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THE DISCOVERER OF THE PHILIPPINES

BY

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It is remarkable that neither of the two great navigators who endowed Spain with her colonial possessions was a Spaniard; Columbus, who "gave to Castile and Leon a new world," was a Genoese; Magellan, the discoverer of the Philippines, was a Portuguese. Magellan, who ranks second only to Columbus as a navigator and discoverer, was actuated, in undertaking his long voyage across the Pacific, by the same motive which induced the great Genoese to brave the terrors of the "immeasurable sea of darkness," as the Arabian geographers termed the Atlantic—that of reaching the spice countries of the East by sailing westward.

The spice trade of southern Asia had long been a source of wealth to the European nations that controlled it. Under the Roman Empire the chief route of this trade was by way of the Red Sea. Once a year, in June or July, a fleet of a hundred and twenty ships sailed from Myos Hormos, a port of Egypt, for the coast of India and the island of Taprobane (Ceylon), where the merchants of the East congregated to exchange their commodities, chiefly pepper and spices, for the wines and the silver, tin and lead of the West. The fleet returned in December or January to Myos Hormos, whence the products of the voyage were transported on camels to the Nile and down that river by boat to Alexandria, then the chief distributing point for the western world.

After the rise of Islam, this trade, which in the East was wholly in the hands of the Mohammedans, sought the West through two principal channels, the ancient southern route by the Red Sea, and a northern one through the Black and Caspian Seas, and by camel-caravans beyond. After the Crusades the southern route was controlled by the Venetians, the northern one by the Genoese. The irruptions of the Tartars and the fall of Constantinople broke up the eastern trade of Genoa and reduced her to the brink of ruin. Out of her troubles arose the idea that the countries of the East could be reached by sailing westward across the Atlantic, the spice trade redeemed from Mohammedan control, and Genoa's commercial supremacy restored. Columbus, one of those who entertained this

idea, died in the belief that he had reached the Indies. But the discoveries of Columbus and his successors led to results far different from those anticipated: maritime power left the Mediterranean for the coast of the Atlantic, and Spain and Portugal succeeded to the commercial and naval greatness of Genoa and Venice.

A short month after Columbus's solemn reception at Barcelona by the Court of Spain, after his return from his first voyage, Pope Alexander VI divided the undiscovered world between Spain and Portugal. The Grand Admiral had discovered, a hundred leagues west of the Azores, a line of non-magnetic variation, where the compass-needle pointed due north without deviation, and had come to the conclusion that this line was a fixed geographical boundary between the Eastern and Western Hemispheres. The Pope changed this physical meridian into a political one by making it the line of demarcation between the possessions of the two countries, limiting Spain to lands discovered to the west of this meridian and Portugal to those east of it. By the convention of Tordesilhas, signed June 7, 1494, Spain and Portugal agreed to remove Pope Alexander's line of demarcation between their respective possessions to a meridian 370 leagues west of the Cape Verde Islands.

Twelve years after Vasco da Gama's voyage around the Cape of Good Hope had won for Portugal the trade of the Indies, the Portuguese entered the Indian Archipelago, and in 1512 an expedition sent out by Albuquerque discovered the Moluccas or Spice Islands, the chief object of the long search of both Portuguese and Spaniards. With this expedition went, perhaps, Fernando Magellan, or, in its Portuguese form, Fernan de Magalhães, a young naval officer who had accompanied Albuquerque to the Indies, though he is not mentioned by De Barros among those who took part in it. Whether he actually visited the Moluccas or not, he obtained at this time a knowledge of those islands which led afterwards to the great voyage that has won him a place among the world's famous discoverers.

Magellan returned to Portugal in 1513 and, after some service in Morocco, dissatisfied with his failure to receive the promotion which he considered his due, left the service of the King of Portugal and went to Spain, where he settled and married. The geographical position of the Moluccas was then in dispute, both Spain and Portugal claiming them as lying within its own division. In a letter written October 23, 1522, by Maximilianus Transylvanus, Secretary to the Emperor Charles V, to the Cardinal of Salzburg, we are told that Magellan "showed to Cæsar" that the "islands which they

call the Moluccas, in which all the spices are produced, and are thence exported to Malacca, lay within the Spanish western division, and that it was possible to sail there; and that spices could be brought thence to Spain more easily, and at less expense and cheaper, as they came direct from their native place." Charles, who had just been elected Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire, being a Fleming rather than a Spaniard, did not share the prejudices of his subjects against the Portuguese. He created Magellan a knight of St. James, entrusted him with a fleet of five ships to prove his claims, and advanced him a liberal sum for the maintenance of his family during his absence.

