

HENRY HARRISSE

HENRY HARRISSE's name is connected with one of the most erudite bibliographies ever published; indeed, according to Nicolas Trübner, Harrisse's "*Bibliotheca Americana Vetusissima*" is a "work unrivalled in its extent, accuracy, and comprehensiveness." This is the more remarkable because Harrisse had no bibliographic training, and because the work in question was his first attempt in this field. Before undertaking the work on the "*Bibliotheca Americana*," he had devoted himself exclusively to art, criticism, and the history of philosophy, translating into English and annotating all the metaphysical works of Descartes. Being unable to find a publisher in America for that class of books, he turned his attention to other subjects. At this time—about 1864-65—he made the acquaintance of Samuel Latham Mitchill Barlow, the generous collector to whose munificence bibliographical science is indebted for this splendid publication. Mr. Barlow shortly before had bought the library of Colonel Aspinwall that was destroyed in the fire which consumed the premises of Bangs, Merwin & Co., 696 Broadway, where the books were temporarily stored. Fortunately, Mr. Barlow, a few days before this disaster, had removed to his house a number of the rarest treasures in the collection. Harrisse was tempted, by the aid of Mr. Barlow's rich mine of invaluable works, to write a history of the beginnings, the decline, and the fall of the Spanish Empire in the New World. In making his selections