

is worth anything to us is external in its influence and is only rendered a source of enjoyment as we can make it our own, by some wonderful alchemic power within, which transmutes all it encounters of outward objective existence into the veritable gold of the Hesperides. So that we are, after all, mere creatures of the Ideal in a sense, and Berkeley's philosophy is not so very foolish as some would have it to be.

And Ruskin is the Arch-Priest, who stands for evermore ministering at the eye-shrine. He is the hierophant and interpreter of nature as he sees it and as he would have us see it.

And first, I would have you observe, he sees it not as common men see it. There is something in it, which, though of earth, is not altogether earthy. There is the form and the texture and the colour, but there is also the soul, the moral, the something that the thousands see not, hear not, appreciate not.

How many generations of men looked at the sombre pine-forests belting the mountain gorge with their sphinx-like, ever-sighing phalanxes before Ruskin wrote :—

“Other trees, tufting crag or hill yield to the form and sway of the ground, clothe it with soft compliance, are partly its subjects, partly its flatterers, partly its comforters. But the pine rises in serene resistance, self-contained ; nor can I ever, without awe, stay long under a great Alpine cliff, far from all house or work of men, looking up to its companies of pine, as they stand on the inaccessible juts and perilous ledges of the enormous wall, in quiet multitudes, each like the shadow of the one beside it—upright, fixed, spectral, as troops of ghosts standing on the walls of Hades, not knowing each other,—dumb forever. You cannot reach them, cannot cry to them ;—those trees never heard human voice ; they are far

above all sound but of the winds. No foot ever stirred fallen leaf of theirs. All comfortless they stand, between the two eternities of the vacancy and the rock ; yet with such iron will, that the rock itself looks bent and shattered beside them—fragile, weak, inconsistent, compared to their dark energy of delicate life, and monotony of enchanted pride—unnumbered, unconquerable.”

This is a word picture, perfect in its way, of a natural object that most men would pass by without deigning it a second glance or thought. The poet alone can hope to emulate such description, in his transcendent diction as quoted by Ruskin himself, though the vignette is but an ideal one. Says Keats, prince of poets :

“ Yes, I will be thy priest, and build a fane
In some untrodden region of my mind,
Where branched thoughts, new grown with
pleasant pain,
Instead of pines, shall murmur in the wind ;
Far-far around shall those dark-clustered
trees
Fledge the wild-ridged mountains, steep by
steep ;
And there by zephyrs, streams, and birds,
and bees,
The moss-lain Dryads shall be hill'd to
sleep.”

But if the men be few who would or could so transmute the sombre living of the pine into the celestial raiment of an artist's vision, how many would linger on their hurried way towards the portal of unattained earthly desires to extract from these serried, silent vastnesses such a moral as the following :—

“ I have watched them in such scenes with the deeper interest, because of all trees they have hitherto had most influence on human character. The effect of other vegetation, however great, has been divided by mingled species ; elm and oak in England, poplar in France, birch in Scotland, olive in Italy and Spain, share their power with inferior trees,