

gloomy and appalling horrors, and the marvels narrated by those fortunate enough to return, told how deeply the imagination had been stirred by the new scenes opened to their vision. Pytheas, who coasted from Marseilles to the Shetland Isles, and who there obtained a glance at the bleak and wintry desolation of the North Sea, declared, on reaching home, that his further progress was barred by an immense black mollusc, which hung suspended in the air, and in which a ship would be inextricably involved, and where no man could breathe. The menaces of the South were even more appalling than the perils of the north; for he who should venture, it was said, across the equator into the regions of the sun, would be changed into a negro for his rashness; besides, in the popular belief, the waters there were not navigable. Upon the quaint charts of the Middle Ages, a giant located upon the Canary Islands forbade all farther venture westward, by brandishing his formidable club in the path of all vessels coming from the east. Upon these singular maps, the concealed and treacherous horrors of the deep were displayed in the grotesque shapes of sea-monsters and distorted water-unicorns, which were represented as careering through space and waylaying the navigators. Even in the time of Columbus, and when the introduction of the compass into European ships should have somewhat diminished the fantastic terrors of the sea, we find that the Arabians, the best geographers of the time, represented the bony and gnarled hand of Satan as rising from the waves of the sea of darkness—as the Atlantic was then called—ready to seize and engulf the presumptuous mariner. The sailors of Columbus, on reaching the Sargasso Sea, where the collected weeds offered an impediment to their progress, thought they had arrived at the limit of navigation, and the end of the world. Five years later the crew of Da Gama, on doubling the Cape of Good Hope, imagined they saw, in the threatening clouds that gathered about Table Rock, the form of a spectre waving off their vessel, and crying woe to all who should thus invade his dread dominion. The Neptune of the classics, in short, who disported himself in the narrow waters of the Mediterranean, and of whose wrath we have read the famous mythologic accounts, was a deity altogether bland and *debonnaire* compared to the gloomy and revengeful monopolist of the seas, such as the historians and geographers of the Middle Ages painted him.

And now Columbus had discovered the Western Continent, Da Gama had found an ocean route to the Indies, and Magellan, sailing round the world, had proved its sphericity and approached the Spice Islands from the east. For centuries now, the two great oceans