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# LITERARY AND SOCIAL ESSAYS

BY

GEORGE WILLIAM CURTIS



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EMERSON





## EMERSON

THE village of Concord, Massachusetts, lies an hour's ride from Boston, upon the Great Northern Railway. It is one of those quiet New England towns, whose few white houses, grouped upon the plain, make but a slight impression upon the mind of the busy traveller hurrying to or from the city. As the conductor shouts "Concord!" the busy traveller has scarcely time to recall "Concord, Lexington, and Bunker Hill" before the town has vanished and he is darting through woods and fields as solitary as those he has just left in New Hampshire. Yet as it vanishes he may chance to "see" two or three spires, and as they rush behind the trees his eyes fall upon a gleaming sheet of water. It is Walden Pond—or Walden Water, as Orphic Alcott used to call it—whose virgin seclusion was a just image of that of the little village, until one afternoon, some half-dozen or more years since, a shriek, sharper than any that had rung from Walden woods since the last war-whoop of the last

Indians of Musketaquid, announced to astonished Concord, drowsing in the river meadows, that the nineteenth century had overtaken it. Yet long before the material force of the age bound the town to the rest of the world, the spiritual force of a single mind in it had attracted attention to it, and made its lonely plains as dear to many widely scattered minds as the groves of the Academy or the vineyards of Vauchuse.

Except in causing the erection of the railway buildings and several dwellings near it, steam has not much changed Concord. It is yet one of the quiet country towns whose charm is incredible to all but those who, by loving it, have found it worthy of love. The shire-town of the great agricultural county of Middlesex, it is not disturbed by the feverish throb of factories, nor by any roar of inexorable toil but the few puffs of the locomotive. One day, during the autumn, it is thronged with the neighboring farmers, who hold their high festival—the annual cattle-show—there. But the calm tenor of Concord life is not varied, even on that day, by anything more exciting than fat oxen and the cud-chewing eloquence of the agricultural dinner. The population of the region is composed of sturdy, sterling men, worthy representatives of the ancestors who sowed along the Concord shores, with their seed-corn and rye, the germs

of a prodigious national greatness. At intervals every day the rattle, roar, and whistle of the swift shuttle darting to and from the metropolitan heart of New England, weaving prosperity upon the land, remind those farmers in their silent fields that the great world yet wags and wrestles. And the farmer-boy—sweeping with flashing scythe through the river meadows, whose coarse grass glitters, apt for mowing, in the early June morning—pauses as the whistle dies into the distance, and, wiping his brow and whetting his blade anew, questions the country-smitten citizen, the amateur Corydon struggling with imperfect stroke behind him, of the mystic romance of city life.

The sluggish repose of the little river images the farmer-boy's life. He bullies his oxen, and trembles at the locomotive. His wonder and fancy stretch towards the great world beyond the barn-yard and the village church as the torpid stream tends towards the ocean. The river, in fact, seems the thread upon which all the beads of that rustic life are strung—the clew to its tranquil character. If it were an impetuous stream, dashing along as if it claimed and required the career to which every American river is entitled, a career it would have. Wheels, factories, shops, traders, factory-girls, boards of directors, dreary white lines of boarding-houses, all the signs that

indicate the spirit of the age, and of the American age, would arise upon its margin. Some shaven magician from State Street would run up by rail, and, from proposals, maps, schedules of stock, etc., educe a spacious factory as easily as Aladdin's palace arose from nothing. Instead of a dreaming, pastoral poet of a village, Concord would be a rushing, whirling, bustling manufacturer of a town, like its thrifty neighbor Lowell. Many a fine equipage, flashing along city ways—many an Elizabethan-Gothic-Grecian rural retreat, in which State Street woos Pan and grows Arcadian in summer, would be reduced, in the last analysis, to the Concord mills. Yet if these broad river meadows grew factories instead of corn, they might perhaps lack another harvest, of which the poet's thought is the sickle.

“One harvest from your field  
 Homeward brought the oxen strong.  
 Another crop your acres yield,  
 Which I gather in a song,”

sings Emerson, and again, as the afternoon light strikes pensive across his memory, as over the fields below him :

“Knows he who tills this lonely field,  
 To reap its scanty corn,  
 What mystic crops his acres yield,  
 At midnight and at morn ?”



The Concord River, upon whose winding shores the town has scattered its few houses—as if, loitering over the plain some fervent day, it had fallen asleep obedient to the slumberous spell, and had not since awakened—is a languid, shallow stream, that loiters through broad meadows, which fringe it with rushes and long grasses. Its sluggish current scarcely moves the autumn leaves showered upon it by a few maples that lean over the Assabet—as one of its branches is named. Yellow lily-buds and leathery lily-pads tessellate its surface, and the white water-lilies—pale, proud Ladies of Shalott—bare their virgin breasts to the sun in the seclusion of its distant reaches. Clustering vines of wild grape hang its wooded shores with a tapestry of the South and the Rhine. The pickerel-weed marks with blue spikes of flowers the points where small tributary brooks flow in, and along the dusky windings of those brooks cardinal-flowers with a scarlet splendor paint the tropics upon New England green. All summer long, from founts unknown, in the upper counties, from some anonymous pond or wooded hillside moist with springs, steals the gentle river through the plain, spreading at one point above the town into a little lake, called by the farmers “Fairhaven Bay,” as if all its lesser names must share the sunny significance of Concord. Then,

shrinking again, alarmed at its own boldness, it dreams on towards the Merrimac and the sea.

The absence of factories has already implied its shallowness and slowness. In truth it is a very slow river, belonging much more to the Indian than to the Yankee; so much so, indeed, that until within a very few years there was an annual visit to its shores from a few sad heirs of its old masters, who pitched a group of tents in the meadows, and wove their tidy baskets and strung their beads in unsmiling silence. It was the same thing that I saw in Jerusalem among the Jews. Every Friday they repair to the remains of the old temple wall, and pray and wail, kneeling upon the pavement and kissing the stones. But that passionate Oriental regret was not more impressive than this silent homage of a waning race, who, as they beheld the unchanged river, knew that, unlike it, the last drops of their existence were gradually flowing away, and that for their tribes there shall be no ingathering.

So shallow is the stream that the amateur Corydons who embark at morning to explore its remoter shores will, not infrequently in midsummer, find their boat as suddenly tranquil and motionless as the river, having placidly grounded upon its oozy bottom. Or, returning at evening, they may lean over the edge as they lie at length

in the boat, and float with the almost imperceptible current, brushing the tips of the long water-grass and reeds below them in the stream—a river jungle, in which lurk pickerel and trout—with the sensation of a bird drifting upon soft evening air over the tree-tops. No available or profitable craft navigate these waters, and animated gentlemen from the city who run up for “a mouthful of fresh air” cannot possibly detect the final cause of such a river. Yet the dreaming idler has a place on maps and a name in history.

Near the town it is crossed by three or four bridges. One is a massive structure to help the railroad over. The stern, strong pile readily betrays that it is part of good, solid stock, owned in the right quarter. Close by it is a little arched stone bridge, auxiliary to a great road leading to some vague region of the world called Acton upon guide-posts and on maps. Just beyond these bridges the river bends and forgets the railroad, but it is grateful to the graceful arch of the little stone bridge for making its curve more picturesque, and, as it muses towards the Old Manse, listlessly brushing the lilies, it wonders if Ellery Channing, who lives beyond, upon a hill-side sloping to the shore, wrote his poem of “The Bridge” to that particular one. There are two or three wooden bridges also, always combining well with



the landscape, always making and suggesting pictures.

The Concord, as I said, has a name in history. Near one of the wooden bridges you turn aside from the main road, close by the Old Manse—whose mosses of mystic hue were gathered by Hawthorne, who lived there for three years—and a few steps bring you to the river and to a small monument upon its brink. It is a narrow, grassy way; not a field nor a meadow, but of that shape and character which would perplex the animated stranger from the city, who would see, also, its unfitness for a building-lot. The narrow, grassy way is the old road, which in the month of April, 1775, led to a bridge that crossed the stream at this spot. And upon the river's margin, upon the bridge and the shore beyond, took place the sharp struggle between the Middlesex farmers and the scarlet British soldiers known in tradition as "Concord fight." The small monument records the day and the event. When it was erected Emerson wrote the following hymn for the ceremony:

APRIL 19, 1836.

"By the rude bridge that arched the flood,  
Their flag to April's breeze unfurled,  
Here once the embattled farmers stood,  
And fired the shot heard round the world.

“The foe long since in silence slept ;  
Alike the conqueror silent sleeps ;  
And Time the ruined bridge has swept  
Down the dark stream that seaward creeps.

“On this green bank, by this soft stream,  
We see to-day a votive stone,  
That memory may their deed redeem,  
When, like our sires, our sons are gone.

“Spirit that made these heroes dare  
To die, or leave their children free,  
Bid Time and Nature gently spare  
The shaft we raise to them and Thee.”

Close under the rough stone wall at the left, which separates it from the little grassy orchard of the Manse, is a small mound of turf and a broken stone. Grave and headstone shrink from sight amid the grass and under the wall, but they mark the earthly bed of the first victims of that first fight. A few large trees overhang the ground, which Hawthorne thinks have been planted since that day, and he says that in the river he has seen mossy timbers of the old bridge, and on the farther bank, half hidden, the crumbling stone abutments that supported it. In an old house upon the main road, nearly opposite the entrance to this grassy way, I knew a hale old woman who well remembered the gay advance of the flashing soldiers, the terrible ring and crack of fire-arms, and the panic-stricken retreat of the

regulars, blackened and bloody. But the placid river has long since overborne it all. The alarm, the struggle, the retreat, are swallowed up in its supreme tranquillity. The summers of more than seventy years have obliterated every trace of the road with thick grass, which seeks to bury the graves, as earth buried the victims. Let the sweet ministry of summer avail. Let its mild iteration even sap the monument and conceal its stones as it hides the abutment in foliage; for, still on the sunny slopes, white with the May blossoming of apple-orchards, and in the broad fields, golden to the marge of the river, and tilled in security and peace, survives the imperishable remembrance of that day and its results.

The river is thus the main feature of the Concord landscape. It is surrounded by a wide plain, from which rise only three or four low hills. One is a wooded cliff over Fairhaven Bay, a mile from the town; one separates the main river from the Assabeth; and just beyond the battle-ground one rises, rich with orchards, to a fine wood which crowns it. The river meadows blend with broad, lonely fields. A wide horizon, like that of the prairie or the sea, is the grand charm of Concord. At night the stars are seen from the roads crossing the plain, as from a ship at sea. The landscape would be called tame by those who think no

scenery grand but that of mountains or the sea-coast. But the wide solitude of that region is not so accounted by those who live there. To them it is rich and suggestive, as Emerson shows, by saying in the essay upon "Nature," "My house stands in low land, with limited outlook, and on the skirt of the village. But I go with my friend to the shore of our little river, and with one stroke of the paddle I leave the village politics and personalities, yes, and the world of villages and personalities behind, and pass into a delicate realm of sunset and moonlight, too bright almost for spotted man to enter without novitiate and probation. We penetrate bodily this incredible beauty; we dip our hands in this painted element; our eyes are bathed in these lights and forms. A holiday, a villeggiatura, a royal revel, the proudest, most heart-rejoicing festival that valor and beauty, power and taste ever decked and enjoyed, establishes itself upon the instant." And again, as indicating where the true charm of scenery lies: "In every landscape the point to astonishment is the meeting of the sky and the earth, and that is seen from the first hillock, as well as from the top of the Alleghanies. The stars stoop down over the brownest, homeliest common, with all the spiritual magnificence which they shed on the Campagna or on the marble deserts of

Egypt." He is speaking here, of course, of the spiritual excitement of Beauty, which crops up everywhere in nature, like gold in a rich region; but the quality of the imagery indicates the character of the scenery in which the essay was written.

Concord is too far from Boston to rival in garden cultivation its neighbors, West Cambridge, Lexington, and Waltham; nor can it boast, with Brookline, Dorchester, and Cambridge, the handsome summer homes of city wealth. But it surpasses them all, perhaps, in a genuine country freshness and feeling, derived from its loneliness. If not touched by city elegance, neither is it infected by city meretriciousness; it is sweet, wholesome country. By climbing one of the hills, your eye sweeps a wide, wide landscape, until it rests upon graceful Wachuset, or, farther and mistier, Monadnoc, the lofty outpost of New Hampshire hills. Level scenery is not tame. The ocean, the prairie, the desert, are not tame, although of monotonous surface. The gentle undulations which mark certain scenes—a rippling landscape, in which all sense of space, of breadth, and of height is lost—that is tame. It may be made beautiful by exquisite cultivation, as it often is in England and on parts of the Hudson shores, but it is, at best, rather pleasing than inspiring. For a per-



manent view the eye craves large and simple forms, as the body requires plain food for its best nourishment.

The town of Concord is built mainly upon one side of the river. In its centre is a large open square, shaded by fine elms. A white wooden church, in the most classical style of Yankee-Greek, stands upon the square. The Court-house is upon one of the corners. In the old Court-house, in the days when I knew Concord, many conventions were held for humane as well as merely political objects. One summer day I especially remember, when I did not envy Athens its forum, for Emerson and William Henry Channing spoke. In the speech of both burned the sacred fire of eloquence, but in Emerson it was light, and in Channing heat.

From this square diverge four roads, like highways from a forum. One leads by the Court-house and under stately sycamores to the Old Manse and the battle-ground, another goes directly to the river, and a third is the main avenue of the town. After passing the shops this third divides, and one branch forms a fair and noble street, spaciously and loftily arched with elms, the houses standing liberally apart, each with its garden-plot in front. The fourth avenue is the old Boston road, also dividing, at the edge of the

village, into the direct route to the metropolis and the Lexington turnpike.

The house of Mr. Emerson stands opposite this junction. It is a plain, square white dwelling-house, yet it has a city air and could not be mistaken for a farm-house. A quiet merchant, you would say, unostentatious and simple, has here hidden himself from town. But a thick grove of pine and fir trees, almost brushing the two windows upon the right of the door, and occupying the space between them and the road, suggests at least a peculiar taste in the retired merchant, or hints the possibility that he may have sold his place to a poet or philosopher—or to some old East India sea-captain, perhaps, who cannot sleep without the sound of waves, and so plants pines to rustle, surf-like, against his chamber window.

The fact, strangely enough, partly supports your theory. In the year 1828 Charles Coolidge, a brother of J. Templeman Coolidge, a merchant of repute in Boston and grandson of Joseph Coolidge, a patriarchal denizen of Bowdoin Square in that city, came to Concord and built this house. Gratefully remembering the lofty horse-chestnuts which shaded the city square, and which, perhaps, first inspired him with the wish to be a nearer neighbor of woods and fields, he planted a row of them along his lot, which this year ripen their

twenty-fifth harvest. With the liberal hospitality of a New England merchant he did not forget the spacious cellars of the city, and, as Mr. Emerson writes, "he built the only good cellar that had then been built in Concord."

