstein and Bailey W. Diffie, "Sir Clements R. Markham as a Translator," *THE HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW*, XVII (1937), 546-557. See also Bailey W. Diffie, "A Markham Contribution to the *Leyenda Negra*," *ibid.*, XVI (1936), 95-103.

<sup>36</sup> See sketches of his life in *The Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 11th ed., and *Dictionary of National Biography, Twentieth Century, 1912-1921*.

he stated that he had edited twenty-two volumes for the Hakluyt Society and three for other societies. Yet the text of his translation of Columbus's Journal is characterized throughout by gross carelessness and inaccuracy, even in maritime details; frequently mistranslating compass points, reversing the meaning of statements, and omitting whole clauses without any warning; whilst his annotations, mostly lifted (not without credit) from Navarrete,<sup>37</sup> are sparse and often misleading.<sup>38</sup>

If Markham is blameworthy for issuing so imperfect a translation over the imprint of the learned society of which he was president, the American scholars responsible thirteen years later for reprinting and presenting it to the American public as standard, are doubly to blame. In 1902 the American Historical Association approved the series known as *Original Narratives of Early American History*, and appointed Dr. J. Franklin Jameson the general editor. The purpose, says Dr. Jameson in the volume now under review, was to provide students, libraries and readers with "the *ipsissima verba* of the first narrators, Argonauts or eye-witnesses, vivacious explorers or captains courageous"; the English translations are to be the "best available" or "fresh versions." Messrs. Charles Scribner's Sons undertook the publication of this series "under the auspices of the American Historical Association." In general, the "Original Narratives" series fulfilled the high expectations of those who authorized it; but not so the initial volume, at least its Columbian section.

This was Julius E. Olson and Edward G. Bourne, eds., *The Northmen, Columbus and Cabot, 985-1503* (New York, 1906; second edition, 1925). It included the Norse sagas on Vinland edited by Olson, and documents on the Cabot voy-

<sup>37</sup> Markham's translation is based on the text of Navarrete. He is perhaps not to be blamed for this, as De Lollis's *Raccolta* text did not appear until 1892, probably after Markham's work was almost finished. But the *Raccolta* text is not even mentioned in his introduction, and the Hakluyt Society's volume came out in 1893.

<sup>38</sup> For instance, to the statement of the Admiral when at Moustique Bay, Haiti, on December 13, 1492, that the day was 20 *ampolletas* long, and the latitude 34°, Markham appends the notes that they are transcribers' blunders. Obviously they are Columbus's own blunders; he had already made worse ones.

ages, with which we are not here concerned, and selected documents on the four voyages of Columbus, including the entire Journal of his first voyage. The selection was well made. But, sad to say, Bourne chose the Markham translation. Why he did so is a mystery. Edward Gaylord Bourne (1860-1908), Professor of History at Yale, is said to have been "preëminently a master of historical criticism,"<sup>39</sup> a good Spanish scholar and an expert on the period of discovery; his *Spain in America, 1450-1580* (1904) is considered a landmark in North American historiography. Yet, instead of making the new and accurate translation of Columbus's Journal from the De Lollis text of which he was perfectly capable, and for which there was a crying need, he used that of Markham. Thus a very untrustworthy version was given a new lease of life by the authority of Bourne's reputation, and that of the American Historical Association. Yet Bourne must have been aware of Markham's shortcomings, for he occasionally corrected some gross error in the text by a footnote.<sup>40</sup> But for every error thus noted by the new editor, there are at least twenty undetected.

Neither do Bourne's annotations reflect much credit on American scholarship. Navarrete's place identifications, excepting the first landfall, are incorporated without correction; even obsolete Spanish names in Haiti, such as *Puerto Escudo*, *Isla de Ratos*, *Puerto Frances*, are not given their modern French or English equivalents.<sup>41</sup> For the fauna and flora he relied largely on Cuvier's notes to the French translation of 1828, adding a few annotations from obvious handbooks, but failing to enlist the aid of his scientific colleagues at Yale who could have pointed out that in many instances a century of scientific work had rendered Cuvier's notes obsolete. Markham, besides many other errors in natural history, translated the Spanish word *pardela* (petrel) two different ways, both inaccurate: "tern" and "sandpiper." Rather late in the Jour-

<sup>39</sup> Sketch by Frank W. Pitman in *Dictionary of American Biography*.

