

Dr. Robertson was the earliest of the English writers to make even scant use of the original manuscript sources of information; and such documents as he got from Spain were obtained through the solicitation and address of Lord Grantham, the English ambassador. Everything, however, was grudgingly given, after being first directly refused. It is well known that the Spanish Government considered even what he did obtain and make use of as unfit to be brought to the attention of their own public, and the authorities interposed to prevent the translation of Robertson's history into Spanish.

In his preface Dr. Robertson speaks of the peculiar solicitude with which the Spanish archives were concealed from strangers in his time; and he tells how, to Spanish subjects even, those of Simancas were opened only upon a royal order. Papers notwithstanding such order, he says, could be copied only by payment of fees too exorbitant to favor research.¹ By order of Fernando VI., in the last century, a collection of selected copies of the most important documents in the various depositories of archives was made; and this was placed in the Biblioteca Nacional at Madrid.

In 1778 Charles III. ordered that the documents of the Indies in the Spanish offices and depositories should be brought together in one place. The movement did not receive form till 1785, when a commission was appointed; and not till 1788, did Simancas, and the other collections drawn upon, give up their treasures to be transported to Seville, where they were placed in the building provided for them.²

Muñoz, who was born in 1745, was commissioned in 1779 by the King with authority³ to search archives, public and family, and to write and publish a *Historia*

man's *La República Mejicana*, three volumes, 1844-1849. We get glimpses in the *Historia* of Las Casas of a large number of the letters of Columbus, to which he must have had access, but which are now lost. Harrisse thinks it was at Simancas, that Las Casas must have found them; for when engaged on that work he was living within two leagues of that repository. It seems probable, also, that Las Casas must have had use of the Biblioteca Colombina, when it was deposited in the convent of San Pablo (1544-1552), from whose Dominican monks Harrisse thinks it possible that Las Casas obtained possession of the Toscanelli map. He regrets, however, that for the personal history of Columbus and his family, Las Casas furnishes no information which cannot be found more nearly at first hand elsewhere. See Harrisse, *Christophe Colomb*, i. 122, 125-127, 129, 133.

¹ Robertson prefixes to his *History* a list of the Spanish books and manuscripts which he had used.

"The English reader," writes Irving in 1828, when he had published his own *Life of Columbus*, "hitherto has derived his information almost exclusively from the notice of Columbus in Dr. Robertson's *History*; this, though admir-

ably executed, is but a general outline."—*Life of Irving*, ii. 313.

² Harrisse, *Christophe Colomb*, i. 35. He also refers to the notarial records preserved at Seville, as having been but partially explored for elucidations of the earliest exploration. He found among them the will of Diego, the younger brother of Columbus (p. 38). Alfred Demersay printed in the *Bulletin de la Société de Géographie*, June, 1864, a paper, "Une mission géographique dans les archives d'Espagne et de Portugal," in which he describes, particularly as regards their possessions of documents relating to America, the condition at that time of the archives of the Torre do Tombo at Lisbon (of which, after 1842 and till his death, Santarem was archivist); those of the Kingdom of Aragon at Barcelona, and of the Indies at Seville; and the collections of Muñoz, embracing ninety-five vols. in folio, and thirty-two in quarto, and of Mata-Lanares, included in eighty folios, in the Academy of History at Madrid. He refers for fuller details to Tiran's *Archives d'Aragon et de Simancas* (1844), and to João Pedro Ribeiro's *Memorias Autenticas para a Historia do real Archivo*, Lisbon, 1819.

³ This authority to search was given later in 1781 and 1788.