Mr. Emerson bought the house in the year 1835. He found it a plain, convenient, and thoroughly built country residence. An amiable neighbor of Mr. Coolidge had placed a miserable old barn irregularly upon the edge of that gentleman's lot, which, for the sake of comeliness, he was forced to buy and set straight and smooth into a decent dependence of the mansion house. The estate, upon passing into Mr. Emerson's hands, comprised the house, barn, and two acres of land. He has enlarged house and barn, and the two acres have grown to nine. Our author is no farmer, except as every country gentleman is, yet the kindly slope from the rear of the house to a little brook, which, passing to the calm Concord beyond, washes the edge of his land, yields him at least occasional beans and pease—or some friend, agriculturally enthusiastic and an original Brook-Farmer, experiments with guano in the garden, and produces melons and other vines with a success that relieves Brook Farm from every slur of inadequate practical genius. Mr. Emerson has shaded his originally bare land with trees, and counts near a hundred

apple and pear trees in his orchard. The whole estate is quite level, inclining only towards the little brook, and is well watered and convenient.

The Orphic Alcott—or Plato Skimpole, as Aspasia called him—well known in the transcendental history of New England, designed and with his own hands erected a summer-house, which gracefully adorns the lawn, if I may so call the smooth grass-plot at the side of the house. Unhappily, this edifice promises no longer duration, not being “technically based and pointed.” This is not a strange, although a disagreeable fact, to Mr. Emerson, who has been always the most faithful and appreciative of the lovers of Mr. Alcott. It is natural that the Orphic Alcott should build graceful summer-houses. There are even people who declare that he has covered the pleasant but somewhat misty lawns of ethical speculation with a thousand such edifices, which need only to be a little more “technically based and pointed” to be quite perfect. At present they whisper, the wind blows clean through them, and no figures of flesh and blood are ever seen there, but only pallid phantoms with large, calm eyes, eating uncooked grain out of baskets, and discoursing in a sublime shibboleth of which mortals have no key. But how could Plato Skimpole, who goes down to Hingham on the sea, in a New England January,

clad only in a suit of linen, hope to build immortal summer-houses?

Mr. Emerson's library is the room at the right of the door upon entering the house. It is a simple square room, not walled with books like the den of a literary grub, nor merely elegant like the ornamental retreat of a dilettante. The books are arranged upon plain shelves, not in architectural bookcases, and the room is hung with a few choice engravings of the greatest men. There was a fair copy of Michael Angelo's "Fates," which, properly enough, imparted that grave serenity to the ornament of the room which is always apparent in what is written there. It is the study of a scholar. All our author's published writings, the essays, orations, and poems, date from this room, as much as they date from any place or moment. The villagers, indeed, fancy their philosophical contemporary affected by the novelist James's constancy of composition. They relate, with wide eyes, that he has a huge manuscript book, in which he incessantly records the ends of thoughts, bits of observation and experience, and facts of all kinds—a kind of intellectual and scientific rag-bag, into which all shreds and remnants of conversations and reminiscences of wayside reveries are incontinently thrust. This work goes on, they aver, day and night, and when he travels the rag-

bag travels too, and grows more plethoric with each mile of the journey. And a story, which will one day be a tradition, is perpetuated in the village, that one night, before his wife had become completely accustomed to his habits, she awoke suddenly, and hearing him groping about the room, inquired anxiously,

“My dear, are you unwell?”

“No, my love, only an idea.”

The library is not only the study of a scholar, it is the bower of a poet. The pines lean against the windows, and to the student deeply sunk in learned lore or soaring upon the daring speculations of an intrepid philosophy, they whisper a secret beyond that of the philosopher's stone, and sing of the springs of poetry.

The site of the house is not memorable. There is no reasonable ground to suppose that so much as an Indian wigwam ever occupied the spot; nor has Henry Thoreau, a very faithful friend of Mr. Emerson's and of the woods and waters of his native Concord, ever found an Indian arrowhead upon the premises. Henry Thoreau's instinct is as sure towards the facts of nature as the witch-hazel towards treasure. If every quiet country town in New England had a son who, with a lore like Selborne's and an eye like Buffon's, had watched and studied its landscape and history, and

then published the result, as Thoreau has done, in a book as redolent of genuine and perceptive sympathy with nature as a clover-field of honey, New England would seem as poetic and beautiful as Greece. Thoreau lives in the berry pastures upon a bank over Walden Pond, and in a little house of his own building. One pleasant summer afternoon a small party of us helped him raise it—a bit of life as Arcadian as any at Brook Farm. Elsewhere in the village he turns up arrowheads abundantly, and Hawthorne mentions that Thoreau initiated him into the mystery of finding them. But neither the Indians nor nature nor Thoreau can invest the quiet residence of our author with the dignity or even the suspicion of a legend. History stops short in that direction with Charles Coolidge, Esq., and the year 1828.

There is little prospect from the house. Directly opposite a low bluff overhangs the Boston road and obstructs the view. Upon the other sides the level land stretches away. Towards Lexington it is a broad, half-marshy region, and between the brook behind and the river good farms lie upon the outskirts of the town. Pilgrims drawn to Concord by the desire of conversing with the man whose written or spoken eloquence has so profoundly charmed them, and who have placed him in some pavilion of fancy, some peculiar resi-

dence, find him in no porch of philosophy nor academic grove, but in a plain white house by the wayside, ready to entertain every comer as an ambassador from some remote Cathay of speculation whence the stars are more nearly seen. But the familiar reader of our author will not be surprised to find the "walking eye-ball" simply sheltered, and the "endless experimenter with no past at my back" housed without ornament. Such a reader will have felt the Spartan severity of this intellect, and have noticed that the realm of this imagination is rather sculpturesque than pictorial, more Greek than Italian. Therefore he will be pleased to alight at the little gate, and hear the breezy welcome of the pines and the no less cordial salutation of their owner. For if the visitor knows what he is about, he has come to this plain for bracing mountain air. These serious Concord reaches are no vale of Cashmere. Where Plato Skimpole is architect of the summer-house, you may imagine what is to be expected in the mansion itself. It is always morning within those doors. If you have nothing to say, if you are really not an envoy from some kingdom or colony of thought and cannot cast a gem upon the heaped pile, you had better pass by upon the other side. For it is the peculiarity of Emerson's mind to be always on the alert. He eats no lotus, but for-



ever quaffs the waters which engender immortal thirst.

If the memorabilia of his house could find their proper Xenophon, the want of antecedent arrow-heads upon the premises would not prove very disastrous to the interest of the history. The fame of the philosopher attracts admiring friends and enthusiasts from every quarter, and the scholarly grace and urbane hospitality of the gentleman send them charmed away. Friendly foes, who altogether differ from Emerson, come to break a lance with him upon the level pastures of Concord, with all the cheerful and appreciative zeal of those who longed

“To drink delight of battle with their peers  
Far on the ringing plains of windy Troy.”

It is not hazardous to say that the greatest questions of our day and of all days have been nowhere more amply discussed, with more poetic insight or profound conviction, than in the comely, square white house upon the edge of the Lexington turnpike. There have even been attempts at something more formal and club-like than the chance conversations of occasional guests, one of which will certainly be nowhere recorded but upon these pages.

It was in the year 1845 that a circle of persons

of various ages, and differing very much in everything but sympathy, found themselves in Concord. Towards the end of the autumn Mr. Emerson suggested that they should meet every Monday evening through the winter in his library. "Monsieur Aubepine," "Miles Coverdale," and other phantoms, since generally known as Nathaniel Hawthorne, who then occupied the Old Manse; the inflexible Henry Thoreau, a scholastic and pastoral Orson, then living among the blackberry pastures of Walden Pond; Plato Skimpole, then sublimely meditating impossible summer-houses in a little house upon the Boston road; the enthusiastic agriculturist and Brook-Farmer already mentioned, then an inmate of Mr. Emerson's house, who added the genial cultivation of a scholar to the amenities of the natural gentleman; a sturdy farmer neighbor, who had bravely fought his weary way through inherited embarrassments to the small success of a New England husbandman, and whose faithful wife had seven times merited well of her country; two city youths, ready for the fragments from the feast of wit and wisdom; and the host himself, composed this club. Ellery Channing, who had that winter harnessed his Pegasus to the New York *Tribune*, was a kind of corresponding member. The news of this world was to be transmitted through his

eminently practical genius, as the club deemed itself competent to take charge of tidings from all other spheres.

I went, the first Monday evening, very much as Ixion may have gone to his banquet. The philosophers sat dignified and erect. There was a constrained but very amiable silence, which had the impertinence of a tacit inquiry, seeming to ask, "Who will now proceed to say the finest thing that has ever been said?" It was quite involuntary and unavoidable, for the members lacked that fluent social genius without which a club is impossible. It was a congress of oracles on the one hand, and of curious listeners upon the other. I vaguely remember that the Orphic Alcott invaded the Sahara of silence with a solemn "saying," to which, after due pause, the honorable member for blackberry pastures responded by some keen and graphic observation; while the Olympian host, anxious that so much good material should be spun into something, beamed smiling encouragement upon all parties. But the conversation became more and more staccato. Miles Coverdale, a statue of night and silence, sat, a little removed, under a portrait of Dante, gazing imperturbably upon the group; and as he sat in the shadow, his dark hair and eyes and suit of sables made him, in that society, the black thread of mystery which he



weaves into his stories, while the shifting presence of the Brook-Farmer played like heat-lightning around the room.

I recall little else but a grave eating of russet apples by the erect philosophers, and a solemn disappearance into night. The club struggled through three Monday evenings. Plato was perpetually putting apples of gold in pictures of silver; for such was the rich ore of his thoughts, coined by the deep melody of his voice. Orson charmed us with the secrets won from his interviews with Pan in the Walden woods; while Emerson, with the zeal of an engineer trying to dam wild waters, sought to bind the wide-flying embroidery of discourse into a web of clear sweet sense. But still in vain. The oracular sayings were the unalloyed saccharine element; and every chemist knows how much else goes to practical food—how much coarse, rough, woody fibre is essential. The club struggled on valiantly, discoursing celestially, eating apples, and disappearing in the dark, until the third evening it vanished altogether. But I have since known clubs of fifty times its number, whose collective genius was not more than that of either one of the *Dii Majores* of our Concord coterie. The fault was its too great concentration. It was not relaxation, as a club should be, but tension. Society is a play, a

game, a tournament ; not a battle. It is the easy grace of undress ; not an intellectual full-dress parade.

I have already hinted this unbending intellectual alacrity of our author. His sport is serious—his humor is earnest. He stands like a sentinel. His look and manner and habit of thought cry “Who goes there?” and if he does not hear the countersign, he brings the intruder to a halt. It is for this surprising fidelity and integrity that his influence has been so deep and sure and permanent upon the intellectual life of the young men of New England ; and of old England, too, where, in Manchester, there were regular weekly meetings at which his works were read. What he said long ago in his preface to the American edition of Carlyle’s *Miscellanies*, that they were papers which had spoken to the young men of the time “with an emphasis that hindered them from sleep,” is strikingly true of his own writings. His first slim, anonymous duodecimo, *Nature*, was as fair and fascinating to the royal young minds who met it in the course of their reading, as Egeria to Numa wandering in the grove. The essays, orations, and poems followed, developing and elaborating the same spiritual and heroic philosophy, applying it to life, history, and literature, with a vigor and richness so supreme that not only do

many account him our truest philosopher, but others acknowledge him as our most characteristic poet.

It would be a curious inquiry how much and what kind of influence the placid scenery of Concord has exercised upon his mind. "I chide society, I embrace solitude," he says; "and yet I am not so ungrateful as not to see the wise, the lovely, and the noble-minded, as from time to time they pass my gate." It is not difficult to understand his fondness for the spot. He has been always familiar with it, always more or less a resident of the village. Born in Boston upon the spot where the Chauncey Place Church now stands, part of his youth was passed in the Old Manse, which was built by his grandfather and in which his father was born; and there he wrote *Nature*. From the magnificent admiration of ancestral England he was glad to return two years since to quiet Concord and to acres which will not yield a single arrowhead. The Swiss sigh for their mountains; but the Nubians, also, pine for their desert plains. Those who are born by the sea long annually to return and to rest their eyes upon its living horizon. Is it because the earliest impressions, made when the mind is most plastic, are most durable? or because youth is that golden age bounding the confines of memory and floating

forever—an alluring mirage as we recede farther from it?

The imagination of the man who roams the solitary pastures of Concord, or floats, dreaming, down its river, will easily see its landscape upon Emerson's pages. "That country is fairest," he says, "which is inhabited by the noblest minds." And although that idler upon the river may have leaned over the Mediterranean from Genoese and Neapolitan villas, or have glanced down the steep green valley of Sicilian Enna, seeking "herself the fairest flower," or walked the shores where Cleopatra and Helen walked, yet the charm of a landscape which is felt rather than seen will be imperishable. "Travelling is a fool's paradise," says Emerson. But he passed its gates to learn that lesson. His writings, however, have no imported air. If there be something Oriental in his philosophy and tropical in his imagination, they have yet the strong flavor of his mother earth—the underived sweetness of the open Concord sky, and the spacious breadth of the Concord horizon.





HAWTHORNE





## HAWTHORNE

HAWTHORNE has himself drawn the picture of the Old Manse in Concord. He has given to it that quiet richness of coloring which ideally belongs to an old country mansion. It seemed so fitting a residence for one who loves to explore the twilight of antiquity—and the gloomier the better—that the visitor, among the felicities of whose life was included the freedom of the Manse, could not but fancy that our author's eyes first saw the daylight enchanted by the slumberous orchard behind the house, or tranquillized into twilight by the spacious avenue in front. The character of his imagination, and the golden gloom of its blossoming, completely harmonize with the rusty, gable-roofed old house upon the river-side, and the reader of his books would be sure that his boyhood and youth knew no other friends than the dreaming river and the melancholy meadows and drooping foliage of its vicinity.

Since the reader, however, would greatly mistake if he fancied this, in good sooth, the ancestral

halls of the Hawthornes—the genuine Hawthornden—he will be glad to save the credit of his fancy by learning that it was here our author's bridal tour—which commenced in Boston, then three hours away—ended, and his married life began. Here, also, his first child was born, and here those sad and silver mosses accumulated upon his fancy, from which he heaped so soft a bed for our dreaming. “Between two tall gate-posts of rough hewn stone (the gate itself having fallen from its hinges at some unknown epoch) we beheld the gray front of the old parsonage, terminating the vista of an avenue of black-ash trees.” It was a pleasant spring day in the year 1843, and as they entered the house nose-gays of fresh flowers, arranged by friendly hands, welcomed them to Concord and summer.

