

MADRID 12 December. On the 7th of this month, Captains Don Alexandre Malaspina, Don José de Bustamante and Don Dionysio Galeano, and Lieutenant Don Ciriaco de Cevallos, the first two commanders of the sloops *Descubierta* and *Atrevida*, the third, of the schooner *Sutil*, and the fourth, an officer of the sloops, were presented to Their Majesties and received the honour of kissing the Royal hands.

These ships returned on 21 September to Cadiz, whence they had departed on 30 July 1789 without any other object than that of competing with the other maritime Powers for the progress of the Sciences, especially Navigation, to construct charts and sailing directions for the coasts of America and the adjacent islands, comprehended on one side between the River Plate and Cape Horn, and on the other, between the same Cape and the extremities of North America, reuniting under one view all the enterprises and voyages, both national and foreign, which preceded them.

On the Northwest coast of America, up to latitudes 59, 60 and 61 degrees, after fruitless exertions, they came to know that in practice the passage to the Atlantic indicated by the old Spanish navigator Lorenzo Ferrer de Maldonado did not exist; and the schooners *Sutil* and *Mexicana*, sent at the beginning of 1792 under the command of Captains Don Dionysio Galeano and Don Caetano Valdes, succeeded in cooperating with the English expedition of Captain Vancoover for the determination of the immense archipelago known under the denomination of Admiral Fonte and João de Fuca.

The major part of the year 1792 was spent by the said sloops in examining the Mariannas islands, the Philippines and Macao on the coast of China. They subsequently sailed together to pass between the island of Mindanao and that of Morintay, coasting New Guinea, examining the part under the Line and the unfurrowed seas beyond for 500 leagues, passing among the New Hebrides, visiting New Zealand at Dusky Bay, New Holland at Port Jackson and, in the archipelago of the Friendly Islands, the islands of Babau [Vava'u], never before visited by any foreign navigators who traversed those seas; and finally, after having made new investigations in several latitudes of the Pacific Ocean, they came to port at Callao de Lima in June of 1793. From there, they again visited the port of Concepcion in Chile and, separating the sloops to increase their explorations, they sailed along Tierra del Fuego, the coast of Patagonia and the western side of the Malvinas, arriving at last at the River Plate after passing through the risks that accompany navigation in those seas, which were increased for the *Atrevida* by encountering many great icebergs. The said sloops, as a consequence of the current state of Europe, brought out their guns in at Montevideo and together with a Royal frigate and six ships belonging to the commerce of Lima, and others belonging to that of Buenos Aires, sailed in convoy for Cadiz, where they arrived successfully on the said date after a 90 day voyage. The value in specie and plate brought by the convoy escorted by the sloops was eight million dollars.

The voyage in question, so successfully carried out that no more than three or four persons died in each sloop, has enriched Botany, Mineralogy and Hydrography copiously and extraordinarily. The experiments on gravity, repeated in both hemispheres and in different latitudes, will lead to important verifications concerning

the non-symmetrical shape of the Earth, and will be the basis for a unit of measure which in Europe is in contemplation, which will be universal, verifiable, and as constant as the laws upon which it will depend.