

than the re-discovery of the New World by Columbus. The influence of Ptolemy's Geography commenced from the time of its translation into Latin, for at that time the knowledge of Greek was slight even among the learned men of the West. The invention of the printing-press enabled seven large folio editions to be published before the end of the fifteenth century. Nearly all the geographical maps published from 1492 down even to 1570¹ were Ptolemy's, with additions from the compass charts of Mediterranean sailors, and sketches showing the more recent discoveries in the Great Ocean. Ptolemy's geographical conceptions prevailed throughout the whole period of great geographical discoveries, and were even imported into the early charts of America. It is interesting to note that *Cattigara*, which was an emporium in the extreme east of Asia in the time of Ptolemy, appears on the western coast of South America in the maps of the sixteenth century, for instance, in the map of Sebastian Münster, published in the Ptolemy of 1540.

During the thirteenth century the great Mongol conquests in Asia and eastern Europe opened up a way from Europe to China, and for nearly a century European missionaries and traders visited these little-known and fabulous countries in the far East. Among others, the three Polos—father, uncle, and son—returned to Venice, after an absence of twenty years, with their coats lined with diamonds, rubies, and other jewels, and spread them before their astonished and envious countrymen. Marco Polo's account of his travels was written down in 1299, but does not appear to have been generally known till about the middle of the fifteenth century. Roger Bacon and Dante, as well as the author of Mandeville's travels who copied from all sources, do not seem to have known about Marco Polo's adventures. The Chinese seas had, as we have pointed out, been visited by Soleiman and other Arab sailors during the ninth century, but these voyages appear to have been wholly unknown in western Europe. Marco Polo gave the first definite information as to the limits of the Asiatic continent towards the east. Ptolemy, it will be remembered, had united the east coast of Africa by unknown lands to the remote portions of Asia, which he regarded as indefinitely extended towards the east in "reedy and impenetrable swamps." The results of Marco Polo's travels are for the first time shown on the Catalan Chart of 1375, as noted above.

The necessities of commerce had, however, a most powerful influence in turning attention towards the Great Western Ocean; in transferring the centre of civilisation and commercial activity from the Mediterranean to the coasts of the Atlantic. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks in 1453 closed the overland trade routes to the east, which, for over a hundred years, had brought trade and wealth to Venice, Genoa, and Western Europe. Turkish pirates so overran the Eastern Mediterranean that

¹ When the first edition of the *Theatrum Orbis Terrarum* by Ortelius was published at Antwerp containing 53 maps in double folio. A second edition appeared the same year, and edition followed edition till 1612, the last containing 228 modern and 38 ancient or historical maps (Nordenskiöld, *op. cit.*, p. 124). (See Plate VI.)