

Christopher Columbus died on the 20th of May 1506 in Spain. It is generally spoken of as the "Florentine portrait." The engraving follows an excellent copy, made by the order of Thomas Jefferson, and now in the possession of the Massachusetts Historical Society. We are indebted to the government of this society for permission to use it. 18 18 The whole subject of the portraits of Columbus is carefully discussed in a learned paper presented to the Wisconsin Historical Society by Dr. James Davie Butler, and published in the Collections of that Society, Vol. IX, pp. 79-96 A picture ascribed to Titian, and engraved and circulated by the geographer, Jomard, resembles closely the portraits of Philip III. The costume is one which Columbus never wore. In his youth Columbus was affiliated with a religious brotherhood, that of Saint Catherine, in Genoa. In after times, on many occasions when it would have been supposed that he would be richly clothed, he appeared in a grave dress which recalled the recollections of the frock of the religious order of Saint Francis. According to Diego Columbus, he died, "dressed in the frock of this order, to which he had always been attached." He says to his son, in another letter, "I only live by borrowing." Still he had good credit with the Genoese bankers established in Andalusia. In writing to his son he begs him to economize, but at the same time he acknowledges the receipt of bills of exchange and considerable sums of money. In the month of December, there is a single transaction in Hispaniola which amounts to five thousand dollars of our money. We must not, therefore, take literally his statement that he was too poor to pay for a night's lodging. On the other hand, it is observed in the correspondence that, on the fifteenth of April, 1505, the king ordered that everything which belonged to Columbus on account of his ten per cent should be carried to the royal treasury as a security for certain debts contracted by the Admiral. The king had also given an order to the royal agent in Hispaniola that everything which he owned there should be sold. All these details have been carefully brought together by Mr. Harris, who says truly that we cannot understand the last order. When at last the official proceedings relating to the affairs in Jamaica arrived in Europe, Columbus made an effort to go to court. A litter was provided for him, and all the preparations for his journey made. But he was obliged once more by his weakness to give up this plan, and he could only write letters pressing his claim. Of such letters the misfortune is, that the longer they are, and the more of the detail they give, the less likely are they to be read. Columbus could only write at night; in the daytime he could not use his hands. 128 He took care to show Ferdinand that his interests had not been properly attended to in the islands. He said that Ovando had been careless as to the king's service, and he was not unwilling to let it be understood that his own administration had been based on a more intelligent policy than that of either of the men who followed him. But he was now an old man. He was unable to go to court in person. He had not succeeded in that which he had sailed for--a strait opening to the Southern Sea. He had discovered new gold mines on the continent, but he had brought home but little treasure. His answers from the court seemed to him formal and unsatisfactory. At court, the stories of the Porras brothers were told on the one side, while Diego Mendez and Carvajal represented Columbus. In this period of the fading life of Columbus, we have eleven letters addressed by him to his son. These show that he was in Seville as late as February, 1505. From the authority of Las Casas, we know that he left that part of Spain to go to Segovia in the next May, and from that place he followed the court to Salamanca and Valladolid, although he was so weak and ill. He was received, as he had always been, with professions

of kindness; but nothing followed important enough to show that there was anything genuine in this cordiality. After a few days Columbus begged that some action might be taken to indemnify him for his losses, and to confirm the promises which had been made to him before. The king replied that he was willing to refer all points which had been discussed between them to an arbitration. Columbus assented, and proposed the Archbishop Diego de Deza as an arbiter. The reader must remember that it was he who had assisted Columbus in early days when the inquiry was made at Salamanca. The king assented to the arbitration, but proposed that it should include questions which Columbus would not consider as doubtful. One of these was his restoration to his office of viceroy. Now on the subject of his dignities Columbus was tenacious. He regarded everything else as unimportant in comparison. He would not admit that there was any question that he was the viceroy of the Indies, and all this discussion ended in the postponement of all consideration of his claims till, after his death, it was too late for them to be considered. All the documents, when read with the interest which we take in his character and fortunes, are indeed pathetic; but they did not seem so to the king, if indeed they ever met his eye. In despair of obtaining justice for himself, Columbus asked that his son Diego might be sent to Hispaniola in his place. The king would promise nothing, but seems to have attempted to make Columbus exchange the privileges which he enjoyed by the royal promise for a seignory in a little town in the kingdom of Leon, which is named not improperly "The Counts' Carrion." The reason of this cannot be written here. The history of the litigation which followed upon this will and upon other documents which bear upon the fortunes of Columbus is curious, but scarcely interesting. The present representative of Columbus is Don Cristobal Colon de la Cerda, Duke of Veragua and of La Vega, a grandee of Spain of the first class, Marquis of Jamaica, Admiral and Seneschal Major of the Indies, who lives at Madrid. Two days after the authentication of the will he died, on the twenty first of May, 1506, which was the day of Ascension. His last words were those of his Saviour, expressed in the language of the Latin Testament, "In manus tuas, Pater, commendo spiritum meum,"—"Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit." Mr. Harris quotes from a manuscript authority to show, that when William Penn besieged the city of San Domingo in 1655, all the bodies buried under the cathedral were withdrawn from view, lest the heretics should profane them, and that "the old Admiral's" body was treated like the rest. Mr. Harris calls to mind the fact that the earthquake of the nineteenth of May, 1673, demolished the cathedral in part, and the tombs which it contained. He says, "the ruin of the colony, the climate, weather, and carelessness all contributed to the loss from sight and the forgetfulness of the bones of Columbus, mingled with the dust of his descendants"; and Mr. Harris does not believe that any vestige of them was ever found afterwards, in San Domingo or anywhere else. In this will he directs his son and his successors, acting as administrators, always to maintain "in the city of Genoa, some person of our line, who shall have a house and a wife in that place, who shall receive a sufficient income to live honorably, as being one of our relatives, having foot and root in the said city, as a native; since he will be able to receive from this city aid in favor of the things of his service; because from that city I came forth and in that city I was born." This clause became the subject of much litigation as the century went on. Another clause which was much contested was his direction to his son Diego to take care of Beatriz Enriquez, the mother of Fernando. Diego is instructed to provide for her an honorable subsistence "as being a person to whom I

have great obligation. His hair was decidedly reddish, and the complexion of his face quite florid and marked with spots of red." Bishop Las Casas knew the admiral personally, and describes him in these terms: "He was above the middle stature, his face was long and striking, his nose was aquiline, his eyes clear blue, his complexion light, tending towards a distinct florid expression, his beard and hair blonde in his youth, but they were blanched at an early age by care." Many of these men had been disloyal to him and unfaithful to their sovereign, but Columbus, with his own magnanimity, represented eagerly at court that they had endured great peril, that they brought great news, and that the king ought to repay them all that they had earned. We have one account by a contemporary of the appearance of Columbus.¹⁷ We are told that he was a "robust man, quite tall, of florid complexion, with a long face." ¹⁷ In the first Decade of Peter Martyr In the next generation, Oviedo says Columbus was "of good aspect, and above .the middle stature