

THE LOTTO PORTRAIT OF COLUMBUS.



HERE is no excuse for bringing forward a new portrait of Columbus at this late day unless it has more than the mere smack of possibility about it. For there are already something like six times six Columbuses in the field, and every one brings in a separate tale, and every tale condemns Columbus for—some other person. The confusion of testimony is, however, no good reason for wholly rejecting all the portraits, with the assumption that the discoverer never was drawn, carved, or painted from life. Positive and direct proof for any likeness of him cannot be adduced. The evidence, if it ever existed, has been lost in the lapse of years. But there are probabilities that seem to attach themselves to two recurrent types, and these form chains of circumstantial evidence worthy of consideration. The original of one of these types, perhaps the earliest of all the portraits, we have before us in the recently discovered picture by Lorenzo Lotto, engraved for the frontispiece of this magazine.

The history of this portrait is brief, and about as unsatisfactory as any of the other Columbuses. It is supposed to have been painted for Domenico Malipiero, the Venetian senator and historian, at the instance of his correspondent, Angelo Trevisan (Trivigiano), secretary of the Venetian ambassador to Spain, who in 1501 was in intimate communication with Christopher Columbus at Granada. Malipiero's manuscripts (and presumably this picture) are said to have passed to Senator Francesco Longo. The Gradenigos were the heirs of the Longos, and it was from them that the Cavaliere Luigi Rossi, a steward of the Duchess of Parma, purchased the picture. Just before Rossi's death the picture was sold to a person named Gandolfi, who had it somewhat repaired and restored. The badly damaged head and red cap of an Indian at the right were cut out, and the picture was made square instead of oblong. From Gandolfi it passed to Signor Antonio della Rovere of Venice, in whose house it was seen in 1801 by Captain Frank H. Mason, United States Consul-General at Frankfort-on-the-Main, and by him bought for the World's Fair at Chicago. The record cannot be traced with any certainty beyond the Gradenigos, and even if it could, it would prove no more than what the picture itself reveals. The best evidence for or against any picture is internal, not external.

It is hardly worth while arguing the antiquity of the canvas. It speaks for itself, and says unmistakably that it is old Italian—Venetian-Italian at that. The archæological methods of determining the place of a work of art are now too well known for explanation, and too accurately based to admit of much error. Neither is it worth while to go afield in search of a painter for the portrait, when the name of the very man we would naturally attribute it to is upon the canvas. The signature and date read "Lauren^s Lotto f, 1512." Both are genuine, though the date had been clumsily scumbled over with gray paint. It has been suggested that the signature was not the one Lotto usually signed. He had no usual signature until 1522, and even after that it varies. I have before me as I write eight facsimiles of his signature, all written differently, and yet all, in common with this signature, possessed of a certain character that shows them to have come from one hand. Had the signature on this portrait been a falsification, we may be sure it would not have varied a hair's-breadth from those on the well-known portraits in the Brera, or that upon the St. Antoninus in SS. Giovanni e Paolo in Venice. The variation is a proof of genuineness. But the signature is corroboration only, not proof positive.

Lorenzo Lotto was a painter who in his portraits was hardly second to Titian, and yet there remain to us few facts in his life. He was born probably about 1480, and as a painter was Venetian with some provincial earmarks about him. Of the school of Giovanni Bellini, he was a friend and fellow-worker with Palma, and after 1512 shows the influence of Giorgione and, later, of Titian. With a faculty for grasping technical features in others, Lotto brought many reminiscences of his contemporaries into his works. It has been said that he was influenced by Correggio (a mistake), by Leonardo (another mistake), by Pennacchi, Carpaccio, Cima, and half a dozen other painters. That he was a borrower there can be no doubt, and this portrait shows his characteristic borrowings. The sharp articulated drawing in both hands and face points to his master Giovanni Bellini; the angularities of drapery, especially in the right sleeve, suggest Bartolommeo Vivarini; the fullness of the cloak and figure are Palmesque; the coloring, especially in the scarlet under-coat with the white edging at the neck, is peculiarly Lottesque, and yet suggests the influence of Ferrara; while the early Venetian landscape