The dark-haired man, who led his wife along the avenue that afternoon, had been recently an officer of the customs in Boston, before which he had led a solitary life in Salem. Graduated with Longfellow at Bowdoin College, in Maine, he had lived a hermit in respectable Salem, an absolute recluse even from his own family, walking out by night and writing wild tales by day, most of which were burnt in his bachelor fire, and some of which, in newspapers, magazines, and annuals, led a wandering, uncertain, and mostly unnoticed life.

Those tales among this class which were attainable he collected into a small volume, and apprizing the world that they were "twice-told," sent them forth anew to make their own way, in the year 1841. But he piped to the world, and it did not sing. He wept to it, and it did not mourn. The book, however, as all good books do, made its way into various hearts. Yet the few penetrant minds which recognized a remarkable power and a method of strange fascination in the stories did not make the public nor influence the public mind. "I was," he says in the last edition of these tales, "the most unknown author in America." Full of glancing wit, of tender satire, of exquisite natural description, of subtle and strange analysis of human life, darkly passionate and weird, they yet floated unhailed barks upon the sea of publicity—unhailed, but laden and gleaming at every crevice with the true treasure of Cathay. Bancroft, then Collector in Boston, prompt to recognize and to honor talent, made the dreaming story-teller a surveyor in the custom-house, thus opening to him a new range of experience. From the society of phantoms he stepped upon Long Wharf and plumply confronted Captain Cuttle and Dirk Hatteraick. It was no less romance to our author. There is no greater error of those who are called "practical men" than the supposition that life is,

or can be, other than a dream to a dreamer. Shut him up in a counting-room, barricade him with bales of merchandise, and limit his library to the ledger and cash-book and his prospect to the neighboring signs; talk "Bills receivable" and "Sundries Dr. to cash" to him forever, and you are only a very amusing or very annoying phantom to him. The merchant-prince might as well hope to make himself a poet, as the poet a practical or practicable man. He has laws to obey not at all the less stringent because men of a different temperament refuse to acknowledge them, and he is held to a loyalty quite beyond their conception.

So Captain Cuttle and Dirk Hatteraick were as pleasant figures to our author in the picture of life as any others. He went daily upon the vessels, looked and listened and learned, was a favorite of the sailors as such men always are, did his work faithfully, and, having dreamed his dream upon Long Wharf, was married and slipped up to the Old Manse and a new chapter in the romance. It opened in "the most delightful little nook of a study that ever offered its snug seclusion to a scholar." Of the three years in the Old Manse the prelude to the *Mosses* is the most perfect history, and of the quality of those years the *Mosses* themselves are sufficient proof. They were mostly written in the little study, and originally

published in the *Democratic Review*, then edited by Hawthorne's friend O'Sullivan.

To the inhabitants of Concord, however, our author was as much a phantom and a fable as the old pastor of the parish, dead half a century before, and whose faded portrait in the attic was gradually rejoining its original in native dust. The gate, fallen from its hinges in a remote antiquity, was never rehung. "The wheel-track leading to the door" remained still overgrown with grass. No bold villager ever invaded the sleep of "the glimmering shadows" in the avenue. At evening no lights gleamed from the windows. Scarce once in many months did the single old knobby-faced coachman at the railroad bring a fare to "Mr. Hawthorne's." "Is there anybody in the old house?" sobbed the old ladies in despair, imbibing tea of a livid green. That knocker, which everybody had enjoyed the right of lifting to summon the good old pastor, no temerity now dared to touch. Heavens! what if the figure in the mouldy portrait should peer, in answer, over the eaves, and shake solemnly its decaying surplice! Nay, what if the mysterious man himself should answer the summons and come to the door! It is easy to summon spirits—but if they come? Collective Concord, moving in the river meadows, embraced the better part of valor and left the

knocker untouched. A cloud of romance suddenly fell out of the heaven of fancy and enveloped the Old Manse :

“In among the bearded barley  
The reaper reaping late and early”

did not glance more wistfully towards the island of Shalott and its mysterious lady than the reapers of Concord rye looked at the Old Manse and wondered over its inmate.

Sometimes in the forenoon a darkly clad figure was seen in the little garden-plot putting in corn or melon seed, and gravely hoeing. It was a brief apparition. The farmer passing towards town and seeing the solitary cultivator, lost his faith in the fact and believed he had dreamed when, upon returning, he saw no sign of life, except, possibly, upon some Monday, the ghostly skirt of a shirt flapping spectrally in the distant orchard. Day dawned and darkened over the lonely house. Summer with “buds and bird-voices” came singing in from the South, and clad the old ash-trees in deeper green, the Old Manse in profounder mystery. Gorgeous autumn came to visit the story-teller in his little western study, and, departing, wept rainbows among his trees. Winter impatiently swept down the hill opposite, rifling the trees of each last clinging bit of summer, as if



thrusting aside opposing barriers and determined to search the mystery. But his white robes floated around the Old Manse, ghostly as the decaying surplice of the old pastor's portrait, and in the snowy seclusion of winter the mystery was as mysterious as ever.

Occasionally Emerson or Ellery Channing or Henry Thoreau — some poet, as once Whittier, journeying to the Merrimac, or an old Brook-Farmer who remembered Miles Coverdale with Arcadian sympathy—went down the avenue and disappeared in the house. Sometimes a close observer, had he been ambushed among the long grasses of the orchard, might have seen the host and one of his guests emerging at the back door and, sauntering to the river-side, step into the boat, and float off until they faded in the shadow. The spectacle would not have lessened the romance. If it were afternoon—one of the spectrally sunny afternoons which often bewitch that region—he would be only the more convinced that there was something inexplicable in the whole matter of this man whom nobody knew, who was never once seen at town-meeting, and concerning whom it was whispered that he did not constantly attend church all day, although he occupied the reverend parsonage of the village and had unmeasured acres of manuscript sermons in his attic, besides the

nearly extinct portrait of an utterly extinct clergyman. Mrs. Radcliffe and Monk Lewis were nothing to this, and the awe-stricken observer, if he could creep safely out of the long grass, did not fail to do so quietly, fortifying his courage by remembering stories of the genial humanity of the last old pastor who inhabited the Manse, and who for fifty years was the bland and beneficent Pope of Concord. A genial, gracious old man, whose memory is yet sweet in the village, and who, wedded to the grave traditions of New England theology, believed of his young relative Waldo Emerson, as Miss Flite, touching her forehead, said of her landlord, that he was "*m*, quite *m*," but was proud to love in him the hereditary integrity of noble ancestors.

This old gentleman—an eminent figure in the history of the Manse and in all reminiscences of Concord—partook sufficiently of mundane weaknesses to betray his mortality. Hawthorne describes him watching the battle of Concord from his study window. But when the uncertainty of that dark moment had so happily resulted, and the first battle-ground of the Revolution had become a spot of hallowed and patriotic consideration, it was a pardonable pride in the good old man to order his servant, whenever there was company, to assist him in reaping the glory due

to the owner of a spot so sacred. Accordingly, when some reverend or distinguished guest sat with the pastor in his little parlor, or, of a summer evening, at the hospitable door under the trees, Jeremiah or Nicodemus, the cow-boy, would deferentially approach and inquire,

“Into what pasture shall I turn the cow to-night, sir?”

And the old gentleman would audibly reply :

“Into the battle-field, Nicodemus, into the battle-field.”

Then naturally followed wonder, inquiry, a walk in the twilight to the river-bank, the old gentleman’s story, the corresponding respect of the listening visitor, and the consequent quiet complacency and harmless satisfaction in the clergyman’s bosom. That throb of pride was the one drop of peculiar advantage which the pastor distilled from the Revolution. He could not but fancy that he had a hand in so famous a deed accomplished upon land now his own, and demeaned himself accordingly with continental dignity.

The pulpit, however, was his especial sphere. There he reigned supreme ; there he exhorted, rebuked, and advised, as in the days of Mather. There he inspired that profound reverence of which he was so proud, and which induced the matrons of the village, when he was coming to

make a visit, to bedizen the children in their Sunday suits, to parade the best teapot, and to offer the most capacious chair. In the pulpit he delivered everything with the pompous cadence of the elder New England clergy, and a sly joke is told at the expense of his even temper, that on one occasion, when loftily reading the hymn, he encountered a blot upon the page quite obliterating the word ; but without losing the cadence, although in a very vindictive tone at the truant word, or the culprit who erased it, he finished the reading as follows :

“ He sits upon His throne above,  
Attending angels bless,  
While Justice, Mercy, Truth—and another word  
which is blotted out—  
Compose His princely dress.”

We linger around the Old Manse and its occupants as fondly as Hawthorne, but no more fondly than all who have been once within the influence of its spell. There glimmer in my memory a few hazy days, of a tranquil and half-pensive character, which I am conscious were passed in and around the house, and their pensiveness I know to be only that touch of twilight which inhered in the house and all its associations. Beside the few chance visitors I have named there were city friends occasionally, figures quite unknown to the

village, who came preceded by the steam-shriek of the locomotive, were dropped at the gate-posts, and were seen no more. The owner was as much a vague name to me as to any one.

During Hawthorne's first year's residence in Concord I had driven up with some friends to an æsthetic tea at Mr. Emerson's. It was in the winter, and a great wood-fire blazed upon the hospitable hearth. There were various men and women of note assembled, and I, who listened attentively to all the fine things that were said, was for some time scarcely aware of a man who sat upon the edge of the circle, a little withdrawn, his head slightly thrown forward upon his breast, and his bright eyes clearly burning under his black brow. As I drifted down the stream of talk, this person, who sat silent as a shadow, looked to me as Webster might have looked had he been a poet—a kind of poetic Webster. He rose and walked to the window, and stood quietly there for a long time, watching the dead white landscape. No appeal was made to him, nobody looked after him, the conversation flowed steadily on as if every one understood that his silence was to be respected. It was the same thing at table. In vain the silent man imbibed æsthetic tea. Whatever fancies it inspired did not flower at his lips. But there was a light in his eye which assured me

that nothing was lost. So supreme was his silence that it presently engrossed me to the exclusion of everything else. There was very brilliant discourse, but this silence was much more poetic and fascinating. Fine things were said by the philosophers, but much finer things were implied by the dumbness of this gentleman with heavy brows and black hair. When he presently rose and went, Emerson, with the "slow, wise smile" that breaks over his face, like day over the sky, said, "Hawthorne rides well his horse of the night."

Thus he remained in my memory, a shadow, a phantom, until more than a year afterwards. Then I came to live in Concord. Every day I passed his house, but when the villagers, thinking that perhaps I had some clew to the mystery, said, "Do you know this Mr. Hawthorne?" I said "No," and trusted to time.

Time justified my confidence, and one day I, too, went down the avenue and disappeared in the house. I mounted those mysterious stairs to that apocryphal study. I saw "the cheerful coat of paint, and golden-tinted paper-hangings, lighting up the small apartment; while the shadow of a willow-tree, that swept against the overhanging eaves, attempered the cheery western sunshine." I looked from the little northern window whence the old pastor watched the battle, and in the small

dining-room beneath it, upon the first floor, there were

“Dainty chicken, snow-white bread,”

and the golden juices of Italian vineyards, which still feast insatiable memory.

Our author occupied the Old Manse for three years. During that time he was not seen, probably, by more than a dozen of the villagers. His walks could easily avoid the town, and upon the river he was always sure of solitude. It was his favorite habit to bathe every evening in the river, after nightfall, and in that part of it over which the old bridge stood, at which the battle was fought. Sometimes, but rarely, his boat accompanied another up the stream, and I recall the silent and preternatural vigor with which, on one occasion, he wielded his paddle to counteract the bad rowing of a friend who conscientiously considered it his duty to do something and not let Hawthorne work alone; but who, with every stroke, neutralized all Hawthorne's efforts. I suppose he would have struggled until he fell senseless, rather than ask his friend to desist. His principle seemed to be, if a man cannot understand without talking to him, it is quite useless to talk, because it is immaterial whether such a man understands or not. His own sympathy was so broad



and sure that although nothing had been said for hours his companion knew that not a thing had escaped his eye, nor had a single pulse of beauty in the day or scene or society failed to thrill his heart. In this way his silence was most social. Everything seemed to have been said. It was a Barmecide feast of discourse, from which a greater satisfaction resulted than from an actual banquet.

When a formal attempt was made to desert this style of conversation, the result was ludicrous. Once Emerson and Thoreau arrived to pay a call. They were shown into the little parlor upon the avenue, and Hawthorne presently entered. Each of the guests sat upright in his chair like a Roman senator. "To them" Hawthorne, like a Dacian king. The call went on, but in a most melancholy manner. The host sat perfectly still, or occasionally propounded a question which Thoreau answered accurately, and there the thread broke short off. Emerson delivered sentences that only needed the setting of an essay to charm the world; but the whole visit was a vague ghost of the Monday-evening club at Mr. Emerson's—it was a great failure. Had they all been lying idly upon the river brink, or strolling in Thoreau's blackberry pastures, the result would have been utterly different. But imprisoned in the proprieties of a



parlor, each a wild man in his way, with a necessity of talking inherent in the nature of the occasion, there was only a waste of treasure. This was the only "call" in which I ever knew Hawthorne to be involved.

In Mr. Emerson's house, I said, it seemed always morning. But Hawthorne's black-ash trees and scraggy apple-boughs shaded

"a land  
In which it seemed always afternoon."

I do not doubt that the lotus grew along the grassy marge of the Concord behind his house, and it was served, subtly concealed, to all his guests. The house, its inmates, and its life lay, dream-like, upon the edge of the little village. You fancied that they all came together and belonged together, and were glad that at length some idol of your imagination, some poet whose spell had held you and would hold you forever, was housed as such a poet should be.

During the lapse of the three years since the bridal tour of twenty miles ended at the "two tall gate-posts of rough-hewn stone," a little wicker wagon had appeared at intervals upon the avenue, and a placid babe, whose eyes the soft Concord day had touched with the blue of its beauty, lay looking tranquilly up at the grave old trees, which

sighed lofty lullabies over her sleep. The tranquillity of the golden-haired Una was the living and breathing type of the dreamy life of the Old Manse. Perhaps, that being attained, it was as well to go. Perhaps our author was not surprised nor displeased when the hints came, "growing more and more distinct, that the owner of the old house was pining for his native air." One afternoon I entered the study, and learned from its occupant that the last story he should ever write there was written. The son of the old pastor yearned for his homestead. The light of another summer would seek its poet in the Old Manse, but in vain.