<sup>40</sup> E.g., *Northmen, Columbus and Cabot*, pp. 98 (Sept. 20), 101 (Sept. 25), 103-04 (Sept. 30, but was unable to explain what it meant), 115 (Oct. 15) 118, (Oct. 16), 120 (Oct. 16), 121 (Oct. 17). Toward the end of the Journal Bourne stopped doing this, although the latter part of Markham is, if anything, more inaccurate than the first.

<sup>41</sup> *Id.*, pp. 171, 198-99.

nal, Bourne does call attention to Markham's ornithological shortcomings,<sup>42</sup> correcting the "sandpipers" in the Journal for September 24, and the "terns" on January 31 and February 2; but he allows "sandpipers" to stand unchallenged on February 5, thus preserving Markham's strange picture of flocks of sandpeep appearing in mid-ocean.<sup>43</sup>

Most serious of all, Bourne failed to correct Markham's frequent blunders in translating Spanish compass points.

Mistranslation of compass points is common to all the English translations except Kettell's, but Markham is the greatest offender. His errors are serious enough to put anyone off who is trying to trace Columbus's course or to study his navigation; and they are unnecessary, since ten minutes' study of the Spanish method of boxing the compass is sufficient to put anyone right. The main difficulty seems to have been ignorance of the fact that one meaning of *cuarta* or *quarta* in Spanish is a "point" of the compass, a thirty-second part of the circle. Thus, when a Spaniard of those days wished to say North by East (a single point East of North), he said *Norte cuarta del Nordeste*, and to translate this, as Thacher and Jane do, "North a quarter to the Northeast," is not only inaccurate as to *cuarta*, but means nothing in English. Similarly, when a Spaniard wished to indicate the point that we call Southwest by West, he said *Sudueste cuarta del Ueste*; and to translate this (as the same men do) "Southwest a quarter to the West" is not only inaccurate but misleading, because "Southwest a quarter West" (SW $\frac{1}{4}$ W) in English means a quarter-point and not a full point west of southwest.<sup>44</sup>

A few examples will demonstrate the wild work that the translators have made of Columbus's compass points.

<sup>42</sup> *Id.*, p. 230 n.

<sup>43</sup> *Id.*, pp. 100, 233-35. On February 6 Columbus says *vieron mucha[s] aves y pardellas*. Markham and Bourne translate this (p. 235) "They saw many birds."

<sup>44</sup> Columbus's compass card was marked for full points only, and he never used fractional points. If he wished to indicate a course between two points, he used the phrase *y tomaba de* (lit., "and taken from"). Thus, *Sudeste y tomaba de la cuarta del sur* is what we should call "Southeast, southerly." See example under December 6.

DECEMBER 6

At daybreak, when Columbus was approaching Haiti, he gives a number of compass bearings on different points. All the translators except Kettell have made such a mess of these that it would be impossible to identify the points or ascertain the *Santa María's* position. But if we follow the *Raccolta* or the Navarrete text, they all converge neatly at a point about 12 miles N by E of Cape St. Nicolas Mole, and enable us to identify the various capes. What the translators did with these bearings may best be shown in a table. It will be understood that the bearings in quotes are abbreviations of Thacher's and Jane's literal translation of the Spanish, and do not represent anything known to the English compass.

