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Letters of Amerigo Vespucci

The publications of the Hakluyt Society (founded in 1846) made available edited (and sometimes translated) early accounts of exploration. The first series, which ran from 1847 to 1899, consists of 100 books containing published or previously unpublished works by authors from Christopher Columbus to Sir Francis Drake, and covering voyages to the New World, to China and Japan, to Russia and to Africa and India. Amerigo Vespucci (1454–1512) was an Italian explorer who became a controversial figure. He made several voyages to South America between 1499 and 1502, and wrote accounts of these voyages to his patron. However the publication of two letters with outrageous claims attributed to him in 1502 and 1504 brought accusations that Vespucci was attempting to undermine Christopher Columbus' fame. These letters, together with other contemporary documents are published in this volume to allow an independent judgement to be made on these claims.

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*And Other Documents
Illustrative of his Career*

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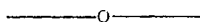
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OF

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THE LETTERS
OF
AMERIGO VESPUCCI
AND
*OTHER DOCUMENTS ILLUSTRATIVE OF
HIS CAREER.*

Translated, with Notes and an Introduction,
BY
CLEMENTS R. MARKHAM, C.B., F.R.S.,
PRESIDENT OF THE HAKLUYT SOCIETY.

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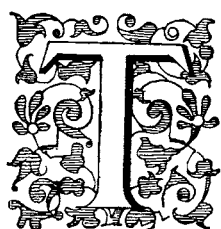
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INTRODUCTION.



THE account of the alleged voyage of Amerigo Vespucci in 1497-98 was written for that worthy's 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, Muñoz, Navarrete, Humboldt, Washington Irving, and D'Avezac 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

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Porto Seguro in Brazil, published a book at Lima,¹ where he was accredited as Brazilian Minister, with the object of rehabilitating the Florentine's 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 Varnhagen's 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

¹ *Amerigo Vespucci, son caractère, ses écrits (même les moins authentiques), sa vie, et ses navigations.* Par F. A. de Varnhagen, Ministre du Brazil en Perou. (Lima, 1865.)

² *Vita e lettere d'Amerigo Vespucci, Gentiluomo Fiorentino, raccolte ed illustrate dall' Abate Angelo Maria Bandini.* (4to, Firenze, 1745.)

family and early life at Florence, and reprinted his authentic letters. Canovai was another biographer, and a still warmer panegyrist.¹

There are three spurious letters attributed to Vespucci, but they are now so universally held to be forgeries, that they need not occupy our time.²

We learn from Bandini that Amerigo was the third son of a notary at Florence, named Ser Nastagio (Anastasio) Vespucci, by Lisabetta Mini, and that he was born on March 9th, 1451.³ He was thus four years younger than Columbus. Amerigo studied under his uncle, Fra Giorgio Antonio Vespucci, a Dominican monk of St. Marco, at Florence, who taught him Latin. A letter from Amerigo to his father, in Latin, has been preserved, dated on October 18th, 1476, at Mugello, near Trebbio, whither he had been sent in consequence

¹ *Viaggi d' Amerigo Vespucci con la vita, l'elogio, e la dissertazione justificativa di questo celebre navigatore*, del Padre Stanislao Canovai, delle scuole pie, pubblico professore di Matematico. Opera postuma. (Firenze, 8vo, 1817.)

² The first of these letters was published by Bandini from a manuscript found in the Riccardi Library at Florence. It is intended to describe the voyage with Hojeda in 1499. The second appeared in the edition of Marco Polo by Baldelli in 1827, and was also found in the Riccardi Library. It describes an imaginary voyage to the East Indies. The third describes a Portuguese voyage, and was published by Bartolozzi in 1789. It was discovered in the archives of the old Secretariat of State at Florence, among papers which belonged to the Strozzi Library. All three profess to be addressed to Lorenzo di Medici. They are reprinted by Varnhagen, pp. 69-86.

³ Bandini, *Vita*, xxiv.

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of an epidemic then raging at Florence. In the same year the elder brother, Antonio, was sent to the University of Pisa. He was a scholar and an author. His eldest son, Bartolomeo, rose to be Professor of Astrology at Pisa, and left a son. His second son, Giovanni, eventually joined his uncle Amerigo in Spain, and became a pilot. The other brother, Geronimo, went as a merchant to Syria, where he lost all he had made after nine years of labour. This is stated in a letter to Amerigo, dated July 24th, 1489, which was brought to Italy by a priest named Carnesecchi, who was returning.

