

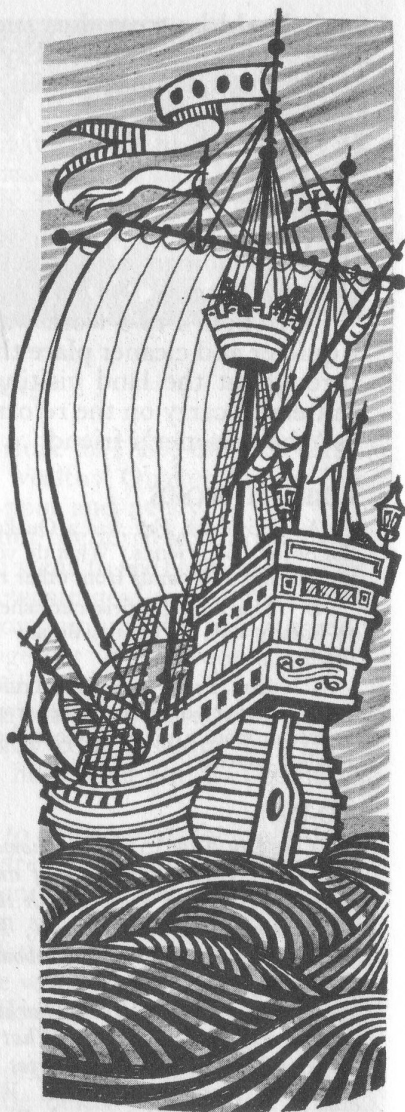
M A Y 22

Braving the Atlantic ocean in their three-masted caravels, Portuguese seamen set out on expedition after expedition during the fifteenth century. They were trying to find a way to India round Africa.

On May 22nd, 1498, after ten months at sea, the west coast of India was sighted by a fleet of caravels under the command of Vasco da Gama. The following day they dropped anchor off Calicut and their long search was over.

Now it would be possible for Portugal to trade direct with the Far East. Before Vasco da Gama's arrival, the only route from India to Europe was by land across Asia and the Turks and Egyptians made Europeans pay high prices for the goods they allowed through.

The Portuguese were expecting to find Indian traders eager to send spices, silk and muslin, and precious stones back to Portugal in exchange for cheap trinkets but the Indians laughed at Vasco da Gama when he produced his gifts.



' Send us gold and silver, corals and scarlet cloth ', they said, ' and you may have spices and precious stones '.

So the Portuguese fleet left Calicut for home. The voyage to Lisbon took thirteen months and many of the sailors were taken sick and died. One of the ships had to be destroyed. So many of her crew died or were too ill to work that she could not carry on.

When the fleet set out from Portugal at the start of the expedition there were 170 men with Vasco da Gama but he returned to Lisbon with only fifty-five.

The Portuguese were not satisfied with the rich trade that this new sea route brought them, they wanted to rule India.

So the next time Vasco da Gama sailed for India, in 1502, he did not go in peace. His ships bombarded Calicut and his men looted the town, returning to Portugal with their holds loaded with valuable goods.

He returned again, many years later, as ruler of the territories that had been seized by the Portuguese, but now he was an old man and the climate killed him.

His discovery of a sea route to India enabled Portugal to build a new empire; it also linked East with West for the first time.

LIBRARY WORK

A. Trace on your maps the route taken by Vasco da Gama from Portugal to India and estimate the distance. He travelled from Lisbon to the Cape Verde Islands, then they were blown by a storm to within 600 miles of Brazil before re-setting their course for South Africa. They sailed up the coast of East Africa to Malindi, north of Mombasa, where they found a pilot willing to guide them across the Arabian Sea to Calicut.

B. Another Portuguese explorer, Ferdinand Magellan, left Lisbon in 1519 in search of another route to the Indies. Was he successful?

TO-DAY

In 1859 the creator of Sherlock Holmes was born. What was his name?

In 1813, Richard Wagner was born in Leipzig. What was his profession?

In 1688, Alexander Pope was born near Windsor. Was he a singer, a poet, a politician, or a novelist?