

reading what such a pen as Bryant's has written, will, we conceive, be at no loss for an answer.

It ought to be borne in mind, too, that Americans can preserve no monopoly of their magnificent scenery. The great lakes and rivers, the grand and hoary forests, and the wide, solitary prairies, are objects from which Europeans are just as free to draw their imagery and poetical materials as we are. And it does not necessarily follow that a poet, because he was born and has always lived in America, should be more deeply stirred by the sublimity of Niagara, or better able to convey to others an adequate idea of that sublimity, than the poet who has come from the Old World on purpose to gaze upon the wonders of the New.

So the history and traditions of the Indian tribes are common property, and are, in some respects, perhaps, most valuable for the purposes of poetry to those who have but little definite knowledge of the tribes themselves. And the worth of these traditions has undoubtedly been vastly over-estimated. It is true that the beauty and significance of the names given by the Indians to their rivers and mountains and water-falls, are undeniable evidences of their poetic temperament, and ought to put us to shame for the homely and often utterly unmeaning titles by which our civilized race has displaced them. But the simplicity of the red man's religious faith, and of his modes of life; his total want of any system of mythology, with its multitude of gods and heroes, its pleasing fables, and its marvellous tales of heroic deeds and heroic sufferings; the almost entire absence of pomp and parade in the methods of his savage warfare,—each and all of these circumstances tend greatly to reduce the value of the Indians and their history, as subjects for poetry. What they do present as metal worth the coining, are a considerable number of stories of "love and death," a few wild legends, some highly poetical ideas of a future state of being, and the sad history of the wasting away of their people and kindred before the spread of our cultivated and powerful race. Of these materials considerable use has been made by American poets. And we shall, probably hereafter make some extracts and references which will give our readers an opportunity of judging for themselves with what success they have been treated.

American antiquities—the remnants left by an extinct civilization to excite the wonder and curiosity of modern times—might seem to afford a great supply of themes for the exercise of the imaginative faculty. But these interesting remains, which have formed the subject of several costly volumes of engraved illustrations, and of many learned essays, will probably never form the subject of any very lofty or very pleasing poem. They have, to be sure, a human interest, as the relics of departed human greatness—the works of human hands,—an interest which the mere wild scenery of this Continent, whose connection with the course of man's progress is almost entirely unknown, never can possess. But they have no history: they offer to the imagination no foothold. These silent