Amerigo Vespucci embraced a mercantile life at Florence,¹ and was eventually taken into the great commercial house of the Medici, the head of which was Lorenzo Piero Francesco di Medici, who succeeded his father, Lorenzo the Magnificent, in 1492. The house had transactions in Spain, and required experienced agents at Cadiz. Amerigo, who was then over forty years of age, and Donato Niccolini were selected for this duty, and took up their residence at Cadiz and Seville in 1492. In December 1495, an Italian merchant, named Juanoto Berardi, died at Seville, and Vespucci was employed to wind up his affairs. This Berardi had contracted, on April 9th, 1495, to supply the Government with twelve vessels of 900 tons each for the Indies.² He handed over the first four in the same

¹ There are sixty-eight letters to him, 1483-91, chiefly on business matters.

² *Nav.*, iii, 316.

April, four more in June, and the rest in September, but unluckily the four last were wrecked before delivery.¹ On the 10th of April 1495, the Spanish Government broke faith with Columbus, and contrary to the concession made to him, free navigation was allowed to the Indies, on condition that the ships sailed from Cadiz, and were registered as submitting to certain engagements as regards the State. Gomara, an unreliable authority, alleges that many vessels took advantage of this concession. It is likely enough that some were sent on commercial ventures, but it is grossly improbable that any discoveries of importance were made and left entirely unrecorded. The Admiral remonstrated against the infraction of his rights, and the order of April 10th, 1495, was cancelled on June 2nd, 1497.

During this period Vespucci was engaged at Cadiz as a provision contractor. A record is preserved of his having received 10,000 maravedis from Treasurer Pinelo on January 12th, 1496, for payment of sailors' wages; and we learn from Muñoz that other entries² prove that Vespucci continued

¹ Four sailed for Española, under the command of Aguado, on 5th August 1495. Others were probably used for the voyage of Pero Alonzo Niño, which sailed on June 15th, 1496; and for the third expedition of Columbus in 1498.

² On the authority of Muñoz, quoted by Navarrete (iii, 317 n.). More recent researches have failed to discover these entries seen by Muñoz in the second book of *Gastos de las armadas de las Indias* of the "Casa de Contratacion"; and Mr. Harris, therefore, assumes that they never existed. This does not follow, and the evidence of so high an authority as Muñoz cannot so lightly

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his business of provision merchant at least until May 1498. He contracted for one, if not for two, of the expeditions of Columbus. A very civil and plausible man was this beef contractor, and the Admiral spoke of him, seven years afterwards, as being very respectable (*hombre muy de bien*).

In 1499, the very respectable contractor, who was approaching the age of fifty, determined to retire from business and go to sea. His own reasons for this complete change in his old age were that he had already seen and known various changes of fortune in business; that a man might at one time be at the top of the well and at another be fallen and subject to losses; and that it had become evident to him that a merchant's life was one of continual labour, with the chance of failure and ruin. It was rather late in life to make these discoveries, and it may fairly be suspected that there was some more concrete reason for his change of life which he concealed under these generalities.

The expedition in which Vespucci sailed was organised and fitted out by Alonzo de Hojeda in 1499. Columbus, having discovered the island of Trinidad and the mainland of South America on the 31st of July 1498, arrived at San Domingo in the end of August. In October he sent five ships to Spain with the news of the discovery, a chart of the

be set aside. It is true, however, that the evidence of Muñoz is not conclusive without documents, and in that case the last date on which Vespucci is mentioned as being at Seville is January 12th, 1496.

new coast-line and islands, and a report containing mention of the existence of pearls. These precious documents fell into the hands of Bishop Fonseca, who showed them to Hojeda, a man whom he favoured. The Bishop suggested that his *protégé* should equip an expedition to reap all the advantages to be derived from the discoveries of the Admiral, and granted him a licence. Hojeda was nothing loth, but he was in want of funds, and only succeeded in fitting out four vessels by promising shares of the expected profits to persons in Seville and Cadiz who would advance money. Vespucci seems to have been one of these promoters of Hojeda's voyage. Las Casas supposes that he was taken on board as a merchant who had contributed to the expenses, and also possibly on account of his theoretical knowledge of cosmography, of which he doubtless made the most.

