

or that we find beauty in its woods or beside its streams, or the impressive and the sublime among its mountains and rocks? Nature is a vast tablet, inscribed with signs, each of which has its own significancy, and becomes poetry in the mind when read; and geology is simply the key by which myriads of these signs, hitherto undecipherable, can be unlocked and perused, and thus a new province added to the poetical domain. We are told by travellers, that the rocks of the wilderness of Sinai are lettered over with strange characters, inscribed during the forty years' wanderings of Israel. They testify, in their very existence, of a remote past, when the cloud-o'ershadowed tabernacle rose amid the tents of the desert; and who shall dare say whether to the scholar who could dive into their hidden meanings they might not be found charged with the very songs sung of old by Moses and by Miriam, when the sea rolled over the pride of Egypt? To the geologist every rock bears its inscription engraved in ancient hieroglyphic characters, that tell of the Creator's journeyings of old, of the laws which He gave, the tabernacles which He reared, and the marvels which He wrought,—of mute prophecies wrapped up in type and symbol,—of earth gulfs that opened, and of reptiles that flew,—of fiery plagues that devastated on the dry land, and of hosts more numerous than that of Pharaoh, that 'sank like lead in the mighty waters;' and, having in some degree mastered the occult meanings of these strange hieroglyphics, we must be permitted to refer, in asserting the poetry of our science, to the sublime revelations with which they are charged, and the vivid imagery which they conjure up. But our history lags in its progress, while we discuss the poetic capabilities of the study through which its records are read and its materials derived.

In the deposits of that Tertiary division of the geologic formation which represents in the history of the globe the period during which mammals began to be abundant, and in