

SPECIAL PRIZE?

Commended

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Subject: Describe the achievements of three explorers of the Commonwealth & Empire, which of them interests you most.

In the thirteenth century the thought of someone sailing round the world had never occurred to the minds of those ignorant people. They never thought that the earth was round, for they had the idea that the earth was some sort of a disc, & that if anyone sailed too near the edge he would drop down into some unknown region. This was the constant fear of the sailors at that time, so they were never encouraged to explore.

It was in the fourteenth century that the Renaissance, the re-birth of knowledge, that had a great deal to do with the explorers of the fifteenth century, which started the new epoch. The great learnings & manuscripts of wisemen had been taken by the Turks during their constant invasion of Europe. The manuscripts were kept in Constantinople but in the fourteenth century they were taken back to Italy. Men started reading & learning the manuscripts which dealt with religion, philosophy, geography, etcetera. This put a feeling of curiosity in their minds. "The sphericity of

General History
by
Meyers

the earth was a doctrine held by all the really learned men of this time. Christopher Columbus supported this statement & proved it by sailing in 1492 to the East Indies. He thought it was the East Indies & he died never knowing that it was a new continent that he had discovered.

This voyage was followed by many, including Bartholomew Diaz who, in 1486, sailed & doubled the Cape of Good Hope. Vasco de Gama (1497-1498) went slightly further than Bartholomew Diaz for he sailed round the Cape of Good Hope & reached India. He returned by the same route. Ferdinand Magellan sailed round the world from 1519 to 1522 by taking the West-East route.

England at this time was by no means indifferent to all these exciting events happening to her neighbours across the sea. She was also very excited & was rather disappointed that she was not one of the first to send her sailors to explore the world. She was also preparing for this voyage, & her dreams for more lands across the sea were realised when Sir Francis Drake succeeded to sail round the world.

Sir Francis Drake was born near Tavistock in Devonshire in 1545. His father was a yeoman & one of the zealous Protestants who took refuge in Kent during Queen Mary's reign, when all Protestants were executed. Sir John Hawkins was a kinsman of Drake & was responsible for Drake's education. Drake worked in a coasting vessel after he had completed his education. When he

was twenty years old he fought gallantly under Sir John Hawkins against the Spanish in the Gulf of Mexico. It was here that he gained a good reputation. In 1570 Drake obtained a regular privateering commission from Queen Elizabeth I. He was a "thorn in the Spanish flesh", for he was constantly attacking Spanish ships which were laden with great riches. He proposed a voyage to the South Seas through the Straits of Magellan & the Queen agreed to equip him.

The voyage began on 13th December 1577 with two vessels & a crew of a hundred & sixty-six men. He cruised down the west coast of Morocco & reached Brazil on April 6th then entered into Rio de La Plate. He turned two of his ships adrift after taking the provisions. He was delayed two months because of provision & the execution of Thomas Doughty who had plotted against him. On August 21st he reached the Straits of Magellan which was founded by Magellan & situated between the south of South America & Tierra del Fuego. He took sixteen days to pass through it because of a storm. Drake parted with two of his vessels which later returned to England. He continued on to Chile, Peru & took the opportunity of plundering Spanish ships whenever possible, until he reached Latitude 48°. He named one of the countries he went ashore, New Albion & proclaimed it in the name of the Queen.

On July 20th, 1579, Drake made for the Moluccas & on November 4th he caught his first glimpse of the

island. He arrived at Terna + was well-received by the Sultan. His ship stuck on to the rocks in the Celebes but he managed to get it out undamaged. He arrived at Java, but his plans of visiting Malacca had to be abandoned as he was urgently needed in England. He sailed across the Indian Ocean, rounded the Cape of Good Hope + arrived at Plymouth on September 20th. This voyage took him two years + three months. Drake was proclaimed as the first Englishman to sail round the world.

Queen Elizabeth I went to Drake's ship, the *Septford*, which was later known as the *Golden Hind*, + knighted him. During this time, England was having much trouble with Spain. Drake was in time to fight in the famous Spanish Armada, which was a crowning victory for Britain. He succeeded to burn ten thousand tons of shipping. This event was nicknamed "singeing the King of Spain's beard." After this he made a trip to the West Indies + died there on January 28th 1596.

Sir Robert Falcon Scott was an explorer of the early part of the twentieth century. His birth took place on January 6th 1868 at Devonport, + he received his education at Stoke Newington + Shrekington House. In 1880 he passed into the His Majesty's ship *Britannia* in 1883 + he became a midshipman on the '*Goodie'*'. His promotion as First Lieutenant came in 1887 + two years later he was recommended as commander of the National Antarctic Expedition. His promotion as can be seen was very rapid, + after taking duties on the '*Discovery'*' in 1900 he

was promoted as commander. During the following four years he proved to be a brave & able leader & a competent scientific investigator. He was given the position of a captain on his return home. He spent six years in the army commanding the 'Victorious', 'Essex' & 'Bulwark' in 1909.