As there is no doubt that Vespucci wrote the famous letters from Lisbon, we may gather some idea of the man from their contents. He was fond of airing his classical knowledge, though it was a mere smattering; for he thought that Pliny was the contemporary of Mécænas,¹ and that the sculptor Policletus was a painter.² On the other hand he quotes Petrarch, and gives a correct reference to a passage in Dante's *Inferno*.³ He was inaccurate in

¹ Pliny the elder was born thirty-one years after the death of Mécænas.

² "The sculptures of Polycletus and the paintings of Apelles."
 (Macaulay.)

³ Letter to Solderini, p. 3.

his narratives and regardless of the truth, as was ably shown by Las Casas,¹ while he habitually assumed the credit of work which belonged to his superiors ; and pretended to knowledge and influence which he could never have possessed.² Though externally civil and obliging, he harboured jealousy and hatred in his heart,³ and was disloyal towards the men under whom he served.⁴ Of his natural ability there can be no doubt. He wrote well, and some of his stories are capitally told.⁵ He must have been a plausible talker, so that, by such men as Fonseca and Peter Martyr, the theoretical pretender was taken at the value he put upon himself, and was believed to be a great pilot and navigator.⁶

He was certainly not a practical navigator, much less a pilot, as the term was understood in those days. Hojeda, in his evidence, said that he took with him "Juan de la Cosa, and Morigo Vespuche, and other pilots". In this sentence the "other pilots" must be intended to be coupled with Juan de la Cosa, not

¹ Chap. clxvi, end.

² Letter to Medici, p. 4.

³ Letter to Solderini, Fourth Voyage, p. 53.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

⁵ *Ibid.*, Second Voyage, p. 27.

⁶ Sebastian Cabot only knew of the qualifications of Vespucci from the report of his nephew Giovanni and others. He said, in his evidence before the Badajoz Commission (13th November 1515), that Vespucci took the altitude at Cape St. Augustine, and that he was expert in taking observations. Giovanni Vespucci also said that his uncle took sights and kept a journal. Nuño Garcia gave similar evidence. (Extracts by Muñoz from the *Registro de copias de cédulas de la Casa de la Contratación*, Nav., iii, 319.)

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with “Morigo Vespuche”. A man of fifty years of age could not go to sea for the first time and be a pilot. The thing would be absurd now, but it would be much more absurd in the fifteenth century. With the perfectly graduated and adjusted instruments, the facilities for calculations, and the appliances of all kinds with which the modern navigator is supplied, the business of the sea may be learnt more quickly than in former days. Yet no one would now dream of calling a middle-aged man an expert navigator because he had read a book on astronomy and made one or two voyages. In the fifteenth century the instruments were of the roughest kind, and much more depended on the skill and intuitive instincts of the seaman himself, qualifications which could only be acquired by a long training and many years of experience. Vespucci has the assurance to talk of his astrolabe and quadrant and sea chart, and to write disparagingly of the trained pilots of whom he was jealous.¹ But his own writings make it clear to any seaman that the Florentine contractor was merely a landlubber with a smattering of Sacrobosco or some other work *De Sphæra*, which enabled him to impose upon his brother landmen by talking of climates, of steering by winds, and of measuring diameters of fixed stars. Hojeda certainly did not ship a pilot when he took Amerigo Vespucci on board, but a very clever and very plausible landman with a keen eye to his own interests.

¹ See p. 44.