While Hawthorne had been quietly writing in the "most delightful little nook of a study," Mr. Polk had been elected President, and Mr. Bancroft, in the cabinet, did not forget his old friend, the surveyor in the custom-house. There came suggestions and offers of various attractions. Still loving New England, would he tarry there, or, as inspector of woods and forests in some far-away island of the southern sea, some hazy strip of distance seen from Florida, would he taste the tropics? He meditated all the chances, without immediately deciding. Gathering up his household gods, he passed out of the Old Manse as its heir entered, and before the end of summer was

domesticated in the custom-house of his native town of Salem. This was in the year 1846. Upon leaving the Old Manse he published the *Mosses*, announcing that it was the last collection of tales he should put forth. Those who knew him and recognized his value to our literature trembled lest this was the last word from one who spoke only pearls and rubies. It was a foolish fear. The sun must shine, the sea must roll, the bird must sing, and the poet write. During his life in Salem, of which the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* describes the official aspect, he wrote that romance. It is inspired by the spirit of the place. It presents more vividly than any history the gloomy picturesqueness of early New England life. There is no strain in our literature so characteristic or more real than that which Hawthorne had successfully attempted in several of his earlier sketches, and of which *The Scarlet Letter* is the great triumph. It became immediately popular, and directly placed the writer of stories for a small circle among the world's masters of romance.

Times meanwhile changed, and presidents with them. General Taylor was elected, and the Salem collector retired. It is one of the romantic points of Hawthorne's quiet life that its changes have been so frequently determined by political events,

which, more than all others, are the most entirely foreign to his tastes and habits. He retired to the hills of Berkshire, the eye of the world now regarding his movements. There he lived a year or two in a little red cottage upon the "Stockbridge Bowl," as a small lake near that town is called. In this retreat he wrote *The House of the Seven Gables*, which more deeply confirmed the literary position already acquired for him by the first romance. The scene is laid in Salem, as if he could not escape a strange fascination in the witch-haunted town of our early history. It is the same black canvas upon which plays the rainbow-flash of his fancy, never, in its brightest moment, more than illuminating the gloom. This marks all his writings. They have a terrible beauty, like the siren, and their fascination is as sure.

After six years of absence Hawthorne returned to Concord, where he purchased a small house formerly occupied by Orphic Alcott. When that philosopher came into possession it was a miserable little house of two peaked gables. But the genius which recreated itself in devising graceful summer-houses, like that for Mr. Emerson, already noticed, soon smoothed the new residence into some kind of comeliness. It was an old house when Mr. Alcott entered it, but his tasteful finger touched it with picturesque grace.

Not like a tired old drudge of a house, rusting into unhonored decay, but with a modest freshness that does not belie the innate sobriety of a venerable New England farm-house, the present residence of our author stands, withdrawn a few yards from the high-road to Boston, along which marched the British soldiers to Concord bridge. It lies at the foot of a wooded hill, a neat house of a "rusty olive hue," with a porch in front, and a central peak, and a piazza at each end. The genius for summer-houses has had full play upon the hill behind. Here, upon the homely steppes of Concord, is a strain of Persia. Mr. Alcott built terraces and arbors and pavilions of boughs and rough stems of trees, revealing—somewhat inadequately, perhaps—the hanging gardens of delight that adorn the Babylon of his orphic imagination. The hill-side is no unapt emblem of his intellectual habit, which garnishes the arid commonplaces of life with a cold poetic aurora, forgetting that it is the inexorable law of light to deform as well as adorn. Treating life as a grand epic poem, the philosophic Alcott forgets that Homer must nod or we should all fall asleep. The world would not be very beautiful nor interesting if it were all one huge summit of Mont Blanc.

Unhappily, the terraced hill-side, like the sum-

mer-house upon Mr. Emerson's lawn, "lacks technical arrangement," and the wild winds play with these architectural toys of fancy, like lions with humming-birds. They are gradually falling, shattered, and disappearing. Fine locust-trees shade them and ornament the hill with perennial beauty. The hanging gardens of Semiramis were not more fragrant than Hawthorne's hill-side during the June blossoming of the locusts. A few young elms, some white-pines and young oaks, complete the catalogue of trees. A light breeze constantly fans the brow of the hill, making harps of the tree-tops and singing to our author, who, "with a book in my hand, or an unwritten book in my thoughts," lies stretched beneath them in the shade.

From the height of the hill the eye courses, unrestrained, over the solitary landscape of Concord, broad and still, broken only by the slight wooded undulations of insignificant hillocks. The river is not visible, nor any gleam of lake. Walden Pond is just behind the wood in front, and not far away over the meadows sluggishly steals the river. It is the most quiet of prospects. Eight acres of good land lie in front of the house, across the road, and in the rear the estate extends a little distance over the brow of the hill.

This latter is not good garden-ground, but it

yields that other crop which the poet "gathers in a song." Perhaps the world will forgive our author that he is not a prize farmer, and makes but an indifferent figure at the annual cattle-show. We have seen that he is more nomadic than agricultural. He has wandered from spot to spot, pitching a temporary tent, then striking it for "fresh fields and pastures new." It is natural, therefore, that he should call his house "The Wayside"—a bench upon the road where he sits for a while before passing on. If the wayfarer finds him upon that bench he shall have rare pleasure in sitting with him, yet shudder while he stays. For the pictures of our poet have more than the shadows of Rembrandt. If you listen to his story, the lonely pastures and dull towns of our dear old homely New England shall become suddenly as radiant with grace and terrible with tragedy as any country and any time. The waning afternoon in Concord, in which the blue-frocked farmers are reaping and hoeing, shall set in pensive glory. The woods will forever after be haunted with strange forms. You will hear whispers and music "i' the air." In the softest morning you will suspect sadness; in the most fervent noon a nameless terror. It is because the imagination of our author treads the almost imperceptible line between the natural and the supernatural. We are

all conscious of striking it sometimes. But we avoid it. We recoil and hurry away, nor dare to glance over our shoulders lest we should see phantoms. What are these tales of supernatural appearances, as well authenticated as any news of the day—and what is the sphere which they imply? What is the more subtle intellectual apprehension of fate and its influence upon imagination and life? Whatever it is, it is the mystery of the fascination of these tales. They converse with that dreadful realm as with our real world. The light of our sun is poured by genius upon the phantoms we did not dare to contemplate, and lo! they are ourselves, unmasked, and playing our many parts. An unutterable sadness seizes the reader as the inevitable black thread appears. For here genius assures us what we trembled to suspect, but could not avoid suspecting, that the black thread is inwoven with all forms of life, with all development of character.

It is for this peculiarity, which harmonizes so well with ancient places, whose pensive silence seems the trance of memory musing over the young and lovely life that illuminated its lost years—that Hawthorne is so intimately associated with the Old Manse. Yet that was but the tent of a night for him. Already, with the *Blithedale Romance*, which is dated from Concord, a new



interest begins to cluster around "The Wayside."

I know not how I can more fitly conclude these reminiscences of Concord and Hawthorne, whose own stories have always a saddening close, than by relating an occurrence which blighted to many hearts the beauty of the quiet Concord river, and seemed not inconsistent with its lonely landscape. It has the further fitness of typifying the operation of our author's imagination: a tranquil stream, clear and bright with sunny gleams, crowned with lilies and graceful with swaying grass, yet doing terrible deeds inexorably, and therefore forever after of a shadowed beauty.

Martha was the daughter of a plain Concord farmer, a girl of delicate and shy temperament, who excelled so much in study that she was sent to a fine academy in a neighboring town, and won all the honors of the course. She met at the school, and in the society of the place, a refinement and cultivation, a social gayety and grace, which were entirely unknown in the hard life she had led at home, and which by their very novelty, as well as because they harmonized with her own nature and dreams, were doubly beautiful and fascinating. She enjoyed this life to the full, while her timidity kept her only a spectator; and she ornamented it with a fresher grace, suggestive of

the woods and fields, when she ventured to engage in the airy game. It was a sphere for her capacities and talents. She shone in it, and the consciousness of a true position and general appreciation gave her the full use of all her powers. She admired and was admired. She was surrounded by gratifications of taste, by the stimulants and rewards of ambition. The world was happy, and she was worthy to live in it. But at times a cloud suddenly dashed athwart the sun—a shadow stole, dark and chill, to the very edge of the charmed circle in which she stood. She knew well what it was and what it foretold, but she would not pause nor heed. The sun shone again; the future smiled; youth, beauty, and all gentle hopes and thoughts bathed the moment in lambent light.

But school-days ended at last, and with the receding town in which they had been passed the bright days of life disappeared, and forever. It is probable that the girl's fancy had been fed, perhaps indiscreetly pampered, by her experience there. But it was no fairy-land. It was an academy town in New England, and the fact that it was so alluring is a fair indication of the kind of life from which she had emerged, and to which she now returned. What could she do? In the dreary round of petty details, in the incessant drudgery of a poor farmer's household, with no

companions of any sympathy—for the family of a hard-working New England farmer are not the Chloes and Clarissas of pastoral poetry, nor are cow-boys Corydons—with no opportunity of retirement and cultivation, for reading and studying—which is always voted “stuff” under such circumstances—the light suddenly quenched out of life, what was she to do?

“Adapt herself to her circumstances. Why had she shot from her sphere in this silly way?” demands unanimous common-sense in valiant heroes.

The simple answer is, that she had only used all her opportunities, and that, although it was no fault of hers that the routine of her life was in every way repulsive, she did struggle to accommodate herself to it—and failed. When she found it impossible to drag on at home, she became an inmate of a refined and cultivated household in the village, where she had opportunity to follow her own fancies, and to associate with educated and attractive persons. But even here she could not escape the feeling that it was all temporary, that her position was one of dependence; and her pride, now grown morbid, often drove her from the very society which alone was agreeable to her. This was all genuine. There was not the slightest strain of the *femme incom-*

*prise* in her demeanor. She was always shy and silent, with a touching reserve which won interest and confidence, but left also a vague sadness in the mind of the observer. After a few months she made another effort to rend the cloud which was gradually darkening around her, and opened a school for young children. But although the interest of friends secured for her a partial success, her gravity and sadness failed to excite the sympathy of her pupils, who missed in her the playful gayety always most winning to children. Martha, however, pushed bravely on, a figure of tragic sobriety to all who watched her course. The farmers thought her a strange girl, and wondered at the ways of a farmer's daughter who was not content to milk cows and churn butter and fry pork, without further hope or thought. The good clergyman of the town, interested in her situation, sought a confidence she did not care to bestow, and so, doling out a, b, c, to a wild group of boys and girls, she found that she could not untie the Gordian knot of her life, and felt, with terror, that it must be cut.

One summer evening she left her father's house and walked into the fields alone. Night came, but Martha did not return. The family became anxious, inquired if any one had noticed the direction in which she went, learned from the neighbors

that she was not visiting, that there was no lecture or meeting to detain her, and wonder passed into apprehension. Neighbors went into the adjacent woods and called, but received no answer. Every instant the awful shadow of some dread event solemnized the gathering groups. Every one thought what no one dared whisper, until a low voice suggested "the river." Then, with the swiftness of certainty, all friends, far and near, were roused, and thronged along the banks of the stream. Torches flashed in boats that put off in the terrible search. Hawthorne, then living in the Old Manse, was summoned, and the man whom the villagers had only seen at morning as a musing spectre in his garden, now appeared among them at night to devote his strong arm and steady heart to their service. The boats drifted slowly down the stream—the torches flared strangely upon the black repose of the water, and upon the long, slim grasses that, weeping, fringed the marge. Upon both banks silent and awe-stricken crowds hastened along, eager and dreading to find the slightest trace of what they sought. Suddenly they came upon a few articles of dress, heavy with the night-dew. No one spoke, for no one had doubted the result. It was clear that Martha had strayed to the river and quietly asked of its stillness the repose she sought. The boats

gathered around the spot. With every implement that could be of service the melancholy search began. Long intervals of fearful silence ensued, but at length, towards midnight, the sweet face of the dead girl was raised more placidly to the stars than ever it had been to the sun.

“ Oh ! is it weed or fish or floating hair—  
A tress o' golden hair,  
O' drownèd maiden's hair,  
Above the nets at sea ?  
Was never salmon yet that shone so fair  
Among the stakes on Dee.”

So ended a village tragedy. The reader may possibly find in it the original of the thrilling conclusion of the *Blithedale Romance*, and learn anew that dark as is the thread with which Hawthorne weaves his spells, it is no darker than those with which tragedies are spun, even in regions apparently so torpid as Concord.

THE WORKS OF  
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE





THE WORKS OF  
NATHANIEL HAWTHORNE

THE traveller by the Eastern Railroad, from Boston, reaches in less than an hour the old town of Salem, Massachusetts. It is chiefly composed of plain wooden houses, but it has a quaint air of past provincial grandeur, and has indeed been an important commercial town. The first American ship for Calcutta and China sailed from this port; and Salem ships opened our trade with New Holland and the South Seas. But its glory has long since departed, with that of its stately and respectable neighbors, Newburyport and Portsmouth. There is still, however, a custom-house in Salem, there are wharves and chandlers' shops and a faint show of shipping and an air of marine capacity which no apparent result justifies. It sits upon the shore like an antiquated sea-captain, grave and silent, in tarpaulin and duck trousers, idly watching the ocean upon which he will never sail again.

But this touching aspect of age and lost pros-

perity merely serves to deepen the peculiar impression of the old city, which is not derived from its former commercial importance, but from other associations. Salem village was a famous place in the Puritan annals. The tragedy of the witchcraft tortures and murders has cast upon it a ghostly spell, from which it seems never to have escaped; and even the sojourner of to-day, as he loiters along the shore in the sunniest morning of June, will sometimes feel an icy breath in the air, chilling the very marrow of his bones. Nor is he consoled by being told that it is only the east wind; for he cannot help believing that an invisible host of Puritan spectres have breathed upon him, revengeful, as he poached upon their ancient haunts.

The Puritan spirit was neither gracious nor lovely, but nothing softer than its iron hand could have done its necessary work. The Puritan character was narrow, intolerant, and exasperating. The forefathers were very "sour" in the estimation of Morton and his merry company at Mount Wollaston. But for all that, Bradstreet and Carver and Winthrop were better forefathers than the gay Morton, and the Puritan spirit is doubtless the moral influence of modern civilization, both in Old and New England. By the fruit let the seed be judged. The State to whose rough coast the *Mayflower* came, and in which the Pilgrim spirit has

been most active, is to-day the chief of all human societies, politically, morally, and socially. It is the community in which the average of well-being is higher than in any State we know in history. Puritan though it be, it is more truly liberal and free than any large community in the world. But it had bleak beginnings. The icy shore, the sombre pines, the stealthy savages, the hard soil, the unbending religious austerity, the Scriptural severity, the arrogant virtues, the angry intolerance of contradiction—they all made a narrow strip of sad civilization between the pitiless sea and the remorseless forests. The moral and physical tenacity which is wrestling with the Rebellion was toughened among these flinty and forbidding rocks. The fig, the pomegranate, and the almond would not grow there, nor the nightingale sing; but nobler men than its children the sun never shone upon, nor has the heart of man heard sweeter music than the voices of James Otis and Samuel Adams. Think of Plymouth in 1620, and of Massachusetts to-day! Out of strength came forth sweetness.