He announced his intention of organising an Antarctic expedition for the continuation of the work of the 'Discovery' & reaching the South Pole. Scott was financially supported by the British & Dominion Government.

Scott set sail in June, 1910, on the 'Teneriffe'. In November 1911 he began his southern sledge journey. Though Scott & his four companions were delayed because of bad weather, they reached the South Pole on January 18th 1912. Disappointment met them in the form of Amundsen, who had reached the Pole a few days earlier than Scott.

Sickness, insufficiency of food, mixed with severity of weather & disappointment made travelling on the return journey very slow. On February 11th Petty Officer Evans broke under the strain & died. A month later, Oates, another member of the expedition was very ill & could not travel. Hoping that his sacrifice could benefit his companions, he walked out into the blizzard. He did not want to delay his companions & thought that they could use his provision. His great sacrifice proved to be effortless!

On November 12th, 1912, a search party found Scott's tent. In it were the bodies of Doctor E. A. Wilson + Lieutenant H. P. Bowers + also the ^{account} diaries + records of Scott, giving a detail of the brave journey. They proved to be very useful for other explorers later on. On February 14th, 1913, a memorial service took place at St. Paul's Cathedral, London, in memory of Scott + his party, who had given their lives for the glory which was Britain.

David Livingstone was born on March 19th, 1813, at the village of Blantyre Works in Lanarkshire in Scotland. When he was young he was compelled to work in a cotton mill, to help his family financially, but he was ambitious. When Livingstone was twenty-two he undertook + college ^{Theology} curriculum. He took up medicine, Greek + ~~Hebrew~~ in Anderson's College in Glasgow. In 1838 he was accepted by the London Missionary Society as a candidate. In November 1840, he received the medical degree in the Faculty of Physicians + Surgeons. His one ambition was to go to China + he was bitterly disappointed when he was told to go to Africa, however I think that he never regretted going there!

Livingstone sailed from England on December 8th, 1840 from Algea Bay. He arrived at Kuruman, a mission station. The next two years he spent looking for a suitable outpost for settlement. He found it in the valley of Makotsa, which was on one of the sources of the Limpopo River. It was here that he brought his family. Two English-

men joined Livingstone & they undertook the journey to Lake Ngami, which had never been seen by white men. They crossed the Kalahari Desert in 1851 & Livingstone went back to England.

Another expedition took place. When Livingstone reached the Lake Dibe, he was ill with dysentery but on recovering he undertook the journey back to England. He went back to Africa, then set out for the Zambesi Expedition. He was accompanied by Sir John Kirk & Charles Livingstone, his brother. They explored the River Tete, especially the Kabaasas Rapids. In 1859 they explored Lake Nyasa, then proceeded to Shire where they found the horrors of the slave trade rampant. Livingstone decided to rouse the civilized world to put down this trade. He returned to England.

On returning to Africa he was appointed as the British Consul to Africa. He organised yet another expedition with the chief object of the suppression of slavery by means of civilizing influences. He met many slave traders & discovered Lake Bangweulu. He was joined later by H. M. Stanley but Livingstone had another attack of dysentery. He died on April 30th. On the next day the African boys found his body kneeling in prayer. His preserved body with other instruments were sent to Zanzibar & later, brought to Westminster Abbey in London.

Livingstone in his thirty years in Africa did a splendid lot for the world. He explored one third of Africa & found important African hydrography. He found

not

useful geographical & scientific materials. It was ^{not} only the civilized world which benefitted from Livingstone but he helped the poor & the down trodden people of Africa. They found in him the simple trust, for he was constantly sympathizing with their joys & sorrows. His memory was cherished by all those ignorant people who treated him as a superior being.

Although Britain gained all the glories from the success of Sir Francis Drake's journey round the world & Sir Fabon Scott's achievement to the South Pole; I feel that David Livingstone was more glorious to England than any of those. He showed the people the nature of the British people. The tribes of Africa at that time looked on white people as one race. They were in constant fear of the white men. They had reason to fear, for the Portuguese slave traders caused havoc in Africa. David Livingstone helped the simple minded people to understand that all white people were not the same. He was gentle, kind to them & showed them the British nature.

No one could have been more fitted than Livingstone to do this great work, for he was a doctor & missionary. The people always called him "the great doctor". He told them about religion & filled their minds with more civilized ideas. The people had always been worshipping the sun, moon & other objects. They were in constant fear of making the gods angry, but Livingstone told them about the one God. He planted the seeds for the abolition of the

slave trade & most of all his death was an inspiration to other explorers & missionaries who followed in his footsteps. His one great motto in life ^{was} ~~one~~ "Fear God, & work hard," which he had lived up to in his life!

References from:

The Encyclopaedia Britannica.

General History by Hegels.

The New Groundwork of British History by Warner, Hatten & Train
