

INTRODUCTION

In 1497 Vasco da Gama set off for India with a fleet of ships including the São Gabriel, the São Rafael, and the Bérrio, on what was to become one of the greatest voyages of all time.

The great discoverer Bartolomeu Dias had shown that it was possible to sail around the southern tip of Africa, and so had found the sea gates to the Orient. It remained for some mariner of equal daring to force those sea gates open.

King Manuel of Portugal chose Vasco da Gama, who was already an expert navigator, to open up the sea route to the east to India, just as Columbus had opened up the sea route to the west a few years earlier.

The momentous voyage continued despite treachery, mutiny, warfare and scurvy, which resulted in the considerable loss of lives. Vasco da Gama certainly possessed the courage, ambition, pride and an unwavering steadfastness of purpose necessary for such a voyage.

He was also not averse to barbarity in the treatment of his enemies. He ordered the upper and lower lips of one of them to be cut off, so that all his teeth showed, and then replaced his enemies ears with those of a dog. On another occasion, a large number of his prisoners were hung to the yards of the ships, and after taking them down he had their hands, feet and heads cut off, filling up one of his enemies ships with them.

The discovery of an ocean route to India irreversibly changed the course of human history by bringing about new and far closer relationships between East and West. Its other consequences were hardly less momentous.

It was the first of three voyages to India that Vasco da Gama was to make, establishing Vasco da Gama's place in history for ever more.

Included in its entirety is the Roteiro, which is the only first hand account of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama, and further descriptions written by Gaspar Corrêa, King Manuel, Girolamo Sernigi, and three Portuguese accounts, as well as the original descriptions of Vasco da Gama's second and third voyages.

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CHAPTER 1

THE EARLY LIFE OF VASCO DA GAMA

The most likely date of Vasco da Gama's birth, proposed by genealogists, is as late as 1469. It is sometimes claimed that Vasco da Gama was born in 1460, but there is little to support this.

Vasco da Gama was born in Sines, on the south west coast of Portugal, probably in a house near the church of Nossa Senhora das Salas. Sines, one of the few seaports on the Alemtejo coast, consisted of little more than a cluster of whitewashed, red-tiled cottages, tenanted chiefly by fishermen. Its inhabitants could hardly fail to be men of the sea, for a waste of barren sand stretched for leagues behind the town and made all agriculture unprofitable. Westward lay the endless Atlantic, where the men of Sines could reap a surer harvest than any they could wring from the dunes, and on the north a little haven sheltered by granite cliffs gave a secure berth to their fishing-fleet. Born and bred in such an environment, Vasco da Gama was fated to follow the sea.

Vasco da Gama was very probably the grandson of another Vasco da Gama and Dona Teresa da Silva, who lived in Olivenca. They had four children, the oldest of whom was Estêvão da Gama.

Estêvão da Gama was Vasco da Gama's father. He was a cavaleiro in the household of the Duke of Viseu, Dom Fernando in the 1460's. Dom Fernando appointed him Alcaide-Mór or Civil Governor of Sines, and enabled him to receive a small revenue from taxes on soap making in Estremoz, Souzel and Fronteira. Estêvão da Gama was able to obtain a series of rights in Sines and its surroundings. In 1478 he lost his post as Alcaide-Mór of Sines, but was instead granted the right to collect taxes there on octroi and registration, by virtue of services to the Order of Santiago. He also held the comenda in the late 1470's of Cerqual for the Order of Santiago.

Estêvão da Gama was married to Dona Isabel Sodre, daughter of João Sodre (also known as João de Resende). In 1480, the Bishop of Safim oversaw the ceremony of tonsure in the Gama household. Those sons

CHAPTER 2

PREPARATIONS FOR THE FIRST VOYAGE

Bartolomeu Dias had found the sea-gates of the Orient. It remained for some mariner of equal daring to force them open. Wars with Castile and the death of King João II had delayed this venture for a decade, but Manuel, who succeeded to the throne in 1495, did not long hesitate to resume the historic mission bequeathed to his country by Prince Henry the Navigator. This had now come to mean the search for a sea-route to India.

The twofold purpose of the quest was explained with admirable brevity by the first Portuguese sailor who disembarked on Indian soil. "Christians and spices", he replied, when asked what had brought him and his comrades so far.

All those who still cherished the crusading ideals of a bygone age dreamed of an alliance with Prester John's empire and with the other Catholic powers that were believed to exist on the other side of the world. This accomplished, the chivalry of Portugal would lead the united hosts of European and Asiatic Christendom in a campaign for the destruction of Muhammadanism. Others hoped to divert for their own profit the trade in Indian wares, and especially in spices, which had hitherto filled the treasuries of Genoa, Venice and Ragusa.

Shortly after his accession, King Manuel summoned to his court at Estremoz the son of a certain Estevão da Gama, who had been chosen to lead the way to India but had died while the preparations for the voyage were still incomplete. His third son Vasco was appointed in his stead to the office of Captain-Major (Capitão-Mór) or Commander-in-chief. Castanheda states that the honour was first offered to Vasco's eldest brother, Paulo da Gama, who declined it on the ground of ill health.