With some of the darkest passages in Puritan history this old town of Salem, which dozes apparently with the most peaceful conscience in the world, is identified, and while its Fourth of July bells were joyfully ringing sixty years ago Na-

thaniel Hathorne was born. He subsequently chose to write the name Hawthorne, because he thought he had discovered that it was the original spelling. In the introduction to *The Scarlet Letter*, Hawthorne speaks of his ancestors as coming from Europe in the seventeenth century, and establishing themselves in Salem, where they served the State and propitiated Heaven by joining in the persecution of Quakers and witches. The house known as the Witch House is still standing on the corner of Summer and Essex streets. It was built in 1642 by Captain George Corwin, and here in 1692 many of the unfortunates who were palpably guilty of age and ugliness were examined by the Honorable Jonathan Curwin, Major Gedney, Captain John Higginson, and John Hathorn, Esquire.

The name of this last worthy occurs in one of the first and most famous of the witch trials, that of "Goodwife Cory," in March, 1692, only a month after the beginning of the delusion at the house of the minister Parris. Goodwife Cory was accused by ten children, of whom Elizabeth Parris was one; they declared that they were pinched by her and strangled, and that she brought them a book to sign. "Mr. Hathorn, a magistrate of Salem," says Robert Calef, in *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, "asked her why she afflicted

these children. She said she did not afflict them. He asked her who did then. She said, I do not know; how should I know? She said they were poor, distracted creatures, and no heed ought to be given to what they said. Mr. Hathorn and Mr. Noyes replied, that it was the judgment of all that were there present that they were bewitched, and only she (the accused) said they were distracted. She was accused by them that the *black man* whispered to her in her ear now (while she was upon examination), and that she had a yellow bird that did use to suck between her fingers, and that the said bird did suck now in the assembly." John Hathorn and Jonathan Curwin were "the Assistants" of Salem village, and held most of the examinations and issued the warrants. Justice Hathorn was very swift in judgment, holding every accused person guilty in every particular. When poor Jonathan Cary of Charlestown attended his wife charged with witchcraft before Justice Hathorn, he requested that he might hold one of her hands, "but it was denied me. Then she desired me to wipe the tears from her eyes and the sweat from her face, which I did; then she desired that she might lean herself on me, saying she should faint. Justice Hathorn replied, she had strength enough to torment these persons, and she should have strength enough to stand. I speaking some-

thing against their cruel proceedings, they commanded me to be silent, or else I should be turned out of the room." What a piteous picture of the awful colonial inquisition and the village Torquemada! What a grim portrait of an ancestor to hang in your memory, and to trace your kindred to!

Hawthorne's description of his ancestors in the Introduction to *The Scarlet Letter* is very delightful. As their representative, he declares that he takes shame to himself for their sake, on account of these relentless persecutions; but he thinks them earnest and energetic. "From father to son, for above a hundred years, they followed the sea; a gray-headed ship-master, in each generation, retiring from the quarter-deck to the homestead, while a boy of fourteen took the hereditary place before the mast, confronting the salt spray and the gale, which had blustered against his sire and grand-sire. The boy also, in due time, passed from the fore-castle to the cabin, spent a tempestuous manhood, and returned from his world-wanderings, to grow old, and die, and mingle his dust with the natal earth." Not all, however, for the last of the line of sailors, Captain Nathaniel Hathorne, who married Elizabeth Clarke Manning, died at Calcutta after the birth of three children, a boy and two girls. The house in which the boy was born

is still standing upon Union Street, which leads to the Long Wharf, the chief seat of the old foreign trade of Salem. The next house, with a back entrance on Union Street, is the Manning house, where many years of the young Hawthorne's life were spent in the care of his uncle, Robert Manning. He lived often upon an estate belonging to his mother's family, in the town of Raymond, near Sebago Lake, in Maine. The huge house there was called Manning's Folly, and is now said to be used as a meeting-house. His uncle sent Hawthorne to Bowdoin College, where he graduated in 1825. A correspondent of the *Boston Daily Advertiser*, writing from Bowdoin at the late commencement, says that he had recently found "in an old drawer" some papers which proved to be the manuscript "parts" of the students at the Junior exhibition of 1824; among them was Hawthorne's "De Patribus Conscriptis Romanorum." "It is quite brief," writes the correspondent, "but is really curious as perhaps the only college exercise in existence of the great tragic writer of our day (has there been a greater since Shakespeare?). The last sentence is as follows (note the words which I put in italics): 'Augustus equidem antiquam magnificentiam patribus reddidit, *sed fulgor tantum fuit sine fervore.* Nunquam in republica senatoribus potestas recu-

perata, postremum species etiam amissa est.' On the same occasion Longfellow had the salutatory oration in Latin—'Oratio Latina; Anglici Poetæ.'"

Hawthorne has given us a charming glimpse of himself as a college boy in the letter to his fellow-student, Horatio Bridge, of the Navy, whose *Journal of an African Cruiser* he afterwards edited. "I know not whence your faith came; but while we were lads together at a country college, gathering blueberries, in study-hours, under those tall academic pines; or watching the great logs as they tumbled along the current of the Androscoggin; or shooting pigeons and gray squirrels in the woods; or bat-fowling in the summer twilight; or catching trouts in that shadowy little stream which, I suppose, is still wandering riverward through the forest—though you and I will never cast a line in it again—two idle lads, in short (as we need not fear to acknowledge now), doing a hundred things that the faculty never heard of, or else it had been the worse for us,—still it was your prognostic of your friend's destiny that he was to be a writer of fiction." From this sylvan university Hawthorne came home to Salem; "as if," he wrote later, "Salem were for me the inevitable centre of the universe."

The old witch-hanging city had no weirder prod-



uct than this dark-haired son. He has certainly given it an interest which it must otherwise have lacked; but he speaks of it with small affection, considering that his family had lived there for two centuries. "An unjoyous attachment," he calls it. And, to tell the truth, there was evidently little love lost between the little city and its most famous citizen. Stories still float in the social gossip of the town, which represent the shy author as inaccessible to all invitations to dinner and tea; and while the pleasant circle awaited his coming in the drawing-room, the impracticable man was—at least so runs the tale—quietly hobnobbing with companions to whom his fame was unknown. Those who coveted him as a phoenix could never get him, while he gave himself freely to those who saw in him only a placid barn-door fowl. The sensitive youth was a recluse, upon whose imagination had fallen the gloomy mystery of Puritan life and character. Salem was the inevitable centre of his universe more truly than he thought. The mind of Justice Hathorn's descendant was bewitched by the fascination of a certain devilish subtlety working under the comeliest aspects in human affairs. It overcame him with strange sympathy. It colored and controlled his intellectual life.

Devoted all day to lonely reverie and musing

upon the obscurer spiritual passages of the life whose monuments he constantly encountered, that musing became inevitably morbid. With the creative instinct of the artist, he wrote the wild fancies into form as stories, many of which, when written, he threw into the fire. Then, after nightfall, stealing out from his room into the silent streets of Salem, and shadowy as the ghosts with which to his susceptible imagination the dusky town was thronged, he glided beneath the house in which the witch-trials were held, or across the moonlit hill upon which the witches were hung, until the spell was complete. Nor can we help fancying that, after the murder of old Mr. White in Salem, which happened within a few years after his return from college, which drew from Mr. Webster his most famous criminal plea, and filled a shadowy corner of every museum in New England, as every shivering little man of that time remembers, with an awful reproduction of the scene in wax-figures, with real sheets on the bed, and the murderer, in a glazed cap, stooping over to deal the fatal blow—we cannot help fancying that the young recluse who walked by night, the wizard whom as yet none knew, hovered about the house, gazing at the windows of the fatal chamber, and listening in horror for the faint whistle of the confederate in another street.

Three years after he graduated, in 1828, he published anonymously a slight romance with the motto from Southey, "Wilt thou go with me?" Hawthorne never acknowledged the book, and it is now seldom found; but it shows plainly the natural bent of his mind. It is a dim, dreamy tale, such as a Byron-struck youth of the time might have written, except for that startling self-possession of style and cold analysis of passion, rather than sympathy with it, which showed no imitation, but remarkable original power. The same lurid gloom overhangs it that shadows all his works. It is uncanny; the figures of the romance are not persons, they are passions, emotions, spiritual speculations. So the *Twice-told Tales* that seem at first but the pleasant fancies of a mild recluse, gradually hold the mind with a Lamia-like fascination; and the author says truly of them, in the Preface of 1851, "Even in what purport to be pictures of actual life, we have allegory not always so warmly dressed in its habiliments of flesh and blood as to be taken into the reader's mind without a shiver." There are sunny gleams upon the pages, but a strange, melancholy chill pervades the book. In "The Wedding Knell," "The Minister's Black Veil," "The Gentle Boy," "Wakefield," "The Prophetic Pictures," "The Hollow of the Three Hills," "Dr. Heideg-

ger's Experiment," "The Ambitious Guest," "The White Old Maid," "Edward Fane's Rose-bud," "The Lily's Quest"—or in the "Legends of the Province House," where the courtly provincial state of governors and ladies glitters across the small, sad New England world, whose very baldness jeers it to scorn—there is the same fateful atmosphere in which Goody Cloyse might at any moment whisk by upon her broomstick, and in which the startled heart stands still with unspeakable terror.

The spell of mysterious horror which kindled Hawthorne's imagination was a test of the character of his genius. The mind of this child of witch-haunted Salem loved to hover between the natural and the supernatural, and sought to tread the almost imperceptible and doubtful line of contact. He instinctively sketched the phantoms that have the figures of men, but are not human; the elusive, shadowy scenery which, like that of Gustave Doré's pictures, is Nature sympathizing in her forms and aspects with the emotions of terror or awe which the tale excites. His genius broods entranced over the evanescent phantasmagoria of the vague debatable land in which the realities of experience blend with ghostly doubts and wonders.

But from its poisonous flowers what a wondrous

perfume he distilled! Through his magic reed, into what penetrating melody he blew that deathly air! His relentless fancy seemed to seek a sin that was hopeless, a cruel despair that no faith could throw off. Yet his naïve and well-poised genius hung over the gulf of blackness, and peered into the pit with the steady nerve and simple face of a boy. The mind of the reader follows him with an aching wonder and admiration, as the bewildered old mother forester watched Undine's gambols. As Hawthorne describes Miriam in *The Marble Faun*, so may the character of his genius be most truly indicated. Miriam, the reader will remember, turns to Hilda and Kenyon for sympathy. "Yet it was to little purpose that she approached the edge of the voiceless gulf between herself and them. Standing on the utmost verge of that dark chasm, she might stretch out her hand and never clasp a hand of theirs; she might strive to call out 'Help, friends! help!' but, as with dreamers when they shout, her voice would perish inaudibly in the remoteness that seemed such a little way. This perception of an infinite, shivering solitude, amid which we cannot come close enough to human beings to be warmed by them, and where they turn to cold, chilly shapes of mist, is one of the most forlorn results of any accident, misfortune, crime, or peculiarity of



character, that puts an individual ajar with the world."

Thus it was because the early New England life made so much larger account of the supernatural element than any other modern civilized society, that the man whose blood had run in its veins instinctively turned to it. But beyond this alluring spell of its darker and obscurer individual experience, it seems neither to have touched his imagination nor even to have aroused his interest. To Walter Scott the romance of feudalism was precious for the sake of feudalism itself, in which he believed with all his soul, and for that of the heroic old feudal figures which he honored. He was a Tory in every particle of his frame, and his genius made him the poet of Toryism. But Hawthorne had apparently no especial political, religious, or patriotic affinity with the spirit which inspired him. It was solely a fascination of the intellect. And although he is distinctively the poet of the Puritans, although it is to his genius that we shall always owe that image of them which the power of *The Scarlet Letter* has imprinted upon literature, and doubtless henceforth upon historical interpretation, yet what an imperfect picture of that life it is! All its stern and melancholy romance is there—its picturesque gloom and intense passion; but upon those quivering

pages, as in every passage of his stories drawn from that spirit, there seems to be wanting a deep, complete, sympathetic appreciation of the fine moral heroism, the spiritual grandeur, which overhung that gloomy life, as a delicate purple mist suffuses in summer twilights the bald crags of the crystal hills. It is the glare of the scarlet letter itself, and all that it luridly reveals and weirdly implies, which produced the tale. It was not beauty in itself nor deformity, not virtue nor vice, which engaged the author's deepest sympathy. It was the occult relation between the two. Thus while the Puritans were of all men pious, it was the instinct of Hawthorne's genius to search out and trace with terrible tenacity the dark and devious thread of sin in their lives.

Human life and character, whether in New England two hundred years ago or in Italy to-day, interested him only as they were touched by this glamour of sombre spiritual mystery; and the attraction pursued him in every form in which it appeared. It is as apparent in the most perfect of his smaller tales, *Rappaccini's Daughter*, as in *The Scarlet Letter*, *The Blithedale Romance*, *The House of the Seven Gables*, and *The Marble Faun*. You may open almost at random, and you are as sure to find it as to hear the ripple in Mozart's music, or the pathetic minor in a

Neapolitan melody. Take, for instance, *The Birth-Mark*, which we might call the best of the smaller stories, if we had not just said the same thing of *Rappaccini's Daughter*—for so even and complete is Hawthorne's power, that, with few exceptions, each work of his, like Benvenuto's, seems the most characteristic and felicitous. In this story, a scholar marries a beautiful woman, upon whose face is a mark which has hitherto seemed to be only a greater charm. Yet in one so lovely the husband declares that, although it is the slightest possible defect, it is yet the mark of earthly imperfection, and he proceeds to lavish all the resources of science to procure its removal. But it will not disappear; and at last he tells her that the crimson hand "has clutched its grasp" into her very being, and that there is mortal danger in trying the only means of removal that remains. She insists that it shall be tried. It succeeds; but it removes the stain and her life together. So in *Rappaccini's Daughter*. The old philosopher nourishes his beautiful child upon the poisonous breath of a flower. She loves, and her lover is likewise bewitched. In trying to break the spell, she drinks an antidote which kills her. The point of interest in both stories is the subtle connection, in the first, between the beauty of Georgiana and the taint of the birth-mark; and, in the second,



the loveliness of Beatrice and the poison of the blossom.

