

to distant regions. The belief in the uncommon and the wonderful lends a definite outline to every manifestation of ideal creation; and the realm of fancy—a fairy-land of cosmological, geognostical, and magnetic visions—becomes thus involuntarily blended with the domain of reality.

Nature, in the manifold signification of the word—whether considered as the universality of all that is and ever will be—as the inner moving force of all phenomena, or as their mysterious prototype—reveals itself to the simple mind and feelings of man as something earthly, and closely allied to himself. It is only within the animated circles of organic structure that we feel ourselves peculiarly at home. Thus, wherever the earth unfolds her fruits and flowers, and gives food to countless tribes of animals, there the image of nature impresses itself most vividly upon our senses. The impression thus produced upon our minds limits itself almost exclusively to the reflection of the earthly. The starry vault and the wide expanse of the heavens belong to a picture of the universe, in which the magnitude of masses, the number of congregated suns and faintly glimmering nebulæ, although they excite our wonder and astonishment, manifest themselves to us in apparent isolation, and as utterly devoid of all evidence of their being the scenes of organic life. Thus, even in the earliest physical views of mankind, heaven and earth have been separated and opposed to one another as an upper and lower portion of space. If, then, a picture of nature were to correspond to the requirements of contemplation by the senses, it ought to begin with a delineation of our native earth. It should depict, first, the terrestrial planet as to its size and form; its increasing density and heat at increasing depths in its superimposed solid and liquid strata; the separation of sea and land, and the vital forms animating both, developed in the cellular tissues of plants and animals; the atmospheric ocean, with its waves and currents, through which pierce the forest-crowned summits of our mountain chains. After this delineation of purely telluric relations, the eye would rise to the celestial regions, and the Earth would then, as the well-known seat of organic development, be considered as a planet, occupying a place in the series of those heavenly bodies which circle round one of the innumerable host of self-luminous stars. This succession of ideas indicates the course pursued in the earliest stages of perceptive contemplation, and reminds us of the ancient conception of the “sea-girt disk of earth,” supporting the vault of heaven. It begins to exercise its action