

fied with literary compositions, whose forms were unknown to former ages.

On casting a retrospective glance on the great discoveries which prepared the way for this modern tone of feeling, our attention is especially attracted by the descriptions of nature which we owe to the pen of Columbus. It is only recently that we have been in possession of his own ship's journal, his letters to the Chancellor Sanchez, to the Donna Juana de la Torre, governess of the Infant Don Juan, and to Queen Isabella. I have already attempted, in my critical investigation of the history of the geography of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries,* to show with what depth of feeling for nature the great discoverer was endowed, and how he described the earth and the new heaven opened to his eyes (*viage nuevo al nuevo cielo i mundo que fasta entonces estaba en occulto*) with a beauty and simplicity of expression which can only be adequately appreciated by those who are conversant with the ancient vigor of the language at the period in which he wrote.

The physiognomy and forms of the vegetation, the impenetrable thickets of the forests, "in which one can scarcely distinguish the stems to which the several blossoms and leaves belong," the wild luxuriance of the flowering soil along the humid shores, and the rose-colored flamingoes, which, fishing at early morn at the mouth of the rivers, impart animation to the scenery, all, in turn, arrested the attention of the old mariner as he sailed along the shores of Cuba, between the small Lucayan islands and the Jardinillos, which I too have visited. Each newly-discovered land seems to him more beautiful than the one last described, and he deploras his inability to find words in which to express the sweet impressions awakened in his mind. Wholly unacquainted with botany (although, through the influence of Arabian and Jewish physicians, some superficial knowledge of plants had been diffused in Spain), he was led, by a simple love of nature, to individualize all the unknown forms he beheld. Thus, in Cuba alone, he distinguishes seven or eight different species of palms, more beautiful and taller than the date-tree (*variedades de palmas superiores a las nuestras en su belleza y altura*). He informs his learned friend Anghiera that he has seen pines and palms (*palmeta et pineta*) wonderfully associated together in one and the same plain; and he even so acutely observed the vegetation around him, that he was the first to notice that

* Humboldt, *Examen Critique de l'Histoire de la Géographie du nouveau Continent*, t. iii., p 227-248.