

Hoces in 1525. It would appear from the journals still extant, and from the historical testimony of Anghiera, that the southern stars were made the special objects of attention during the voyage in which Amerigo Vespucci and Vicente Yañez Pinzon discovered Cape San Augustin in $8^{\circ} 20'$ south latitude. Vespucci boasts on this occasion of having seen three *Canopi* (one dark, *Canopo fosco*; and two bright stars, *Canopi risplendenti*). We find from an attempt made by Ideler, the ingenious author of works on the "Names of the Stars" and on "Chronology," to explain Vespucci's very confused description of the southern heavens, in his letter to Lorenzo Pierfrancesco de' Medici, of the party of the "Popolani," that Vespucci used the name in nearly as indefinite a manner as the Arabian astronomers had used the word *Suhel*. Ideler shows that the "*canopo fosco nella via lattea*" must have been the black spot, or large coal-sack in the Southern Cross; while the position of three stars, in which are supposed to be recognized α , β , and γ of Hydrus, renders it very probable that the "*canopo risplendente di notabile grandezza*" (of considerable extent) is the Nubecula Major, and the second *risplendente* the Nubecula Minor.* It is very singular that Vespucci should not have compared these recently-noticed celestial objects to clouds, as all other observers had done. One would have thought the comparison irresistible. Peter Martyr Anghiera, who was personally acquainted with all the discoverers, and whose letters were written under the vivid impression excited in his mind by their narratives, describes, with striking truthfulness, the mild but unequal effulgence of the nubeculæ. He says, "Assecuti sunt Portugallenses alterius poli gradum quinquagesimum amplius, ubi punctum (polum?) circumeuntes *quasdam nubeculas* licet intueri, veluti in lactea via sparsos fulgores per universi cœli globum intra ejus spatii latitudinem."† The exceeding fame, and

* Humboldt, *Examen Crit. de la Géogr.*, tom. iv., p. 205, 295-316 tom. v., p. 225-229, 235. Ideler, *Sternnamen*, § 346.

† Petrus Martyr Angh., *Oceanica*, dec. iii., lib. i., p. 217. I can prove from the numerical data in dec. ii., lib. x., p. 204, and dec. iii., lib. x., p. 232, that the portion of the *Oceanica*, in which the Magellanic Clouds are referred to, was written between 1514 and 1516, and therefore immediately after the expedition of Juan Diaz de Solis to the Rio de la Plata (then known as the *Rio de Solis, una mar dulce*). The latitudes are much exaggerated.

[“The Portuguese extended their discoveries to within less than 50 degrees of the South Pole, where they plainly observed certain nebulæ moving round the point (pole?), like the luminous spots scattered in