

It is an interesting enough fact, that from the existence of this strong appetite for the rural intensified into poetry by those circumstances which render all attempts at its gratification mere tantalizing snatches, that whet rather than satisfy, the influence of great cities on the literature of a country should be, not to enhance the artificial, but to impart to the natural prominence and value. The "Farmer's Boy" of Bloomfield was written in a garret in the midst of London; and nowhere perhaps in the empire has it been read with a deeper relish than by the pale country-sick artisans and clerks of the neighboring close courts and blind alleys. Nowhere have Thomson, Cowper, and Crabbe, with the poets of the Lake School, given a larger amount of pleasure than in London; and when London at length came to produce a school of poetry exclusively its own, it proved one of the graver faults of its productions, that they were too incessantly descriptive, and too exclusively rural.

I spent, as I have said, two days at the British Museum, and wished I could have spent ten. And yet the ten, by extending my index acquaintance with the whole, would have left me many more unsettled points to brood over than the two. It is an astonishing collection; and very astonishing is the history of creation and the human family which it forms. Such, it strikes me, is the proper view in which to regard it: it is a great, many-chaptered work of authentic history, beginning with the consecutive creations, — dwelling at great length on the existing one, — taking up and pursuing through many sections the master production, Man, — exhibiting in the Egyptian section, not only what he did, but what he was, — illustrating in the Grecian and Roman sections the perfectibility of his conceptions in all that relates to external form, — indicating in the middle-age section a refolding of his previously-