	<i>Raccolta</i> , p. 56	Correct trans.	Kettel <sup>45</sup>	Markham <sup>46</sup>	Thacher	Jane	French trans. <sup>47</sup>
C. Estrella . . .	Sur, quarta del sudueste.	S by W	S by W	SSW	"S¼SW"	"S¼SE"	"S¼SW"
isla no grande.	Leste . . . . .	E	E	E	E	omitted	E
C. Elefante . . .	Leste, quarta del sueste.	E by S	E by S	E	"E¼SE"	"E¼SE"	"E¼SE"
C. Çinquin . . .	Lessueste . . . . .	ESE	ESE	SE	ESE	ESE	ESE
gran scisura . .	Sueste, y tomava de la quarta del leste. . . . .	SE, E'ly	SE by E	omitted	"SE a little on the quarter of the E"	"SE, slightly to the E"	"SE inclinant vers le quart-E"

The Journal for January 19 is a very short one, containing only about 50 words. But the translators make of it a veritable comedy of errors, not only as to the courses but as to the birds sighted.

JANUARY 19

Accurate translations of the winds and courses are naturally very important for any student of Columbus's navigation. The third and fourth courses above, in conjunction with the wind, show that the *Niña* could sail as close as 5 points on the wind at times, but was forced to fall off to 6.

<sup>45</sup> All three editions.

<sup>46</sup> Including the Markham-Bourne (*N.C.C.*).

<sup>47</sup> Here I abbreviate *Ouest* "W." The French translators' points would be as incomprehensible to a French mariner as Thacher's and Jane's are to those of our nation.

Raccolta, p. 101	Correct trans.	KETTLELL		MARKHAM		Thacher	Jane	French trans.
		1827	1931	1893	Bourne			
Norte, quarta del nordeste.	N by E	N by E	N by E	NNE	NNE	"N $\frac{1}{4}$ NE"	"N $\frac{1}{4}$ NE"	"N $\frac{1}{4}$ NE"
Nordeste, quarta del norte. . . . .	NE by N	NE by N	NE by N	NE by N	NE by N	"NE $\frac{1}{4}$ N"	"NE $\frac{1}{4}$ N"	"NE $\frac{1}{4}$ N"
Nordeste con el viento lssueste. . . . .	NE, wind ESE	NE, wind ESE	NE, wind ESE	NE, wind SW	NE, wind SW	NE, wind ESE	NE, wind ESE	NE, wind ESE
[Nordeste] quarta del norte. . . . .	NE by N	NE by N	N	WSW	WSW	"to the quarter of the N"	N	"quart-N"
alcatrazes. . . . .	boobies	pelicans	gannets	boobies	boobies	pelicans	pelicans	<i>fous</i>
rabos de juncos	tropic-birds	tropic-birds	tropic-birds	frigate-birds	bosun-birds	ring-tails	frigate-birds	<i>pailles-en-queue</i>
rabiforcados. . . . .	frigate-birds	<i>rabihorcadoes</i>	frigate-pelicans	terns	frigate-birds	frigate-pelicans	terns	<i>frégates</i>

## JANUARY 27

Raccolta: *anduvo al nordeste y al norte, quarta del nordeste. . . .*

Navarrete: *anduvo al Nordeste y al Norte, y al Norte*<sup>48</sup> *cuarta del Nordeste. . . .*

Kettell: "steered NE. and N."

Markham-Bourne: "they steered N.E. and N.E. by E."

Thacher and Jane "he went to the northeast and to the north quarter north-east."

All are wrong. The correct translation is, "he went (or proceeded or steered, if you will) to the NE, and to the N by E."

Every translator without exception misleads the casual reader by rendering Columbus's *millia* as "mile." His *millia* was the old Roman *millia passuum* as understood in medieval Italy. This Roman or Italian mile equalled about 4,850 feet,<sup>49</sup> as against 5,280 feet for the English (now international) nautical mile. Consequently Columbus's *millia* is roughly

<sup>48</sup> De Lollis observes in a footnote to the *Raccolta* (p. 103) that the second *y al norte* is the scribe's repetition. If Columbus had wished to say that he steered to the N as well as NE and NE by E, he would have mentioned the N rhumb last.