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Alonso de Hojeda left Cadiz, with four vessels, on May 20th, 1499. Endeavouring to steer by the chart of Columbus, he made a landfall at some distance to the south of Paria, off the mouths of the Orinoco. Coasting along to the northward, he came to the Gulf of Paria, went out by the Boca del Drago, and visited the island of Margarita. He then proceeded along the coast of the continent, visited Curaçoa, which he called the “Isla de los Gigantes”, and came to the Gulf of Maracaibo, where he found a village built on piles, which was named Venezuela, or Little Venice. His most western point was the province of Cuquibacoa and the Cabo de la Vela. His discovery consisted of 200 leagues of coast to the west of Paria. Along this coast Hojeda obtained gold and pearls. He had an encounter with the natives, in which one Spaniard was killed and about twenty wounded, the place being named “Puerto Flechado”. He refitted in a harbour where the people were friendly, and which Amerigo considered to be the best harbour in the world. Las Casas believed this to have been Cariaco, near Cumana. On leaving the coast Hojeda proceeded to Española, where he behaved in the outrageous manner described by Las Casas,¹ remaining two months and seventeen days, from September 5th, 1499, to November 22nd, finally visiting some islands, probably the Bahamas,² and

¹ See pages 99 to 106.

² Las Casas thinks that the islands where the natives were

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carrying off 200 natives as slaves. Hojeda returned to Cadiz in February 1500. In the same year Juan de la Cosa, the pilot of the expedition, compiled his famous map of the world, on which he delineated this new coast-line from Paria to Cabo de la Vela, the extreme point of continental land that was known up to that time. On this coast-line he placed twenty-two names, including the Boca del Drago, Margarita, the “Isla de los Gigantes”, the Lake of Venezuela (or Little Venice), and the Cabo de la Vela. The map of Juan de la Cosa is important when we come to the consideration of the statements in the letters of Vespucci.

The Florentine, on his return from this voyage, took up his residence at Seville. Here, according to his own account, he received a message from the King of Portugal, asking him to come to Lisbon. The bearer of the message was a countryman of his own, named Giuliano di Bartolomeo di Giocondo, and Vespucci would have us believe that the King attached importance to his entering the Portuguese service. The Visconde de Santarem has searched the archives in the Torre do Tombo at Lisbon, and all the Portuguese documents in Paris, without once meeting with the name of Vespucci. This absence of all official allusion to him points to the conclusion that he never held any important position as pilot or commander. He asserts that he joined a Portuguese

kidnapped, called *Iti* by Vespucci, were Dominica and Guadalupe. See p. 93.

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expedition of discovery along the coast of Brazil, which sailed on March 10th, 1501, and returned on September 7th, 1502.¹ In the following March or April (1503) he addressed a letter to the head of the mercantile house to which he had belonged, Lorenzo Piero Francesco di Medici, giving his account of the voyage. On May 10th, 1503, he sailed from Lisbon on another voyage, returning on June 28th, 1504.

In the following September he finished writing the famous letter containing an account of his alleged four voyages. The original Italian version was sent to a magnificent Lord, who is supposed to have been Piero Soderini, Gonfaloniere of Florence in 1504; and a French translation was sent to Renè, Duke of Lorraine. Soon afterwards Vespucci left the Portuguese service and returned to Spain.

In February 1505, the Admiral, Christopher Columbus, was laid up with an illness at Seville, while his brother and his son Diego were at court. Vespucci, having returned to Spain from Lisbon,

¹ These dates make the voyage mentioned in an alleged letter of Vespucci, recently found in Holland, quite impossible. This fabulous voyage from Lisbon to Calicut covered the time from March 1500 to November 15th, 1501. The letter was printed in Dutch by Jan van Doesborch at Antwerp, on December 1st, 1508 (twelve leaves). Mr. Coote (in the *Athenæum*, Jan. 20, 1894) has suggested that the date is a mistake, and that it should be 1505-1506, the date of the Portuguese voyage of Almeida; having found that some incidents in the spurious letter occur also in the account of the voyage of Almeida. But the suggested dates are equally impossible so far as Vespucci is concerned, for he was certainly in Spain during the whole of 1505 and 1506. The letter is clearly a fabrication.

