

empire, where cities spring up, as if by magic, on wild and barbarous shores, and in the midst of boundless forests, where great institutions are formed, and flourish, and bestow their blessings upon man, where but yesterday, so to speak, the awful solitude of nature was never broken save by the wild yell of the bloody savage. Everything is, or promises to be, on the same grand and magnificent scale as the mountains and plains, the forests, lakes, and rivers, which characterise the natural scenery of this vast Continent.

Is there then, in the contemplation of such countries as these, nothing to be found fit theme for the poet's lay? We are aware, that a very large—perhaps the largest portion of the reading public, can see, in the transactions of enlightened modern times, no material for the epic and the other higher branches of poetic composition. These events are “too commonplace.” Such persons are enamoured with gloom and mystery. The results of modern civilization tend so far to dissipate these requisites, that they are supposed to have left the enlightened world unfruitful in poetic themes. With all due admiration of the taste of such readers, we cannot but entertain the opinion, that, in the present age, although in our daily intercourse with the world, we may perceive less mystery, may encounter less wild adventure, than in the darker ages of the world's history, it is by no means true that we must necessarily meet with less of what tends to excite poetical emotions, and to suggest poetical ideas. We cannot but think further, that he who can see nothing grand, nothing sublime, nothing beautiful, nothing poetical, in short, in the great modern triumphs of Art and Science, in those gigantic achievements of the human mind which characterise the nineteenth century, can have no real conception of that which is poetical.

What, for instance, can have more of the sublime in its nature, than the act of man in chaining the lightning and making it subservient to his purposes; in making it an engine of conveying his thoughts and sending them leaping over the earth, outstripping time and annihilating space, by a speed which equals that of even thought itself? What more grand, more beautiful in its conception, its perfection, and its results, than that invention which enables the modern Artist literally to “dip his pencil in the sunbeams” that he may depict, in absolute perfection, the lineaments of Nature? The Steam-engine too, that great modern innovation in the material world, and which is so often blamed for banishing all that is poetical from the ideal, in the sphere in which it operates—we pity the man who can see nothing grand in its mighty power. As one out of innumerable instances, take that in which it is employed on railroads. Who has not admired the sublime description of the war-horse, as portrayed in the Book of Job? But the horse of life and muscle sinks into insignificance, in comparison with the *iron horse* which literally breathes fire and smoke, and whose voice is terrible as the thunder. What can be more sublime than the railway engine, with its long train of locomotive palaces