

other. 'See my *Examen Crit de l'Hist. de la Géographie*, t. iii., p. 154-158 and 225-227.)

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GREAT DISCOVERIES IN THE HEAVENS BY THE APPLICATION OF THE TELESCOPE.—PRINCIPAL EPOCHS IN THE HISTORY OF ASTRONOMY AND MATHEMATICS, FROM GALILEO AND KEPLER TO NEWTON AND LEIBNITZ.—LAWS OF THE PLANETARY MOTIONS AND GENERAL THEORY OF GRAVITATION.

AFTER having endeavored to enumerate the most distinctly defined periods and stages of development in the history of the contemplation of the universe, we have proceeded to delineate the epoch in which the civilized nations of one hemisphere became acquainted with the inhabitants of the other. The periods of the greatest discoveries in space over the surface of our planet was immediately succeeded by the revelations of

rare manuscript of Bartholomé de las Casas, I would wish to embody in this long note what I did not employ in 1839 in my *Examen Critique*, t. v., p. 178-217. The conviction which I then expressed, in the same volume, p. 217 and 224, has remained unshaken. "Where the designation of a large continent, generally adopted as such, and consecrated by the usage of many ages, presents itself to us as a monument of human injustice, it is natural that we should at first sight attribute the cause to the person who would appear most interested in the matter. A careful study of the documentary evidence has, however, shown that this supposition in the present instance is devoid of foundation, and that the name of America has originated in a distant region (as, for instance, in France and Germany), owing to many concurrent circumstances which appear to remove all suspicion from Vespucci. Here historical criticism stops, for the field of *unknown* causes and *possible* moral contingencies does not come within the domain of positive history. We here find a man who, during a long life, enjoyed the esteem of his cotemporaries, raised by his attainments in nautical astronomy to an honorable employment. The concurrence of many fortuitous circumstances gave him a celebrity which has weighed upon his memory, and helped to throw discredit on his character. Such a position is indeed rare in the history of human misfortunes, and affords an instance of a moral stain deepened by the glory of an illustrious name. It seems most desirable to examine, amid this mixture of success and adversity, what is owing to the navigator himself, to the accidental errors arising from a hasty supervision of his writings, or to the indiscretion of dangerous friends." Copernicus himself contributed to this dangerous celebrity, for he also ascribes the discovery of the new part of the globe to Vespucci. In discussing the "*centrum gravitatis*" and "*centrum magnitudinis*" of the continent, he adds, "magis id erit clarum, si addentur insulæ ætate nostra sub Hispaniarum Lusitaniæque principibus repertæ et præsertim America ab inventore denominata navium præfecto, quem, ob incompertam ejus adhuc magnitudinem, alterum orbem terrarum putent." (*Nicolai Copernici de Revolutionibus Orbium Cælestium*, libri sex, 1543, p. 2, a.)