

what of all that? It is not by painting the straight-nosed beauties of Greece or the winged angels of Italy that the Scotch artist need expect to confer honour on either Scotland or himself. Let him do what was done by Thomson, and Burns, and Sir Walter Scott, and what Wilkie, and Allan, and Harvey are employed in doing,—let him walk abroad into nature, and study the history of his country. The mere imitative faculty is one of the lowest: the Chinese possess it in perfection, and so does the chimpanzee.

But am I not evincing a barbarous and Gothic disregard of the classical? Very far from it. I have read all Cowper's "Homer" and Dryden's "Virgil" again and again. I could almost repeat that portion of the *Odyssey* in which the wanderer of Ithaca is described sitting apart in his own hall, a poor despised beggar, when his enemies are expending their strength in vain attempts to bend his bow; and I have felt my heart leap within me when, scorning reply to their rude taunts, he leaned easily forward on the well-remembered weapon, and, bending it with scarce more of effort than the musician employs in straitening the strings of his harp, sent the well-aimed arrow through all the rings and the double planks of the oaken gate beyond. I have luxuriated, too, over the exquisite descriptions of the *Æneid*,—amid the horrors of the burning town, for instance, till I almost saw the pointed flames shooting far aloft into the darkness, and almost heard the trappings and shouts of the enemy in the streets,—amid the terrors, too, of the tempest, when the fierce surge rolled resistless over the foundering vessel, and the scattered fleet laboured heavily amid the loud dash of the billows and the wild howl of the wind. And when I looked for the first time on Laocoon and his children crushed in the ruthless coil of the serpent,—a too faithful allegory of the human race,—the story of Virgil rose at once before me, and I felt the blended genius of the poet and the sculptor breathing in