<sup>49</sup> George E. Nunn, *Geographical Conceptions of Columbus* (1924), p. 18, calls it 1480 metres; applying the factor 39.37 inches, we obtain 4855.63 feet to the Roman mile.

three-quarters of a nautical mile, and there were four of them to his *legua*. It is true that most of the English translators explain this somewhere in a footnote;<sup>50</sup> but any casual reader or researcher who merely dipped into the text for information at some point would suppose that "mile" meant either a statute or nautical mile, and might readily conclude that the Admiral was a tremendous liar about the speed of his fleet! Translators should either insert "Roman" or "Italian" before "mile," or if they wish to use the word "mile" unqualified reduce the number by one-quarter. Columbus's statement of speed, e.g., January 17, *quatro millas por ora*, should be rendered either "4 Roman miles an hour," or "3 knots."<sup>51</sup> Columbus's *legua*, on the contrary, is so near to an English league of 3 nautical miles—one and six one-hundredths of an English league, to be precise—that it is sufficiently correct to translate it "league."

Markham's mistakes, reproduced without comment by Bourne, are so frequent that only a small part of even those that I have noted can be reproduced here. I give a few examples only to show their character. On October 5 Markham says the wind "increased somewhat" at night when Columbus said *afloxó*, "it went down" (as it generally does). On October 7 and 17 he leaves out whole clauses: *al levantar del sol* (*Raccolta*, p. 13, l. 22), and *y quería llevar el dicho camino del sur y sueste, porque aquella parte* (*id.*, p. 23, ll. 26, 27). October 21 (*id.*, p. 28, l. 11), *yo fallaré recaudo* is rendered "I obtain tidings" instead of "I shall find a collection (or quantity)," and he has the Admiral collecting specimens "of the land" where the original (*id.*, p. 27, l. 23) says *las yervas* "the plants." November 16 (*id.*, p. 42, l. 32), Markham leaves out the clause on praying before the cross, omits (*id.*, l. 36) the definition of *cala* (probably an interpolation of Las Casas, to be sure); and where Columbus has his people "dive in" for pearls (*id.*, p. 43, l. 7), Markham has them "examine." November 20 (*id.*, p. 44, ll. 9-10), *de donde salíá* omitted; (l. 13) *aquel día* translated "that night," (l. 14) *ver* rendered

<sup>50</sup> Kettell on p. 12; Markham-Bourne (*O.N.S.*) not until p. 91; Jane nowhere that we can find; Thacher, I, 516; Verneuil and De La Roquette, II, 7.

<sup>51</sup> A knot means one nautical mile an hour. Seamen never say "knots per hour," and knots should never be used as a measure of distance.

“explore,” (l. 21) *viento rezio* rendered “light wind” and the following *amansó* (“it moderated”) omitted; *al terzero quarto de la noche* (“at the third night watch”) rendered “at three o’clock in the morning”;<sup>52</sup> *salido el sol* (l. 24) translated “at sunset” and *marcó* (“he picked up” or “was off”) omitted. And out of seven compass points mentioned that day, two are mistranslated. Few days in the Markham-Bourne edition show such a bad score as this, but no day of over three or four lines is free from error, and by error I do not mean a mere difference of opinion as to phrasing, or as to *le mot juste*, but an unheralded omission, or a real mistake such as the sun setting when it is rising,<sup>53</sup> “before” when Columbus says “after,”<sup>54</sup> sails being lowered when they are hoisted, wrong courses and mistaken distances.

Markham has a certain terseness and vigor to his style that Thacher’s and Jane’s translations lack, and which make it better reading than most of the others; but it is completely unreliable. It passes all understanding why Edward G. Bourne should have used so shabby a piece of work for a standard text, and, moreover, have treated it as a sort of sacred scripture that could only be corrected by a footnote.

