

CALLS COLUMBUS A FOURFLUSHER

Muckraker Vignaud Thus Brands Discoverer of America.

STUDIED CASE FIFTY YEARS.

Declares Columbus Learned of the Existence of America From an Ignorant Sailor Who Had Seen It First Ahead of Him—Makes a Bitter Attack on the Explorer.

Two volumes of a work by Henry Vignaud, first secretary of the American embassy, at Paris, in which the discoverer of America is branded an impostor and a humbug, have just been published.

Vignaud retired from the American embassy two years ago and has since devoted his entire time to the completion of a study of Columbus which has consumed in all fifty years. The author is now eighty-one years of age. He is celebrated as a historian and was consulted recently by the pope when it was proposed to canonize Columbus. At that time Vignaud showed that the explorer was anything but a saintly man and that he had at least one illegitimate son.

Took Credit From Another.

In his study of Columbus Vignaud undertakes to prove that the explorer's discovery of America was not the result of his own genius, that the expedition was not based upon scientific data, but that Columbus actually learned of the existence of America from an ignorant sailor who had been there ahead of him—in a word, that America was discovered long before Columbus ever organized his expedition and that he merely took the credit from another man unknown to history.

The story that Toscanelli wrote a letter to Columbus inclosing a chart showing the route across the Atlantic and that it was with this in hand that Columbus started out to find the new world is disposed of by Mr. Vignaud. He declares that the Toscanelli letter was a forgery perpetrated possibly by Columbus himself, but more probably by the explorer's brother, Bartholomew Columbus.

A Forged Letter.

Vignaud says that in 1871 a copy of the forged letter was found on a blank page of a book once the explorer's property. This is undoubtedly in Columbus' writing, says Vignaud. A facsimile of the document is published in Vignaud's work. Vignaud further undertakes to prove that the map used by Columbus could not have come from Toscanelli because it contained exact information which no amount of scientific thinking could have adduced, but which could only have been learned from actual experience.

Vignaud says that Columbus not infrequently acted in a manner which renders it possible to suspect him of deception. He says the explorer concealed the lowness of his origin; that he boasted that he was descended from other admirals of the name of Columbus, though it has been discovered that the men in question were not even of his nationality, one being a Greek and the other a Frenchman; that he boasted of having served under King Rene of Anjou, while modern critics prove that he did not; that he often referred to the voyages he made in his youth, while facts show the statements to be wholly untrue.

PLATINUM THE THING.

Its Use as Fashionable Metal Dictated by Jewelers.

An edict of the National Wholesale Jewelers' association names platinum as the precious metal upon which men and women of wealth shall hereafter lavish their surplus cash.

Platinum, which is more rare and expensive than gold, has heretofore been used chiefly for expensive diamond settings. Henceforth it is to be used in all kinds of smaller articles, such as stickpins and studs for men and earrings, brooches, rings, chains and bracelets for women. Hard platinum costs wholesale \$42 and the soft variety costs from \$38 to \$40 an ounce. The retail price ranges from \$52 to \$60 an ounce. This makes the new metal especially desirable, according to the jewelers, as it is calculated to be almost, if not quite, beyond the reach of persons of ordinary means.

DRYDOCK FOR WHALES.

Device Is to Be Used For Keeping Carcasses Afloat After Capture.

The only known "drydock for whales" has been ordered built at the Western Boat works, Long Beach, Cal., and Captain E. E. Dodge, proprietor of the boat works, is hauling from San Pedro 35,000 feet of lumber, which will be required to build the barge. It will be 30 by 70 feet in size and will cost \$2,500.

"I am to build the barge for J. D. Loop, launch owner and whale hunter," said Captain Dodge. "He calls it a drydock for whales. I understand he will use it to buoy up whales that he may capture in the future as well as use it for a landing at the side of big ships which may anchor in the bay."

Shown by the Census.

The census returns showed that in Nevada there was only seven-tenths of a man to the square mile.