

Americo Vespucci, born at Florence on the 9th March 1451, died at Seville 22nd February 1512, went to Spain, joined in the year 1499 the adventurers who sailed to South America, explored with Spanish and Portuguese ships and by land excursions large tracts of this continent especially at the mouth of the Amazon, drew maps of the countries he visited, and described his four voyages in his Latin work *Quatuor Navigationes*, which was published in 1507 at St. Dié in the Lorraine. The editor of this interesting book, professor Martin Waldseemüller, proposed that the continent described and illustrated by Americo should bear the author's name, for through him we first learned that the vast countries discovered in the West formed no part of Asia. Germany and Switzerland were the first to adopt the proposed name, and at the end of the 16th century the appellation of America was nearly universally employed; the Spaniards however continued till 1820 to use in documents and on coins the old title *Hispaniarum et Indiarum Rex*. The aborigines of America alone were, and still are wrongly called Indians, like their brethren in the Asiatic peninsula, although there be neither analogy of race, skill, custom nor religion.

Solis and Pinzon of Spain found Yucatan in 1508 which then stood under the king of the Aztecs or Mexicans; they were the first who brought information into Europe of the existence of such a rich and tolerably civilized kingdom. The Spaniard Balboa, after having entered the Gulf of Darien in 1513, travelled westwards; he was the first European that saw the Pacific Ocean from its eastern shore; turning then to the south he discovered the kingdom of Incas, now republic of Peru, which at that time had rich mines of silver.