

# Raps Columbus

An aged French scholar named Vignaud is keeping up a steady fire on the reputation of Christopher Columbus, reputed discoverer of America. It will be remembered that Mark Twain, in "Innocents Abroad," pretended, in order to scandalize an Italian guide, that he had never heard of Mr. Columbus. Perhaps if M. Vignaud lives long enough, he will ultimately succeed in crowding Columbus out of the school histories.

But after all, it isn't as bad as that, even if the worst be true. Vignaud doesn't deny that Columbus reached San Salvador; all he denies is that Columbus was looking for India or any sort of continent whatsoever when he found the island. Vignaud claims that Columbus was actually looking for the very island he found, only that, and nothing more; that he had heard an account of the existence of such an island from a seaman, and accordingly set out and found it. In a way, that's more remarkable than finding a continent, though. Anybody could stumble onto a continent, but surely it would take a genius of the first water—sea-water, that is—to find such a needle in a haystack as the tiny isle of San Salvador.

Some local interest is added to the controversy by the fact that Vignaud cites Professor Percy A. Martin of Stanford as one of the scholars very much interested in his theory, and also Professor Julius Klein of Harvard, member of a well known San Jose family.

Diligent scholars are continually proving that many things in history are beautiful myths, merely myths. And while it is easy to poke fun at their patient digging into things, it is this severe discipline of scholars and scientists which is making the world more and more a pleasant place in which to live. They are not satisfied with vague traditions, legends, myths. They want the truth, and it is the truth which shall make us free.