

After many attempts this cape was cleared in 1433 or 1434 by Gil Eannes. Up to the time of Prince Henry's death, in 1460, the Portuguese had reconnoitred the African coast for about 1700 geographical miles, or about one-third of the distance to the Cape of Good Hope, which was finally doubled by Bartholomew Diaz in an expedition which DIAZ set sail at the end of August 1486; thus for the first time was the true form of the African continent, as well as the communication between the Atlantic and Indian Oceans discovered.

Columbus, while traversing the African and British seas, drawing charts and reading COLUMBUS philosophical works, conceived the idea of those voyages of discovery which are always associated with his illustrious name. The successful expedition of Diaz made Columbus all the more impatient to start on his daring voyage across the Atlantic.<sup>1</sup> He calculated that there was an interval of not more than 90° between the Canary Islands and the eastern shores of Asia, and he estimated these 90°, on the parallel of the Canaries, at 1100 Spanish leagues, equivalent to five weeks of direct navigation; he thus erred in his calculations by 110° or about 2000 leagues. The doctrine of the Antipodes was far from being currently accepted; an instinctive terror was awakened at the idea of an immense unknown sea, at a time when the most daring navigators barely lost sight of the coasts. Yet Columbus successfully surmounted all the prejudices which prevailed in his day. It is not necessary to describe his embarkation at Palos, his rest at the Canaries, his passage across the Sargasso Sea, his struggles with his crew, his arrival in October 1492 at Guanahani. The examination of a part of the Greater Antilles was the fruit of this first voyage; the later ones do not relate directly to our subject. The Atlantic had been crossed, but the celebrated Genoese had no suspicion as yet of a still greater ocean beyond<sup>2</sup>; America was for him only the continent of Asia. In the newly-discovered land Columbus was further from the riches of Cathay than when he left Spain. He spent years in searching, on the opposite side of the world from its true position, for the kingdom of Kublai Khan, a hundred years after the Grand Khan's race had been driven from the throne of China.

Bartholomew Diaz, as we have seen, not only reached the Cape of Good Hope in 1486, but passed to the east of it more than 140 leagues. A short distance further and he would have united the Portuguese discoveries to those parts of Eastern Africa known from an early date to the Arabs. At the same time that Diaz was sent towards the Cape, the Portuguese sent Pedro de Covilham by way of Egypt to Aden, and thence to Hindustan, Madagascar, and Sofala. It remained for the Portuguese merely to unite these voyages by a continuous one around the Cape and as far as India. This was accomplished by Vasco da Gama in November 1497; his fleet passed the Cape of Good VASCO DA GAMA.

<sup>1</sup> Columbus' own brother, Bartholomew, is believed to have taken part in the voyage of Bartholomew Diaz around the Cape of Good Hope.

<sup>2</sup> In October 1502 Columbus, while in the neighbourhood of the Chiriquí Archipelago, learnt from a native that at nine days' journey to the west there was another ocean. This was the first hint of the Pacific which reached Europeans.