When Vasco da Gama was chosen for the Indian voyage, he was already an expert navigator, and was unmarried. Courage, ambition, pride and unwavering steadfastness of purpose were the bedrock of his

CHAPTER 3

VASCO DA GAMA'S SHIPS AND EQUIPMENT

All authorities agree that the fleet, or armada, fitted out for Vasco da Gama's voyage numbered four vessels, but they are not agreed as to the names that these vessels bore. We are not, however, likely to be misled if we accept the unanimous testimony of the author of our Roteiro, of João de Barros, Lopez de Castanheda, Pedro Barretto de Rezende, and Manuel Faria y Sousa, according to whom the names of the ships and of their principal officers were as follows : -

São Gabriel (the flag-ship) - Vasco da Gama was the captain-major. Pero d'Alenquer was the pilot. Gonçalo Alvarez was the master. Diogo Dias was the clerk.

São Rafael - Paulo da Gama was the captain. João de Coimbra was the pilot. João de Sá was the clerk.

Bérrio - Nicolau Coelho was the captain. Pero Escolar was the pilot. Alvaro de Braga was the clerk.

Store-ship - Gonçalo Nunes was the captain.

Correa and the unknown author of the *Jornal das Viagens* call the "Bérrio" São Miguel, and make the São Rafael the flag-ship. L. de Figueiredo de Falcão substitutes a São Miguel for the São Rafael. It is just possible that the vessel popularly called Bérrio, after its former owner, had been re-christened São Miguel.

The Bérrio was one of those swift lateen-rigged vessels for which Portugal was famous from the thirteenth century. Their burthen did not exceed 200 tons, and they had two or three masts, and occasionally even four. The Bérrio is stated to have been a vessel of only 50 tons. She was named after her former owner and pilot, of whom she was purchased expressly for this voyage. The store-ship was of more considerable size. Sernigi says she measured 110 tons. Castanheda credits her with 200 tons. She may have been a so-called *caravela*

CHAPTER 4

VASCO DA GAMA'S CREWS

The officers and men in Vasco da Gama's armada were carefully selected. Several of them had been with Bartolomeu Dias around the Cape of Good Hope. All of them, as appears from the "Journal", justified by their conduct under sometimes trying circumstances the selection that had been made.

Authorities widely differ as to the number of men who embarked. Sernigi says there were only 118, of whom 55 died during the voyage and only 63 returned. Galvão says there were 120, besides the men in the store ship. Castanheda and Goes raise the number to 148, of whom only 55 returned, many of them broken in health. Faria y Sousa and San Ramon say there were 160, and the latter adds that 93 of these died during the voyage, thus confirming a statement made by King Manuel in his letter of February 20th 1504, to the effect that less than one-half returned. According to Barros there were 170 men, including soldiers and sailors. Corrêa raises the number to 260, for he says that in each of the three ships there were 80 officers and men, including servants, besides six convicts and two priests. He says nothing of the store-ship. By the time Vasco da Gama had reached the Rio da Misericórdia only 150 out of this number are said to have been alive.

Corrêa, no doubt, exaggerates. On the other hand, Sernigi's numbers seem to us to err quite as much on the other side. It is quite true that a Mediterranean merchantman of 100 tons, in the sixteenth century, was manned by 12 able and 8 ordinary seamen, but in the case of an expedition sent forth for a number of years and to unknown dangers, this number would no doubt have been increased. We are, therefore, inclined to believe that the number given by De Barros - namely, 170 - may be nearer the truth, namely 70 men in the flag-ship, 50 in the São Rafael, 30 in the caravel, and 20 in the store-ship. The men in the flag-ship may have included 1 captain, 1 master, 1 pilot, 1 assistant pilot, 1 mate (conrastre), 1 boatswain (guardião), 20 able seamen (marinheiros), 10 ordinary seamen (grumetes), 2 boys (pagens), 1 chief gunner or constable, 8 bombardiers, 4 trumpeters, 1 clerk or purser

CHAPTER 5

THE FIRST VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA

The King was at Montemór o novo when he despatched Vasco da Gama and his fellow commanders upon the momentous expedition that was to place Portugal for a time in the forefront of maritime and commercial powers. It was summer, and His Majesty did not, therefore, desert the beautiful hills of Monfurado for the stifling heat of the capital, in order that he might witness the embarkation of his “loyal vassal” whom, on account of his proven valour and past services he had deemed worthy of the honourable distinction of being entrusted with the conduct of so important an enterprise.

When all was ready, Vasco da Gama and his three captains went down to the chapel of Our Lady of Bethlehem (Belem), which Prince Henry the Navigator had built for his mariners, on the right bank of the Tagus. There they all kept vigil during the night of Friday the 7th of July.

On the following morning, which was Saturday the 8th of July 1497, Vasco da Gama and his companions were escorted to the beach by a solemn procession of priests and friars for the place of embarkation. They all carried lighted tapers. An excited crowd muttered responses to the litany that was being intoned by the priests. A vast concourse had assembled on the mud flats that then lined the estuary. They stood bare-headed in the blazing July sunshine, murmuring their responses to the Litany, and moving with the procession as it wound slowly across the foreshore, down to that landing place that Barros calls “a beach of tears for those who depart, a land of delight for those who arrive”.