This, also, is the key of his last romance, *The Marble Faun*, one of the most perfect works of art in literature, whose marvellous spell begins with the very opening words: "Four individuals, in whose fortunes we should be glad to interest the reader, happened to be standing in one of the saloons of the sculpture-gallery in the Capitol at Rome." When these words are read, the mind familiar with Hawthorne is already enthralled. What a journey is beginning, not a step of which is trodden, and yet the heart palpitates with apprehension! Through what delicate, rosy lights of love, and soft, shimmering humor, and hopes and doubts and vanishing delights, that journey will proceed, on and on into utter gloom. And it does so, although "Hilda had a hopeful soul, and saw sunlight on the mountain-tops." It does so, because Miriam and Donatello are the figures which interest us most profoundly, and they are both lost in the shadow. Donatello, indeed, is the true centre of interest, as he is one of the most striking creations of genius. But the perplexing charm of Donatello, what is it but the doubt that does not dare to breathe itself, the appalled wonder whether, if the breeze should lift those clustering locks a little higher, he would prove to be

faun or man? It never does lift them; the doubt is never solved, but it is always suggested. The mystery of a partial humanity, morally irresponsible but humanly conscious, haunts the entrancing page. It draws us irresistibly on. But as the cloud closes around the lithe figure of Donatello, we hear again from its hidden folds the words of "The Birth-Mark": "Thus ever does the gross fatality of earth exult in its invariable triumph over the immortal essence, which, in this dim sphere of half-development, demands the completeness of a higher state." Or still more sadly, the mysterious youth, half vanishing from our sympathy, seems to murmur, with Beatrice Rappaccini, "And still as she spoke, she kept her hand upon her heart,—'Wherefore didst thou inflict this miserable doom upon thy child?'"

We have left the story of Hawthorne's life sadly behind. But his life had no more remarkable events than holding office in the Boston Custom-house under Mr. Bancroft as collector; working for some time with the Brook-Farmers, from whom he soon separated, not altogether amicably; marrying and living in the Old Manse at Concord; returning to the Custom-house in Salem as surveyor; then going to Lenox, in Berkshire, where he lived in what he called "the ugliest little old red farm-house that you ever saw," and where

the story is told of his shyness, that, if he saw anybody coming along the road whom he must probably pass, he would jump over the wall into the pasture, and so give the stranger a wide berth ; back again to Concord ; then to Liverpool as consul ; travelling in Europe afterwards, and home at last and forever, to "The Wayside" under the Concord hill. "The hillside," he wrote to a friend in 1852, "is covered chiefly with locust-trees, which come into luxuriant blossom in the month of June, and look and smell very sweetly, intermixed with a few young elms and some white-pines and infant oaks, the whole forming rather a thicket than a wood. Nevertheless, there is some very good shade to be found there ; I spend delectable hours there in the hottest part of the day, stretched out at my lazy length with a book in my hand or an unwritten book in my thoughts. There is almost always a breeze stirring along the side or the brow of the hill."

It is not strange, certainly, that a man such as has been described, of a morbid shyness, the path of whose genius diverged always out of the sun into the darkest shade, and to whom human beings were merely psychological phenomena, should have been accounted ungenial, and sometimes even hard, cold, and perverse. From the bent of his intellectual temperament it happens that in his sim-

plest and sweetest passages he still seems to be studying and curiously observing, rather than sympathizing. You cannot help feeling constantly that the author is looking askance both at his characters and you, the reader; and many a young and fresh mind is troubled strangely by his books, as if it were aware of a half-Mephistophelean smile upon the page. Nor is this impression altogether removed by the remarkable familiarity of his personal disclosures. There was never a man more shrinkingly retiring, yet surely never was an author more naïvely frank. He is willing that you should know all that a man may fairly reveal of himself. The great interior story he does not tell, of course, but the Introduction to the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, the opening chapter of *The Scarlet Letter*, and the *Consular Experiences*, with much of the rest of *Our Old Home*, are as intimate and explicit chapters of autobiography as can be found. Nor would it be easy to find anywhere a more perfect idyl than that introductory chapter of the *Mosses*. Its charm is perennial and indescribable; and why should it not be, since it was written at a time in which, as he says, "I was happy"? It is, perhaps, the most softly-hued and exquisite work of his pen. So the sketch of "The Custom-house," although prefatory to that most tragically powerful of romances,

*The Scarlet Letter*, is an incessant play of the shyest and most airy humor. It is like the warbling of bobolinks before a thunder-burst. How many other men, however unreserved with the pen, would be likely to dare to paint, with the fidelity of Teniers and the simplicity of Fra Angelico, a picture of the office and the companions in which and with whom they did their daily work? The surveyor of customs in the port of Salem treated the town of Salem, in which he lived and discharged his daily task, as if it had been, with all its people, as vague and remote a spot as the town of which he was about to treat in the story. He commented upon the place and the people as modern travellers in Pompeii discuss the ancient town. It made a great scandal. He was accused of depicting with unpardonable severity worthy folks, whose friends were sorely pained and indignant. But he wrote such sketches as he wrote his stories. He treated his companions as he treated himself and all the personages in history or experience with which he dealt, merely as phenomena to be analyzed and described, with no more private malice or personal emotion than the sun, which would have photographed them, warts and all.

Thus it was that the great currents of human sympathy never swept him away. The character

of his genius isolated him, and he stood aloof from the common interests. Intent upon studying men in certain aspects, he cared little for man; and the high tides of collective emotion among his fellows left him dry and untouched. So he beholds and describes the generous impulse of humanity with sceptical courtesy rather than with hopeful cordiality.

He does not chide you if you spend effort and life itself in the ardent van of progress, but he asks simply, "Is six so much better than half a dozen?" He will not quarrel with you if you expect the millennium to-morrow. He only says, with that glimmering smile, "So soon?" Yet in all this there was no shadow of spiritual pride. Nay, so far from this, that the tranquil and pervasive sadness of all Hawthorne's writings, the kind of heartache that they leave behind, seem to spring from the fact that his nature was related to the moral world, as his own Donatello was to the human. "So alert, so alluring, so noble," muses the heart as we climb the Apennines towards the tower of Monte Beni; "alas! is he human?" it whispers, with a pang of doubt.

How this directed his choice of subjects, and affected his treatment of them, when drawn from early history, we have already seen. It is not, therefore, surprising, that the history into which

he was born interested him only in the same way.

When he went to Europe as consul, *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was already published, and the country shook with the fierce debate which involved its life. Yet eight years later Hawthorne wrote with calm ennui, "No author, without a trial, can conceive of the difficulty of writing a romance about a country where there is no shadow, no antiquity, no mystery, no picturesque and gloomy wrong, nor anything but a commonplace prosperity, in broad and simple daylight, as is happily the case with my dear native land." Is crime never romantic, then, until distance ennobles it? Or were the tragedies of Puritan life so terrible that the imagination could not help kindling, while the pangs of the plantation are superficial and commonplace? Charlotte Brontë, Dickens, and Thackeray were able to find a shadow even in "merrie England." But our great romancer looked at the American life of his time with these marvellous eyes, and could see only monotonous sunshine. That the devil, in the form of an elderly man clad in grave and decent attire, should lead astray the saints of Salem village, two centuries ago, and confuse right and wrong in the mind of Goodman Brown, was something that excited his imagination, and produced one of his weirdest stories. But that the

same devil, clad in a sombre sophism, was confusing the sentiment of right and wrong in the mind of his own countrymen he did not even guess. The monotonous sunshine disappeared in the blackest storm. The commonplace prosperity ended in tremendous war. What other man of equal power, who was not intellectually constituted precisely as Hawthorne was, could have stood merely perplexed and bewildered, harassed by the inability of positive sympathy, in the vast conflict which tosses us all in its terrible vortex?

In political theories and in an abstract view of war men may differ. But this war is not to be dismissed as a political difference. Here is an attempt to destroy the government of a country, not because it oppressed any man, but because its evident tendency was to secure universal justice under law. It is, therefore, a conspiracy against human nature. Civilization itself is at stake; and the warm blood of the noblest youth is everywhere flowing in as sacred a cause as history records—flowing not merely to maintain a certain form of government, but to vindicate the rights of human nature. Shall there not be sorrow and pain, if a friend is merely impatient or confounded by it—if he sees in it only danger or doubt, and not hope for the right—or if he seem to insinuate that it would have been better if the war had been



avoided, even at that countless cost to human welfare by which alone the avoidance was possible?

Yet, if the view of Hawthorne's mental constitution which has been suggested be correct, this attitude of his, however deeply it may be regretted, can hardly deserve moral condemnation. He knew perfectly well that if a man has no ear for music he had better not try to sing. But the danger with such men is that they are apt to doubt if music itself be not a vain delusion. This danger Hawthorne escaped. There is none of the shallow persiflage of the sceptic in his tone, nor any affectation of cosmopolitan superiority. Mr. Edward Dicey, in his interesting reminiscences of Hawthorne, published in *Macmillan's Magazine*, illustrates this very happily.

"To make his position intelligible, let me repeat an anecdote which was told me by a very near friend of his and mine, who had heard it from President Pierce himself. Frank Pierce had been, and was to the day of Hawthorne's death, one of the oldest of his friends. At the time of the Presidential election of 1856, Hawthorne, for once, took part in politics, wrote a pamphlet in favor of his friend, and took a most unusual interest in his success. When the result of the nomination was known, and Pierce was President-elect, Hawthorne was among the first to come and wish him joy. He sat down in the room moodily and silently, as he was wont when anything troubled him; then, without speaking a word, he shook Pierce warmly by the hand, and at last remarked, 'Ah, Frank, what a pity!' The moment the victory was won, that timid, hesitating mind saw the evils of the successful course—the advantages of the one which had not been fol-

lowed. So it was always. Of two lines of action, he was perpetually in doubt which was the best ; and so, between the two, he always inclined to letting things remain as they are.

“Nobody disliked slavery more cordially than he did ; and yet the difficulty of what was to be done with the slaves weighed constantly upon his mind. He told me once that, while he had been consul at Liverpool, a vessel arrived there with a number of negro sailors, who had been brought from slave States, and would, of course, be enslaved again on their return. He fancied that he ought to inform the men of the fact, but then he was stopped by the reflection—who was to provide for them if they became free ? and, as he said, with a sigh, ‘while I was thinking, the vessel sailed.’ So, I recollect, on the old battle-field of Manassas, in which I strolled in company with Hawthorne, meeting a batch of runaway slaves—worn, foot-sore, wretched, and helpless beyond conception ; we gave them food and wine, some small sums of money, and got them a lift upon a train going northward ; but not long afterwards Hawthorne turned to me with the remark, ‘I am not sure we were doing right after all. How can these poor beings find food and shelter away from home ?’ Thus this ingrained and inherent doubt incapacitated him from following any course vigorously. He thought, on the whole, that Wendell Phillips and Lloyd Garrison and the Abolitionists were in the right, but then he was never quite certain that they were not in the wrong after all ; so that his advocacy of their cause was of a very uncertain character. He saw the best, to alter slightly the famous Horatian line, but he never could quite make up his mind whether he altogether approved of its wisdom, and therefore followed it but falteringly.

“‘Better to bear those ills we have,  
Than fly to others that we know not of,’

expressed the philosophy to which Hawthorne was thus borne imperceptibly. Unjustly, but yet not unreasonably, he was looked upon as a pro-slavery man, and suspected of Southern sympathies. In politics he was always halting between two opinions ; or, rather, holding one opinion, he could never summon up his courage to adhere to it and it only.”



The truth is that his own times and their people and their affairs were just as shadowy to him as those of any of his stories, and his mind held the same curious, half-wistful poise among all the conflicts of principle and passion around him, as among those of which he read and mused. If you ask why this was so—how it was that the tragedy of an old Italian garden, or the sin of a lonely Puritan parish, or the crime of a provincial judge, should so stimulate his imagination with romantic appeals and harrowing allegories, while either it did not see a Carolina slave-pen, or found in it only a tame prosperity—you must take your answer in the other question, why he did not weave into any of his stories the black and bloody thread of the Inquisition. His genius obeyed its law. When he wrote like a disembodied intelligence of events with which his neighbors' hearts were quivering—when the same half-smile flutters upon his lips in the essay *About War Matters*, sketched as it were upon the battle-field, as in that upon *Fire Worship*, written in the rural seclusion of the mossy Manse—ah me! it is Donatello, in his tower of Monte Beni, contemplating with doubtful interest the field upon which the flower of men are dying for an idea. Do you wonder, as you see him and hear him, that your heart, bewildered, asks and asks again, "Is he human? Is he a man?"

Now that Hawthorne sleeps by the tranquil Concord, upon whose shores the Old Manse was his bridal bower, those who knew him chiefly there revert beyond the angry hour to those peaceful days. How dear the Old Manse was to him he has himself recorded; and in the opening of the *Tanglewood Tales* he pays his tribute to that placid landscape, which will always be recalled with pensive tenderness by those who, like him, became familiar with it in happy hours. "To me," he writes, "there is a peculiar, quiet charm in these broad meadows and gentle eminences. They are better than mountains, because they do not stamp and stereotype themselves into the brain, and thus grow wearisome with the same strong impression, repeated day after day. A few summer weeks among mountains, a lifetime among green meadows and placid slopes, with outlines forever new, because continually fading out of the memory, such would be my sober choice." He used to say, in those days—when, as he was fond of insisting, he was the obscurest author in the world, because, although he had told his tales twice, nobody cared to listen—that he never knew exactly how he contrived to live. But he was then married, and the dullest eye could not fail to detect the feminine grace and taste that ordered the dwelling, and perceive

the tender sagacity that made all things possible.

Such was his simplicity and frugality that, when he was left alone for a little time in his Arcadia, he would dismiss "the help," and, with some friend of other days who came to share his loneliness, he cooked the easy meal, and washed up the dishes. No picture is clearer in the memory of a certain writer than that of the magician, in whose presence he almost lost his breath, looking at him over a dinner-plate which he was gravely wiping in the kitchen, while the handy friend, who had been a Western settler, scoured the kettle at the door. Blithedale, where their acquaintance had begun, had not allowed either of them to forget how to help himself. It was amusing to one who knew this native independence of Hawthorne, to hear, some years afterwards, that he wrote the "campaign" *Life of Franklin Pierce* for the sake of getting an office. That such a man should do such a work was possibly incomprehensible to those who did not know him upon any other supposition, until the fact was known that Mr. Pierce was an old and constant friend. Then it was explained. Hawthorne asked simply how he could help his friend, and he did the only thing he could do for that purpose. But although he passed some years in pub-

lic office, he had neither taste nor talent for political life. He owed his offices to works quite other than political. His first and second appointments were virtually made by his friend Mr. Bancroft, and the third by his friend Mr. Pierce. His claims were perceptible enough to friendship, but would hardly have been so to a caucus.

