

We have hitherto considered nebulae in reference to their number and their distribution in what we call the firmament

(*Novus Orbis*, 1532, p. 58); while Ramusio (*Navigazioni*, vol. i., p. 107), and the new *Collecção de Noticias para a Hist. e Geog. das Nações Ultramarinas* (tom. ii., Lisboa, 1812, p. 57, cap. 39), in the place of the former, give an equally arbitrary drawing of the Southern Cross. (Humboldt, *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géogr.*, tom. v., p. 236.) Since, in the Middle Ages, and probably for the sake of replacing the two Daners, χ ορευραι, of Hyginus (*Poet. Astron.*, iii., 1), *i. e.*, the *Ludentes* of the Scholiast of Germanicus, or the *Custodes* of Vegetius in the Lesser Wain, the stars β and γ of Ursa Minor had been denominated the Guards, *le due guardie*, of the neighboring north pole, on account of their rotation round that point, and as this designation, as well as the habit of determining polar altitudes by these Guards (Pedro de Medina, *Arte de Navegar*, 1545, lib. v., caps. 4-7, p. 183-195), was familiar to the European pilots of all nations in the northern seas, so erroneous conclusions led men to believe from analogy that they could recognize in the southern horizon the polar star which had so long been sought for. It was not until Amerigo Vespucci's second voyage (from May, 1499, to September, 1500), when he and Vicente Yañez Pinzon (both voyages are perhaps one and the same) advanced as far in the southern hemisphere as Cape San Augustin, that they devoted themselves diligently, but to no purpose, to the search for a visible star in the immediate vicinity of the South Pole. (Bandini, *Vita e Lettere di Amerigo Vespucci*, 1745, p. 70; Anghiera, *Oceanica*, 1510, dec. i., lib. ix., p. 96; Humboldt, *Examen. Crit.*, tom. iv., p. 205, 319, 325.) The South Pole was then situated within the constellation Octans, so that β of Hydrus, if we follow the reduction of Brisbane's Catalogue, had still a southern declination of fully $80^{\circ} 5'$. "While I was engaged in observing the wonders of the southern heavens, and in vainly seeking for a pole-star, I was reminded," says Vespucci, in his letter to Pietro Francesco de' Medici, "of an expression made use of by our Dante, when, in the first chapter of the *Purgatorio*, he depicts a presumed passage from one hemisphere to the other, and in describing the Antarctic Pole, says, *Io mi volsi a man destra* In my opinion, the author intended in these verses to indicate the pole of the other firmament by his four stars (*non viste mai fuorch' alla prima gente*). I am the more certain of this, because I actually saw four stars, which together formed a lozenge, and had a slight (?) movement." Vespucci refers to the Southern Cross, *la croce meravigliosa* of Andrea Corsali (Letter from Cochin, dated January 6, 1515, in *Ramusio*, vol. i., p. 177), whose name he did not then know; but which subsequently served to mark to all pilots the position of the South Pole (as β and γ Urs. Min. indicated the North Pole. (*Mém. de l'Acad. des Sciences*, 1666-1699, tom. vii., part 2. Paris, 1729, p. 58.) This constellation also served for determinations of latitude. (Pedro de Medina, *Arte de Navegar*, 1545, lib. v., cap. xi., p. 204.) Compare my investigation of the celebrated passage of Dante in the *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géogr.*, tom. iv., p. 319-334. I there drew attention to the fact that α of the Southern Cross, which was carefully observed in modern times by Dunlop (1826), and by Rümkler (1836) at Paramatta, is one of those stars whose multiple nature was first recognized in 1681 and 1687 by the Jesuits Fontaney, Noël, and Richaud. (*Hist. de l'Acad. dep.* 1686-1699, tom. ii., Par., 1733, p. 19; *Mém de l'Acad. dep.* 1666-1699, tom. vii., 2, Par., 1729, p. 206; *Lettres édifiantes*, recueil vii., 1703,