

WAS COLUMBUS BOASTFUL LIAR?

VIGNAUD'S CHARGES AGAINST DISCOVERER OF AMERICA.

Truthfulness and Good Character of Columbus Severely Assailed by the First Secretary of the American Embassy in Paris—Manner of the Discovery of the New World Rests on Evidence of Columbus Alone, and Mr. Vignaud Finds Reason for Doubting the Discoverer's Veracity.

New York, March 23.—The Tribune prints today a long letter addressed to Whitelaw Reid by Henry Vignaud, first secretary of the American Embassy in Paris, in which the writer reviews his critical study of Columbus, published some months ago, in which he contended that the great discoverer had concealed the true date of his birth, which Mr. Vignaud declares occurred in 1421, and not in 1436, or even 1440, as is generally supposed.

Mr. Vignaud says that were it merely a question of determining the exact year in which Columbus was born the subject would not have been worth the trouble entailed, but that another question of the utmost importance—the good faith, the truthfulness of Columbus—is thus brought into question, in view of the fact that the story of the discovery of America, as it is generally accepted, is based on the evidence supplied by Columbus himself. From such sources, Mr. Vignaud says, we learn "that Columbus came of a noble stock; that the arms of his ancestors are engraved on their tombs at Placenza; that there had been admirals of his name and blood; that he himself had taken to the sea from his earliest years; that during 40 years of seafaring he had studied the secrets of nature and that his cosmographical speculations had taught him that the maritime space separating the extremities of the known world was not very great, and that by crossing it the Indies could be reached by a shorter route than the other way. This was, indeed, the project, so we are informed by himself, that he proposed to the Catholic king, and which they accepted."

Mr. Vignaud says that had Columbus revealed the place and date of his birth it would have become known that his family were only poor weavers, and that from a study of documents not of Columbian origin and from official records it is made clear that Columbus' first reference to the new route to the Indies crops up for the first time after his return from his first voyage, in 1493.

Mr. Vignaud writes: "All I wish to show is that the generally conceived opinion that the scheme of Columbus was based on considerations of a theoretical character had no other foundation than Columbus' own statement; that our belief that the discovery of America was due to an attempt to carry out a scheme for reaching the Indies by way of the West rests solely on the unsupported testimony of the man whose interest lay in maintaining the assertion—on the word of Christopher Columbus, who was not a truthful man."

Mr. Vignaud pronounces Columbus to have been "boastful and lying, greedy, violent and brutal," but declares that "whatever his moral weaknesses may have been; he is the discoverer of America, and that alone suffices to assure his rank among those to whom grateful humanity raises statues. In what really constitutes his glory he has nothing to fear from the corrections of history."