

characteristic beauty: to the tropics belong diversity and grandeur in the forms of plants; to the north, the aspect of tracts of meadow-land, and the periodic and long-desired revival of nature at the earliest breath of the gentle breezes of spring. As in the Musaceæ (Pisang) we have the greatest expansion, so in the Casuarinæ and in the needle-tree we have the greatest contraction of the leaf vessels. Firs, Thujæ, and Cypresses constitute a northern flora which is very uncommon in the plains of the tropics. Their ever-verdant green enlivens the dreary winter landscape, and proclaims to the inhabitants of the north that, even when snow and ice have covered the ground, the inner life of vegetation, like Promethean fire, is never extinguished on our planet.

Every zone of vegetation has, besides its own attractions, a peculiar character, which calls forth in us special impressions. Referring here only to our own native plants, I would ask, who does not feel himself variously affected beneath the somber shade of the beech, on hills crowned with scattered pines, or in the midst of grassy plains, where the wind rustles among the trembling leaves of the birch? As in different organic beings we recognize a distinct physiognomy, and as descriptive botany and zoology are, in the strict definition of the words, merely analytic classifications of animal and vegetable forms, so there is also a certain physiognomy of nature exclusively peculiar to each portion of the earth. The idea which the artist wishes to indicate by the expressions "Swiss nature" or "Italian skies," is based on a vague sense of some local characteristic. The azure of the sky, the form of the clouds, the vapory mist resting in the distance, the luxuriant development of plants, the beauty of the foliage, and the outline of the mountains, are the elements which determine the total impression produced by the aspect of any particular region. To apprehend these characteristics, and to reproduce them visibly, is the province of landscape painting; while it is permitted to the artist, by analyzing the various groups, to resolve beneath his touch the great enchantment of nature—if I may venture on so metaphorical an expression—as the written words of men are resolved into a few simple characters.

But, even in the present imperfect condition of pictorial delineations of landscapes, the engravings which accompany, and too often disfigure, our books of travels, have, however, contributed considerably toward a knowledge of the physiognomy of distant regions, to the taste for voyages in the tropical zones, and to a more active study of nature. The improvements in