

the stars, I was disturbed by a feeling unknown to those who are devoted to sedentary life. It was painful to me to renounce the hope of beholding the beautiful constellations near the south pole. Impatient to rove in the equinoctial regions, I could not raise my eyes to the starry firmament without thinking of the Southern Cross, and recalling the sublime passage of Dante, which the most celebrated commentators have applied to that constellation:—

Io mi volsi a man' destra e posi mente
 All' altro polo, e vidi quattro stelle
 Non viste mai fuorch' alla prima gente.
 Goder pareva lo ciel di lor fiammelle ;
 O settentrional vedovo sito
 Poichè privato sei di mirar quelle !

The pleasure we felt on discovering the Southern Cross was warmly shared by those of the crew who had visited the colonies. In the solitude of the seas we hail a star as a friend, from whom we have long been separated. The Portuguese and the Spaniards are peculiarly susceptible of this feeling; a religious sentiment attaches them to a constellation, the form of which recalls the sign of the faith planted by their ancestors in the deserts of the New World.

The two great stars which mark the summit and the foot of the Cross having nearly the same right ascension, it follows that the constellation is almost perpendicular at the moment when it passes the meridian. This circumstance is known to the people of every nation situated beyond the tropics, or in the southern hemisphere. It has been observed at what hour of the night, in different seasons, the Cross is erect or inclined. It is a timepiece which advances very regularly nearly four minutes a-day, and no other group of stars affords to the naked eye an observation of time so easily made. How often have we heard our guides exclaim in the savannahs of Venezuela, or in the desert extending from Lima to Truxillo, "Midnight is past, the Cross begins to bend!" How often those words reminded us of that affecting scene, where Paul and Virginia, seated near the source of the river of Lataniers, conversed together for the last time, and where the old man, at the sight of the Southern Cross, warns them that it is time to separate.