

bold daring man, of undoubted courage, great personal strength and plausible eloquence. He was soon selected as their leader. Judging that more gold would be found in the inland than on the coast, he marched with his band into the mountainous parts of the Isthmus. He first, it is said, came across the Albinos—pure white with red eyes—feeble creatures in mind and body: but soon he met with other tribes of a different race—brave—hardy—and ready to defend their rights. Among these latter an odd custom prevailed: the husbands on the death of their wives, and the wives on the death of their husbands, cut off the end of a finger—widowers and widows were thus easily detected—and by the time a man had had five wives, or a lady five husbands, they would have no ends to their fingers,—quite time to stop, you will say. Notwithstanding the ferocity of these people, Balboa aided by the cupidity of his soldiers—his own indomitable disposition—and packs of blood hounds brought over by the Spaniards, and used in all their conquests, ultimately succeeded in destroying most of the inhabitants of Darien, and in subduing the remainder. One day as the conquerors were disputing about some gold, with great warmth, a young cacique overturned the scales in which they were weighing it, exclaiming with great disdain, “why do you quarrel for such a trifle—if it is for this you quit your country and massacre so many people, I will conduct you to a region where it is so common that it is used for the meanest purposes!” He then explained that there was another ocean, beyond the mountains, which led to this rich country.

An expedition was immediately planned; and on the first of September 1513, one hundred and ninety Spaniards with one thousand Indians to serve as guides, and to carry provisions and baggage, set out with Balboa at their head. The march across was only sixty miles, but it was necessary to climb steep mountains—pass wide rivers—deep morasses—thick forests—and disperse, persuade, or destroy so many tribes of fierce natives, that it was not until after twenty five days that the journey was accomplished. They reached Mount Ancon. Bidding his followers pause in their ascent of the mountain, Balboa continued alone to the top, and gazed long and ardently upon the magnificent scene before him,—the first European whose eyes had ever beheld the Pacific. “Spectators of both hemispheres,” exclaimed this haughty leader, “I call you to witness that I take possession of this part of the universe for the