seen through the window is like Cima in drawing, and like the Lombards in its blue-green coloring. These influences showing in his work were mingled with technical methods peculiar to himself. Thus he had his own method of handling light and shade, his own color delicacy, and, what is more apparent in this portrait, certain mannerisms in drawing. The theory of the late Senator Morelli, that the old Italians had a way of painting conventional features, has been sneered at by his critics, but nevertheless there is some truth in it, if not enough to establish a science. Lotto, for example, was very fond of giving his portraits a peculiar twist of the head, and a side-long look from the eye; his ears were almost always heavy, long, and inclined toward a point, not at the top but at the bottom; his hands and fingers were never quite free from a cramped appearance; and the finger-tips were inclined toward a point with a very singular form of finger-nail. Portraiture in those days did not extend to the minute realization of every individual feature. The examination of a man's work — Bellini's or Titian's, for instance — shows that he used but one formula for all hands and ears. Just so with Lotto. This portrait, compared with those in the Brera (especially the "Portrait of a Lady with a Fan," No. 253), those in the National Gallery in London, or even the sadly repainted Giorgionesque "Three Ages" in the Pitti (engraved in this magazine for April, 1892), will reveal the peculiar methods of the one man.

Those who do not care for the technical analysis of a picture, but prefer to judge by the spirit in which it is conceived and executed, may trace the identity of Lotto in that way quite as well. For, in spite of his eclecticism, Lotto had an individuality of his own, showing in a loftiness of type, an aristocratic grace of countenance, a refinement of feeling, and all through both conception and method a certain nervous quality that is almost morbid in its sensitiveness. Certainly our portrait shows these qualities, and, applying either method of recognition, the microscope of Morelli or the broader intuitive sense of Mündler or Cavalcaselle, there is only one conclusion that can be reached about it. It is a work of Lorenzo Lotto, and though it has suffered somewhat from the effects of time and repainting, it still possesses not a little of nobility.¹ Whether it is a Columbus or not, is quite another matter. Perhaps if the reasons for thinking so are set forth, the public will be as capable a judge as the Columbus experts.

Of the many representations of Columbus every portrait with a ruff or a beard is excluded. Neither was worn in Columbus's time. Criticism accepts as possibilities two types of the discoverer. One is the Giovian type, best seen perhaps in the D'Orchi portrait at Como or the Yanez portrait at Madrid. The history of the supposed original is brief and uncertain. Sixty years or more after the death of Columbus, Vasari gave a list of two hundred and eighty portraits in the villa of Paolo Giovio on Lake Como, which Duke Cosimo had Cristoforo dell' Altissimo copy for his Gardaroba. In the list, with Attila, Artaxerxes, Saladin, Tamerlane, and other celebrities, whose portraits must have been purely imaginary, appears "Colombo Genovese." In 1575, engravings purporting to reproduce the portraits in the Como villa were printed, and among them one that still does service for Christopher Columbus. If the real portrait of the discoverer ever was in that collection, it must have been lost or confused with others. The Giovian type shows the face and costume of a Franciscan brother instead of a navigator. For that reason, and because it does not correspond to the written descriptions left by the contemporaries of Columbus, it has not been universally accepted.

The other type is well shown in the Ministry of Marine portrait at Madrid.² The Lotto portrait, which we have before us, is an earlier presentation of this type — perhaps the archetype. The difference between the two men shown in the two portraits is slight indeed. It might result from two different artists viewing the same sitter, or the sitter himself seen at two different times or ages, or from the careless restorations from which both pictures have suffered. We see such variations in the portraits of Francis I., and Napoleon I., and even in those of George Washington. This type seems to repeat itself in succeeding engravings and ideal portraits; something of it shows in the Genoa statue; so familiar is it that painters at this day employ it in historical pictures of Columbus; and even the circus people use it in their show-bills. Whether real or imaginary, it seems to be the popular conception of what the discoverer ought to be. Unfortunately there is no absolute Columbus criterion by which we may judge whether it is fact or fiction, but there are reasons for thinking it founded on fact.