As the procession halted beside the margin of the river, the whole multitude fell on their knees in silence. While the vicar of the chapel received a general confession, in virtue of a Bull published by Pope Nicholas V in 1452, he absolved the departing adventurers of their sins. After which they left on their errand with the blessings of the Church, in the favour of their King, and amidst the acclamations of a sympathising people. Vasco da Gama and his comrades took leave of the weeping crowd and were rowed out to their ships. The royal

CHAPTER 6

THE FIRST VOYAGE - FROM LISBON TO THE CAPE

Gaspar Corrêa (c1495-c1561) was a Portuguese historian. He lived mostly in Portuguese India, where he is believed to have gone to in around 1512-1514, to serve as a soldier. He was subsequently chosen as secretary to Afonso de Albuquerque. He is the author of "Lendas da Índia" (Legends of India), which is one of the most important books concerning Portuguese rule in Asia. It benefited from thirty five years of Corrêa's work in India, and privileged sources unknown to other historians. In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter V to Chapter IX of "Lendas da Índia", he details the voyage from Lisbon to the Cape of Good Hope.

CHAPTER V

How the King gave the captaincy of three ships to Vasco da Gama, a nobleman of his house, and charged him to go and discover India.

Whilst these things were being thus prepared, the king was full of care both day and night, as to whom he should entrust this so great enterprise; he was always praying the Lord, that if this affair was to be for His holy service, He would be pleased to show him the men whom it would please Him to send upon this voyage, with respect to which the king was occupied in constant thought. The grandees of the kingdom, seeing the preparations that the king was making for this fleet, which he was going to send for the discovery, spoke to him about a few men who appeared to be fitting for this, but the king answered them, that he had them already decided upon. Many days passed thus, and one day the king sitting in his hall of business at a table with his officers, giving orders, by chance the king raised his eyes, and Vasco da Gama happened to cross through the hall : he was a gentleman of the household, and of noble lineage, son of Estevan da Gama, who had been comptroller of the household of the King Don Alfonso, for in that time they took honour more from nobility of blood than from titles of

CHAPTER 7

THE FIRST VOYAGE - FROM THE CAPE TO INDIA

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter X to Chapter XIII of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the voyage of Vasco da Gama from the Cape until Vasco da Gama's fleet reached India.

CHAPTER X

How the ships entered a beautiful river, in which they refitted the two ships and burned the other, and they named this river the River of Mercy.

Whilst these things were happening the wind did not shift its direction, but the sea being smoother the ships were more easy, though they let in so much water that they never left off pumping. The captain-major saw this, and that the ships had an absolute need of repairs; and also because they had no more water to drink, because, with the tossing about in the storm, many barrels had broken and given way under such great pressure, he stood in to land under sail, for the weather was moderate and was beginning to be favourable : all were praying to God for mercy, and that He would grant them a haven of safety. Which God was pleased to do in His mercy, for presently He showed them land, at which it seemed that all were resuscitated from the death that they looked upon as certain if the ships were not repaired. After that the wind came free, and they sailed along the land for several days without finding where to put in; this was now in January of the year 1498. Thus they ran close to the land, with a careful look out, for they did not dare to leave the land, from the great peril in which the ships were from the great leakage. Proceeding in this way, one day they found themselves at dawn in the mouth of a large river, into which the captain-major entered, for he always went first; and all entered, and found within a large bay sheltered from all winds, in which they anchored, and all exclaimed three times - "The mercy of the Lord God!" for which reason

CHAPTER 8

THE FIRST VOYAGE - ARRIVAL IN INDIA

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XIV to Chapter XV of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the arrival of Vasco da Gama's fleet in India. He then details their time spent there in Melinde, and their subsequent departure from Melinde towards Calcut.

CHAPTER XIV

How the ships reached Melinde, and of the good peace that the King established with our people, and from thence they departed to Calicut.

Our men having left Bombaza, they ran along the coast with much vigilance, because they did not trust to the pilot whom they had got in irons, and proceeding on their voyage, one afternoon they sighted two sambuks, of which they only captured one, for the other got so close in to shore that the ships could not reach it, until it found a very narrow river, into which it put in. The other, which was taken, was laden with ivory, and eighty men were captured in it. Its captain was a man of Dias, who was taking thither his wife, a very pretty woman, with rich jewels and money in a chest, and four women in her service. The captain-major distributed amongst the ships, only the people who remained in the sambuk, into which he ordered ten Portuguese to be put, whom he prohibited from moving anything, and bade them watch well by night, so as not to part company from the ships. They searched the sambuk and did not find any arms in it. So they went on until they arrived at Melinde, which is on the open coast. As the city was a great one, of noble buildings, and surrounded by walls, and placed immediately on the shore, it made an imposing appearance, and at the sight of it our men experienced great delight, and gave great praise to the Lord, who had brought them to such a country. They anchored in front of the city close to many ships that were in the port, all dressed out with flags, for the King also ordered flags to be hung out on the

CHAPTER 9

THE FIRST VOYAGE - IN CALECUT

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XVI to Chapter XVII of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the arrival of Vasco da Gama's fleet in Calecut, and their time spent there, including their encounter with the King of Calecut.

