

ward, to be stopped, however, by the Indus, on the western frontier of India. In later days, the Mahometans brought the spices, the gold, the jewels of the far East to Syria, whence the Crusaders, witnessing all this magnificence, carried back to Western Europe a knowledge of Eastern luxury. This knowledge begot desire, and gradually among European nations a love of luxury and a passion for the products of far climes sprang up. To satisfy this desire, the most eastern maritime nations of Europe—the republics of Venice and Genoa—cultivated a trade with the East, in order to supply the markets of the West, and rose to greatness and splendour upon the profits of that trade. “In the middle of the thirteenth century Marco Polo, the famous navigator, brought back to Western Europe such glowing accounts of the East, as verified all the traditionary tales of Cipango and Cathay.” About that time men’s minds were awaking from the torpidity of the Middle Ages. The age of chivalry died with the last crusade. Trade and manufactures were calling into existence all over Western Europe a race of practical men, whose minds had shuffled off the coil of worn-out, exploded ideas. The last news from the East aroused cupidity and awakened enterprise; and there was a spirit in the very air, of vague and blind desire to reach the wonders and the wealth of the mysterious East. When such a spirit is abroad, the Unknown is sure to reveal itself sooner or later, and become the Known. At that period there was much mercantile activity in Portugal; her navigators were accustomed to coast along the western shores of Africa. Enterprise in this direction was encouraged by the Portuguese king, until coasting farther and still farther south, his navigators reached the southern extremity of the African continent, rounded the Cape of Good Hope, and—stood away eastward for the El Dorado of the Indies. Thus one nation solved for itself the problem of how to reach the land of diamonds. Another nation had already solved for itself the same problem, but in a very different way.

When Columbus set sail upon his marvellous voyage it was to seek that for which all the maritime powers of Europe were dreaming and languishing—a sea-route to the East. When he sailed, he sailed for *India*; when he discovered the shore of the New World, he believed he had touched the eastern coasts of the *Indies*. The error, of course, was discovered in due time; but in the meanwhile the Spaniards were not slow to take full advantage of the glorious discovery that placed them in the van of European nations. Soon the eastern coasts of America, or rather of South America, were explored, until at length the Spanish captains rounding the southern extremity of the American continent by the Straits of Magellan, found themselves in the Pacific, and with a clear way westward to the goal of their desires.

Two routes had now been found to the wished-for Indies—the Portuguese route round Africa and eastward, and the Spanish route round South