

Touches of Nature.

There are those who look at Nature from the standpoint of conventional and artificial life—from parlour windows and through gilt-edged poems—the sentimentalists. At the other extreme are those who do not look at Nature at all, but are a grown part of her, and look away from her toward the other class—the backwoodsmen and pioneers, and all rude and simple persons. Then there are those in whom the two are united or merged—the great poets and artists. In them the sentimentalist is corrected and cured, and the hairy and taciturn frontiersman has had experience to some purpose. The true poet knows more about Nature than the naturalist because he carries her open secrets in his heart. Eckerman could instruct Goethe in ornithology, but could not Goethe instruct Eckerman in the meaning and mystery of the bird? It is my privilege to number among my friends a man who has passed his life in cities amid the throngs of men, who never goes to the woods or to the country, or hunts or fishes, and yet he is the true naturalist. I think he studies the orbs. I think day and night and the stars and the faces of men and women have taught him all there is worth knowing.

We run to Nature because we are afraid of man. Our artists paint the landscape because they cannot paint the human face. If we could look into the eyes of a man as coolly as we can into the eyes of an animal, the products of our pens and brushes would be quite different from what they are.

But I suspect after all it makes but little difference to which school you go, whether to the woods or to the city. A sincere man learns pretty much the same things in both places. The differences

are superficial, the resemblances deep and many. The hermit is a hermit and the poet a poet, whether he grow up in the town or the country. I was forcibly reminded of this fact recently on opening the works of Charles Lamb after I had been reading those of our Henry Thoreau. Lamb cared nothing for Nature, Thoreau for little else. One was as attached to the city and the life of the street and tavern as the other to the country and the life of animals and plants. Yet they are close akin. They give out the same tone and are pitched in about the same key. Their methods are the same; so are their quaintness and scorn of rhetoric. Thoreau has the drier humour, as might be expected, and is less stomachic. There is more juice and unction in Lamb, but this he owes to his nationality. Both are essayists who in a less reflective age would have been poets pure and simple. Both were spare, high-nosed men, and I fancy a resemblance even in their portraits. Thoreau is the Lamb of New England fields and woods, and Lamb is the Thoreau of London streets and clubs. There was a wilfulness and perversity about Thoreau behind which he concealed his shyness and his thin skin, and there was a similar foil in Lamb, though less marked, on account of his good-nature; that was a part of his armour too.—John Burroughs, in "Birds and Poets," (Edinburgh—David Douglas.)

Two Irishmen were visiting the Zoo, and, coming to the cage of the "missing link," one remarked to the other, "Isn't he like a human being, Pat?" "Like a human being!" exclaimed the other. "He's no more like a human being than I am."

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