

describe every thing. In the midst of the obscurity in which the East and the interior of Asia were shrouded, distance seemed only to magnify the grand proportions of individual forms. This unity of composition is almost wholly wanting in most of our recent voyages, especially where their object is the acquirement of scientific knowledge. The narrative in the latter case is secondary to observations, and is almost wholly lost sight of. It is only the relation of toilsome and frequently uninformative mountain ascents, and, above all, of bold maritime expeditions, of actual voyages of discovery in unexplored regions, or of a sojourn in the dreadful waste of the icy polar zone, that can afford any dramatic interest, or admit of any great degree of individuality of delineation ; for here the desolation of the scene, and the helplessness and isolation of the seamen, individualize the picture and excite the imagination so much the more powerfully.

If, from what has already been said, it be undeniably true that in modern books of travel the action is thrown in the back-ground, being in most cases only a means of linking together successive observations of nature and of manners, yet this partial disadvantage is fully compensated for by the increased value of the facts observed, the greater expansion of natural views, and the laudable endeavor to employ the peculiar characteristics of different languages in rendering natural descriptions clear and distinct. We are indebted to modern cultivation for a constantly-advancing enlargement of our field of view, an increasing accumulation of ideas and feelings, and the powerful influence of their mutual reaction. Without leaving the land of our birth, we not only learn to know how the earth's surface is fashioned in the remotest zones, and by what animal and vegetable forms it is occupied, but we may even hope to have delineations presented to us which shall vividly reflect, in some degree at least, the impressions conveyed by the aspect of external nature to the inhabitants of those distant regions. To satisfy this demand, to comply with a requirement that may be termed a species of intellectual enjoyment wholly unknown to antiquity, is an object for which modern times are striving, and it is an object which will be crowned with success, since it is the common work of all civilized nations, and because the greater perfection of the means of communication by sea and land renders the whole earth more accessible, and facilitates the comparison of the most widely-separated parts.

I have here attempted to indicate the direction in which