

But when the so-called descriptive poetry is justly blamed as an independent form of art, such disapprobation does not certainly apply to an earnest endeavor to convey to the minds of others, by the force of well-applied words, a distinct image of the results yielded by the richer mass of modern knowledge. Ought any means to be left unemployed by which an animated picture of a distant zone, untraversed by ourselves, may be presented to the mind with all the vividness of truth, enabling us even to enjoy some portion of the pleasure derived from the immediate contact with nature? The Arabs express themselves no less truly than metaphorically when they say that the best description is that by which the ear is converted into an eye.\* It is one of the evils of the present day that an unhappy tendency to vapid poetic prose and to sentimental effusions has infected simultaneously, in different countries, even the style of many justly celebrated travelers and writers on natural history. Extravagances of this nature are so much the more to be regretted, where the style degenerates into rhetorical bombast or morbid sentimentality, either from want of literary cultivation, or more particularly from the absence of all genuine emotion.

Descriptions of nature, I would again observe, may be defined with sufficient sharpness and scientific accuracy, without on that account being deprived of the vivifying breath of imagination. The poetic element must emanate from the intuitive perception of the connection between the sensuous and the intellectual, and of the universality and reciprocal limitation and unity of all the vital forces of nature. The more elevated the subject, the more carefully should all external adornments of diction be avoided. The true effect of a picture of nature depends on its composition; every attempt at an artificial appeal from the author must therefore necessarily exert a disturbing influence. He who, familiar with the great works of antiquity, and secure in the possession of the riches of his native language, knows how to represent with the simplicity of individualizing truth that which he has received from his own contemplation, will not fail in producing the impression he seeks to convey; for, in describing the boundlessness of nature, and not the limited circuit of his own mind, he is enabled to leave to others unfettered freedom of feeling.

It is not, however, the vivid description of the richly-adorned lands of the equinoctial zone, in which intensity of light and of humid heat accelerates and heightens the development of

\* Freytag's *Darstellung der Arabischen Verskunst*, 1830, s. 402.