

are most of the papers of his deceased friend, the late historian Muñoz, who was cut off in the midst of his valuable labours. These, and various other documents, have been imparted to me by Don Antonio with a kindness and urbanity which greatly increased, yet lightened the obligation.

With these, and other aids incidentally afforded me by my local situation, I have endeavoured, to the best of my abilities, and making the most of the time which I could allow myself during a sojourn in a foreign country, to construct this history. I have diligently collated all the works that I could find relative to my subject, in print and manuscript; comparing them, as far as in my power, with original documents, those sure lights of historic research; endeavouring to ascertain the truth amid those contradictions which will inevitably occur, where several persons have recorded the same facts, viewing them from different points, and under the influence of different interests and feelings.

In the execution of this work I have avoided indulging in mere speculations or general reflections, excepting such as rose naturally out of the subject, preferring to give a minute and circumstantial narrative, omitting no particular that appeared characteristic of the persons, the events, or the times; and endeavouring to place every fact in such a point of view, that the reader might perceive its merits, and draw his own maxims and conclusions.

As many points of the history required explanations, drawn from contemporary events and the literature of the times, I have preferred, instead of incumbering the narrative, to give detached illustrations at the end of the work. This also enabled me to indulge in greater latitude of detail, where the subject was of a curious or interesting nature, and the sources of information such as not to be within the common course of reading.

After all, the work is presented to the public with extreme diffidence. All that I can safely claim is, an earnest desire to state the truth, an absence from prejudices respecting the nations mentioned in my history, a strong interest in my subject, and a zeal to make up by assiduity for many deficiencies of which I am conscious.

WASHINGTON IRVING.

Madrid, 1827.

BOOK I.

WHETHER in old times, beyond the reach of history or tradition, and in some remote period of civilization, when, as some imagine, the arts may have flourished to a degree unknown to those whom we term the Ancients, there existed an intercourse between the opposite shores of the Atlantic; whether the Egyptian legend, narrated by Plato, respecting the island of Atlantis, was indeed no fable, but the obscure tradition of some vast country, engulfed by one of those mighty convulsions of our globe, which have left traces of the ocean on the summits of lofty mountains, must ever remain matters of vague and visionary speculation. As far as authenticated history extends, nothing was known of terra-firma, and the islands of the western hemisphere, until their discovery towards the close of the fifteenth century. A wander-

ing bark may occasionally have lost sight of the landmarks of the old continents, and been driven by tempests across the wilderness of waters long before the invention of the compass, but never returned to reveal the secrets of the ocean. And though, from time to time, some document had floated to the shores of the old world, giving to its wondering inhabitants evidences of land far beyond their watery horizon; yet no one ventured to spread a sail, and seek that land enveloped in mystery and peril. Or if the legends of the Scandinavian voyagers be correct, and their mysterious Vinland was the coast of Labrador, or the shore of Newfoundland, they had but transient glimpses of the new world, leading to no certain or permanent knowledge, and in a little time lost again to mankind. Certain it is that at the beginning of the fifteenth century, when the most intelligent minds were seeking in every direction for the scattered lights of geographical knowledge, a profound ignorance prevailed among the learned as to the western regions of the Atlantic; its vast waters were regarded with awe and wonder, seeming to bound the world as with a chaos, into which conjecture could not penetrate, and enterprise feared to adventure. We need no greater proofs of this than the description given of the Atlantic by Xerif al Edrizi, surnamed the Nubian, an eminent Arabian writer, whose countrymen were the boldest navigators of the middle ages, and possessed all that was then known of geography.

"The ocean," he observes, "encircles the ultimate bounds of the inhabited earth, and all beyond it is unknown. No one has been able to verify any thing concerning it, on account of its difficult and perilous navigation, its great obscurity, its profound depth, and frequent tempests; through fear of its mighty fishes, and its haughty winds; yet there are many islands in it, some peopled, others uninhabited. There is no mariner who dares to enter into its deep waters; or if any have done so, they have merely kept along its coasts, fearful of departing from them. The waves of this ocean, although they roll as high as mountains, yet maintain themselves without breaking; for if they broke, it would be impossible for ship to plough them."

It is the object of the following work, to relate the deeds and fortunes of the mariner who first had the judgment to divine, and the intrepidity to brave, the mysteries of this perilous deep; and who, by his hardy genius, his inflexible constancy, and his heroic courage, brought the ends of the earth into communication with each other. The narrative of his troubled life is the link which connects the history of the old world with that of the new.

* See Illustrations at the end of this work. Article SCANDINAVIAN DISCOVERIES.

* Description of Spain, by Xerif al Edrizi: Cowde's Spanish translation, Madrid, 1799.

BIRTH, PARENTS

Or the early thing certain is his birth-place, his parentage; and such commentators, the from the web of woven. Judging contemporaries a born about the contend for the but it seems satisfactory of the ancient has arisen where one noble family name has become than receive distinct branches may have though shaken as by the civil wars there had been a knowledge of his the fact material honourable to his attention among various to designate the Fernando, who journey to investigate all claims of the family should date look beyond him sors had been bound; for "I should derive less try than from be

The immediate though reputable wool-comber, lo was the eldest of Bartholomew, a lated into Spain nothing is known to a person in ob

The family n latinized into C ters, and by oth in compliance Latin was the and that in wh ance was writte ter known in having altered The principal

* Andres Bernal Palacios. For re of Columbus, see t
* Hist. del Almir