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went to pay his respects to the great discoverer, and the Admiral entrusted him with a letter to his son. "The bearer of this letter", wrote Columbus, "is going to court on matters relating to navigation. He always showed a desire to please me, and he is a very respectable man. Fortune has been adverse to him, as to many others. His labours have not been so profitable to him as might have been expected. He leaves me with the desire to do me service, if it should be in his power." Vespucci had evidently been complaining to the Admiral that his Portuguese service had been a failure, and had brought him no profit. He went on to the court of Ferdinand, and soon obtained employment; receiving letters of naturalisation on the 24th of April 1505¹; but there is no record of his ever having been of any service to the Admiral. He was very plausible, and knew how to ingratiate himself with men in power. It was intended to send him on a voyage of discovery with Vicente Yañez Pinzon, and in 1506 and 1507 he was engaged in purchasing provisions for the voyage; but the idea of despatching this expedition was abandoned in 1508.²

It has been supposed, from a sentence in a letter from Hieronimo Vianelo, the Venetian Ambassador, dated at Burgos on December 23rd, 1506, that Vespucci accompanied Juan de la Cosa on a voyage of discovery to the Indies during that year.³ "The

¹ *Nav.*, iii, 292.² *Ibid.*, 294-95, 302.³ See p. 58.

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two ships have arrived from the Indies which went on a voyage of discovery under Juan Biscaino and Amerigo Fiorentino." But Vianelo must have been misinformed. There are documentary proofs that Vespucci was in Spain until August 1506. It is highly probable that the voluble Florentine retailed the story of Juan de la Cosa's voyage in such a way as to give Vianelo the impression that the narrator took part in it himself. The story of the voyage, as we find it in the letter of the Venetian Ambassador, is quite in Vespucci's manner.

On the 6th of August 1508, Amerigo Vespucci received the appointment of Chief Pilot (*Piloto Mayor*) of Spain, with a salary of 75,000 maravedis a year.¹ The "Real Titulo", or commission, is a curious and very interesting document. He is ordered to prepare an authoritative chart, called a "Padron General", on which all discoveries are to be shown, and whence the charts for all ships are to be copied; and he is also to examine all pilots in the use of the astrolabe and quadrant, and to give instruction in his house at Seville. Vespucci was able to give theoretical instruction in cosmography; although a man who first went to sea when he was nearly fifty, and who had only made three voyages, could not be an experienced pilot. With such experts as Juan de la Cosa, Juan Diaz de Solis, Vicente Pinzon, and others, available, it was indeed a strange selection. But Ferdinand and Fonseca were

¹ *Nav.*, iii, 299.

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notorious for their bad appointments. Columbus was sent home in chains, Blasco Nuñez de Balboa was beheaded ; while high places, for which they were more or less unfit, were entrusted to Ovando, Bobadilla, Pedrarias, and Vespucci.

Vespucci held the appointment of Chief Pilot until the 22nd of February 1512, when he died at Seville, aged 61. He had married a Spaniard named Maria Cerezo, but left no children. His widow received a pension of 10,000 maravedis,¹ to be paid out of the salary of her husband's successor,² Juan Diaz de Solis. Vespucci left his papers to his nephew Giovanni, son of his brother Antonio, who received the appointment of a royal pilot, with a salary of 20,000 maravedis, on May 22nd, 1512.³ He went as chief pilot in the expedition of Pedrarias Davila in 1514 ; and is mentioned as a royal pilot in 1515 and 1516. In 1524 he was a member of the Badajoz Commission, but was dismissed in March 1525.

This is all that is known of the life of Amerigo Vespucci, beyond what is contained in his own letters, which we will now proceed to consider in detail.

Of the two letters of Vespucci that have been preserved, the earliest was written from Lisbon in March or April 1503, and was addressed to Lorenzo

¹ *Nav.*, iii, 305, 308.

² On her death, in 1524, her pension was passed on to her sister Catalina. (*Nav.*, iii, 324.)

³ *Ibid.*, 306.

Piero Francesco di Medici. The original Italian text is lost, but it was translated into Latin by “Jocundus Interpreter”, who is supposed to have been the same Giuliano di Bartolomeo di Giocondo who brought the invitation to Vespucci to come to Portugal in 1501.¹ The letter describes the voyage of discovery sent from Lisbon in May 1501, in which Vespucci alleged that he took part. He alludes to a previous letter in which he had fully described “the new countries”, and continues: “it is lawful to call it a new world, because none of these countries were known to our ancestors, and to all who hear about them they will be entirely new.” He does not mention the name of the commander of the expedition, and assumes all the glory of the discovery for himself. “*I* have found a continent in that southern part more populous and more full of animals than our Europe or Asia or Africa.”² Moreover, the safety of the ships, their navigation across the ocean, their escape from perils, were all due to this wonderful beef contractor, if we are to believe his own account. “If my companions had not trusted in me, to whom cosmography was known, no one, not the leader of our navigation, would have known where we were after running five hundred leagues.” He goes on to tell us that his “knowledge of the marine chart, and the rules taught by it, were more worth than all the pilots in the world”.³ After relating some fictitious stories about the natives and

¹ See page 35.

