

which bathes the western shores of America, was the most important cosmical event of the great epoch which we are here describing.

Ten years before Balboa, on the 25th of September, 1513, first caught sight of the Pacific from the heights of the Sierra de Quarequa at the Isthmus of Panama, Columbus distinctly learned, when he was coasting along the eastern shores of Veragua, that to the west of this land there was a sea "which in less than nine days' sail would bear ships to the *Chersonesus aurea* of Ptolemy and to the mouth of the Ganges." In the same *Carta rarissima*, which contains the beautiful and poetic narration of a dream, the admiral says, that "the opposite coasts of Veragua, near the Rio de Belen, are situated relatively to one another as Tortosa on the Mediterranean, and Fuenterrabia in Biscay, or as Venice and Pisa." The great ocean, the South Pacific, was even at that time regarded as merely a continuation of the *Simus magnus* (μέγας κόλπος) of Ptolemy, situated before the golden Chersonesus, while Cattigara and the land of the Sines (Thinæ) were supposed to constitute its eastern boundary. The fanciful hypothesis of Hipparchus, according to which this eastern shore of the great gulf was connected with the portion of the African continent which extended far toward the east,\* and thus supposed to make a closed inland sea of the Indian Ocean, was but little regarded in the Middle Ages, notwithstanding the partiality to the views of Ptolemy—a fortunate circumstance,

in the expedition of the Commendador Garcia de Loaysa, which, following that of Magellan, was destined to proceed to the Moluccas. While Loaysa was passing through the Straits of Magellan, Hoces, with his caravel, the *San Lesmes*, was separated from the flotilla, and driven as far as 55° south latitude. "Dijeron los del buque, que les parecia que era alli acabamiento de tierra." (Navarrete, *Viages de los Españoles*, t. v., p. 28 and 404-488.) Fleurieu maintains that Hoces only saw the Cabo del Buen Suceso, west of Staten Island. Toward the end of the sixteenth century, such a strange uncertainty again prevailed respecting the form of the land, that the author of the *Araucana* (canto i., oct. 9) believed that the Magellanic Straits had closed by an earthquake, and by the upheaval of the bottom of the sea, while, on the other hand, Acosta (*Historia Natural y Moral de las Indias*, lib. iii., cap. 10) regarded the Terra del Fuego as the beginning of a great south polar land. (Compare, also, *ante*, p. 72.)

\* Whether the isthmus hypothesis, according to which Cape Prasum, on the eastern shore of Africa, was connected with the eastern Asiatic isthmus of Thinæ, is to be traced to Marinus of Tyre, or to Hipparchus, or to the Babylonian Seleucus, or rather to Aristotle, *De Cælo* (ii., 14), is a question treated in detail in another work, *Examen Crit.*, t. i., p. 144, 161, and 329; t. ii., p. 370-372.