

Montville N. J.

Feb'y 3^d. 1891.

Mr. Hubert Howe Bancroft:

Dear Sir: I have for some time had in mind to address you upon a subject, which the entire absence of personal acquaintance with you may render seemingly inappropriate, but which I trust you will recognize to be a matter of reasonable and legitimate literary business.

For something like two years, I have had in mind and have been working at intervals upon a story of the time of Columbus, my intention being to familiarize the life of that day and present the Discoverer to modern thought outlined against a background having something besides Kings, Nobles and Priests in it — not forgetting them but remembering that there were peoples as well as rulers — then.

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Now, my idea is this:

- 1 - Such a work from any hand is sure at the outset of a large and profitable sale.
- 2 - The profit from such a work may be greatly enhanced by proper management.
- 3 - Such a work, published in both English and Spanish, in parallel columns with extensive foot-notes also in both languages, and profusely illustrated and made a memorial volume of the 400th anniversary year of the Discovery would have an enormous sale and would be very valuable as a series. The Notes should be really a personal history of Columbus and should be written with relation to but not entirely subservient to the text of the story, and should occupy about the same space.

This work I expect to have ready to begin the serial publication at the time of opening the Exposition, in Oct. 1892 and the book-publication some time the next summer.

I think such a work may be made a great success both from a literary and financial point of view, if properly handled and well illustrated. I wish especially to call its financial attractions to your attention as you do not need any rehearsal of its literary possibilities. In regard to the latter I will only observe that there is even in well informed minds an absolute lack of ^{any} definite picture of the life of Columbus' time. It is the one richest of historical epochs which modern fiction seems never to have thought of re-creating. This fact makes the occasion particularly attractive,

You are the greatest living authority upon the events of that time. The works of few American novelists command a wider sale than mine. I think that a novel of mine, upon that subject, published at that time would be a decided financial success. I have no doubt that a work by you upon the life and times of Columbus would be very valuable in every way. I think that if our work was written, published as I have indicated and sold as a souvenir of that year and time the profit would be very large.

This then is the burden of my ~~inquiry~~, epistle, - to inquire whether it would not be ~~advisable~~ agreeable, profitable and altogether desirable for us to collaborate on such a work. I believe that by so doing we can each add from 50 to 100 percent to the value of our separate work by such collabora-

~~tion. I think that it would~~

The matter is as yet entirely my own secret, but arrangements for the serial publication and illustration to begin in Oct. 1892 should soon be begun. I have a fairly well elaborated, though not unchangeable plan of the story, but must visit its Spain and Italy and would be glad to get the entourage of the West Indies and Central America in my mind so as to feel that I know the ground of which I am to write. So I think I shall try to visit that region next winter. I am a rather rapid writer but I have to be soaked in the environment of what I have to depict - in other words, I must see my background and know the sky and air, the land and sea I am to portray.

Now, if we could collaborate, I do not doubt that each would give a due share of resultant value to the work. Of course, your thorough knowledge of the epoch would keep me from falling into error and by arranging the story so that the notes might be made to supplement it and make a fairly continuous life of Columbus, I think we should make it quite worthy of being considered the worthy souvenir of the quadricentennial, besides getting us present rewards.

Should the plan meet your approval, I should be glad to hear from you in regard to arranging details. Yours very truly