

HENRY VIGNAUD HAS ENDED CONTROVERSY

Paris, April 19.—Henry Vignaud, first secretary of the United States embassy here and vice president of the Americanists Society of Paris, has closed his controversy with Sir Clements Markham, president of the Royal Geographical Society, which arose from the publication of his book "Toscanelli and Columbus," by publishing Clements Markham's last letter and his reply thereto. Mr. Vignaud brings out several new points going to show that the letter of Toscanelli, the famous Florentine astronomer, was a forgery, he declines, however, to fix the responsibility for it. He points to the probable sources of the statements of various authors who hitherto have been relied on as proving the existence of the letter, and comes to the conclusion that if the letter was spurious Columbus may have remained in ignorance of the fraud and hence could not be expected to mention a fact of which he was not aware, or, of which he disapproved if he was aware.

Mr. Vignaud says if the letter was genuine Columbus was guilty of hiding the source to which he owed the circumstances that today constitute his chief title to glory and of claiming as his own the trophies stolen from Toscanelli. In the first instance the conduct of Columbus is capable of a natural explanation. In the second nothing can serve to remove from his memory this stain which his action indelibly has impressed thereon.

Mr. Vignaud's book "Toscanelli and Columbus" was published in Paris in 1901. In an interview on the book Mr. Vignaud said:

"The work is intended to show that for the last four centuries we have been deceived by a fraud which hides from us the real beginnings of Columbus' project and that the famous documents ascribed to Toscanelli were fabricated. I submit excellent reasons for believing that Toscanelli never wrote the letter of 1474 to the king of Portugal and never traced the chart alleged to have accompanied it. Columbus' design was not founded on any scientific basis, but on positive information as to the existence of lands to the westward."