CHAPTER XVI

How the ships arrived at the city of Calecut, and in which is related all that happened to them there until they again departed.

The ships continued running along the coast close to land, for the coast was clear, without banks against which to take precautions; and the pilots gave orders to cast anchor in a place that made a sort of bay, because there commenced the city of Calecut. This town is named Capocate, and on anchoring there a multitude of people flocked to the beach, all dark and naked, only covered with cloths half way down the thigh, with which they concealed their nakedness. All were much amazed at seeing what they had never before seen. When news was taken to the King he also came to look at the ships, for all the wonder was at seeing so many ropes and so many sails, and because the ships arrived when the sun was almost set; and at night they lowered out the boats, and Vasco da Gama went at once for his brother and Nicolas Coelho, and they remained together conversing upon the method of dealing with this King, since here was the principal end that they had come to seek; it seemed to him that it would be best to comfort himself as an ambassador, and to make him his present, always saying that they had been separated from another fleet, which they came to seek for there, and that the captain-major had come and brought him letters from the King. This they agreed upon together, and that Vasco da Gama should go on shore with that message sent by the captain-major, who carried the standard at the peak; they also talked of the manner in

CHAPTER 10

THE FIRST VOYAGE - IN CANANOR

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XVIII of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the arrival of Vasco da Gama's fleet in Cananor, and their time spent there, including their encounter with the King of Cananor.

CHAPTER XVIII

How the Portuguese went to the port of Cananor, and saw the King, and of what happened with him, and what they settled.

While the Portuguese were at Calecut, the King of Cananor always knew all that happened to them, because he had sent people for that purpose to write to him everything. The Moors of Cananor, who received information from those of Calecut, in order to indispose the inclination of the King, used to tell him many lies about the Portuguese, that they used violence and arrogance in Calecut, and many other false tales with respect to which the King knew the truth. For which reason, one day that the Moors were thus relating these things to him, he said that no one should tell him lies, because he would order his head to be cut off for it. The King said this because he had already settled in his heart that he would establish as much peace with the Portuguese as they might be willing, because he was always talking to his soothsayers, who continually repeated what they had said to the King, and they said to him that the evils done in Calecut caused by the Moors would doubtless grow, and that the Portuguese would always do much harm to Calecut, and would destroy the Moors throughout India, and would turn them out of India, and they would never again possess the navigation that they now had. The King said that if that came to pass, that he also would receive great losses to his kingdom. The soothsayers said to him and gave great assurances that so it would be, because the Portuguese would be masters of the sea, and that no one would be able to navigate upon it unless they were friends of the Portuguese, and that whoever

CHAPTER 11

THE FIRST VOYAGE - ON THE ISLAND OF ANGEDIVA

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XIX of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the arrival of Vasco da Gama's fleet at the island of Angediva, and their time spent there.

CHAPTER XIX

How the ships departed from Cananor and crossing over to Melinde met with calms, and put in, and touched at the island of Angediva : and of that which happened to them there.

The good brothers having set sail from Cananor made their course to Melinde, and having got away from the coast about forty or fifty leagues, the wind fell and they remained in a dead calm, at which they were much put out. Talking of it to the pilots, they said that it was not yet the time of the monsoon, and on that account it would be well to return to land, not to go on in that way working the ships and expending water. The captain-major said : "I am ashamed to return to land, which is the act of people who do not know how to navigate." The pilot said : "We will not return to Cananor, but will fetch the first land, and we will go and stop at an island near the land, which has a good port, in which there is good water and wood, sheltered from all winds, where we shall be very well, until we have the monsoon." When the captains heard this they determined to put into port, and some little wind arising they returned towards the land, and found in a short time more wind, of which there was none, except near the coast. They fetched the land and ran along the coast, with delays, because the wind did not serve for the island, and they met many ships, which were sailing to all parts, and the pilots said that they should go and take them, because they carried much merchandise. The captains said : "We have got the ships laden with what we came to seek; we do not want to take other men's goods, for we are not thieves." They went and put in at

CHAPTER 12

THE FIRST VOYAGE - IN MELINDE

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XX of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the return of Vasco da Gama's fleet to Melinde, and their time spent there.

CHAPTER XX

How the ships arrived at Melinde, and what they did there until they departed for the kingdom.

