

Like Vergil's husbandman, our minstrel did not know how well off he was to have been without schooling. This, I think, every one feels at once to be poetry that sings itself. It makes its own tune, and the heart beats in time to its measure. By and by poets will begin to say, like Goethe, "I sing as the bird sings"; but this poet sings in that fashion without thinking of it or knowing it. And it is the very music of his race and country which speaks through him with such simple pathos. Finland is the mother, and Russia is the stepdame, and the listeners to the old national lays grow fewer every day.

Before long the Fins will be writing songs in the manner of Heine, and dramas in imitation of "Faust." Doubtless the material of original poetry lies in all of us, but in proportion as the mind is conventionalized by literature, it is apt to look about it for models, instead of looking inward for that native force which makes models, but does not follow them. This rose of originality which we long for, this bloom of imagination whose perfume enchants us — we can seldom find it when it is near us, when it is part of our daily lives.

James Russell Lowell.

CONTRASTS OF ENGLISH AND AMERICAN SCENERY.



HAVING lately visited England after a long absence, my mind, both there and since my return, has been busy with the subject of the relations between our scenery and that of the Old World. I visited a dull part of Hampshire; on leaving the house where I was staying, it was necessary to get up to an early breakfast to catch a train. Two young soldiers, very pleasant and friendly fellows, who went away at the same time, were in the cab with me. Reference was made to the scenery, and one of them, who had been in America, said, "You Americans may not always say you admire England, but in your hearts you know there is nothing like it." I looked out of the cab window at the flat and very rolled-out landscape, cut up into squares and plots by iron fences, which, however, with its sparse oaks standing here and there, was not without a classic grace, and thought of the fresh and magic outlines of the Virginian mountains. But the hour was much too early and too drowsy to allow of any expression of dissent. It is an old question, that between the scenery of the two worlds. It is a simple one, however, with an obvious answer. Here it is primeval and virgin nature; there, nature affected by man and art.

The difference between European and American trees and woodlands is significant of this. Early in September an acquaintance took me to look at a remarkable oak on his place in Essex, which he said had been thought by some persons to be a relic of the ancient British forest. This oak, which was not very high, threw its powerful arms straight out in all directions over a wide space of ground. Certainly such a tree could not have stood in an aboriginal forest. There would not have been sufficient sun to produce so great an amount of leafage, and there would have been no room for such a vast lateral extension. It so hap-

pened that only a few months before, in June perhaps, I had seen in Tennessee a good deal of a forest which was almost virgin. The trees went straight upward to a great height, the boles being clean of branches a long distance from the ground, and the leafage scant except at the top, where it received the sun. I rode into the middle of this forest. The trees were often so close together that it would have been hard for a horse to go between them, and my horse followed the bed of a stream which was so shallow that it scarcely more than wet his fetlocks, the rhododendrons being very thick on each side of me. Halting in the midst of the level floor of the forest, it was an impressive scene which I found. The pale and lofty trunks stood everywhere parallel, and with a stately decorum and regularity, except where, half-way up the adjacent mountain-side, some tumbling trees, leaning at angles against their surrounding fellows, which had arrested them in falling, varied the universal propriety with a noble confusion, the gray trunks looking like mighty fallen pillars of a ruined temple. The scene around me was without a voice — such faint, occasional twitter of bird life as there was serving only to deepen the stillness. Where was the voice of the place? There was continuous twilight, touched here and there by some stray sunbeam which a rift overhead had let through. At the foot of some vast column I found the morning-glory, surprised in such a place to come upon this ornament of the domestic sill, and companion of the bright face of childhood. But the hue of its glistening cup was as fresh and dewy amid these religious shadows as if in some sun-lighted and human garden spot; the flower, however, not without a sense of exile, and conscious, as it seemed to me, of the absence of those welcome voices and shining faces of the cottage door.

It is true that our scenery is not very rich

in its associations of human history. This source of interest we have here only to a slight degree. But the landscape has its own history. Is it not well to consider that history? Is not scenery made more impressive by the study of those sublime changes which have prepared the world which we see, and may not the disclosures of men of science, so far as the unlearned are capable of comprehending them, be brought to the service of the sense of natural beauty? There are, indeed, times when one fancies that the historic facts linger on the face of nature. Chautauqua Lake, in the southwestern part of the State of New York, not many miles south of Lake Erie, is a fine sheet of clear water, a few miles long, and perhaps a mile wide. One perfectly clear evening I sat in a boat on the lake, the quiet surface of which was encompassed by a crimson stain possessing the entire circle of the horizon, with the pale azure of the sky above without a cloud. The red hues were in the air and upon the bosom of the lake. The only other occupant of the boat was a young girl, whose youthful coloring was blended with, and was a part of, that in the air and upon the waters. We spoke of the mighty change of which this still lake had once been the scene. The lake's outlet was at one time northward into Lake Erie, and through the St. Lawrence to the ocean. But the Ice Age came, and dumped a lot of debris to the north of Chautauqua, which forced the waters of the lake southward into the Ohio, so that they now seek the Atlantic through the Mississippi and the Gulf of Mexico. A reminiscence of those boreal ages lingered on the chill shores and in the crystal heavens, a sense of the pole and of arctic scenes. Of this mighty event we talked, two waifs or motes floating in the atmosphere of the roseate evening, as transient as the diaphanous vapors which surrounded us.

Another contrast there may be in the scenery of the two lands. There is this to be said of English scenery: it is suitable to the luxury and comfort of English country life. It is appropriate to the English flesh-pots. There are plenty of country-houses throughout England in which material comforts are of the best, and which at certain seasons contain much agreeable company of both sexes. I had some experience of such a house in Surrey. The library was excellent; for a wonder the weather was good, the ephemeral British sunshine remain-

ing all day on the southern walls, and really lavish among those flowers of the garden you do not know by name. Easily detained by such an existence, you are not inclined to anything more active than some kind of pleasant reading, and are likely to lose your place at that, while your gaze rests upon the hills to the west. To such a life and such a state of mind the vague, soft aspect of the Surrey hills was most suitable — two impalpable ranges of hills, alluring to the eyes. Essences they seemed, rather than substance or matter, and unreal, save in their gentle, emerald coloring; and they were always lying there, quivering as in a dream — a mirage which did not go away.

If there is an agreement between luxury and English scenery, my sentiment is that, on the contrary, luxury does not suit our scenery. An iron foundry, strange to say, does no harm; a forge, a factory by the side of a pond filled with water-lilies (I have now in mind the New England landscape) — these are not unsuitable. But a fine house in some way is, and my sense of incongruity extends as well to those mansions which a friend describes as Queen Anne in the front and Mary Ann in the rear. Architecture, both private and public, should be such as is suited to the local requirements and history. A white spire, for instance, marking such a church as New England farmers have built for generations, what an eloquent object in a wide and undulating view! The manner of life should be simple also. An eight-o'clock dinner and champagne are out of place. People should dine in the middle of the day. The evening meal, however, should be late, for it is a serious mistake to take the hour of sunset, for which the twenty-four have been a preparation, as one in which to eat something. In our semi-tropical summer people should adopt the tropical habit of rising early; it will do, however, if they are out of doors, say, within an hour after sunrise, for it is not till then that the dawn becomes "incense-breathing"; this quality the air has not acquired when the sun first appears. And yet it seems a great pity that the sunrise, that most auspicious of nature's facts, should not be noticed, at any rate from one's bedroom window. Its advent is never so benign as in a sky without a cloud; the orb, as it emerges, kindling the rim of the verdant meadow with cheerful promise — irresistible sign of life and friend of man.