Magellan's fleet consisted of the *Trinidad*, the flag-ship, of 110 tons; the *San Antonio* of 125 tons; the *Concepcion* of 90 tons; the *Vittoria* of 85 tons, and the *Santiago* of 75 tons, manned by 237 men, including soldiers. Among the volunteers was Antonio Pigafetta, a native of Vicenza, Italy, who had gone to Spain in the suite of Monsignor Cheregato, Ambassador of Pope Leo X. He employed his leisure in keeping a journal of the events of the voyage, which was published after his return in an abridged form, first in French and later in Italian, but not in its entirety until 1800, when it was printed from the original manuscript in the Ambrosian Library, Milan. As Pigafetta's limited education is largely compensated by intelligent and quick perception, heightened by curiosity concerning the countries and peoples visited, his journal is intensely interesting.

The squadron set sail from San Lucar, Sept. 20, 1519, spent a week at Teneriffe, and cast anchor in the bay of Rio de Janeiro on the 13th of December. Following the coast southward in search of the inlet supposed to connect the Atlantic with the South Sea (*Mar del Sur*), as Balboa had named the western ocean, and after spending some time in the exploration of the Rio de la Plata, which he supposed to be that passage, Magellan reached, March 31, 1520, a harbor on the coast of Patagonia, which he named Port St. Julian, where he wintered. He suppressed there, in a summary manner characteristic of the age, a conspiracy against his life by the Spanish commanders of the ships, who hated him, says Pigafetta, because he was a Portuguese. Two were executed and their bodies quartered and set up on stakes on shore. A third, who had received his appointment directly from the Emperor, was pardoned, but was detected a few days later in a fresh conspiracy and was set ashore, together with a priest in complicity with him, and abandoned to the mercy of the Patagonian savages.

On Oct. 21, 1520, the fleet entered the strait separating the continent of America from Tierra del Fuego. It was Saint Ursula's day and Magellan, who was very religious so far as outward observance went, named the cape at its entrance in her honor the Cape of the Eleven Thousand Virgins. The strait itself was called *Vitoria*, after the ship which first entered it, but Magellan subsequently named it the Channel of All Saints. Later navigators, ignoring both these names, have chosen to call it after him who first navigated its waters. Some five weeks were occupied in exploring its channels, during which the *Santiago* was wrecked. The *San Antonio* soon after deserted and returned to Spain, where she arrived May 6, 1521, and spread false reports about Magellan. After a fruitless search for her, the remaining ships went on and on Nov. 28, 1520, Magellan weathered the Cape of Desire at the western entrance of the strait and entered upon the great western ocean to which he gave the name of Pacific (*Oceano Pacifico*), on account of the calmness of its waters as compared with the stormy Atlantic.

The hardships endured during the many days before they again saw land—a voyage more than three times as long as that of Columbus from the Canaries to Guanahani—the disheartenment of the crews reduced almost to starvation, and the indomitable energy and perseverance of Magellan, unequalled save by that of the great Genoese, are graphically narrated by Pigafetta. We “entered into the Pacific Sea, where we remained three months and twenty days without taking in provisions or other refreshments, and we only ate old biscuit reduced to powder, and full of grubs, and stinking from the dirt which the rats had made on it when eating the good biscuit, and we drank water that was yellow and stinking. We also ate the ox-hides which were under the main-yard so that the yard should not break the rigging, and they were very hard on account of the sun, rain and wind, and we left them for four or five days in the sea, and then put them a little on the embers, and so ate them; also the sawdust of wood, and rats which cost half a crown each, moreover, enough of them were not to be got.”

Mistaking the position of the Moluccas, Magellan sailed northward to about the thirtieth parallel, after which he pursued a north-westerly course across the equator to about ten north latitude, when he changed his course to the west. He saw no land, excepting two sterile islets until he reached the archipelago of volcanic islands, now called the Marianas or Ladrone Islands, where he cast anchor on March 6, 1521. “The captain-general wished to touch at the largest of these islands to get refreshments of provisions; but it was

not possible because the people of these islands entered into the ships and robbed us, in such a way that it was impossible to preserve oneself from them. Whilst we were striking and lowering the sails to go ashore, they stole away with much address and diligence the small boat called the skiff, which was made fast to the poop of the captain's ship, at which he was much irritated, and went on shore with forty armed men, burned forty or fifty houses, with several small boats, and killed seven men of the island; they recovered their skiff. * * * Immediately after we sailed from that island, following our course, and those people seeing that we were going away, followed us for a league with a hundred small boats or more, and they approached our ships, showing to us fish, and feigning to give it to us. But they threw stones at us and then ran away, and in their flight they passed with their little boats between the boat which is towed at the poop and the ship going under full sail; but they did this so quickly and with such skill that it was a wonder."