When the ships arrived at the port of Melinde, they anchored, and dressed themselves out with flags, and the trumpets sounded, and the crews shouted. The pilot, who had already got leave from the captain-major, hailed the skiff of a ship which was near to them, and it was sent, and he went on shore to take the good news to the King of the good fortune that our men had met with; at which the King was much pleased, and went immediately to seat himself on the beach, waiting until the boats were lowered into the sea. The captains got into them at once and went to the shore, and as soon as the boats grounded they jumped out, because the King was standing by with the water reaching to his feet. He embraced the captains with both arms, as though they had been his brothers; and so he led them away to the palace, where he again embraced them, and sat down between them both, the captains making great salutations. The King then began to inquire of them if they came with good health, and if their affairs had been to their satisfaction. Paulo da Gama said to him : "Sire, you, with your royal sincerity and kind affection, put us in a good road, on which account we have found all that we were seeking for : and if the Lord be pleased to bring us to Portugal, we may say that we are very fortunate : and since you, Sire, procured for us this so great good, we and those who descend from us will for ever be under greater obligation to you than any men ever owed to a ruler." For which reason they offered to him

CHAPTER 13

THE FIRST VOYAGE - RETURN TO PORTUGAL

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XXI of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the departure of Vasco da Gama's fleet from India, until their arrival back in Portugal.

CHAPTER XXI

How our men departed from Melinde and arrived in Portugal; and of what happened to them by the way.

When the ships had set sail, as has been related, they continued to run down the coast, and the captains gave orders to the pilots to keep a good look out, and to note well the coast and landmarks that it presented, and to question the Moorish pilots as to all they saw, and to write it down with full details; especially the outlines and marks presented by the land when it remained astern, because that was the view and description by which it would be known by those who would come from the kingdom, running along the coast; and also to write down the names of the towns and rivers and everything. This the pilots did with much care; and it was also done by a priest of the ship, named Joan Figueira, who of his own accord wrote down all that happened in this voyage; and on arriving at Melinde he was at the point of death. Then, thinking that he was going to die, he gave to the captain a notebook in which he had written down everything, at which the captain was much pleased; and on leaving Melinde he charged him to go on writing in the same manner until the voyage was ended, which he did. Many copies were afterwards made of what this priest wrote; and I saw some fragments of one of them, in the possession of Alfonso de Albuquerque, amongst some old papers of his (for I, Gaspar Correa, served him for three years as his clerk), and seeing in them things so pleasing to hear and to know, I gathered together this manuscript book, which was already become pieces and was torn in parts : and on

CHAPTER 14

THE FIRST VOYAGE - ARRIVAL IN PORTUGAL

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. In Chapter XXII of "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa details the arrival of Vasco da Gama's fleet back in Portugal, and the reception they received there.

CHAPTER XXII

Of the reception and honours and favours that the King granted to Vasco da Gama, and to those who had gone with him on this voyage.

The King was staying at Sintra when there arrived one Arthur Rodriguez, a man married in the isle of Terceira; he had a caravel of his own, ready to make a voyage to Algarve. He, seeing the ships come in, set sail without knowing whence they were coming, and so he passed by them under sail before they came to anchor, and asked whence they came, and they answered that they came from India. He at once made his course for Lisbon, where he arrived in four days, and entered Cascaes, and got into a small boat that was going ashore, and he gave orders to a son of his who came with him not to let anyone approach to communicate with his vessel, nor to say anything of the ships from India. This Arthur Roiz on reaching land went at once with speed to Sintra, because the men of the skiff had told him that the King was there, and he set out and arrived there at one o'clock at night, and went to the King, who had just sat down at table to sup. Arthur Roiz took the King's hand and kissed it, saying : "Sire, I have kissed the hand of your Highness for the great favour that you will grant me for the so great and good news that I bring you. It is four days since I set out from Terceira, where I left two ships from India, for as I was coming under sail in a caravel of mine I passed by them, and inquired, and they told me that they came from India : and as it was such good news, I did not choose that another should come first and be before me in gaining the reward that I hope your Highness will give me." The King was not able to

CHAPTER 15

THE ROTEIRO

The "Roteiro" is the only first hand account of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. Its' complete title was "Roteiro da viagem que em descobrimento da India pelo Cabo da Boa Esperana fez dom Vasco da Gama em 1497". It is not known with certainty who wrote the Roteiro. It is assumed, by process of elimination to have been written by Álvaro Velho, who took part in the voyage. After the voyage, Álvaro Velho spent eight years in Guinea.

In the name of God. Amen !

In the year 1497 King Dom Manuel, the first of that name in Portugal, despatched four vessels to make discoveries and go in search of spices. Vasco da Gama was the captain-major of these vessels; Paulo da Gama, his brother, commanded one of them, and Nicolau Coelho another.

We left Restello on Saturday, July 8, 1497. May God our Lord permit us to accomplish this voyage in his service. Amen !

On the following Saturday [July 15] we sighted the Canaries, and in the night passed to the lee of Lançarote. During the following night, at break of day [July 16] we made the Terra Alta, where we fished for a couple of hours, and in the evening, at dusk, we were off the Rio do Ouro.

The fog during the night grew so dense that Paulo da Gama lost sight of the captain-major, and when day broke [July 17] we saw neither him nor the other vessels. We therefore made sail for the Cape Verde islands, as we had been instructed to do in case of becoming separated.

On the following Saturday, [July 22], at break of day, we sighted the Ilha do Sal, and an hour afterwards discovered three vessels, that turned out to be the storeship, and the vessels commanded by Nicolau Coelho

CHAPTER 16

KING MANUEL'S LETTERS

King Manuel wrote two letters in which he described Vasco da Gama's first voyage. They were written in July and August 1499, soon after the return of the ships.

