

Asia represented on the chart of Toscanelli.¹ The absence of all domestic animals among the natives, as well as of all the civilisation, wealth, and display of the fabulous East, must have forced this conclusion on the mind of Columbus, although he may have felt that to acknowledge this to the Spanish sovereigns would have proved fatal to further discovery in the West. We know he prevented some of his companions who held these views from returning to Spain, fearing the result should such opinions be made known at the Spanish court. Indeed, as early as the second year of the sixteenth century, the eastern coast lines of the American continent had been more or less carefully examined from Labrador to the mouth of the Rio de la Plata, and every endeavour was being made to find a strait leading towards the Indies.

On the 25th September 1513, from the summit of the Sierra Quarequa, Vasco Nuñez de Balbao beheld a boundless ocean extending towards the setting sun—the Pacific was discovered. During many years a passage into this further ocean was in vain sought for in all directions, towards the north as well as towards the south; this was finally discovered by Magellan.

Ferdinand Magellan, after a sojourn in the far east in the service of Portugal, returned home and devoted himself to serious cosmographical studies. He became convinced that the Spice Islands lay so far to the east as to be situated in the hemisphere reserved for the Spaniards by the decision of the Pope.² He consequently offered his services to the King of Spain, and proposed to reach these islands by a new and shorter route than that taken by the Portuguese. He embarked on the 20th September 1519; in the following year, on the 21st October, he entered the mouth of a passage in 52° south latitude, henceforth to be known as the Strait of Magellan. On the 28th November, on leaving the Strait, he beheld the mighty ocean. For ninety-nine days the vessels of Magellan ploughed the Pacific; on the 6th March 1521 the Mariana Isles rose before them, and ten days later the flotilla was in sight of the archipelago which was to bear the name of Philippines. Here Magellan lost his life in a fight with the natives of Mactan, but one of his vessels,—the “Victoria,” in command of Sebastian del Cano—ultimately reached Spain in 1522.

A memorable fact connected with this great expedition is the attempt of Magellan to determine the depth of the ocean. At that period the sounding lines carried by explorers measured from one to two hundred fathoms, and it was with the assistance of these that Magellan tried to sound the ocean in 1521 between the two coral islands, St Paul and Los Tiburones; he was, of course, unable to reach the bottom, and somewhat naively concluded from this that he had reached the deepest part of the ocean. Great historical interest attaches to this attempt, for it is the first authentic sounding ever

¹ HARRISSE, *The Discovery of North America*, London and Paris, 1892, pp. 97, &c.

² This papal line was at first placed at 100 leagues to the west of the Cape Verdes, but by a later treaty at 370 leagues to the west (see August BAUM, *Die Demarkationslinie Papst Alexanders VI. und ihre Folgen*, p. 54, 1890).