Magellan, disgusted with his reception, named the group *Islas de los Ladrones* or *Isles of Thieves*. They were taken possession of for the crown of Spain, forty-four years later, by Miguel de Legaspé, the conqueror of the Philippines, and their name was changed subsequently to *Marianas*, in honor of Maria Anna of Austria, queen of Philip IV. They now constitute a province of the Philippines, the seat of government being at Guam, the largest island.

Ten days later, on Passion Sunday, March 16, 1521, Magellan, still in search of the Moluccas, came in sight of Samar, the most easterly of the central group of the Philippines, and was thus the first European to look upon that famous group, though they had long been known to the Malays, Javanese, Chinese and Japanese, whose ships had visited them for centuries. "In this place," writes Pigafetta, "there were many circumjacent islands, on which account we named it the Archipelago of Saint Lazarus (*San Lázaro*), because we stayed there on the day and feast of Saint Lazarus. This region and archipelago is in ten degrees north latitude, and a hundred and sixty-one degrees longitude from the line of demarcation." The islands retained this name until 1542, when Ruy Lopez de Villabolo, leader of an unsuccessful expedition from Mexico to colonize them, renamed them the Philippines in honor of Philip, Prince of the Asturias, who succeeded his father, the Emperor Charles V, in 1556, as Philip II. Magellan saw but little of the archipelago. Passing through the strait of Surigao, he reached, on March 28th, the little island of Limasagua, called by Pigafetta *Mazzava*, where he received a friendly reception by the "king" and his subjects. Thence

he sailed northwest between Leyte and Bohol, and on Sunday, April 7, entered the harbor of Cebu in the island of Cebu, the Zzubu of Pigafetta.

On approaching the principal village, Magellan ordered all his ships to hang out their flags and to fire their artillery. Having come to anchor, he sent a young man and his interpreter ashore. They found the king and a great number of people assembled, all alarmed by the artillery. The interpreter calmed their fears by telling them that the guns had been fired in honor of their king. The king, reassured, asked "what we were seeking. The interpreter answered him that his master was captain of the greatest king in the world, and that he was going by the command of the said sovereign to discover the Molucca islands. However, on account of what he had heard where he had passed, and especially from the King of Mazzava, of his country and good fame, he had wished to visit him, and also to obtain some refreshments and victuals for his merchandize. The king answered that he was welcome, but that the custom was that all ships that arrived at his country or port paid tribute, and it was only four days since that a ship called the Junk of Ciama [Siam], laden with gold and slaves, had paid him his tribute, and to verify what he said, he showed them a merchant of the said Ciama, who had remained there to trade with the gold and slaves."

The interpreter told the king that his captain would not pay tribute to any sovereign in the world; and that if he wished for peace he should have peace, and if he wished for war he should have war. The Ciama merchant then said to the king in his own language: "Look well, oh king, what you will do, for these people are of those who have conquered Calicut, Malacca, and all greater India; if you entertain them well and treat them well you will find yourself the better for it, and if ill, it will be so much the worse for you, as they have done at Calicut and Malacca. The interpreter, who had understood all this discourse, said to them that the king, his master, was a good deal more powerful in ships and by land than the king of Portugal, and declared to him that he was the King of Spain and Emperor of all Christendom, wherefore, if he would not be his friend and treat his subjects well, he would another time send against him as many men as to destroy him. Then the king answered that he would speak to his council, and give an answer the next day."

On the next day the king, assured that the Spaniards only wished to trade, "said that he was content, and as a greater sign of affection sent him [Magellan] a little of his blood from his right arm, and

wished he should do the like." A delegation from the king, consisting of his nephew and some principal men, visited the ship and were received with much ceremony, Magellan "sitting in a chair of red velvet and the principal men of the ships near him in leather chairs and the others on the ground on mats." Magellan made the visitors a long address on the subject of peace, and told them of the advantages that would accrue to them if they became Christians. His hearers seem to have been impressed by Magellan's eloquence, and answered that "they wished first to speak to their king, and then would become Christians. Each of us wept for the joy which we felt at the good-will of these people," * * * who "all cried out with one voice, that they did not wish to become Christians from fear, nor from complaisance, but of their free will."

