



MAGELLAN

Engraving from Dapper's American Book 1673

CHAPTER ONE

Navigare Necessè Est

IN THE BEGINNING THERE WERE SPICES. From the days when the Romans, in their journeys and their wars, first acquired a taste for the hot or aromatic, the pungent or intoxicating dietetic adjuvants of the East, the Western world found it impossible to get on without a supply of Indian spices in cellar and storeroom. Lacking spices, the food of northern Europe was unspeakably monotonous and insipid, and thus it remained far into the Middle Ages. Centuries were to elapse before the fruits, the tubers and the other products which now seem commonplaces were to be used or acclimatised in Europe. Potatoes, tomatoes and corn were unknown. There were no lemons to prepare acid drinks, there was no sugar for sweetening, the cheering tea and coffee were still lacking; even at the tables of the rich and the powerful, there was naught to relieve the sameness of perpetual gluttony—until, wonderful to relate, it was found that a touch of spice from the Orient, a dash of pepper, a minute addition of ground nutmeg, the mingling of a little ginger or cinnamon with the coarsest of dishes, would give an unwonted and wholesome