

the one by the globular aspect of the stars, the other by numerical deductions—were led to conceive the idea of a terrestrial globe, and the possibility of circumnavigating the entire Earth. At length, directed by the magnetic needle, the grand and prolific achievement of the twelfth century, the Portuguese navigators trusted themselves intrepidly to the open seas, and theirs was the glory of discovering that “Cape of Storms” which was afterwards more fitly designated the “Cape of Good Hope.”* In 1492 Christopher Columbus revealed to man the New World; a revelation which soon doubled the extent of the known Earth, and added to our charts two immense continents—immense in area, immense in resources, immense in the prospects and capabilities of their future—which hitherto had remained as inaccessible as the Solar World or the Milky Way.

Since that epoch human genius has been free to spread itself over the whole extent of our planet; and the combined efforts of innumerable voyagers will speedily leave no corner of its inhabitable regions unexplored. According to the calculations made by those geometers who have defined the exact form of the Earth, the direct measurement of a part of two meridians taken at the equator and at the poles demonstrates, beyond all doubt, that it is really a flattened (or oblate) spheroid. Finally, during the last century, the contour of the mountains, the depth of the seas, the geological and mineralogical character of the successive formations, and the circumstances which have determined the great “accidents”—the lights and shades, as it were—of the terrestrial crust, the true configuration of the ocean-bed, have been scrutinized with the most rigorous exactness. All this is, at present, actually familiar to us in its general features; it only remains for our generation to fill in the details of the picture. The external edifice of the glorious palace of science is raised; we have but to perfect its internal arrangement and decoration.

What, in our days, chiefly contributes to geographical progress is the fact that the immense distances, which formerly prevented any extensive exploration of the globe, have, as it were, disappeared. Space is no longer an insurmountable barrier. We have almost realized the boast of Shakspeare’s “Puck,” and put “a girdle round about the earth in forty minutes.” Owing to the facility and rapidity of our modern communications, the steam-car and the steam-ship, Earth has been examined even into its furthest recesses, and man has become a cosmopolitan being. Through the mutual and reciprocal contact and intercourse of peoples, nationalities vanish; † the human race, like the individual, tends more and more to make itself free of the entire world; to throw off the narrow sympathies of particular countries, to assume an uniform type of character and thought. Let us take an example. In the era of the Roman people, the Alps formed an unconquerable barrier, which separated the

* [The Cape of Good Hope was doubled, in 1487, by Bartolommeo Diaz. In 1497, Dom Vasco du Gama sailed round the Cape, crossed the Indian Ocean, and arrived at Calicut, in India, May 20, 1498.—COOLEY, *History of Maritime Discovery*.]

† [In the face of recent events (1868), and the rapid spread of the “doctrine of nationalities,” our readers will hardly accede to M. Figuier’s proposition.]