² See page 42.

³ See pp. 44, 45.

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their cannibalism, and giving a glowing but vague account of the vegetation, he concludes with some absurd remarks about the stars of the southern hemisphere, which he has the assurance to tell us were measured by him to see which was the largest. The letter concludes with the statement that this was his third voyage, as he had made two by order of the King of Spain. This is the first intimation of a design to make two voyages out of the Hojeda expedition, one of which was to precede the Admiral's discovery of the mainland. He also announces his intention of collecting all the wonderful things he had seen into a cosmographical book, that his record may live with future generations, intending to complete it, with the aid of friends, at home. The letter shows the character of the man, and how little reliance can be placed on his statements.

The letter to Medici was printed very soon after it was written. The first issue, entitled *Mundus Novus*, consisting of four 4to leaves, and the second, *Epistola Albericij de Novo Mundo*, are without place or date. A copy of the third, printed at Augsburg in 1504, and entitled *Mundus Novus*, is in the Grenville Library. Then followed two others, and the sixth issue was the early Paris edition of Jean Lambert, a copy of which is in the Bibliothèque Nationale. Another Paris edition, nearly as old, is in the Grenville Library. In 1505, an issue, entitled *De Ora Antarctica*, and edited by Ringmann, appeared at Strasbourg. The letter was also included

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in the book of voyages, *Paesi novamente ritrovati*, printed at Vicenza in 1507, where it was called *Novo Mondo da Alb. Vesputio*. It was thus widely circulated over Europe, and Vespucci obtained the credit of discoveries made by the unnamed Portuguese commander. The title, *Novus Mundus*, is taken from the opening boast of his letter, that it is lawful to call the discovery *a new world* because no one had ever seen it before. It was thus that Vespucci got his name connected, throughout Europe, with the discovery of a New World, and this prepared the way for the proposal to give it the name of America!

The more important letter of Vespucci, containing the account of his alleged four voyages, was written in September 1504, a short time before he left Portugal. A copy, in French, was sent to René II, Duke of Lorraine, while the Italian original was addressed to a "Magnificent Lord", who is supposed, with much probability, to have been Piero Soderini, the Gonfaloniere of Florence from 1502 to 1512. Vespucci speaks of him as having been his school-fellow, and as being, at the time the letter was written, in a high official position at Florence.

The French copy was translated into Latin, and published at St. Dié in April 1507, in the *Cosmographic Introductio*, a rare little book by the Professor of Cosmography at the University of St. Dié in Lorraine, named Martin Waldzeemüller, who used the *nom de plume* of Hylacomylus. The Italian version was also printed at an early date, a little

volume in quarto of thirty-two pages, without place or year. It is excessively rare, only four copies being known to exist. One belonged to Baccio Valori, and from it Bandini published a new edition in 1745. It was afterwards the property of the Marchese Gino Capponi. The second belonged to Gaetano Poggiale of Leghorn, and is now in the Palatine Library at Florence. The third is in the Grenville Library. The fourth belonged to the Carthusian Monastery at Seville, and was bought by Varnhagen in 1863 at Havanna.¹

The Medici letter, and both the Latin and Italian versions of the Soderini letter, are given by Varnhagen in his work on Vespucci.

There are forty-four words or expressions of Spanish or Portuguese origin in the Italian version,²

¹ Varnhagen thought, from the places and dates of other pamphlets bound up in the same volume with his copy, that it was printed by Piero Paccini, at Pescia, in 1506.

