

The second class embraces the artists who paint what they see and feel to be the mood or phase of nature present to them, without regard to external appearances. They watch for new truths unknown to the lay mind. They reveal to us hidden mysteries of nature to the extent to which the artist's powers enable him to give full expression of his subject as he sees it. They excite our sympathy and stir our emotions. They are not a mere record of the surface, but they go deeper, and reach the feelings as some great singer would do in rendering the simplest song. The speaker illustrated the distinction between the two classes in this way: Take, for example, such a song as "Annie Laurie." We hear that song by a person with a carefully trained voice and all the advantages of academic instruction. The music is exact, the words are the same, but the effect is scarcely felt. We hear precisely the same words and the same music from a genius, and the experience is totally different. The emotions and sympathies are reached. The feelings of humanity are stirred and new beauties are revealed to us through the voice and sympathy of the singer.

And so it is with art. The subject which is common-place in itself and equally so in the hands of an academic painter, becomes a thing of life, truth and beauty in the hands of the artist who actually feels what he paints, and imparts to it his own individual sentiments and the result of his own observation. People often say, "I do not know anything about pictures, but I know what pleases me." This is not the way to judge a picture. The work of genius, which implies a work of art, reaches far beyond the surface. It may be that the beholder is unable to explain why he feels some special sympathy with the trees, the sky, the valleys or the rivers portrayed in the picture, but if he does feel that the subject strikes him in a way different from anything he has felt before, and if his emotions and sympathies are more or less awakened, it is because the artist has been able to make known to him some new truth, some latent beauty, or some feeling of sympathy by means of the canvas before him.