

But the question of too high coloring is often one of personal equation only. One of our greatest modern writers thus defends himself against the charge of exaggeration:

"What is exaggeration to one class of minds and perception is plain truth to another. That which is commonly called long-sight, perceives in a prospect innumerable features and bearings non-existent to a short-sighted person. I sometimes ask myself whether there may occasionally be a difference of this kind between some writers and some readers: whether it is *always* the writer who colors highly or whether it is now and then the reader whose eye for color is a little dull."

Half a century ago the country west of the Mississippi was a veritable *terra incognita*. No one appreciated the magnificent distances of that region. The Rocky Mountains were supposed to be somewhat in sight of the falls of St. Anthony. I remember once seeing in a novel written by an author who, I believe, is still living, an account in which the hero is represented as ascending to the roof of a one-story structure on the banks of the Illinois River, and looking admiringly over an extensive landscape which was "bounded on the west by the distant outline of the Rocky Mountains." In other words, this gentleman of telescopic eye was able to take in the entire states of Missouri and Kansas and half of Colorado at a single glance. With such ideas prevailing among the learned, how could Catlin, having journeyed some three thousand miles up the Missouri, come back with his finger in his mouth and say he had not had a glimpse of the Rocky Mountains? No one would believe him. He must at least pretend he had seen them, and so by an ingenious verbal fabrication,* but without the slightest direct falsehood, he makes possible the inference that he saw their snowy summits during his journey up the Missouri River in 1832. So well does he succeed that a recent student of Catlin, in a published map, terminates the itinerary of 1832 some hundreds of miles west of the mouth of the Yellowstone, which latter was really his farthest west during the year in question.

I have not time now to explain in full my reasons for knowing that Catlin did not see the Rocky Mountains in 1832, as he leads many to suppose he has done; but if there is any one in the audience conversant with Catlin's works, who wishes to have the proofs on this point, I am at his service. Not only did Catlin not see the "Rockies" in 1832, but I have serious doubt if he saw the main chain at any time during the eight years or more during which he was engaged in making this Gallery. What he may have seen and sketched after 1852, when the Gallery passed into other hands, I do not know; but then the California gold fields had been discovered, the overland route was trodden as clear as a thrashing-floor, and the visit to the Rocky Mountains had become a common achievement. One of the reasons for my doubts is the evidence of the collection itself. Examine all these pictures carefully by

*See "Illustrations of the Manners, Customs and Condition of the North American Indians," by Geo. Catlin, vol. 1, London, 1866, pp. 63-65. The conversation with "Batiste" here given is fictitious.

daylight, and you will see that the artist well appreciated the distinctive beauties of different landscapes—the odd, the peculiar, the striking. There is not a remarkable scene on the Upper Missouri from the Platte to the Yellowstone that he has not transferred to his canvas. To the beauties of the Upper Mississippi he has done a justice which Banvard did not excel. If he has worked so faithfully on these beautiful but comparatively tame landscapes, how would the infinitely grander scenes of the Rocky Mountains have inspired him? Could he have held his brush still in sight of them? Yet no view of that vast mountain region is to be found in his collection, with the possible exception of some ridges seen from the Comanche camp in 1834, which may have been outlying spurs of the Sierra Madre. Pike's Tent, an odd and beautiful but comparatively insignificant bluff, some five hundred feet high, on the upper Mississippi, has a canvas allotted to it in the Gallery, but for a view of Pike's Peak, fourteen thousand feet high and covered with eternal snows, we seek in vain. In vain do we search for a view of a single one of the monarchs of the Chippewyan Range.

As is well known, literature has always had its requirements, which varied according to time, race and country. But, as is not so generally recognized, science too has had its requirements in times past, which limited and controlled its development. Perhaps it has its arbitrary and illogical requirements to day, while we are not aware of them. The slave knows not how deeply the fetter has cut into his flesh until it has been cast away.

There was a singular demand made on the American ethnographer of a generation or two ago, and it has scarcely yet been silenced. He was obliged to advance a theory of an Old World origin for the American aborigines, and if not for the whole race, at least for that part of it in which he was most interested. The shelves of libraries of Americana are crowded with volumes devoted to proving such theories. Such an important place in the speculations of that time did these theories have, that a great religious system (a system which forms to-day one of the greatest political problems that confront us) is based upon the theory of the descent of the Indians from the ten lost tribes of Israel. We can understand Catlin's environment better, when we remember that he lived in the time the angel Moroni revealed to Joseph Smith the hiding place of the golden tablets on which was engraved the book of Mormon.

Catlin's journey in 1832 on the Upper Missouri was his first important expedition, his first journey into a really wild land, as well as the most fruitful journey in artistic and ethnographic material that he ever made. His most interesting observations were taken among a sedentary, house-building, agricultural people named Mandans. Tribes of this class were not uncommon in America in his day, but at the time of his visit he was not aware of the fact. In the Mandan villages he found a hospitable and intelligent trader named Joseph Kipp, who