The king having sent to Magellan a present of baskets full of rice, pigs, goats and fowls, the latter despatched Pigafetta and another with return presents—"a robe of yellow and violet silk in the fashion of a Turkish jubbeh, a red cap, very fine, and certain pieces of glass, and had all of them put in a silver dish, and two gilt glasses. When we came to the town we found the king of Zzubu at his palace, sitting on the ground on a mat made of palm, with many people about him. He was quite naked, except that he had a cloth round his middle, and a loose wrapper round his head, worked with silk by the needle. He had a very heavy chain round his neck, and two gold rings hung in his ears with precious stones. He was a small and fat man, and his face was painted with fire in different ways. He was eating on the ground on another palm mat, and was then eating tortoise eggs in two china dishes, and he had four vessels full of palm wine, which he drank with a cane pipe."

Magellan sent a quantity of merchandise on shore, with four men to dispose of it, and the king gave them a house to display it in. "These people live with justice, and good weight and measure, loving peace, and are people who love ease and pleasure. They have wooden scales for weighing their merchandise. Their houses are made of wood and beams and canes, founded on piles, and are very high, and must be entered by means of ladders; their rooms are like ours, and underneath they keep their cattle, such as pigs, goats and fowls."

The king having finally promised to become a Christian, great preparations were made for the baptismal ceremony. A scaffolding was erected in the open space of the village, and decorated with tapestry and palm branches. "On Sunday morning, the fourteenth day of April, we went on shore, forty men, of whom two were

armed, who marched before us, following the standard of our king emperor. When we landed, the ships discharged all their artillery, and from fear of it the people ran away in all directions. The captain and the king embraced one another, and then joyously we went near the scaffolding, where the captain and the king sat on two chairs, one covered with red, the other with violet velvet. The principal men sat on cushions, and others on mats, after the fashion of the country. Then the captain began to speak to the king through the interpreter to incite him to the faith of Jesus Christ, and told him that if he wished to be a good Christian, he must burn all the idols of his country, and, instead of them, place a cross, and that everyone should worship it every day on their knees, and their hands joined to heaven; and he showed him how he ought every day to make the sign of the cross. To that the king and all his people answered that they would obey the commands of the captain and do all that he told them. The captain took the king by the hand and they walked about on the scaffolding, and when he was baptised he said that he would name him Don Carlos, as the emperor his sovereign was named; and he named the prince Don Fernand, after the brother of the emperor, and the king of Mazzava Jehan, and to the others each a name of his fancy. Thus, before mass, there were fifty men baptized."

"After dinner our chaplain and some of us went on shore to baptise the queen. She came with forty ladies, and we conducted them on to the scaffolding; then made her sit down on a cushion and her women around her, until the priest was ready. During that time they showed her an image of our Lady, of wood, holding her little child, which was very well made, and a cross. When she saw it she had a greater desire to be a Christian, and, asking for baptism, she was baptized and named Jehanne, like the mother of the emperor. The wife of the prince, daughter of this queen, had the name of Catherine, the Queen of Mazzava, Isabella, and the others each their name. That day we baptized eight hundred persons of men, women and children. The queen was young and handsome, covered with a black and white sheet; she had the mouth and nails very red, and wore on her head a large hat made of leaves of palm, with a crown over it made of the same leaves, like that of the Pope. After that she begged us to give her the little wooden boy to place in the place of the idols. This we did, and she went away."

"At last, in eight days, all the inhabitants of this island were baptized, and some belonging to the neighboring islands. * * * The captain-general went ashore every day to hear mass, to which

there came many of the new Christians, to whom he explained various points of our religion. One day the queen came with all her state. She was preceded by three damsels, who carried in their hands three of her hats; she was dressed in black and white, with a large silk veil with gold stripes, which covered her head and shoulders. Very many women followed her, with their heads covered with a small veil, and a hat above that; the rest of their bodies and feet were naked, except a small wrapper of palm cloth which covered their natural parts. Their hair fell flowing over their shoulders. The queen, after making a bow to the altar, sat upon a cushion of embroidered silk, and the captain sprinkled over her and over some of her ladies rose water and musk, a perfume which pleases the ladies of this country very much. The captain on that occasion approved of the gift which I had made to the queen of the image of the Infant Jesus, and recommended her to put it in the place of her idols, because it was a remembrance of the Son of God. She promised to do all this and to keep it with much care.”*

