

**AMERICUS VESPUCCIUS: A
CRITICAL AND DOCUMENTARY
REVIEW OF TWO RECENT
ENGLISH BOOKS CONCERNING
THAT NAVIGATOR**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649023776

Americus Vespuccius: A Critical and Documentary Review of Two Recent English Books
Concerning That Navigator by Henry Harrisse

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Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

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HENRY HARRISSE

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ARMS OF BALTHAZAR SPRENGER
THE REAL AUTHOR OF THE ALLEGED VESPUCCIAN
VOYAGE FROM LISBON TO INDIA 1505-6.

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AMERICUS VESPUCCIUS



*A Critical and Documentary
Review of Two recent English
Books concerning that Navigator*

BY HENRY HARRISSE



LONDON

B. F. STEVENS, 4 TRAFALGAR SQUARE

1895



PUBLISHER'S APOLOGY.



ALL books and manuscripts associating the name of AMERICUS VESPUCCIUS, rightly or wrongly, with voyages or expeditions, are of importance to collectors of *Americana*.

Having recently published the *Voyage from Lisbon to India, 1505-6, being an Account and Journal by Albericus Vespuccius, translated from the contemporary Flemish and edited with Prologue and Notes by C. H. Coote, Department of Printed Books (Geographical Section), British Museum*, I now have pleasure in issuing a controversial twin volume, *Americus Vespuccius: A Critical and Documentary Review of two recent English Books concerning that Navigator, by Henry HARRISSE*.

As a Publisher, I have only to present both sides of the question, and leave the reader to judge for himself. Meanwhile, it will be readily granted that these two publications possess the merit of reviving, in one form or another, the

fullest and most authentic account, long since forgotten, of one of the greatest achievements in the history of maritime enterprise. This, of itself, would suffice to enlist the goodwill of the historical student.

In addition to a review of Mr. Markham's and of Mr. Coote's books on Vespuccius, the reader will find a bibliographical analysis of thirteen ancient documents relative to the part which the merchant-princes of Augsburg and Nuremberg took in the famous expeditions of the Portuguese to India, at the beginning of the sixteenth century. Mr. HARRISSE has also added interesting extracts from the original texts, with a translation into English, and compared them with the Flemish version edited by Mr. Coote.

I may finally call attention to the chapter concerning the extremely rare plates designed by Hans Burgkmair in 1508, and their imitations, which refer to the marvellous exploits of Francisco d'Almeida in Africa and the East Indies.

B. F. S.





INTRODUCTION.

THE four voyages of Americus Vespuccius across the Ocean (1497-1504), remain the enigma of the early history of America. The probability is that it will never be solved. Yet every new book on the subject engrosses at once the attention of the student who takes an interest in the first Transatlantic navigations, and that even in a higher degree than the writings devoted to Christopher Columbus. Perhaps it is owing to the fact that we are getting every day nearer the truth regarding the life and deeds of the great Genoese, whilst, on the contrary, the calumniated Florentine recedes more and more from the field of historical demonstration.

Two works which have been published recently in England on the question, afford another instance of this seeming paradox. One of these sets forth deductions from imaginary premises; the other is a sheer imposture, dating from the beginning of the sixteenth century, and now unconsciously revived.