It is, in the first place, the Ligurian type, the Genoese type, which the contemporaries and followers of Columbus — his son Ferdinand, Trevisan, Las Casas, Oviedo, Benzoni

¹ Critical articles upon this portrait appeared in "La Tribuna Illustrata," Rome, December 7, 1890, and in the "Rivista Marittima," July and August, 1890. W. J. Stillman wrote of it as a Lotto in the "Nation,"

December 26, 1889, and I am informed that Cavalcaselle, Morelli, Böde, and a number of German experts have given a like opinion.

² Engraved in this magazine for May, 1892.

—described in saying that the admiral was tall, well formed, above the average height; his face was long, neither full nor thin, his cheek-bones a little high. He had an aquiline nose, light (gray) eyes, and a fair, high-colored complexion. When a young man his hair was blond, but at the age of thirty it became gray. Las Casas adds that "he had an air of authority," and Benzoni that "his appearance was that of a nobleman." Such a general description is, of course, a rather loose mask into which many faces may be thrust; but the one that fits it best is the Ligurian face. A comparison, feature by feature, will show that the Lotto portrait tallies exactly with the description even in the matter of the gray hair, the gray eyes, the "air of authority," and "the appearance of a nobleman." If the original study for the portrait were made in 1501, as is thought probable, it should find Columbus (according to HARRISSE) fifty-six years of age, out of favor with the court, suffering from hardships and misfortunes, and disheartened by ingratitude. Again, the picture corresponds, even in the facial expression of sadness and wounded pride.

The costume in which the figure is clothed has more importance, perhaps, than would ordinarily attach, for the reason that the old Venetians never searched the history of antiquity for appropriate "historical" garments. They always painted what they saw about them, and here in this portrait we have the Italian costume of the Columbus age. It is the first time that it appears in any portrait of the discoverer; and the second and only other time it appears is in the repetition, the Ministry of Marine portrait. Carderera, in his "Informe sobre los Retratos de Cristobal Colon," says of the costume of the Columbus period, that for the better classes "the hair was as long as to cover the ears, and cut in a horizontal line; the shirts had thin folds, and a collar which was no higher than a finger is thick; the coat was long to the knees, and the collar was cut out square around the neck, or the breast was cut out square. . . . Mantles were long, and fell to the ankles, with broad lapels, and had slits or openings at the sides." Had he added that the lapels were of silk or of fur, it would seem as though his description had been taken directly from the Lotto portrait, for it fits it in every respect. It is, in brief, the Italian costume in the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries for well-to-do or noble people, and may be seen at this day in the Venetian pictures by Bellini, Carpaccio, Cima, and their contemporaries.

But to come a little nearer to our search, this Genoese, with "an air of authority" and a tinge of melancholy about him, who looks out of his canvas with such a reproachful, half-disdainful

look—this man is a navigator, a commander. The lines of the face are those formed by exposure to all sorts of weather; the bronzed, tanned look of the skin is the result of salt air and southern sun; the very eyes, with their keen, narrow look, are those of a "lookout" at sea who blinks in the fierce light of noonday beating on the ocean. But, above all, if he be not a navigator, why the attributes of the craft about him? In the left hand he holds a log-glass. It is not an hour-glass, but a log-glass, which runs from fourteen to twenty-eight seconds, and was used in connection with the log-line to ascertain the speed of a ship. It rests upon a book, and that book is marked on the back "Aristotel." Aristotle and Strabo both taught the spherical theory of the earth. It was the influence of Aristotle and his interpreters that kept alive during the middle ages the doctrine that India and Spain were not far apart; and Mr. Tillinghast informs us (Winsor, Vol. I, p. 36) that Columbus certainly knew of these sources. Whether he did or did not would have made little difference to the painter. He had to portray a believer in the roundness of the earth. Aristotle was an ancient authority for that belief; hence his volume was an appropriate symbol—particularly appropriate for the man who first put the spherical theory to a practical test. Another symbol, that of the Indian in the red cap at the right, was unfortunately cut away, and cannot be spoken of now. There was probably some confusion in the painter's mind between the Indian brought to Venice by Cappello as a present to the Signiory in 1497 and the Moors of western Africa. The error of thinking them of kin was popular at that time; hence the red fez, which might, indeed, have been worn by Cappello's Indian while in Venice.

