

LETTER--To M. Chapelain

To preserve us from all false travelling knights and from lying bookmen that tell tales of lands that never were. And so I commend me to you, and to your ghostly and bodily welfare. And ever pray for me, as I shall for you, to the God of Seynt Albones, to have you in his keeping, whether in Englund or beyond the sea, or in the lands that never were. And ever more, Sir John, clepe upon Seynt George, and he shall help you, as he hath meny a good knight out of peril and disease. And I, at my coming back from Ynde, will visit you, by the leave of our Lord, and tell you of many things that now I write not, for lack of space and time. Till then, be of good cheer and keep well your armour bright and your heart lighter than your shield, for in lightness is the might of all true knights and men of worth.

In this admonition to Sir John Maundeville, the author oscillates between reverence and skepticism towards the tales of diverse lands and strange wonders recounted by the knight. The juxtaposition of a medieval world brimming with marvels against the backdrop of a modern, colonial quest for domination in lands like Ynde (India) offers a critique of both the insatiable curiosity and the imperial ambitions of England. The letter mocks the concept of adventure and discovery, satirizing the colonial enterprise by showing it as just another chapter in a long history of tales and travels, some true, many fabricated. The skepticism extends to the authenticity of Sir John's own travels, while playfully engaging with the expansionist and colonial narratives of the British Empire, suggesting that the quest for Ynde is a continuation of the fantastical tales of knights-errant. The discussion on different routes to India, the sardonic comments on modern English politics, and the imagined responses of diverse stakeholders (from the Emir of the Afghans to Muscovy and the radical elements within England itself) serve to highlight the absurdist elements inherent in the justification and execution of colonial ventures, all the while framing it within the chivalric and adventurous discourse supposedly epitomized by Sir John Maundeville's travels.