

*O caminho da Índia.* By ELAINE SANCEAU. Translated from the English by ANTÓNIO ÁLVARO DÓRIA. (Oporto: Livraria Civilização, 1948. Pp. 274. Illustrations. Paper.)

Miss Sanceau has made a speciality out of popularizing the Portuguese Age of Exploration for the benefit of the English reader, and she is the author of a series of books including studies on Dom João de Castro, Afonso de Albuquerque, the Portuguese in Abyssinia, and Prince Henry the Navigator. The latest of her books to be translated into Portuguese is an account of the voyage of Vasco da Gama. She wrote on Gama to make clear why his voyage round the Cape of Good Hope to India was important. She knew that every schoolboy read tales about the Portuguese explorer, as about Columbus. But she also knew that whereas schoolboys had a good idea of the significance of Columbus' voyage, they had only the foggiest notions about the significance of Vasco da Gama's. If Gama had discovered India, or had been the first to bring the cloth and spices of India to Europe, this would have been enough to immortalize him, but Gama did nothing of the kind. India was no novelty to Europeans before his time; it was no *terra incognita* as was the New World. Some Europeans had actually been there, and had returned to tell of their experiences. Many people, moreover, were familiar with Indian merchandise, which Muslim and Venetian traders sold at handsome prices. Even Gama's rounding of the Cape was not unique. He merely followed in the footsteps of Bartholomew Dias. When Dias returned to Lisbon from the extremities of Africa, it was a foregone conclusion that some Portuguese would eventually reach India.

Yet Vasco da Gama's voyage, as Miss Sanceau says, was one of those events in history that helped to shape the modern world. In the first place, it demonstrated the superiority of European navigation and the ability of European ships to sail wherever their pilots took them. Before its time, no voyage by Europeans had been so long; the distance covered by Gama and his crew was equal to the circumference of the globe at the equator. It was also a remarkable achievement in the history of nautical science. For ninety days, on his way to the Cape of Good Hope, Gama sailed the high seas out of the sight of land, guided only by his instruments and the stars; beyond the promontory, the Portuguese crossed the uncharted ocean to reach India. The success of such a voyage made it possible for Europeans to trade with exotic lands, and to spread their civilization and religion throughout the world. In the second place, Gama was the first European to present himself formally at an Hindu court. His diplomatic mission on the Malabar Coast marks the beginning of the contacts between India and the West

which have continued to this day. Finally, Gama's discovery of the water route to India led to the destruction of Muslim supremacy in the vast area that lay between Suez and Malacca, and opened these territories to European influence. Clearly, the voyage of Vasco da Gama had wide repercussions in modern times.

Miss Sanceau, of course, tells these things as she goes along. They are the highlights of a story that is more immediately concerned with the perils of the expedition, with Gama's reception in Calicut and Cochin, with his return to Europe. Her setting is good; she gives glimpses of Europe and India in 1497, so that the voyage is seen in perspective, not as an isolated happening. All this she relates with conviction and charm. Her narrative is absorbing; she captures the reader's interest, and holds it to the end. The author, as mentioned before, did not write for the specialist, who already has the sources at his disposal, nor did she endeavor to find anything new in the archives of Portugal (whose secrets in this regard have in all likelihood been revealed). But she made use of the best contemporary materials, especially Álvaro Velho's indispensable *roteiro*, and her book may be read with confidence.

Miss Sanceau ends her story with a brief account of the second expedition to India, that of Pedro Álvares Cabral with whose connection with Brazil every reader of the *THE HISPANIC AMERICAN HISTORICAL REVIEW* is familiar. It has been said, and with some truth, that Brazil, through a curious inversion of things, was baptized before it was born, at Tordesillas in 1494. Actually, Portuguese America arose as the result of an effort that was directed towards the East, and it grew up within an empire; it was explored and colonized even as the Portuguese were setting themselves up along the Malabar Coast, on the Persian Gulf, in China, and the East Indies. Students of Ibero-American history have not paid much attention to Brazil's position within a colonial system that extended half way across the world. I believe that they should. They would never think of studying the Spanish Empire, in a general survey, for example, on the basis of the viceroyalty of Peru alone, but they do not hesitate to study the Portuguese Empire as though Brazil had been its only part. This selection is, I suppose, inevitable, for it is difficult to require the student of an already enormous field to spread himself out even thinner by studying the Portuguese Empire in Africa, India, and the Far East. Yet the reading of such books as those that Miss Sanceau has written, popular though they are, would go a long way towards improving the student's perspective of Brazilian history, particularly in the sixteenth century, and would give added significance to the Portuguese colonization of America.

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