If there is any possible doubt about the book, the log-glass, and the Indian symbols, there is none whatever about the attribute in the right hand. It is a map—a map not of Africa or India, but of the New World, the West Indies discovered by Columbus. What possible pertinence could there be in placing this map of Columbus's discoveries in the hands of another person than Columbus himself? He holds the map half unrolled to the view as an evidence of his achievement; in the hands of any other person, say Vasco da Gama, Magellan, or Vespucci, it would look like downright theft or false pretenses. During the life of Columbus, and for many years after his death, no navigator would have dared to appropriate to himself such a symbol. The discovery of the West Indies was the peculiar glory of Columbus, and even modern historical criticism, which has pilfered from him everything else, including ability, honor, and common decency, has

not disputed his right to that. And yet not quite all the land upon the map was discovered by Columbus. The map was of course sketchily painted, as the symbol of a navigator, not for cartographical purposes; but nevertheless the degrees of longitude, the outlines of the islands, and the names, may be easily traced. The names that appear are Spagnola (Hayti), La Dominica, Moferato (Monserrat), Canibalorum (Cannibal Islands), and at the bottom Terra Sancte [*sic*] Crucis (Brazil). But Brazil was not discovered by Columbus. It is usually conceded to be the find of the Portuguese Cabral in 1500. How does it happen, then, that he holds a map showing a discovery not his own?

All the discoveries on the map were known in 1500. Columbus died in 1506. The earliest engraved map of the New World now known to us is the Ruysch map, published with the second edition of the Rome Ptolemy in 1508. The map in the Lotto portrait (the portrait is dated 1512, it will be remembered) is very like the West Indian portion of the Ruysch map, except in the omission of some important islands and in the spelling of some of the names. It is not impossible that Lotto used the Ruysch map, because it was in existence in his time, and that he copied the West Indian portion of it, indicating at the bottom the Terra Sanctæ Crucis, ignorant or careless as to whether Columbus did or did not discover that particular country. From the painter's point of view, there would be nothing unusual or out of the way in his doing so. But if such were the case, why did not Lotto likewise copy the spelling? Why Canibalorum for "Canibalos In," and Moferato for "Moferrato"? Why were Matinina, and Tamaragua, and other names and islands on the Ruysch map omitted entirely? Did Lotto reproduce Ruysch's map, or was Ruysch's map an enlargement of that now lost map brought to Venice for Domenico Malipiero by Angelo Trevisan in 1502—a map which Lotto must have known about and possibly copied in this portrait?

Angelo Trevisan, secretary to the Venetian Embassy at Granada, had been requested by Domenico Malipiero, the Venetian senator, admiral, and historian, to obtain for him a map of the newly discovered countries in the west, as appears from a letter of Trevisan's to Malipiero dated Granada, August 21, 1501. In that letter he speaks of his intimacy and friendship for Columbus, who was then at Granada, poor, and out of favor with the sovereigns.

Through him [Columbus] I have sent to Palos, a place where only sailors and men acquainted

with Columbus's voyages live, to have a map made at the request of your Magnificency. It will be extremely well executed and copious, and minute in respect to the newly discovered country.