The first of these letters is addressed to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella of Castile, whose daughter, Dona Isabella, King Manuel had married in October 1497. She died in childbirth on August 24th 1498. Dom Manuel, having been granted a dispensation from the Pope, married her sister, Dona Maria, on August 24th 1500, which was the second anniversary of his first wife's death. The letter is dated July 1499, and may have been written immediately after the arrival of Coelho's vessel on July 10th 1499. The draught, or copy, of this letter in the Torre do Tombo was published by A.C. Texeira de Aragão in the Boletim of the Lisbon Geographical Society, vi, 1886, page 673.

The draught of the second letter, which is addressed to the "Cardinal Protector" also exists in the Torre do Tombo, but is evidently very illegible, for the text published by Texeira de Aragão is full of blanks. The original, as also the letter to Pope Alexander VI, to which reference is made, may possibly be discovered in Rome. The letter is dated August 28th 1499, which was the day before Vasco da Gama's supposed return to Lisbon. It was certainly written after the arrival of the S. Gabriel, for it refers to the "Moor of Tunis" or Monçaide, to the "Jew", who subsequently became known as Gaspar da Gama, and to the men carried off from Calecut, none of whom is likely to have been on board Coelho's small vessel. The "Cardinal Protector" can be identified with D. Jorge da Costa, a man of mean extraction, whom Dona Catharina, the virgin daughter of King Duarte, and sister of King Afonso IV, appointed her chaplain, and who subsequently rose to high dignities in the Church, until finally, the Pope bestowed upon him a cardinal's hat. King João took a dislike to the cardinal, who went to reside at Rome. However, King Manuel had a high opinion of his wisdom, and soon after his accession in 1495, he invited him, through Pedro Correa, his special ambassador to the Court of Rome, to return to

CHAPTER 17

GIROLAMO SERNIGI'S LETTERS

Girolamo Sernigi wrote three letters describing the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. The letters were written soon after the return of the expedition.

Girolamo Sernigi was born in Florence in 1453. Girolamo Sernigi was residing at Lisbon, where he had settled as a merchant, when Vasco da Gama's expedition returned from India. Girolamo Sernigi remained in Lisbon for many years afterwards. In addition to the letters giving an account of the voyage of Vasco da Gama, he wrote others dealing with the trade between Portugal and India. Manuscript copies of these letters are in the Biblioteca Riccardiana, Florence (Codices 1910, f.61, and 2112b).

The first of these letters was undoubtedly written immediately after the arrival of Coelho's vessel, on July 10th 1499. The information it conveys was obtained from various members of the expedition, and there is at least one passage in it that shows that it was not all written on the same day. The letter is addressed to a gentleman at Florence with whom the writer was not on terms of familiarity, and whom he consequently addresses as "Vossignoria". This need not, however, be translated as "your Lordship", for that style of address was customary in the case of persons of much humbler degree.

The second letter was written some time afterwards, for it embodies information obtained from the "pilot", Gaspar da Gama, who had not come back when the first letter was written. This intelligent informant reached Lisbon on board the flag-ship, the S.Gabriel, the command of which had been entrusted by Vasco da Gama to his clerk, João de Sá, when he himself left São Thiago in a caravel for Terçeira. This letter is also addressed to the gentleman at Florence.

The third letter is undoubtedly by the same writer. An abstract of it, in German, was discovered among the papers of Conrad Peutinger, of Augsburg, the antiquarian, and at one time the owner of the famous

CHAPTER 18

THREE PORTUGUESE ACCOUNTS

Three Portuguese accounts of the first voyage of Vasco da Gama were written in 1608, 1612 and 1646. If the earlier descriptions of the voyage are correct, then these later accounts of the voyage contain errors.

The account written in 1608 is in "Jornal das Viagens dos Portuguezes ás Indias". Included is all that refers to the first voyage of Vasco da Gama. Editions used were in the British Museum (Add. MSS. 20902) and the Bibliothèque Nationale (Port. 8, No. 85 and Port. 46).

The account written in 1612 is by Luiz de Figueiredo Falcão, who was secretary of King Philip II of Portugal (Philip III of Spain). He was the compiler of *Livro em que se contem toda a Fazenda, & Real Patrinzonio dos Reynos de Portugal, India, ilhas adjacentes de sua coroa*. The information concerning the voyage is from a "List of Captain-majors and Captains who went to India since 1497", page 137.

The account written in 1646 is by Captain Pedro Barretto de Rezende, a professed Knight of the Order of St. Benedict of Aviz. He is the author of a *Livro do Estado da India*, of which slightly differing copies exist in the British Museum (Sloane Collection, No. 197) and the Bibliothèque Nationale (Port. i and Port. 36). This is followed by "*Livro das armadas capitaes que forão a India*", which forms an Appendix.

