

and one of the greatest* has taken us back to those early days of earth's history when God said—

“Let there be firmament
Amid the waters, and let it divide
The waters from the waters.’ . . .
So He the world
Built on circumfluous waters calm, in wide
Crystalline ocean.”

“Water,” said the great Greek lyric poet,† “is the chief of all.” The ocean covers nearly three-fourths of the surface of our globe. Earth is its mere offspring. The continents and islands have been and *still are being* elaborated from its depths. All in all, it has not, however, been treated fairly at the hands of the poets, too many of whom could only see it in its sterner lights. Young speaks of it as merely a

“Dreadful and tumultuous home
Of dangers, at eternal war with man,
Wide opening and loud roaring still for more,”

ignoring the blessings and benefits it has bestowed so freely, forgetting that man is daily becoming more and more its master, and that his own country in particular has most successfully conquered the seemingly unconquerable. Byron, again, says:—

“Roll on, thou dark and deep blue ocean—roll!
Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain;
Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
Stops with the shore; upon the watery plain
The wrecks are all thy deeds.”

And though this is but the exaggerated and not strictly accurate language of poetry, we may, with Pollok, fairly address the great sea as “strongest of creation’s sons.” The first impressions produced on most animals—not excluding altogether man—by the aspect of the ocean, are of terror in greater or lesser degree. Livingstone tells us that he had intended to bring to England from Africa a friendly native, a man courageous as the lion he had often braved. He had never voyaged upon nor even beheld the sea, and on board the ship which would have safely borne him to a friendly shore he became delirious and insane. Though assured of safety and carefully watched, he escaped one day, and blindly threw himself headlong into the waves. The sea terrified him, and yet held and drew him, fascinated as under a spell. “Even at ebb-tide,” says Michelet,‡ “when, placid and weary, the wave crawls softly on the sand, the horse does not recover his courage. He trembles, and frequently refuses to pass the languishing ripple. The dog barks and recoils, and, according to his manner, insults the billows which he fears. . . . We are told by a traveller that the dogs of Kamtschatka, though accustomed to the spectacle, are not the less terrified and irritated by it. In numerous troops, they howl through the protracted night against the howling waves, and endeavour to outvie in fury the Ocean of the North.”

* Milton.

† Pindar.

‡ “La Mer.” There is much truth in Michelet’s charming work, but often, as above, presented in an exaggerated form. Animals, in reality, soon become accustomed to the sea. They show generally, however, a considerable amount of indisposition to go on board a vessel.