Further on he speaks of its size preventing the sending of it; Malipiero must wait until Trevisan returns to Venice. In the mean time he sends a free Venetian translation of the first book of Martyr's "Decades of the Ocean," containing the first three voyages of Columbus, and promises the others. Probably Malipiero had no direct interest in Columbus. As a historian and a Venetian senator, he wanted complete information regarding the New World—perhaps to promote Venetian commerce. Possibly Columbus did not know about all the land discovered, but the Venetian Embassy in Granada did. It knew about the discovery of Terra Sanctæ Crucis by Cabral through its secretary in Portugal, and through the letter of the King of Portugal to the King of Spain (dated July 29, 1500, and printed in Rome, October 23, 1500) announcing that discovery. In August, 1501, Trevisan promises to make the map "as copious and minute as possible"; therefore he sends to have it made at Palos. Why, if not that he finds there map-makers familiar with Portuguese as well as with Spanish discoveries? There was no need of sending to Palos for Columbus's charts, because Columbus had his charts with him at Granada, where Trevisan was located. It was evidently Trevisan's object to have the map show not only the islands of Columbus's discovery, but *all the discoveries*. It is extremely likely that when the Embassy returned to Venice in 1502, Trevisan's map had, besides the West Indies, the outline of Terra Sanctæ Crucis (Brazil) upon it, and that Lotto used the map for his portrait. It is not positively known that such was the case, for all trace of the map is now lost; but one slight thing seems to connect the Lotto map with the Trevisan map, and intimates that the one was merely a painter's copy of the other. In 1504 Trevisan's Venetian translation of the first book of Martyr's "Decades" appeared under the title of "Libretto de tutte le Navigazione del Re di Spagna," and in it the spelling of the names of the countries is the same as that upon the map in the hand of the Lotto Columbus.¹ Why the map made at Palos, a Spanish port, should have Venetian and Latin names upon it corresponding to the spelling in Trevisan's "Libretto," is explicable only on the ground that Trevisan so ordered it, knowing that the map was for Venetian use. That Lotto should have copied this map with in Venice. The "Libretto" was republished with Cabral's voyage and other matter in the "Paesi novamente ritrovati," Vicentia, 1507.

¹ This information is furnished me by Signor della Rovere, who has had access to the only copy of the "Libretto" in existence, in the library of St. Mark's

Terra Sanctæ Crucis upon it, or that he should have varied the Ruysch map, using either the one or the other as a symbol of Columbus the discoverer, has nothing of the improbable about it. To paint what was before one, regardless of chronology or exact historic truth, was the story of all the Renaissance art.

There is no record that Lotto ever was in Spain or ever saw Columbus. Such things were not matters of record. There are only some half-dozen dates in Lotto's whole life, and these come mainly from churches that had paid money for his pictures. From the different towns in which these dates appear it would seem that Lotto was a wanderer over Italy at least. From 1500 to 1503 no one knows where he was. He might have been in Spain, as he was, later on, in Rome and elsewhere. He may have sketched Columbus from life and never finished the picture until 1512. Such things were not infrequent then, nor are they now. It is more likely, however, that Trevisan, the intimate friend of Columbus, who had the elaborate map made for Malipiero,—a map so large that he had to take it with him to Venice in his luggage,—also brought with him some sketch or portrait of Columbus as a complement to the map and as

a present to Malipiero. Trevisan's one-sentence description of Columbus prefacing his "Libretto," and reading "Christopher Columbus, a Genoese, high and tall, red, very clever, with a long face," seems insufficient and meaningless unless accompanied by a sketch or portrait of the man. It is not improbable that such a sketch or portrait served as Lotto's model for this larger picture. Lotto was certainly well enough known in 1512 to obtain such an order from Malipiero or Trevisan. Later on his intimate companion, Palma Vecchio, was working for a branch of the Malipiero family; but whether Lotto ever did or did not can only be conjectured.

Such, in brief, is the present evidence for the Lotto Columbus. It is not conclusive, because the portrait has outlived its record, and stands to-day, like many another Renaissance portrait, the sole witness in itself for itself. The type, the costume, the attributes, the circumstances, point toward a likeness of Columbus; that is all. Circumstantial or hearsay evidence is all that has ever been brought forward for any portrait of Columbus, and perhaps it is not too much to say that the evidence for this one is quite as strong as for any other in existence.

John C. Van Dyke.



DARE-THE-WIND.

"Western people have a proverbial saying that the blue-grass springs up wherever an Indian has stepped."—J. J. PIATT.

BLUE-GRASS dancing to your shadow
Lightly swaying o'er the sod,
Do you spring up in the meadow
Where an Indian foot has trod?