1608 - *Jornal das Viagens dos Portuguezes ás Indias*

THE YEAR 1497

On the second of June, 1497, there set sail from Lisbon for the discovery of Oriental India, Vasco da Gama, the second son of Estevão da Gama, comptroller (veador) of the household of the King Don Affonso, and of Dona Isabel Sodré, his wife, as captain-major of four

CHAPTER 19

PEDRO CABRAL'S VOYAGE TO INDIA

Vasco da Gama had returned to Lisbon from India on the 29th of August, 1499, and was received with great honour. He was made Count of Vidigueira and given an irrevocable commission to act as the chief of any future fleet to India, should he so desire.

Alvard conceded to Dom Vasco da Gama the chief captaincy of all the ships departing for India during his lifetime, the king not being able to intervene in this matter, etc. :

“We, the King, make known to all to whom this our alvará may come, that in consideration of the very great and signal service that Dom Vasco da Gama of our council did to us and to our kingdoms in the discovery of India, for which reason we should give him all honour, increase and reward, and because of this, it pleases us that we grant him by this present alvará that of all the armadas that in his life we shall order made and shall make for the said parts of India, whether they be only for the trade in merchandise or whether it is necessary to make war with them, he may take and takes the chief captaincy of these, so that in the said armadas he has to go in person, and in them to serve us, and when he thus wishes to take the said captaincy, we may not place in them nor appoint another chief captain save him, because of his honour, and we confide in him that he will know very well our service; it pleases us that we grant and we in fact grant this reward and privilege as is said. Furthermore, we order to be given to him this our alvará by us signed, that we order shall be in every way kept and guarded, as in it is contained our reward, without impediment or any embargo that might be placed upon it. And it pleases us, and we wish that it be as valid as a letter by us signed and sealed with our seal, and passed by our Chancellery, in spite of our ordinance, even though it may not be passed by the officers of the Chancellery. Done.”

The discovery of an ocean route to India changed the course of human history by bringing about new and far closer relationships between East and West. Its other consequences were hardly less momentous.

CHAPTER 20

THE SECOND VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the second voyage of Vasco da Gama. Vasco da Gama set sail from the Tagus for India on the 10th of February 1502, and returned in 1503.

CHAPTER I

The Fleet of Dom Vasco da Gama, with which he went to India in the year 1502.

The King our sovereign, Dom Manuel, was very mindful, with the great regret that he felt in his heart, of the treachery that the King of Calecut had committed towards Pedralvarez Cabral, who, when he arrived from India, at once related it to him, and he had promised to send him again with a much larger fleet, and well equipped, in order to make war upon Calecut, and take vengeance on it, since he had more right on his side. With this recollection, as the time had arrived, he ordered large ships to be prepared for lading; and they were ten in number, into which was put much beautiful artillery, with plenty of munitions and weapons, all in great abundance, and supplies of everything most fitting for the voyage and their return to the kingdom; and they carried good men-at-arms, and captains, and gentlemen of birth, and Pedralvarez Cabral went as captain-major. All this was done and ordained by Vasco da Gama, whom the King charged with doing it all, for in the affairs of India the King ordered that he should do everything. When the fleet was quite ready to depart to Belem, and the King was one day talking about the affairs of the fleet, and of how well equipped and well supplied it was with everything, the King said : " Everything is much to my satisfaction, but I pray the Lord that Pedralvarez may be as lucky with this fleet and voyage as Dom Vasco was with his; because, although we know Pedralvarez to be an excellent man, he is not very fortunate in affairs of the sea." The King had already said this in other conversations, and the Queen had said to

CHAPTER 21

THE SECOND VOYAGE - A DUTCH NARRATIVE

A first hand account of the second voyage of Vasco da Gama was published in 1504. It was titled "Calcoen, a Dutch narrative of the second voyage of Vasco da Gama". The Calcoen in the title means Calicut. The book begins with a brief description of one of the unfortunate expeditions undertaken by the Portuguese on the coast of Barbary against the celebrated Barbarossa, but from then onwards deals with the second voyage of Vasco da Gama. The dates, events, and places mentioned in the book agree with all that is otherwise known of the second voyage, and also provides details that are not mentioned by other contemporary authors. As the book is not a translation of any previous writings in Portuguese, Spanish or Italian, it can be reasonably concluded that it was written by a Dutch officer or sailor who took an active part in the expedition.

Calicut

This is the voyage that a man wrote himself, how far he sailed with seventy ships from the river of Lisbon, in Portugal, to go to Calicut in India, and this occurred in the year 1501. And they sailed along the coast of Barbary, and came before a town called Meskebijnl [Mers el kebir], and were there defeated with great loss and dishonour, and we lost there many Christians, whose souls God must have had. This battle took place the day of St. James, of the above said year.

That castle is one mile from the town called Oeraen [Oran], and there come many wicked Christian merchants from Venice and Genoa, and they fell to the Turks suits of armour, arquebusses, and ammunition to fight against the Christians, and they have there their staple.

I was six months on the coast of Barbary, and suffered much misery in the Straits [of Gibraltar ?].