² The Spanish *traer* is used for the Italian *portare* four times, *cansado* for *stanco* three times, *disnudi* for *ignudi* three times, *salir* for *escire* twice, *allargar* for *allungare* twice, *dismanparate* for *abbandonate* twice, *largi* for *lontani* twice, and *ruego* for *priego* twice. Other Hispanicisms occur once, namely:—

<i>Usado</i>	for <i>Ardilo.</i>		<i>Profito</i>	for <i>Utilita.</i>
<i>Patagna</i>	„ <i>Frivolessa.</i>		<i>Dimostra</i>	„ <i>Indizio.</i>
<i>Circa</i>	„ <i>Vecino.</i>		<i>Folgato</i>	„ <i>Spassato.</i>
<i>Brava</i>	„ <i>Selvaggio.</i>		<i>Di basso</i>	„ <i>Sotto.</i>
<i>Dispedino</i>	„ <i>Licenziano.</i>		<i>Sabiduria</i>	„ <i>Sapienza.</i>
<i>Madiana</i>	„ <i>Mediocra.</i>		<i>Corregemo</i>	„ <i>Racconciamo.</i>
<i>Formosa</i>	„ <i>Bella.</i>		<i>Difesono</i>	„ <i>Impedirono.</i>
<i>Levano</i>	„ <i>Portano.</i>		<i>Uorata in un</i>	„ <i>Incagliata in un</i>
<i>Vaciare</i>	„ <i>Volare.</i>		<i>rio.</i>	<i>fiume.</i>
<i>Scusono</i>	„ <i>Ricusano.</i>		<i>Dispopolato</i>	„ <i>Disabitato.</i>
<i>Dolentia</i>	„ <i>Infirmitta.</i>		<i>Dannato</i>	„ <i>Damaggiato.</i>
<i>Relato</i>	„ <i>Raccontato.</i>			

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which Vespucci must have got into the habit of using during his long residence in Spain, even when writing in his own language. Twelve of these refer to things belonging to the sea or ships,¹ an indication that Vespucci was ignorant of maritime affairs before he went to sea with Hojeda in 1499. But the Hispanicisms also show that the letter to Soderini was written by an Italian who had lived for several years among Spaniards. Vespucci answers to this description. He had been ten years in Spain or Portugal, or in Spanish or Portuguese ships, when he composed the letter to Soderini.

The feature in Vespucci's letters that has struck nearly all the students who have examined them, is their extraordinary vagueness. Not a single name of a commander is mentioned, and in the account of the two Spanish voyages there are not half-a-dozen names of places. The admirers of Vespucci explain this away by pointing out that he was corresponding with a friend, and only wrote what was likely to amuse him; and that he refers to a book he had written for fuller details. This might explain many omissions, but it is scarcely sufficient to account for the absolute silence respecting commanders and comrades, whom it would be as natural to mention

¹ He calls a bay *ensenada* instead of *seno*, *surgemo* for *gettamo* (*l'ancora*), *calefatar* and *brear* instead of *spalmare* and *impeciare*, *aguacero* for *rovescio*, *serrazon* for *oscurrezza*, *tormento* for *tempesta*, *palo* for *legno*, *riscatto* for *comprato*. He uses the Spanish phrase *doblar un cabo*, and the Portuguese word *fateixa* for a boat's anchor.

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as dates or the number of ships, and quite as entertaining. This extraordinary silence can really be accounted for only by the assumption that no real names could be made to fit into the facts as he gave them. This is, no doubt, the true explanation.

The "book" is referred to in four places in the Soderini letter, and once in the Medici letter. In one place Vespucci says: "In these four voyages I have seen so many things different from our customs that I have written a book to be called *The Four Voyages*, in which I have related the greater part of the things that I saw, very clearly and to the best of my ability. I have not yet published it, because my own affairs are in such a bad state that I have no taste for what I have written, yet I am inclined to publish it. In this work will be seen every event in detail, so I do not enlarge upon them here."¹ A little further on he says: "In each of my voyages I have noted down the most remarkable things, and all is reduced to a volume, in the geographical style, entitled *The Four Voyages*, in which all things are described in detail; but I have not yet sent out a copy, because it is necessary for me to revise it."² According to these two statements the book had been actually written, but not yet revised or shown to anyone. He also speaks of his observations of fixed stars as being in his *Four Voyages*.³ But towards the end of the letter he says that he refrains from recounting certain events, because he reserves

¹ See p. 11.² See pp. 16, 17.³ See p. 39.