

Thomas Cole's Voice Narrative in the Main House Parlor

All nature here is new to art. The mists were resting in the valley of the Hudson— The tops of mountains were visible on the other side – you might imagine them in another world. The fields in shadow were a most beautiful fresh green, the mountain side was brilliant though dark.

I am now in the village of Catskill with the intention of spending the Summer here. Retired from the noise and bustle of the city and surrounded by the beauties of Nature, I shall have every opportunity of improvement I can wish.

I have just returned from the mountain, where I have spent two of the happiest days that I remember. Dark forests, rugged rocks, towering mountains encompassed me. It was sublime. I have found no natural scenery which has affected me so powerfully as that which I have seen in the wilderness of America. Yet I cannot but express my sorrow that the beauty of such landscapes is quickly passing away. The copper-hearted barbarians are cutting all the trees down in the beautiful valley on which I have looked so often with a loving eye. This throws quite a gloom over me. The ravages of the axe are daily increasing.

I have been dwelling on several subjects and looking forward to the time when I can embody them on the canvas. My desire is to undertake a work on which I may hope to establish a lasting

reputation. I will create a series of pictures that illustrate the history of a natural scene affected by man, wherein we see how nations have risen from the savage state, to that of power and glory, and then fallen again and become extinct. I have had some difficulty in finding an appropriate title for this series, but now I think I have a good one: The Course of Empire. To my great surprise the series seems to give universal pleasure.

What's more, I have found a congenial spirit to mingle soul with my soul. Since I have been married, my happiness is augmented. I often look at our house and think how wonderful that so much of happiness should be comprised in that little spot.

I am as usual engaged in painting. Among American scenes, many a mountain, stream, and rock has its legend, worthy of the painter's pencil. But the wayside is becoming shade-less, and another generation will behold spots, now rife with beauty, desecrated by what is called improvement.

In this age, when a meager utilitarianism seems ready to absorb every feeling and sentiment, may we at times turn to the pure enjoyment of rural nature. We are still in Eden; the wall that shuts us out of the garden is our own ignorance and folly. Nature has spread for us a rich and delightful banquet. Shall we turn from it?

Thomas Cole

Quotation sources can be found at thomascole.org/parlors.



'could - green woods unfolding them whose venerable
masses had never figured in trans-atlantic animals -
and far away the stern blue mountains whose
forms were never beheld by Claude or Salvator or
been subjected to the canvas by the innumerable
dabblers in paint for all time past - The painter
of American scenery ~~does~~ ^{has} indeed ~~feel~~ ^{possesses} a joy superior
to any other - all nature is new to art - No
Tivolis 'Temple Mount' or plintheons -
Lackrized & worn by the daily pencils of hum-
-drums - but virgin forests, ~~woods~~ ^{lakes}, & waterfalls
feasting his eye with new delights & filling his post-
-folio with their features of beauty & magnificence