

to our young readers. Science is almost as old as the human race ; but its march has been singularly slow and gradual.

" Science moves but slowly, slowly, creeping on from point to point."

Man has only conquered the earth by degrees, and with measured steps. His geographical knowledge has gradually extended, just as the horizon of every individual enlarges from his early years to his " last scene of all." The child begins by familiarizing himself with the things around him, under his paternal roof. Then he descends into the garden and the street ; in time he explores the surrounding country and neighbouring towns. Arrived at manhood, he travels. His curiosity carries him beyond the seas ; he traverses remote lands, and eventually returns to his birth-place, able to exclaim with the *Ulysses* of Tennyson,—

" Much have I seen and known ; cities of men
And manners, climates, councils, governments."

Analogous has been the march of humanity in progressively acquiring a knowledge of the domain allotted to it by Providence as the sojourn of its fugitive life. The horizon of the ancient geographers, at first restricted to the narrowest circle, gradually developed in proportion as those " skirmishers " or " pioneers of science," whom we call " travellers," penetrated further into unknown regions ; in proportion as the Ptolemies and the Strabos revealed to their surprised contemporaries the extent and the splendours of lands unknown. The day that the crew of the immortal Genoese hailed, with cries of gratitude and joy, the mist-shrouded shores of the New World, that day Geography broke from its leading-strings, and flung aside its childish toys ; a new life commenced for Science, as for Humanity.



FIG. 1. — COLUMBUS.

[The grandeur of the work which Columbus did can hardly be over-estimated, nor the extent of its beneficial influence upon the destinies of the human race. By revealing the New World, he perfected the physical oneness of the globe. It was his, observes Lamartine,* to advance far beyond what had been previously accomplished, the work of God — the moral unity of the human race. Mohammedans date from the Hegira ; philosophers and humanitarians should reckon from the day that Columbus discovered the first land of the American hemisphere, October 12, 1492.]

Before presenting a summary of our physical knowledge of the present terrestrial globe, it will not be uninteresting if we cast a rapid glance at its successive developments ; that is to say, at the history of geography.

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