CHAPTER 22

VASCO DA GAMA IN RETIREMENT

After his second voyage to India, Vasco da Gama ceased for twenty one years to take any prominent part in public affairs. His retirement has been ascribed to pique at the meagreness of his reward, and to the King's jealousy of able and strong willed servants. Neither view is quite consistent with the few documents that illuminate this part of Vasco da Gama's career, nor is there any real difficulty to be solved. The great navigator had so many inducements to a life ashore that nothing but a strong sense of duty or an insatiable thirst for adventure could have lured him to sea again.

He had married D.Catherina de Athayde, a lady of rank, and doubtless he felt that desire for land and a home, which is not rare among those who follow the sea. Moreover, the King had given him the means to gratify such an ambition. Vasco da Gama probably married after his first voyage. Vasco da Gama had six sons and one daughter, Isabella de Athayde by name. Francisco, the eldest son, succeeded to his fortune and rank. Estevão, the second, became Governor of India in 1540 and died in Venice, whither he had emigrated to avoid marrying a wife selected by his sovereign. Paulo, the third, was killed in a naval action off Malacca, in 1534. Christovão, the fourth, died the hero of a forlorn hope in Abyssinia, in 1542. Pedro da Silva, the fifth, became Captain of Malacca in 1541. Alvaro de Athayde, the youngest, succeeded to the same office.

Vasco da Gama's personal ambition by no means stopped short at vast wealth. It is quite clear that he sought a place among the feudal nobility, a title and a manorial domain.

In January 1500, a new office, the Admiralty of India, was created for his benefit by a royal rescript which is still extant. In language that strives to be worthy of the occasion, it names D.Vasco da Gama, Gentleman of the King's Household, as "Admiral of the aforesaid India, with all the pre-eminences, liberties, power, jurisdiction, revenues, privileges and rights which, as appertaining to the aforesaid

CHAPTER 23

THE CHAMBER OF GOA LETTER

In 1524, after years of misrule in Portuguese India, King João III decided to send out a man strong and honest enough to re-establish discipline. His choice fell on the veteran Dom Vasco da Gama, who was accordingly nominated as Viceroy. Vasco da Gama had now reached his sixty-fifth year. For over twenty years he had lived the life of a territorial magnate, far from the sound of the sea, but neither his maritime skill nor his alertness of mind and vigour of would have deserted him. Taking command of 14 ships, Vasco da Gama sailed from Lisbon on the 9th of April 1524, accompanied by two of his elder sons, Dom Estevão and Dom Paulo. He was not disposed to belittle his own importance as at once Count of Vidigueira, Admiral of the Indies and representative of the Crown. This voyage was to be his last.

The following is a letter from the Chamber of Goa announcing the arrival of Vasco da Gama at Goa, in India, on the 23rd September 1524. It was written in the Chamber of Goa on 31st October 1524 :

"Through Luis Fernandez Colazo, whom we had sent as our agent to Your Highness, we received the answer to the letters that he conveyed from this city, and also the confirmation of our privileges, with the settlement of regulations, and also the sanction of appointments to offices, all despatched satisfactorily as we desired, and for all this we kiss the hands of Your Highness; and we cannot deny that the love and good will which the King your father (may he be in holy glory!) had for this city and its inhabitants is not forgotten, according as we see by the many favours that you grant us, both in despatching our business, and in all the rest which for our part we have requested : and for ever we and our sons will beseech and pray the Lord God to increase the days and royal state of Your Highness for His service.

The Count of Vidigueira arrived at this city on the 23rd day of September of the present year with nine ships; they say that five are

CHAPTER 24

THE THIRD VOYAGE OF VASCO DA GAMA

In "Lendas da Índia", Gaspar Corrêa describes the third and final voyage of Vasco da Gama to India, and the events that took place there. Vasco da Gama's third voyage to India took place in 1524.

CHAPTER I

Dom Vasco da Gama, second Viceroy of India, who went thither this year - 1524.

On the eleventh of September there arrived at the bar of Goa, Dom Vasco da Gama, who discovered India, as viceroy of India; he had been made Count of Vidigueira, and admiral of the Indian seas, and he came this year in the ship St. Catherine of Mount Sinay, and with him there came two sons; the elder named Dom Estevan da Gama, who was captain-major at sea, and later was governor of India; and the other named Dom Paulo da Gama, who was killed in the war of Malacca. The said Dom Vasco brought with him great state, and was served by men bearing silver maces, by a major-domo, and two pages with gold neckchains, many equerries, and body servants, very well clothed and cared for; he also brought rich vessels of silver, and rich tapestry of Flanders, and for the table at which he sat, brocade cloths. They brought to him at table large dishes, as if to the king, with his napkin-bearer bringing him the ewer, and all the forms of precedence of a king. The ornaments of his wardrobe, bed, and chapel were very complete, with much show and arrangement. He had a guard of two hundred men, with gilt pikes, clothed with his livery. He kept a splendid table; all the gentlemen and honourable persons ate with him. He brought out with him complete power of justice and revenue, like the King's self, over all persons who might be found beyond the Cape of Good Hope. He was a very disdainful man, and ready to anger, very rash, much feared and respected, very knowing and experienced in all matters. He brought with him very brilliant soldiery, and as captains, men of high family,