Mayville N. Y.
March 11-1891 -

My dear Mr. Bancroft -

Your favor of the 4th inst. is received.

Your list of material is simply marvellous to me and more than confirms my belief in our joint effectiveness. I feel sure we shall get on and do a "grand" work. Pardon my use of that overworked term "grand". I am not often guilty. But I would like us to put up a picture of that epoch which in its length and breadth, its vigor power and intense life-likeness should leave its impress upon the thought of all the future. In my mind the opportunity is unrivalled in all the world's thought

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. The speech was heroic, not-
merely in its achievements but
especially in its sentiments. The
material is abundant — almost
super abundant in its fullness
and richness. As artists are
known a matchless subject,
the most complete properties,
perfect models, and an
absolutely new canvas
of the grandest proportions
and a subject requiring
heroic treatment, — strong lines,
high colors, bravery shading,
free action.

Running over your list I
am impressed with the opportun-
ity others have missed.

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As accurate you at the first
Columbus has been printed
but never his speech — a
speech of which he was more
a forerunner than a center.

Irving and Prescott made
the artistic mistake of drawing
him and their Catholic majes-
ties heroically with the age — the
speech — entombed. It is the
other way. The man who blows
a bugle makes an army but
when one it is awake the
bugler shrinks into insignificance
beside the force he has stirred.

Besides that, neither Ir-
ving nor Prescott knew
what "America" meant. Very
probably we do not — but we
do know that it is certain to
for long to outlook the old world

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which is after all only Europe — and to continue to be so un= til the Old World has subdued or eliminated its more unman= ageable and hopeless ani= tagonisms. They mind, therefore, the magnificent sun = rise against which we shall trace our figures. More and more clearly I see that our next point

The Epoch.

My brain has been in a fer= ment over the way and method. In determining this we have to consider some what effectiveness as well as fullness and accuracy. There must also be a sort of un= consciousness. If we arbitrarily

thrust the Man too much into the foreground the thought will fail. That has been the mistake of others. We must think, too, of the opportunity for illustration and availability for serial publication.

I think, therefore, that our work should be very largely background — or apparently so, at least. That background consists of the following elements (1) His contemporaries — that is the human historical characters of his time.

They have never been adequately and effectively grouped. They fall naturally into two classes (a) those living at his birth (b) those born during his life.

(2) - The physical conditions of life at that time — the people — the manners — This has been quite neglected

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(3) - The intellectual conditions - the state of knowledge - the relation of the Columbus to philosophy, Geographical, &c. of that day. This has been done and ~~~~~.

(4) - How the people of his time were impressed by his character and regarded his discovery and the opportunities it opened.

Now, it seems to me that our work for value and artistic effect divides itself into two parts, in both of which Columbus is kept - rather in the background and measured or felt - by the impression made rather than by direct limning. This is all the more effective because

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It is a new treatment of a familiar subject. It gives us more freedom and also a wider scope. So, I think it seems to me that we may divide our work into two parts, both making when united a unique and complete picture, but which when viewed separately, seemingly distinct and individually complete in entirety.

I— The Contemporaries of Columbus — Part First — Historical Characters akin to, or in part precedent to his birth

Part Second - Historical Characters known during his life.

II — A Romance of the Great Admirals' Day.

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The first prepares the way for the second and the second illustrates the first. The first deals with great characters and great events; the second with the men who walked about between the legs of the colossus. In both Columbus will be held somewhat in the background and seen in the reflection on the lives and fortunes of others rather than in the immediate face of his enormous misfortunes.

The first intrigues your wonderful accumulation of material and gives play to your favorite method of subordinate grouping. It gives, too, a wonderful field for illustration. I think I can suggest a plan for it, which with many many modifications, of course, will not only economize your effort all but annihilate your author's

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views.

The annual part will enable me to use material which would be cumbrous in the first and print the purple ~~matter~~ in connection with the events of the epoch covered by the first - without apparent repetition.

Of course more can be determined in an hour's talk than by many letters. I am still negotiating for the annual publication and trying to learn the book publication fever as I think there is more in that than any other department of publication. I will not attempt to give details of negotiation. You might think me visionary if I did. I find the value of the work impresses every one as

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well as our peculiar pictures from it.

If nothing intervenes to ~~interfere~~ with present prospects I hope to make your comments by telegraph to a professional hand on the outline given above, for work to run ~~The~~ — the first part (I) from Jan 1st 1892 until August 1892 and the second (II) from August 1892 till May 1893 — Perhaps the whole under the ~~general~~ general title

The Columbian Epoch.

As soon as I have arranged this, and I do not mean to quit any work a moment until it is finished Mrs. Sawyer and I hope to

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accept your invitation to visit you. I trust and expect that this will be about the first of April, but cannot yet decide definitely this contingency.

Sincerely Yours

William H. Rowan

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