

the number of the works of creation known to the inhabitants of Europe, it likewise offered to the intellect new and powerful incitements toward the improvement of natural sciences, in the departments of physics and mathematics.*

The world of objects now, as in Alexander's campaigns, although with still more overwhelming power, manifested itself to the combining mind in individual forms of nature, and in the concurrent action of vital forces. The scattered images of sensuous perception were gradually fused together into one concrete whole, notwithstanding their abundance and diversity, and terrestrial nature was conceived in its general character, and made an object of direct observation, and not of vague presentiments, floating in varying forms before the imagination. The vault of heaven revealed to the eye, which was as yet unaided by telescopic powers, new regions, unknown constellations, and separate revolving nebulous masses. At no other period, as we have already remarked, were a greater abundance of facts, and a richer mass of materials for the establishment of comparative physical geography, presented to any one portion of the human race. At no other period have discoveries in the material world of space called forth more extraordinary changes in the manners and well-being of men, and in the long-enduring condition of slavery of a portion of the human race, and their late awakening to political freedom; nor has any other age afforded so large an extension to the field of view by the multiplication of products and objects of barter, and by the establishment of colonies of a magnitude hitherto unknown.

On investigating the course of the history of the universe, we shall discover that the germ of those events which have imparted any strongly-marked progressive movement to the human mind may be traced deeply rooted in the track of preceding ages. It does not lie in the destinies of mankind that all should equally experience mental obscuration. A principle of preservation fosters the eternal vital process of advancing reason. The age of Columbus attained the object of its destination so rapidly because a track of fruitful germs had already been cast abroad by a number of highly-gifted men, who formed, as it were, a lengthened beam of light amid the darkness of the Middle Ages. One single century—the thirteenth—shows us Roger Bacon, Nicolaus Scotus, Albertus Magnus, and Vincentius of Beauvais. The mental activity,

* Compare Humboldt, *Examen Crit. de l'Hist. de la Géographie*, t. i., p. viii. and xix.