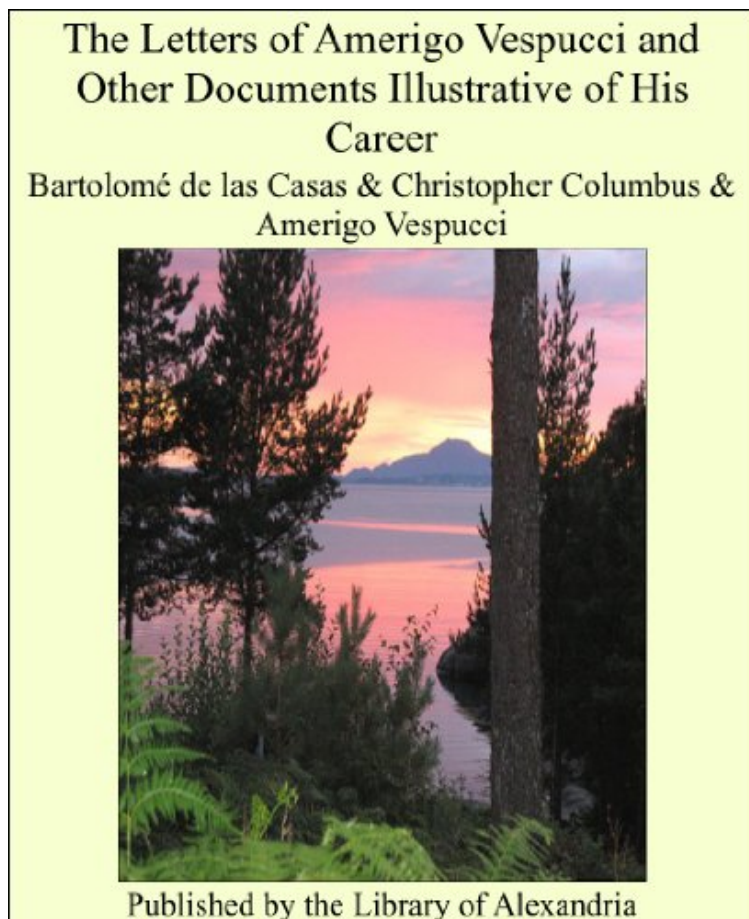


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The Letters of Amerigo Vespucci and Other Documents Illustrative of His Career



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe account of the alleged voyage of Amerigo Vespucci in 1497-98 was written for that worthys own countrymen, and for foreigners who lived at a distance from the Peninsula. When, after some years, the story reached Spain in print, men were still alive who would have known whether any such voyage had ever been made. Among them was the able and impartial historian Las Casas, who considered that the story was false, and disproved it from internal evidence. The authority of Las Casas is alone conclusive. Modern investigators, such as Robertson, Muoz, Navarrete, Humboldt, Washington Irving, and DAVEZAC examined the question, and they all came to the same conclusion as Las Casas. The matter appeared to be finally settled until 1865. In that year M. F. de Varnhagen, Baron of Porto Seguro in Brazil, published a book at Lima, 1 where he was accredited as Brazilian Minister, with the object of rehabilitating the Florentines character for honesty, by arguing that the story of the alleged voyage in 1497-98 was worthy of credit. This makes it desirable that the whole question should once more be discussed. Varnhagen at least deserves the thanks of all students of the history of American discovery for having published, in an

accessible form, both the Latin and the Italian texts of the letters of Vespucci. It has been decided by the Council of the Hakluyt Society to supply a volume to the members containing translations of the letters of Vespucci, of the chapters in which they are discussed in the history of Las Casas, and other original documents relating to the subject. Readers will thus be enabled to form independent judgments on this vexed question; while the Introduction will furnish them with the events of the life of Vespucci, and with a review of the arguments in support of Varnhagens theory, as well as of those which militate against it. A Life of Vespucci was published by an enthusiastic fellow-countryman named Bandini, in 1745, 2 who collected all there is to be known respecting his family and early life at Florence, and reprinted his authentic letters. Canovai was another biographer, and a still warmer panegyrist. 3Prsentation de l'diteurThe account of the alleged voyage of Amerigo Vespucci in 1497-98 was written for that worthys own countrymen, and for foreigners who lived at a distance from the Peninsula. When, after some years, the story reached Spain in print, men were still alive who would have known whether any such voyage had ever been made. Among them was the able and impartial historian Las Casas, who considered that the story was false, and disproved it from internal evidence. The authority of Las Casas is alone conclusive. Modern investigators, such as Robertson, Muoz, Navarrete, Humboldt, Washington Irving, and DAVEzac examined the question, and they all came to the same conclusion as Las Casas. The matter appeared to be finally settled until 1865. In that year M. F. de Varnhagen, Baron of Porto Seguro in Brazil, published a book at Lima, 1 where he was accredited as Brazilian Minister, with the object of rehabilitating the Florentines character for honesty, by arguing that the story of the alleged voyage in 1497-98 was worthy of credit. This makes it desirable that the whole question should once more be discussed. Varnhagen at least deserves the thanks of all students of the history of American discovery for having published, in an accessible form, both the Latin and the Italian texts of the letters of Vespucci. It has been decided by the Council of the Hakluyt Society to supply a volume to the members containing translations of the letters of Vespucci, of the chapters in which they are discussed in the history of Las Casas, and other original documents relating to the subject. Readers will thus be enabled to form independent judgments on this vexed question; while the Introduction will furnish them with the events of the life of Vespucci, and with a review of the arguments in support of Varnhagens theory, as well as of those which militate against it. A Life of Vespucci was published by an enthusiastic fellow-countryman named Bandini, in 1745, 2 who collected all there is to be known respecting his family and early life at Florence, and reprinted his authentic letters. Canovai was another biographer, and a still warmer panegyrist. 3