In this brief essay we have aimed only to indicate the general character of the genius of Hawthorne, and to suggest a key to his peculiar relation to his time. The reader will at once see that it is rather the man than the author who has been described; but this has been designedly done, for we confess a personal solicitude, shared, we are very sure, by many friends of Nathaniel Hawthorne, that there shall not be wanting to the future student of his works such light as acquaintance with the man may throw upon them, as well as some picture of the impression his personality made upon his contemporaries.

Strongly formed, of dark, poetic gravity of aspect, lighted by the deep, gleaming eye that recoiled with girlish coyness from contact with your gaze; of rare courtesy and kindness in personal intercourse, yet so sensitive that his look and manner can be suggested by the word "glimmering;" giving you a sense of restrained impatience to be away; mostly silent in society, and speaking al-

ways with an appearance of effort, but with a lambent light of delicate humor playing over all he said in the confidence of familiarity, and firm self-possession under all, as if the glimmering manner were only the tremulous surface of the sea, Hawthorne was personally known to few, and intimately to very few. But no one knew him without loving him, or saw him without remembering him ; and the name Nathaniel Hawthorne, which, when it was first written, was supposed to be fictitious, is now one of the most enduring facts of English literature.





RACHEL



## RACHEL

ONE evening in Paris, we were strolling through that most Parisian spot the Palais Royal, or, as it was called at that moment, the Palais National. It was after the revolution of February; but, although the place was full of associations with French revolutions, it seemed to have no special sympathy with the trouble of the moment, and was as gay as the youngest imagination conceives Paris to be. There was a constant throng loitering along the arcades; the cafés were lighted and crowded; men were smoking, sipping coffee, playing billiards, reading the newspapers, discussing the debates in the Chamber and the coming "Prophete" of Meyerbeer at the opera; women were chatting together in the boutiques, pretty grisettes hurrying home; little blanchisseuses, with their neatly-napkinned baskets, tripping among the crowd; strangers watched the gay groups, paused at the windows of tailors and jewellers, and felt the fascination of Paris. It was the moment of high-tide of Parisian life. It was an epit-

ome of Paris, and Paris is an epitome of the time and of the world.

At the corner of the Palais Royal is the Comédie Française, and to that we were going. There Rachel was playing. There she had recently recited the "Marseillaise" to frenzied Paris; and there, in the vestibule, genius of French comedy, of French intellect, and of French life, sits the wonderful Voltaire of Houdon, the statue which, for the first time, after the dreadful portraits which misrepresent him, gives the spectator some adequate idea of the personal appearance and impression of the man who moulded an age. You can scarcely see the statue without a shudder. It is remorseless intellect laid bare. The cold sweetness of the aspect, the subtle penetration of the brow, the passionless supremacy of a figure which is neither manly nor graceful, fill your mind with apprehension and with the conviction that the French Revolution you have seen is not the last.

The curtain rises, and Paris and France roll away. A sad, solitary figure, like a dream of tragic Greece, glides across the scene. The air grows cold and thin, with a sense of the presence of lost antiquity. The feeling of fate, vast, resistless, and terrible, rises like a suffocating vapor; and the hopeless woe of the face, the pathetic dignity of the form, assure you, before she speaks,

that this is indeed Rachel. The scenery is poor and hard; but its severe outlines and its conventional character serve to suggest Greece. The drapery which hangs upon Rachel is exquisitely studied from the most perfect statue. There is not a fold which is not Greek and graceful, and which does not seem obedient to the same law which touches her face with tragedy. As she slowly opens her thin lips, your own blanch; and from her melancholy eyes all smiles and possibility of joy have utterly passed away. Rachel stands alone, a solitary statue of fate and woe.

When she speaks, the low, thrilling, distinct voice seems to proceed rather from her eyes than her mouth. It has a wan sound, if we may say so. It is the very tone you would have predicted as coming from that form, like the unearthly music which accompanies the speech of the Commendatore's statue in "Don Giovanni." That appearance and that voice are the key of the whole performance. Before she has spoken, you are filled with the spirit of an age infinitely remote, and only related to human sympathy now by the grandeur of suffering. The rest merely confirms that impression. The whole is simple and intense. It is conceived and fulfilled in the purest sense of Greek art.

Of the early career and later life of Rachel

such romantic stories are told and believed that only to see the heroine of her own life would be attraction enough to draw the world to Paris. Dr. Vernon, in his *Mémoires d'un Bourgeois*, has described her earliest appearance upon the Boulevards—her studies, her trials, and her triumph. That triumph has been unequalled in stage annals for enthusiasm and permanence. Other actors have achieved single successes as brilliant; but no other has held for so long the most fickle and fastidious nation thrall to her powers; owning no rival near the throne, and ruling with a sway whose splendor was only surpassed by its sternness.

For Rachel has never sought to ally her genius to goodness, and has rather despised than courted the aid of noble character. Not a lady by birth or breeding, she is reported to have surpassed Mesalina in debauchery and Semiramis in luxury. Paris teems with tales of her private life, which, while they are undoubtedly exaggerated, yet serve to show the kind of impression her career has produced. Those modern Sybarites, the princes and nobles of Russia, are the heroes of her private romances; and her sumptuous apartments, if not a Tour de Nesle, are at least a bower of Rosamond.

As if to show the independent superiority of her art, she has been willing to appear, or she really

is, avaricious, mean, jealous, passionate, false; and then, by her prodigious power, she has swayed the public that so judged her as the wind tosses a leaf. There has, alas, been disdain in her superiority. Perhaps Paris has found something fascinating in her very contempt, as in the *Mémoires du Diable* the heroine confesses that she loved the ferocity of her lover. Nor is it a traditional fame that she has enjoyed; but whenever Rachel plays, the theatre is crowded, and the terror and the tears are what they were when she began.

Rachel is the greatest of merely dramatic artists. Others are more beautiful; others are more stately and imposing; others have been fitted by external gifts of nature to personify characters of very marked features; others are more graceful and lovely and winning; most others mingle their own personality with the characters they assume, but Rachel has this final evidence of genius, that she is always superior to what she does; her mind presides over her own performances. It is the perfection of art. In describing this peculiar supremacy of genius, a scholar, in whose early death a poet and philosopher was lost, says of Shakespeare: "He sat pensive and alone above the hundred-handed play of his imagination." And Fanny Kemble, in her journal, describes a conversation upon the stage, in the tomb-scene of "Romeo and

Juliet," where she, as Juliet, says to Mr. Romeo Keppel, "Where the devil is your dagger?" while all the tearful audience are lost in the soft woe of the scene.

This is very much opposed to the general theory of acting, and the story is told with great gusto of a boy who was sent to see Garrick, we believe, and who was greatly delighted with the fine phrasing and swagger of a supernumerary, but could not understand why people applauded such an ordinary bumpkin as Garrick, who did not differ a whit from all the country boobies he had ever seen. It is insisted that the actor must persuade the spectator that he is what he seems to be, and this is gravely put as the first and final proof of good acting.

This is, however, both a false view of art and a false interpretation and observation of experience. Shakespeare, through the mouth of Hamlet, tells the players to "hold the mirror up to nature"—that is, to represent nature. For what is the dramatic art, like all other arts, but a representation? If it aims to deceive the eye—if it tries to juggle the senses of the spectator—it is as trivial as if a painter should put real gold upon his canvas instead of representing gold by means of paint; or as if a sculptor should tinge the cheeks of his statue to make it more like a human face. We



have seen tin pans so well represented in painting that the result was atrocious. For, if the object intended is really a tin pan, and not the pleasure produced by a conscious representation of one, then why not insert the veritable pan in the picture at once? If art is only a more or less successful imitation of natural objects, with a view to cheat the senses, it is an amusing game, but it is not a noble pursuit.

It is an equally false observation of experience; because, if the spectator were really deceived, if the actor became, in the mind of the audience, truly identical with the character he represents, then, when that character was odious, the audience would revolt. If we cannot quietly sit and see one dog tear another, without interfering, could we gravely look on and only put our handkerchiefs to our eyes, when Othello puts the pillow to the mouth of Desdemona? If we really supposed him to be a murderous man, how instantly we should leap upon the stage and rescue "the gentle lady." The truth is, to state it boldly, we know the roaring lion to be only Snug, the joiner.

All works of art must produce pleasure. Even the sternest and most repulsive subjects must be touched by art into a pensive beauty, or they fail to reach the height of great works. Goethe has shown this in the *Laocoon*, and every man feels it

in constant experience. One of the grand themes of modern painting is the great tragedy of history, the Crucifixion. Materially it is repulsive, as the spectacle of a man in excruciating bodily torture; spiritually it is overwhelming, as the symbolized suffering of God for sin. If, now, the pictures which treat this subject were indeed only imitations of the scene, so that the spectator listened for the groans of agony and looked to see the blood drop from the brow crowned with thorns, how hideous and insupportable the sight would be! The mind is conscious as it contemplates the picture that it is a representation, and not a fact. The mere force of actuality is, therefore, destroyed, and thought busies itself with the moral significance of the scene. In the same way, in the tragedy of "Othello," conscious that there is not the actual physical suffering which there seems to be, the mind contemplates the real meaning which underlies that appearance, and curses jealousy and the unmanly passions.

Even in a very low walk of art the same principle is manifested. A man might not care to adorn his parlor with the carcass of an ox or a hog, nor invite to his table boors muzzy with beer. But the most elegant of nations prizes the pictures of Teniers at extraordinary prices, and hangs its galleries with works minutely representing the sham-

bles. Here, again, the explanation is this: that the mind, rejecting any idea of actuality in the picture, is charmed with the delicacy of detail, with lovely color, with tone, with tenderness, and all these are qualities inseparable from the picture, and do not belong by any necessity to the actual carcasses of animals. In the shambles, the sense of disgust and repulsion overcomes any pleasure in light and color. In the parlor, if the spectator were persuaded by the picture to hold his nose, the thing would be as unlovely as it is in nature. Imitation pleases only so far as it is known to be imitation. If deception by imitation were the object of art, then the material of the sculptor should be wax, and not marble. Every visitor mistakes the sitting figure of Cobbett, in Madame Tussaud's collection of wax-works, for a real man, and will very likely, as we did, speak to it. But who would accost the Moses of Michael Angelo, or believe the sitting Medici in his chapel to have speech?

There is something unhandsomely derogatory to art in this common view. It is forgotten that art is not subsidiary nor auxiliary to nature, but it is a distinct ministry, and has a world of its own. They are not in opposition, nor do they clash. The cardinal fact of imitation in works of art is evident enough. The exquisite charm of

art lies in the perfection of the imitation, coëxisting with the consciousness of an absolute difference, so that the effect produced is not at all that which the object itself produces, but is an intellectual pleasure arising from the perception of the mingling of rational intention with the representation of the natural object. We can illustrate this by supposing a child bringing in a fresh rose, and a painter his picture of a rose. The pleasure derived from the picture is surely something better than wonder at the skill with which the form and color of the flower are imitated. Since imitation can never attain to the dignity and worth of the original, and since we live in the midst of nature, it would be folly to claim for its more or less successful copy the position and form of a great mental and moral influence.

Of course we are not unmindful of the inevitable assertion that if certain forms are to be used for the expression of certain truths, the first condition is that those forms shall be accurately rendered. Hence arises the great stress laid by the modern schools upon a rigorous imitation of nature, and hence what is called the pre-Raphaelite spirit, with its marvellous detail. But mere imitation does not come any nearer to great art by being perfect. If it is not informed by a great intention, sculpture is only wax-work and painting a juggle.

It is by her instinctive recognition of these fundamental principles that Rachel shows herself to be an artist. She is fully persuaded of the value of the modern spirit, and she belongs to the time by nothing more than by her instinctive and hearty adaptation of the principles of art which are illustrated in all other departments. There is nothing in Millais's or Hunt's paintings more purely pre-Raphaelite than Rachel's acting in the last scenes of "Adrienne Lecouvreur." It is the perfection of detail. It was studied, gasp by gasp, and groan by groan, in the hospital wards of Paris, where men were dying in agony. It is terrible, but it is true. We have seen a crowded theatre hanging in a suspense almost suffocating over that fearful scene. Men grew pale, women fainted, a spell of silence and awe held us enchanted. But it was all pure art. The actor was superior to the scene. It was the passion with which she threw herself into the representation, with a distinct conception of the whole, and a thorough knowledge of the means necessary to produce its effect, that secured the success. There was a sublimity of self-control in the spectacle, for, if she had allowed herself to be overwhelmed by the excitement, the play must have paused; real feeling would have invaded that which was represented, and we should, by a

rude shock, have been staring in wonder at the weeping woman Rachel, instead of thrilling with the woes of the dying, despairing Adrienne. She seems to be what we know she is not.

Rachel's earlier triumphs were in the plays of Racine. Certainly nothing could show the essential worth of the old Greek dramatic material more than the fact that it could be rendered into French rhyme without losing all its dignity. If a man should know Homer only through Pope's translations, he could hardly understand the real greatness and peculiar charm of Homer. And as most of us know him in no other way, we all understand that the eminence of Homer is conceded upon the force of tradition and the feeling of those who have read him in the original. So, to the reader of Racine, it is his knowledge of the outline of the grand old Greek stories that prevents their loss of charm and loftiness when they masquerade in French rhyme. They have lost their sublimity, so far as treatment can effect it, while they retain their general form of interest. But it is the splendid triumph of Rachel that she restores the original Greek grandeur to the drama. We no longer wonder at Racine's idea of Phèdre, but we are confronted with Phèdre herself. From the moment she appears, through every change and movement of the scene until the catastrophe,

a sense of fate, the grim, remorseless, and inexorable destiny that presides over Greek story, is stamped upon every look and nod and movement of Rachel. It is stated that, since the enthusiasm produced in Paris by Ristori, Rachel's Italian rival, the sculptor Schlesinger has declared that his statue of Rachel which he had called *Tragedy* was only *Melodrama* after all. If the report be true, it does not prove that Rachel, but Schlesinger, is not a great artist.

