

of the stars, their changing brilliance, the trails of light streaming across the sky make the silence of nature less awe-inspiring than it is by day.

Life is to most of us essential for the enjoyment of nature, especially in the majestic scenes, whether among high mountains or on the ocean, when the feeling of awe is at times overpowering. Never is our insignificance in comparison with the mighty forces that surround us more manifest. But again it is the solitary individual who is thus impressed, and except in the actual convulsion of an earthquake or volcano the feeling of awe is dissipated when a multitude of men and women are found together in majestic surroundings.

This feeling of awe is not the same as fear, though the two are akin, and indeed some thinkers have sought to trace in this emotion of awe an unconscious homage of the spirit of man to the imminent divine spirit in nature. Undoubtedly the element of fear enters into those religions in which the homage is paid to their deities through nature-worship. Be this, however, as it may, nature was for ages overwhelmingly awesome to most nations. Of late among the peoples of our Western civilization this awe has been lessening. Men are growing more familiar with nature; they are gaining greater mastery over it. Centuries ago the "merry Grecian coaster" hugged the shore partly because his boat was a cockle shell; the braver Tyrian trader "Snatched his rudder and shook out more sail

And day and night held on indignantly
O'er the blue Midland waters with the
gale,

Betwixt the Syrtes and soft Sicily,
To where the Atlantic raves

Outside the Western straits, and unbent sails

There, where down cloudy cliffs,
through sheets of foam,

Shy traffickers, the dark Iberians come;
And on the beach undid his corded
bales."

Man was beginning to assert his control over nature, but the venturesome spirit did not mature till the fifteenth century, which was an age of discovery memorable for many voyages, to the West Coast of Africa, round the Cape of Good Hope to India and the far East, led by brave men sometimes lured on by hope of gold but often by the fascination of the unknown. The voyage that appeals most to our imagination and seems to surpass the others in its daring, and its seamanship was made by Christopher Columbus in 1492, when he invaded the solitude of the Western ocean. They were the first that ever burst into that solitude and Westwards hereafter was the trend of exploration. It was the discovery of a New World in more senses than one. Then appeared the great sailors whose familiarity with the ocean in its variable moods so dispelled fear that they could think of it as their home. Man was asserting his mastery. He knew what lay beyond; he learned to use the fickle winds, and when neither sun nor stars appeared for many days to go by dead reckoning.

With the sense of mastery the spirit of mystery has vanished; science, knowledge, experience are making exact calculation possible. Thus we have a "Mauretania," the proof of man's mastery over nature, the product, almost miraculous, were we not able to trace each simple step in the development of adventure, experience and