The first volume of John Boyd Thacher’s monumental three-volume work, *Christopher Columbus, his Life, his Work, his Remains*, came out in 1903. The most valuable feature of Thacher is his inclusion of original sources, both in facsimile and in translation. The text of the Journal he did not reproduce, probably because of its length; but a fresh translation of the Navarrete text (the *Raccolta* again ignored) occupies pp. 513-86 and 604-68. Thacher employed various persons to translate for him, and generally names them; but the Journal’s translator is anonymous. From internal evidence he would seem to have been a person who had a good dictionary knowledge of Spanish, but a very remote idea of what the Journal was about, and nearly complete ignorance of those nautical matters with which Columbus necessarily dealt at

<sup>52</sup> That is how we figure it too, but the explanation belongs in a footnote.

<sup>53</sup> Another instance will be found on January 22—*el salir del sol* becomes “sunset.”

<sup>54</sup> *E.g.*, January 21, *Ayer, después del sol puesto* becomes “yesterday, before sunset.”



considerable length. Thacher's translation is also weak on fauna and flora. We are spared the sea-going sandpeep, but the Sargasso Sea is covered with "grass."<sup>55</sup> The annotations, not without garbling, are mostly from Navarrete and Las Casas.

Finally we come to the translation by Cecil Jane. This gentleman, who died in 1932, was an Oxford man and a public-school teacher in England who engaged in various literary labors during his spare time. For the Hakluyt Society he edited and translated two volumes entitled *Select Documents illustrating the Four Voyages of Columbus* (2d ser., LXV, 1929, and 2d ser., LXX, 1932). In these the Spanish texts and Jane's translation were printed on opposite pages, a commendable innovation. The Journal of the First Voyage was reserved for a third volume, but Jane's death intervened. In the meantime, however, he had completed his translation, which was published without the Spanish text in a beautifully printed volume, *The Voyages of Christopher Columbus . . . newly Translated and Edited, with an Introduction and Notes, by Cecil Jane* (London, the Argonaut Press, 1930). The first 131 pp. are occupied by an Introduction, in which Jane presents his interesting and original views on Columbus's character and the nature of his enterprise. The Journal occupies pp. 135-258. The very sparse notes, mostly on persons mentioned in the text, are on pp. 329-34. There is no statement in the introduction respecting the manuscript or the printed texts; by internal evidence I should say that he used Navarrete mainly, but did some checking from the *Raccolta*.

Cecil Jane's translation is in some respects the best; so good that one wishes it could have been a little better. His interest in Columbus seems to have been personal and psychological, hence he was careless about navigation, Indians, fauna and flora, and made no attempt (other than some very inaccurate maps) to trace his course or identify his places of call. He apparently "did not know one end of a boat from the other," as mariners say, and was not nearly so successful

<sup>55</sup> Columbus's *yerba* and *yerbas* has to be translated "gulf-weed," "grass," "plants," or even "poison," according to the context.

as Markham in finding the correct English equivalent of Spanish nautical phrases. Otherwise, the Spanish is very well translated; and I have found him of much assistance in getting at the meaning of obscure phrases and obsolete words. Nevertheless, he carelessly omitted a considerable number of words and phrases, without any warning; and, as we have seen, his method of translating compass points requires a reference to the original text to find out what Columbus meant.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>56</sup> Here are some of Jane's mistakes and omissions, besides those elsewhere noted.

September 17 (*Raccolta*, p. 7, l. 6): *las agujas noruesteaban una gran quarta*; (Jane, p. 140): "the needles declined north-west a full quarter" ("point" is correct).

September 16 (*Raccolta*, p. 6, l. 19): *andiarían. xxxviii. leguas*; Jane (p. 140): "made thirty-eight leagues."

September 19 (*Raccolta*, p. 7, l. 32), and elsewhere: *alcatraz* rendered "pelican."

September 22 (*Raccolta*, p. 8, l. 30): *pardelas* rendered "sandpipers" (but correctly translated in January and February).

October 13 (*Raccolta*, p. 17, ll. 30-31): *las piernas muy derechas, todos á una mano, y no barriga, salvo muy bien hecha*; (Jane, p. 150): "Their legs are very straight; none are bowlegged. They are not fat, but have very good figures." Correct: "Their legs are very straight, all in a line, and no belly, but very well built."

