

Our public sheets reveal some details relative to an expedition round the globe, which has not been spoken of till now. We know that at present there is being printed at Madrid a magnificent work containing a detailed account of all the events that occurred during the course of the voyage: there you will find a description of the customs and habits of the Islanders of Babacos [Vava'u], a group of islands unknown to Europeans until now. Here is the announcement of the voyage:

“On 30 July 1789, two Spanish sloops, the *Scoperta* [*Descubierta*] and the *Sottile* [*Sutil*], the first commanded by Don Alessandro Malespina, and the second by Don Giuseppe de Bastiamente [José de Bustamante], made sail in company from the Port of Cadiz. Their commander was charged principally with charting the Coast of America from the river Plate to Cape Horn, and from that Cape to the farthestmost northern extremity of that part of the World.

“On their arrival at the North-West Coast of America in latitude 59, 60 and 61 degrees, they searched in vain for a passage by which they might penetrate into the Atlantic Ocean. They accordingly concluded that the Strait announced by Maldonado, an old Spanish navigator, did not exist but in his imagination, and that the prediction of Cook was based on reason, at least with regard to that passage.

“In the beginning of the year 1792, the *Sottile*, and a Galliot of the same nationality, called the *Mexicana*, joined the ships under the command of Captain Wancower [Vancouver], with an intention to survey and examine the immense Archipelago discovered by Admiral de Fonte, and the inlet of Juan de Fuca. The account of Captain Wancower, which has been published, will instruct us concerning the achievements of their researches.”

Mr. Etches, the Captain of the ship *Principessa Reale* [*Princess Royal*] [says of the coast of] America from 48 as far as 57 degrees North, that it is no more than a chain of islands placed at the entrance of a vast inland sea, like the Baltic and Mediterranean, full of islands. After having set a course in a northerly direction, for a distance of many hundreds of leagues, he arrived at about 200 leagues from Hudson's Bay. The object of his voyage was purely commercial, and not to survey the extremities of this new Mediterranean Sea, but from as much as he was able to discover, it seemed probable that it communicated with Hudson's Bay. The islands that he visited, in number more than 50, were all inhabited by tribes of Indians of a peaceful character and disposed to trade.

“The two Spanish sloops employed the greater part of the year 1792 in visiting the *Mariannes* and *Philippines*, as also *Macao* on the Coast of China. They afterwards passed between the Isles *Mindanao* and the Isles called *Montag* [Morintay], shaping their course along the coasts of *New Guinea*. Reaching the Equator, they traversed a Gulf of about 500 maritime leagues in extent, which no European ship had observed before them. They set course from that Gulf toward *New Zealand* and *New Holland*, and discovered in the Archipelago called the *Friendly Isles* the *Babaco* Islands [Vava'u], where they stayed some time.

“After a variety of other researches in the Southern Ocean, they arrived in May 1793 at Callao on the coast of Peru. From this port, they made other occasional expeditions, which they extended as far as the Moluccas [Malvinas], and finished with entering the river Plate, after having surmounted all the dangers incident to those southern latitudes. They subsequently made sail for Cadiz, where they arrived after a passage of ninety days.

These voyages have contributed not a little to the progress of navigation, Botany, and of mineralogy. In both hemispheres, and in a variety of different latitudes, many experiments were made relative to gravity, which will give rise to important discoveries connected with the irregular form of our Globe, which at the same time will be useful for establishing a general unit of measure.“