

"PRINCE OF AMERICANISTS"

VETERAN'S LATEST BIOGRAPHY

Booklet by the Venerable John Henry Vignaud, Louisiana's Famous Diplomat, Sheds New Light on a Learned Authority on the Discovery of America—Mystery of Henry Harrisse's Origin.



HE venerable John Henry Vignaud, now in his eighty-second year, has published a booklet on Henry Harrisse, "Prince of Americanists."

Born in New Orleans, newspaper editor, captain of the Sixth Louisiana Regiment of the Confederate Army, captured by General Butler, secretary of the Confederate Diplomatic Commission of Paris, secretary of the Roumanian Legation in Paris, and secretary of the American embassy for thirty-five years—such are the landmarks in the life of the venerable Vignaud.

Owing to the generosity of twenty personal friends, who presented him with an annuity, he is now spending the winter of his life in the little town of Bagnaux, a suburb of Paris. His dignified ease is interrupted by agreeable literary work, the latest of which is this biographical and critical study of Henry Harrisse and his writings.

Mr. Vignaud, the greatest authority on Columbus and on all questions pertaining to the discoverer of America, is president of the Society of Americanists of Paris. This society has for its object the study of American history in all its branches. It was its president who gave the late Henry Harrisse the name of "Prince of Americanists."

Harrisse, like Columbus, of whom he was the historian, concealed his birthplace. But Vignaud says he was the son of a Russian Jew and of a pretty Parisian. Like Admiral John Paul Jones, Tom Paine, General La Fayette and other distinguished citizens of the great republic, he was an American by virtue of naturalization. He went to America when very young, taught French literature in the Caro-

linas, studied law under the direction of the eminent advocate, Charles O'Connor, of New York, and became the law partner of Samuel Barlow, another learned Americanist.

Returning to Paris, he was one of the few Americans who were here during the stirring days of the siege and the Commune. Fortune smiled upon him in the city of light. He was counsel for the American consulate and for several American assurance companies doing business here. This learned and eccentric man died at No. 30 Rue de La Cambaceres over two years ago, in apartments which he had occupied for more than forty years and wherein his chief works were written. His body was cremated and his ashes put in an urn which bears no inscription.

Mr. Vignaud informs us that Harrisse's first literary work was an article in the North American Review, for which he was paid \$10. The ten-dollar bill he had framed and hung in his study. While still a teacher he studied the writings of that most imaginative philosopher from the fens of Holland, the great Descartes—whose guiding principle was "I think, therefore I am"—and translated into English his "Method and Principles."

There are some thirty volumes from the pen of the learned Harrisse. Many of these deal with Christopher Columbus and the first discoverers of the New World, such as, for instance, the ancestors of Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, namely, John Mathew and Sebastian Cabot. In his book on the discovery of North America, Harrisse gives biographical accounts of 300 pilots who first crossed the Atlantic. Though living to a great age, his work was not finished when death came. His purpose was to write a trilogy of the three great discoverers of the New World—Cabot, Columbus and Ves-

pacius. He had published his works on the first two and he had collected material for a book on Americus Vesputius when the angel of death came.

To the Library of Congress Harrisse willed a complete set of his printed

works, also his manuscripts and most of his maps. Among the last are the original editions of the two maps of Champlain, as well as important ones of Manhattan and the East Indies.

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HENRY VIGNAUD,

The Veteran American Who Served as Secretary to the Legation in Paris for Many Years. He is an Authority on the History of the Discovery of America.

AMERICANISTS

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made by the geographer Ivan Vingboons in 1639.

His writings were so appreciated in France that on the occasion of the fourth centenary of the discovery of America, M. Ribot, then minister of foreign affairs, conferred upon him the Grand Cross of the Legion of Honor.

PIERRE ROCHECOURT.