Magellan, inspired by his success in Cebu, determined to follow it up by planting the cross in other islands. East of Cebu and separated from it by only a narrow strait, lies the little island of Mactan, the Matan of Pigafetta, which was ruled by two chiefs. One of these had expressed his willingness to accept Christianity, but had been restrained by the other. Magellan determined, against the advice of his friends, to punish the recalcitrant in person, and set out, on the night of April 26, with sixty Spaniards and a few native auxiliaries, in three boats. The king of Cebu and many of his chief men followed in their own boats, invited to see how Spaniards could fight. Magellan waited for daylight before landing. The water was shallow and the men were obliged to wade knee-deep a long distance, at least two bow-shots, says Pigafetta. Leaving eleven men to guard the boats, Magellan led the remainder to the shore, where he was met by a large body of natives, reckoned by Pigafetta at fifteen hundred, drawn up in three divisions, armed with bows and arrows, scimitars and bamboo lances with points hardened in the fire. The Spaniards who, protected by corselets and helmets, despised the native weapons, attacked this large force with ardor, but met with a stubborn resistance. Their ammunition was soon exhausted and Magellan, recognizing too late the danger of the situation, ordered a retreat. The islanders, elated at their

* This image, long worshiped as an idol, was recovered forty-four years later, when Miguel de Legaspé returned to Cebu with missionaries, and is said to be still preserved there in the Church of San Augustine, called also the Church of the Holy Infant of Cebu, together with the cross erected by Magellan.

advantage, pressed the Spaniards in front and on both flanks, and the retreat became a rout. Magellan, with a few of the bravest, attempted to stem the tide, but was cut off from the rest and surrounded, and after a gallant resistance, was killed with eight of his companions and four friendly natives. Pigafetta was wounded, but was among those who escaped and lived to narrate the mournful tale. He says:

“The captain had his right leg pierced by a poisoned arrow, on which account he gave orders to retreat by degrees; but almost all our men took to precipitate flight, so that there remained hardly six or eight of us with him. We were oppressed by the lances and stones which the enemy hurled at us, and we could make no more resistance. * * * As they knew the captain, they aimed especially at him, and twice they knocked the helmet off his head. He, with a few of us, like a good knight, remained at his post without choosing to retreat further. Thus we fought for more than an hour, until an Indian succeeded in thrusting a cane lance into the captain’s face. He then, being irritated, pierced the Indian’s breast with his lance, and left it in his body, and trying to draw his sword he was unable to draw it more than half way, on account of a javelin wound which he had received in the right arm. The enemies seeing this, all rushed against him, and one of them with a great sword, like a great scimeter, gave him a blow on the left leg, which brought the captain down on his face, then the Indians threw themselves upon him, and ran him through with lances and scimeters, and all the other arms which they had, so that they deprived of life our mirror, light, comfort, and true guide. Whilst the Indians were thus overpowering him, several times he turned round towards us to see if we were all in safety, as though his obstinate fight had no other object than to give an opportunity for the retreat of his men. We, who fought to extremity and were covered with wounds, seeing that he was dead, proceeded to the boats, which were on the point of going away.”

Magellan’s sad fate throws a considerable light on his character, and shows that though he possessed many of the qualities of a great captain, his bravery was marred by rashness and his judgment impaired by credulity. The sequel proves that he was no match in cunning for the king of Cebu. As soon as that breechless potentate, who had watched the fight from a safe distance in his boat, saw that the commander of the Spaniards had fallen before the weapons of the islanders, he forgot his Christian professions, and began to plot how he could rid himself of the remainder of his

unwelcome guests. A few days after the return to Cebu, he invited Barbosa and Juan de Serrano, who had succeeded to the command, and others, to a great feast and deliberately murdered twenty-six of his newly-made brethren. After this sad experience, the Spaniards, now greatly reduced in numbers, went to the island of Bohol, southeast of Mactan, where they transferred the equipment of the Concepcion to the other ships and burned her. Under the command of Juan Sebastian del Cano, they then set sail again for the Moluccas and, after a visit to Borneo, finally reached Tidore, one of the spice islands. There they loaded both vessels with cloves and, fearful of the Portuguese, who had already laid claim to the islands, they sailed, the Trinidad for Panama and the Vittoria for Spain. The former never reached her destination, but the latter, after a stormy voyage around the Cape of Good Hope and the loss of thirteen of her men, captured by the Portuguese at the Cape Verde Islands, arrived with only eighteen men on board at San Lucar, whence she had sailed just three years before. The Vittoria, whose representation on the seal of the Hakluyt Society is so familiar, was thus the first ship to sail around the earth. The Emperor, in commemoration of the event, gave to Sebastian del Cano, her commander, for his armorial bearings, a terrestrial globe, with the grand motto "Primus me circumdedisti." But as Magellan had previously sailed around the Cape of Good Hope to the Asiatic Archipelago, and had in his voyage westward reached nearly the same point, the world has universally given to him, the discoverer of the Philippines, the credit of being the first to circumnavigate the globe.