

velopment of language could be employed for the purpose of giving animated pictures of distant regions.

The earlier travelers of the Middle Ages, as, for instance, John Mandeville (1353), Hans Schiltberger of Munich (1425), and Bernhard von Breytenback (1486), delight us even in the present day by their charming simplicity, their freedom of style, and the self-confidence with which they step before a public, who, from their utter ignorance, listen with the greater curiosity and readiness of belief, because they have not as yet learned to feel ashamed of appearing ignorant, amused, or astonished. The interest attached to the narratives of travels was then almost wholly dramatic, and the necessary and easily introduced admixture of the marvelous gave them almost an epic coloring. The manners of foreign nations are not so much described as they are rendered incidentally discernible by the contact of the travelers with the natives. The vegetation is unnamed and unheeded, with the exception of an occasional allusion to some pleasantly-flavored or strangely-formed fruit, or to the extraordinary dimensions of particular kinds of stems or leaves of plants. Among animals, they describe, with the greatest predilection, first, those which exhibit most resemblance to the human form, and, next, those which are the wildest and most formidable. The cotemporaries of these travelers believed in all the dangers which few of them had shared, and the slowness of navigation and the want of means of communication caused the Indies, as all the tropical regions were then called, to appear at an immeasurable distance. Columbus* was not yet justified in writing to Queen Isabella, "the world is small, much smaller than people suppose."

The almost forgotten travels of the Middle Ages to which we have alluded, possessed, however, with all the poverty of their materials, many advantages in point of composition over the majority of our modern voyages. They had that character of unity which every work of art requires; every thing was associated with one action, and made subservient to the narration of the journey itself. The interest was derived from the simple, vivid, and generally implicitly-believed relation of dangers overcome. Christian travelers, in their ignorance of what had already been done by Arabs, Spanish Jews, and Buddhist missionaries, boasted of being the first to see and

* Letter of the Admiral from Jamaica, July 7, 1503: "*El mundo es poco; digo que el mundo no es tan grande como dice el vulgo*" (Navarrete, *Coleccion de Viages Esp.*, t. i., p. 300).