

ing the path of empire on the West, others of their fellow-citizens were making journeys overland toward the East. They learned that as they had been reaching out to the Orient, so Moslem traders had been seeking the West. The slant-sailed ships of the East had long made regular voyages to Zanzibar and other African ports. It now only remained for some one to fill in the blank in order to bring the civilization of the East and West into intimate touch. This last link in this chain of discovery was not to remain long unforged, for in 1497 Vasco da Gama set sail, not for the Cape only, but for India itself. After storm and stress, treachery and hunger, Capo Bona Speranza was passed, and finally the points on the north-eastern coast of Africa, already in touch with eastern commerce. It now only remained for Da Gama to take his course across the Indian Ocean to complete his task. This last feat was soon accomplished, and for the first time European ships rode in the harbour of Calcutta. The door to India was open.

Now that this wonderful path had been discovered, many were willing to follow it. Various nations coveted the rich treasures of far Cathay. The Portuguese proved to be better navigators than traders, and were soon distanced by both France and Holland. England was, however, now coming into prominence as a sea power, and very soon between these three nations began the struggle for supremacy in the East, with what result the world already knows.

Sir James Lancaster was the first to seek the far East in England's name. Sailing from Plymouth on the 10th of April, 1591, he returned after an absence of over three years, having rounded Cape Cormorin, the southern extremity of India, and enduring much hard-

ship. The spirit of the times can be judged from the records of these voyages. Then "might was right," and trade or piracy was alike honourable. After taking several rich prizes they waited at Ceylon for a certain fleet, "which ships were to come that way within fourteene dayes to bring commodities to serve the Caraks which commonly départ from Cochin for Portugal by the middest of Januarie." "Capture whom you can and surrender when you must" was the accepted motto of all.

Prior to this, however, England had had considerable trade with the East through the Levant, and by the grace of the Grand Turk. But now that English ships had ploughed these stormy seas, and English merchants had tasted at first hand the sweets of this trade, the all-sea route was henceforth to be the only feasible one for the Island Queen. Accordingly, in the year 1599, the great East India Company was formed by London merchants, their rights being secured by charter. The settled policy of the Portuguese was to "keep the coast of India from being traded with by other nations." It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Portuguese Ambassador objecting to the great honour shown the Company's representative by the Court of Acheen, Sumatra. The Portuguese Ambassador, however, got snubbed for his pains, while the Company's representative secured valuable presents and important concessions for trade. Though not in India proper, this may be regarded as the real beginning of England's Empire in the East.

Other voyages followed, and trade with the mainland became established, though for a time it was considerably hindered by the jealousies of the Portuguese. Britain's star, however, was in the