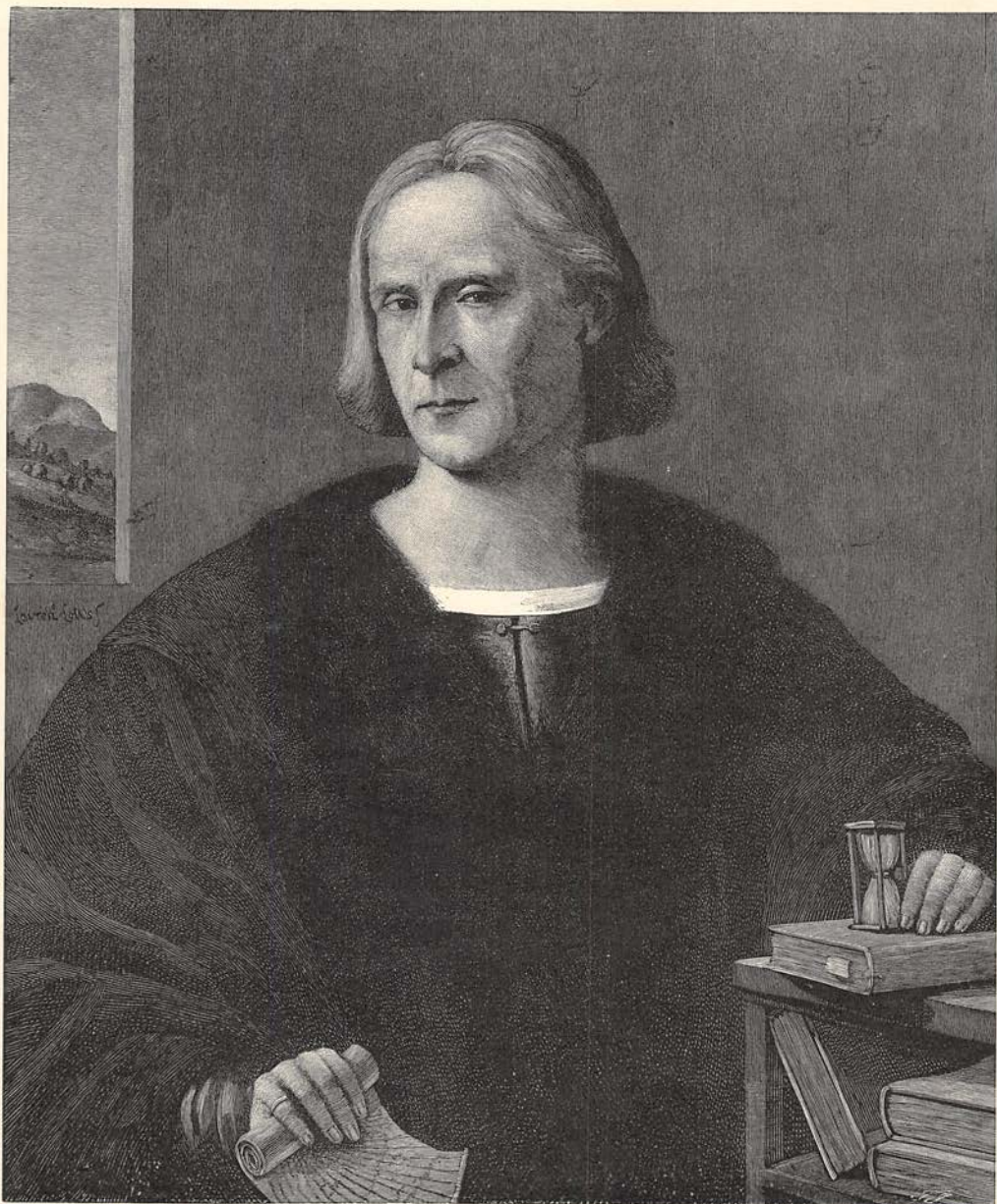
And is this the mystic sun-dance,
Feathery-crested Dare-the-Wind?
Or the thank-reel for abundance
Of tall maize in-stacks to bind?

Doughty brave, afraid of no man—
Ha, your blade is tipped with red!
'T is the blood of dusky foeman
In some old-time battle shed.

Light and lissome, tall and slender,
Pluméd chieftain of the soil,
Ay, you dance the war-dance furious
Ere you dash into the broil!

Silent, Dare-the-wind, and sulky?
Come, your secret have I found?
You 're the ghost of Indian warrior
Sent to guard yon Indian mound.

Alice Williams Brotherton.



ENGRAVED BY T. JOHNSON,

OWNED BY JAMES W. ELLSWORTH.

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