

THE DISCOVERY OF AMERICA.

Dispute Over Toscanelli's Part in Enterprise—Henry Vignaud Replies to Dr Ruge.

Henry Vignaud, first secretary of the United States embassy at Paris, has joined issue with the German savant, Dr Sophus Ruge, of Dresden, who criticised Mr Vignaud's theories regarding the part of Toscanelli in the discovery of America. Mr Vignaud's pamphlet handles Dr Ruge severely, pointing out errors in fact and judgment, and charging him with entering into the controversy quite unprepared. The character of the paper places Prof Ruge on the defensive. Mr Vignaud, who is vice-president of the American society of Paris, has made a lifelong study of the discovery and early history of America. In September, 1901, he published an important work in which he claims to expose a fraud which for centuries has hidden the real beginnings of Columbus's project, and to prove that the famous documents ascribed to Toscanelli, the Florentine astronomer, which were supposed to have served as a guide to Columbus, were fabricated. He submitted excellent reasons for believing that Toscanelli never wrote the famous letter of 1474 to the king of Portugal, and never traced the chart alleged to have accompanied it. Columbus's design, he demonstrated, was not founded on any scientific basis, but on positive information as to the existence of lands to the westward.