

(1689) should have mistaken Acosta's "*manchas negras*" for the luminous Magellanic Clouds.\*

Richaud, moreover, like the earliest pilots, speaks of the Coal-sacks in the plural, mentioning two, of which the large one was situated in the constellation of the Cross, and another in Charles's Oak; the latter, according to other descriptions, was subdivided into two distinct specks. These were described by Feuillée in the early part of the eighteenth century, and by Horner (in a letter to Olbers, written from Brazil in 1804), as undefined, and having confused outlines.† I was unable, during my residence in Peru, to discover any thing definite as to the Coal-sacks in Charles's Oak; and as I was disposed to ascribe this to the low position of the constellation, I applied for information to Sir John Herschel and to Rümker, the director of the Observatory at Hamburgh, who had been in far more southern latitudes than myself. Notwithstanding their endeavors, they were equally unsuccessful in discovering any thing that could be compared for definiteness of outline and intensity of blackness with the Coal-sack in the Cross. Sir John Herschel is of opinion that we can not speak of a plurality of Coal-sacks, unless we would include under that head every ill-defined and darker portion of the heavens, as the regions between  $\alpha$  Centauri and  $\beta$  and  $\gamma$  Trianguli,‡ between  $\eta$  and  $\theta$  Argûs, and more especially the barren portion of the Milky Way in the Northern heavens, between  $\varepsilon$ ,  $\alpha$ , and  $\gamma$  Cygni.§

The longest known *Black Speck* in the Southern Cross, and the one which is also the most striking as seen by the naked eye, is of a pear-like shape, and lies on the eastern side of that constellation, in  $8^{\circ}$  long. and  $5^{\circ}$  lat. This large space presents one visible star of the 6th to the 7th magnitude, together with a large number of telescopic stars, varying from the 11th to the 13th magnitudes. A small group of 40 stars lies nearly in the center.|| The paucity of stars, and the contrast with the magnificent effulgence of the neigh-

\* *Mém. de l'Acad. des Sciences dep. 1666 jusqu'à 1699*, t. vii., partie 2 (Paris, 1729), p. 206.

† Letter to Olbers from St. Catharina (January, 1804), in Zach's *Monatl. Correspondenz zur Beförd. der Erd- und Himmels-Kunde*, bd. x., p. 240. See, on Feuillée's observation and rough sketch of the black spot in the Southern Cross, Zach, *Op. cit.*, bd. xv., 1807, p. 388-391.

‡ *Observ. at the Cape*, pl. xiii. § *Outlines of Astronomy*, p. 531.

|| *Observ. at the Cape*, p. 384, No. 3407, of the catalogue of nebulae and clusters. (Compare Dunlop in the *Philos. Transact.* for 1828, p. 149, and No. 272 of his Catalogue.)