

the case at the time of Hiram and the Ptolemies, or during the Roman dominion, and the period in which the Arabs maintained commercial intercourse with the nations dwelling on the shores of the Red Sea or of the Indian Ocean, between the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb and the western peninsula of India. Amerigo Vespucci, in his letters, Vicente Yañez Pinzon, Pigafetta, the companion of Magellan and Elcano, and Andrea Corsali, in his voyage to Cochin in the East Indies, in the beginning of the sixteenth century, gave the first and most animated accounts of the southern sky (beyond the feet of the Centaur and the glorious constellation Argo). Amerigo, who had higher literary acquirements, and whose style was also more redundant than that of the others, extols, not ungracefully, the glowing richness of the light, and the picturesque grouping and strange aspect of the constellations that circle round the southern pole, which is surrounded by so few stars. He maintains, in his letters to Pierfrancesco de' Medici, that he had carefully devoted his attention, on his third voyage, to the southern constellations, having made drawings of them and measured their polar distances. His communications regarding these observations do not, indeed, leave much cause to regret that any portion of them should have been lost.

I find that the first mention of the mysterious black specks (coal-bags) was made by Anghiera in the year 1510. They had already been observed in 1499 by the companions of Vicente Yañez Pinzon, on the expedition dispatched from Palos, and which took possession of the Brazilian Cape San Augustin.\* The *Canopo fosco* (*Canopus niger*) of Amerigo is probably also one of these *coal-bags*. The intelligent Acosta compares them to the darkened portion of the moon's disk (in partial eclipses), and appears to ascribe them to a void in the heavens, or to an absence of stars. Rigaud has shown how the reference to the coal-bags, of which Acosta says positively that they are visible in Peru (and not in Europe), and move round the south pole, has been regarded by a celebrated astronomer as the first notice of spots on the sun.† The knowledge of the two Magellanic clouds has been unjustly ascribed to Pigafetta, for I find that Anghiera, on the observations of Portuguese seamen, mentions these clouds fully eight years

\* Petr. Mart., *Ocean.*, Dec. i., lib. ix., p. 96; *Examen Crit.*, t. iv., p. 221 and 317.

† Acosta, *Hist. Natural de las Indias*, lib. i., cap. 2; Rigaud, *Account of Harriot's Astron. Papers*, 1833, p. 37.