November 24 (*Raccolta*, p. 46, l. 4): *á la ora de tercia del día*; Jane (p. 180): "at three o'clock" ("terce," 9 a.m., is right).

November 27 (*Raccolta*, p. 50, l. 6): *qu' es como una escodella*; Jane (p. 185): "which is like a small hammer" ("little porringer" is correct).

December 5 (*Raccolta*, p. 56, ll. 1-2): *dava este reguardo*; Jane (p. 191): "this gave protection" ("he took this precaution" is right).

December 6 (*Raccolta*, p. 56, l. 21): *Sur, quarta del sudueste* rendered "South, quarter south-east"; (ll. 23-24): *xxviii. myllas. parcciale otra tierra como isla no grande, al leste, y estaría d' él* omitted by Jane (p. 192); (*Raccolta*, p. 57, l. 7): *se pone la proa al sursueste*; Jane (p. 192): "and he steered to the south-south-east" (correct, "the vessel's bow should be held to the SSE"—he is giving sailing directions, not stating what he did); (*Raccolta*, p. 57, ll. 16-18): *y así es todo el dicho puerto de cada cabo hondo dentro, á una passada de tierra, de .15. braças, y limpio*; omitted by Jane; (l. 28): *poner los bordos en las yervas*; Jane (p. 193): "at which landing planks could be laid on the grass" (correct, "to put the gunwales alongside the grass").

December 17 (*Raccolta*, p. 66, l. 18): *holgáronse mucho con los christianos los Yndios*; Jane (p. 203): "the Indians were greatly pleased with the Christians").

December 25 (*Raccolta*, p. 79, l. 28): *se abrieron los conventos*; Jane (p. 217): "the hatches came open" (correct, "the planks [or seams] opened"); (p. 80, l. 1) *adelante*; Jane: "inland"; (correct: "distant").

Yet, on the whole, Jane's is the most accurate of the translations. His only consistent fault, other than those of omission of fauna, flora and compass points, is an attempt to write a more literary English than the very unliterary style of Columbus warrants.

Rating the different translations on a scale of 100, with 75 points for maximum accuracy, 15 for scholarly and informing annotation, and 10 for readableness, I should score them as follows: Jane, 75; Kettell (Lawrence and Young), 65; Thacher, 60; Markham-Bourne, 50; Kettell (1827), 45; Markham, 35.

As the reader may have guessed, these gloomy conclusions as to the extant translations have determined me to make a new one. A volume of Columbian sources, both texts and translations, is already contracted for.<sup>57</sup> My colleagues, in American ethnology, botany, zoölogy, ornithology and oceanography are rendering me expert assistance in annotating relevant passages of scientific interest; my master Professor J. D. M. Ford is kindly giving his valuable time to help me extract the correct meaning from Columbus's often obscure Spanish; and I am planning next winter in the "*Harvard Columbus Expedition*" to complete by personal inspection an accurate identification of the places that the Admiral touched at and described. I hope that readers of this REVIEW will favor me with elucidations that they have made; and all will be suitably acknowledged. Since *humanum est errare*, my text and translation will not be perfect; but at least I shall spare neither pains nor expense to make them worthy of the most important and epoch-making voyage in America, or indeed in human history.

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January 13 (*Raccolta*, p. 97, ll. 6-7): *una gran cuchillada en las nalgas*; Jane (p. 235): "a great cut on the thigh" (correct: "a great slash on the buttocks").

January 21 (*Raccolta*, p. 101, l. 26): *después del sol salido*; Jane (p. 239): "after sunset."

February 13 (*Raccolta*, p. 106, ll. 21-22): *atormentavan los navíos*; Jane (p. 245): "broke over the ships" (correct, "strained the vessels").

February 14 (*Raccolta*, p. 106, l. 26, p. 107, l. 1, and p. 109, l. 6): *el papahigo*; Jane (p. 245, twice and 247): "the studding-sail" (correct, "the squaresail").

<sup>57</sup> By Messrs. Little, Brown and Company.