

OUR MONISTIC RELIGION

The opposite character of our *naturalistic* century to that of the *anthropistic* centuries that preceded is especially noticeable in the different appreciation and spread of illustrations of the most diverse natural objects. In our own days a lively interest in artistic work of that kind has been developed, which did not exist in earlier ages; it has been supported by the remarkable progress of commerce and technical art which have facilitated a wide popularization of such illustrations. Countless illustrated periodicals convey along with their general information a sense of the inexhaustible beauty of nature in all its departments. In particular, landscape-painting has acquired an importance that surpassed all imagination. In the first half of the century one of our greatest and most erudite scientists, Alexander Humboldt, had pointed out that the development of modern landscape-painting is not only of great importance as an incentive to the study of nature and as a means of geographical description, but that it is to be commended in other respects as a noble educative medium. Since that time the taste for it has considerably increased. It should be the aim at every school to teach the children to enjoy scenery at an early age, and to give them the valuable art of imprinting on the memory by a drawing or water-color sketch.

The infinite wealth of nature in what is beautiful and sublime offers every man with open eyes and an æsthetic sense an incalculable sum of choicest gifts. Still, however valuable and agreeable is the immediate enjoyment of each single gift, its worth is doubled by a knowledge of its meaning and its connection with the rest of nature. When Humboldt gave us the "outline of a physical description of the world" in his magnificent *Cosmos* forty years ago, and when he combined