It is this simplicity and grandeur that make the excellence of Rachel in the characters of Racine. They cease to be French and become Greek. As a victim of fate, she moves, from the first scene to the last, as by a resistless impulse. Her voice has a low concentrated tone. Her movement is not vehement, but intense. If she smiles, it is a wan gleam of sadness, not of joy, as if the eyes that lighten for a moment saw all the time the finger of fate pointing over her shoulder. The thin form, graceful with intellectual dignity, not rounded with the ripeness of young womanhood, the statuesque simplicity and severity of the drapery, the pale cheek, the sad lips, the small eyes—these are accessory to the whole impression, the melancholy ornaments of the tragic scene. Her fine instinct avoids the romantic and melodramatic touches which, however seductive to an actor who

aims at effect, would destroy at once that breadth and unity which characterize her best impersonations. Wherever the idea of fate inspires the tragedy, or can properly be introduced as the motive, there Rachel is unsurpassed and unapproachable. Her stillness, her solemnity, her intensity; the want of mouthing, of ranting, of all extravagance; the slight movement of the arms, and the subtle inflections of the voice which are more expressive than gestures, haunt the memory and float through the mind afterwards as the figure of Francesca di Rimini, in the exquisite picture of Ary Scheffer, sweeps, full of woe, which every line suggests, across the vision of Dante and his guide.

There was, naturally, the greatest curiosity and a good deal of scepticism about Rachel's power in the modern drama, the melodrama of Victor Hugo, and the social drama of Scribe. But her appearance in the "Angelo" of Victor Hugo and in "Adrienne Lecouvreur" of Scribe satisfied the curiosity and routed the scepticism. It was pleasant after the vast and imposing forms, the tearless tragedy of Greek story, to see the mastery of this genius in the conditions of a life and spirit with which we were more familiar and sympathetic. It was clear that the same passionate intensity which, united with the most exquisite perceptions, enabled her so perfectly to restore the Greek spirit to the



Greek form, would as adequately represent the voluptuous southern life. If in the old drama she was sculpture, so in the modern she was painting, not only with the flowing outline, but with all the purple, palpitating hues of passion.

This is best manifested in the "Angelo," of which the scene is laid in old Padua and is, therefore, full of the mysterious spirit of mediæval Italian, and especially Venetian life. Miss Cushman has played in an English version of this drama, called the "Actress of Padua." But it is hardly grandiose enough in its proportions to be very well adapted to the talent of Miss Cushman. It was remarkable how perfectly the genius which had, the evening before, adequately represented Phèdre, could impersonate the ablest finesse of Italian subtily. The old Italian romances were made real in a moment. The dim chambers, the dusky passages, the sliding doors, the vivid contrast of gayety and gloom, the dance in the palace and the duel in the garden, the smile on the lip and the stab at the heart, the capricious feeling, the impetuous action, the picturesque costume of life and society — all the substance and the form of our ideas of characteristic Italian life, are comprised in Rachel's *Thisbe* and *Angelo*.

There is one scene in that play not to be forgotten. The curtain rises and shows a vast, dim

chamber in the castle, with a heavily-curtained bed, and massive carved furniture, and a deep bay-window. It is night; a candle burns upon the table, feebly flickering in the gloom of the great chamber. Angelo, whom Thisbe loves, and who pretends to love her, is sitting uneasily in the chamber with his mistress, whose name we have forgotten, but whom he really loves. Thisbe is suspicious of his want of faith, and burns with jealousy, but has had no proof.

A gust of wind, the rustle of the tapestry, the creak of a bough in the garden, the note of a night bird, any slightest sound makes the lovers start and quiver, as if they stood upon the verge of an imminent peril. Suddenly they both start at a low noise, apparently in the wall. Angelo rises and looks about, his mistress shivers and shrinks, but they discover nothing. The night deepens around them. The sense of calamity and catastrophe rises in the spectator's mind. They start again. This time they hear a louder noise, and glance helplessly around and feebly try to scoff away their terror. The sound dies away, and they converse in appalled and fragmentary whispers. But again a low, cautious, sliding noise arrests them. Angelo springs up, runs for his hat and cloak, blows out the candle upon the table, and escapes from the room, while his mistress totters

to the bed and throws herself upon it, feigning sleep. The stage is left unoccupied, while the just-extinguished candle still smokes upon the table, and the sidelights and footlights, being lowered, wrap the vast chamber in deeper gloom.

At this moment a small secret door in the wall at the bottom of the stage slips aside, and Thisbe, still wearing her ball-dress, and with a head-dress of gold sequins flashing in her black hair, is discovered crouching in the aperture, holding an antique lamp in one hand, a little raised, and with the other softly putting aside the door, while, bending forward with a cat-like stillness, she glares around the chamber with eager eyes, that flash upon everything at once. The picture is perfect. The light falls from the raised lamp upon this jewelled figure crouching in the darkness at the bottom of the stage. Judith was not more terrible; Lucrezia Borgia not more superb. But, magnificent as it is, it is a moment of such intense interest that applause is suspended. The house is breathless, for it is but the tiger's crouch that precedes the spring. The next instant she is upon the floor of the chamber, and, still bending slightly forward to express the eager concentration of her mind, she glances at the bed and the figure upon it with a scornful sneer, that indicates how clearly she sees the pretence of sleep, and how evidently some-



body has been there, or something has happened which justifies all her suspicion, and then, with panther-like celerity, she darts about the chamber to find some trace of the false lover—a hat, a glove, a plume, a cloak—to make assurance doubly sure. But there is nothing upon the floor, nothing upon the table, nothing in the bay-window, nothing upon the sofa, nor in the huge carved chairs; there is nothing that proves the treachery she suspects. But her restless eye leads her springing foot from one corner of the chamber to the other. Speed increases with the lessening chance of proof; the eye flashes more and more fiercely; the breast heaves; the hand clinches; the cheek burns, until, suddenly, in the very moment of despair, having as yet spoken no word, she comes to the table, sees the candle, which still smokes, and drawing herself up with fearful calmness, her cheeks grow pallid, the lips livid, the hands relax, the eye deadens as with a blow, and, with the despairing conviction that she is betrayed, her heart-break sighs itself out in a cold whisper, "*Elle fume encore.*"

In this she is as purely dramatic as in other plays she is classical. But neither in the one nor the other is there a look, or a gesture, or a word, which is not harmonious with the spirit of the style and the character of the person represented.

This is pure passion as the other is implacable fate. There is something so tearfully human in it that you are touched as by a picture of the Magdalen. Every representation of Rachel is preserved in your memory with the first sights of the great statues and the famous pictures.

In the French translation of Schiller's "Mary Stuart," a character which may be supposed especially to interest Americans and English, Rachel is not less excellent. The sad grace, the tender resignation, the poetic enthusiasm, the petulant caprice, the wilful, lovely womanliness of the lovely queen, are made tragically real by her representation. Perhaps it is not the Mary of Mignet nor of history. But Mary Queen of Scots is one of the characters which the imagination has chosen to take from history and decorate with immortal grace. It cares less for what the woman Mary was, than to have a figure standing upon the fact of history, but radiant with the beauty of poetry. It has invested her with a loveliness that is perhaps unreal, with a tenderness and sweetness that were possibly foreign to her character, and with a general fascination and good intention which a contemporary might not have discovered.

It has made her the ideal of unfortunate womanhood. For it seemed that a fate so tragic deserved a fame so fair. Perhaps the weakness

which Mary had, and which Lady Jane Grey had not, have been the very reasons why the unfortunate, unhappy Queen Mary is dearer to our human sympathies than the unfortunate Lady Jane. Perhaps because it was a woman who pursued her, the instinct of men has sought to restore, by the canonization of Mary, the womanly ideal injured by Elizabeth.

But, whatever be the reason, there is no question that we judge Mary Queen of Scots more by the imagination than by historical rigor; and it is Mary, as the mind insists upon having her, that Rachel represents. She conspires with the imagination to complete the ideal of Mary. It is a story told in sad music to which we listen; it is a mournful panorama, unfolding itself scene by scene, upon which we gaze. Lost in soft melancholy, the figures of the drama move before us as in a tragic dream. But after seeing Rachel's Mary we can see no other. If we meet her in history or romance, it is always that figure, those pensive eyes, forecasting a fearful doom, that voice whose music is cast in a hopeless minor. It is thus that dramatic genius creates, and poetry disputes with history.

Jules Janin says that Rachel is best in those parts of this play where the anger of the Queen is more prominent than the grief of the woman.

This is true to a certain extent. It was not difficult to see that the fierceness was more natural than the tenderness to the woman Rachel, and that, therefore, those parts had a reality which the tenderness had not. But the performance was symmetrical, and, so far as the mere acting was concerned, the woman was as well rendered as the Queen. The want of the spectacle was this, and it is, we fully grant, the defect of all her similar personations: you felt that it was only intellect feigning heart, though with perfect success. The tenderness and caprice of the woman, and the pride and dignity of the Queen, are all there. She would not be the consummate artist she is if she could not give them. But even through your tears you see that it is art. It is, indeed, concealed by its own perfection, but it is not lost in the loveliness of the character it suggests, as might be the case with a greatly inferior artist. You are half sure, as you own the excellence, that much of the tender effect arises from your feeling that Rachel, as she represents a woman so different from herself, regards her rôle with sad longing and vague regret. When we say that she is the ideal Mary, we mean strictly the artistic ideal.

The late Charlotte Brontë, in her novel of *Villette*, has described Rachel with a splendor of rhetoric that is very unusual with the author of

*Jane Eyre*. But in the style of the description it is very easy to see the influence of the thing described. It has a picturesque stateliness, a grave grace and musical pomp, which all belong to the genius of Rachel. Even the soft gloom of her eyes is in it; a gloom and a fire which no one could more subtly feel than Miss Brontë. Her description is the best that we have seen of what is, in its nature, after all indescribable.

As the fame of an actor or singer is necessarily traditional, and rapidly perishes, it is not easy to compare one with another when they are not contemporaries, for you find yourself only comparing vague impressions and reports. Of Roscius and Betterton we must accept the names and allow the fame. We can see Reynolds's pictures, we can hear Handel's music, we can read Goldsmith's and Johnson's books; but of Garrick what can we have but a name, and somebody's account of what he thought of Garrick? The touch of Shakespeare we can feel as well as did our ancestors, and our great-grandchildren's great-grandchildren will feel it as fully as we. But the voice of Malibran lingers in only a few happy memories, and we know Mrs. Siddons better by Sir Joshua's portrait than by her own glories.

It is, therefore, impossible to decide what relative rank among actresses Rachel occupies.



Mrs. Jameson, in her *Common-Place Book of Thoughts, Memories, and Fancies*, says some sharp things of her, and Mrs. Jameson is a critic of too delicate a mind not to be heeded. The general view she takes of Rachel is, that she is not a great artist in the true sense of the word. She is a finished actress, but not an artist fine enough to conceal her art. The last scene of "Adrienne Lecouvreur" seems to Mrs. Jameson a mistake and a failure—so beyond the limits of art, a mere imitation of a repulsive physical fact; and finally she pronounces that Rachel has talent but not genius; while it is the "entire absence of the high poetic element which distinguishes Rachel as an actress, and places her at such an immeasurable distance from Mrs. Siddons, that it shocks me to hear their names together."

It may be fairly questioned, whether a woman so refined and cultivated as Mrs. Jameson may not have judged Rachel rather by her wants as a woman than by her excellence as an artist. That the terrible last scene of "Adrienne" is a harrowing imitation of nature we have conceded. The play is, in truth, a mere melodrama. It is a vaudeville of costume, with a frightful catastrophe appended. But as an artist she seems to us perfectly to render the part. She does not make it more than it is, but she makes it just what it is—a proud, in-

jured, and betrayed actress. Whether the accuracy of her imitation is not justified by the intention, which alone can redeem imitation, will remain a question to each spectator. Mrs. Jameson also insists that Rachel's power is extraneous, and excites only the senses and the intellect, and that she has become a hard mannerist.

In our remarks upon this celebrated actress we have viewed her simply as an artist, and not as a woman. She appeals to the public only in that way. Perhaps the sinister stories that are told of her private career only serve to confirm and deepen the feeling of the intensity of her nature, she so skilfully represents the most fearful passions, not from the perception of genius alone, but from the knowledge of actual experience. Certainly no woman's character has been more freely discussed, and no public performer of any kind ever sought so little to propitiate her audience. She has seemed to scorn the world she fascinated; and like a superb snake, with glittering eyes and cold crest, to gloat over the terror which held her captives thrall. Hence it is not surprising to one who has seen her a great deal, and has felt the peculiarity of her power, to find in Lehmann's portrait of her—which is, perhaps, the most characteristic of all that have been taken—a subtle resemblance to a serpent, which is at once fascinating and

startling. Mrs. Jameson mentions that when she first saw her in *Hermione*, she was reminded of a *Lamia*, or serpent nature in woman's form. As you look at Lehmann's portrait this feeling is irresistible. The head bends slightly forward, with a darting, eager movement, yet with a fine, lithe grace. The keen, bright eyes glance a little askance, with a want of free confidence. There are a slim smoothness, a silent alertness, in the general impression—a nervous, susceptible intentness, united with undeniable beauty, that recall the deadly -nightshade among flowers and Keats's "*Lamia*" among poems. The portrait would fully interpret the poem. She looked the lovely *Lamia* upon the verge of flight, at the instant when she felt the calm, inexorable eye of criticism and detection. In a moment, while you gaze, that form will be prone, those bright, cold eyes malignant, that wily grace will undulate into motion and glide away. You feel that there is no human depravity that Rachel could not adequately represent. Perhaps you doubt if she could be *Desdemona* or *Imogen*.

Rachel is great, but there is something greater. It is not an entirely satisfactory display of human power, even in its own way. Her triumph is that of an actress. It is only an intellectual success. For however subtly dramatic genius may seize

and represent the forms of human emotion, yet the representation is most perfect—not, indeed, as art, but as a satisfaction of the heart—when the personal character of the artist interests those emotions to himself, and thus sympathetically affects the audience. Rachel's Mary is a perfect portrait of Mary; but it is only a picture, after all, that expresses the difference in feeling between the impression of her personation and that which will be derived from another woman. The fiercer and darker passions of human nature are depicted by her with terrible force-power. They throb with reality; but in the soft, superior shades you still feel that it is emotion intellectually discerned.

Such facts easily explain the present defection of Paris from Rachel. Ristori has come up from Italy, and with one woman's smile, "full of the warm South," she has lured Paris to her feet. There is no more sudden and entire desertion of a favorite recorded in all the annals of popular caprice. The feuilletonists, who are a power in Paris, have gone over in a body to the beautiful Italian. They describe her triumphs precisely as they described Rachel's. The old ecstasies are burnished up for the new occasion. In a country like ours, where there is no theatre, and where the dramatic differences only creep into an advertisement, such an

excitement as Paris feels, from such a cause and at such a time, is simply incredible. It is, possibly, as real and dignified an excitement as that which New York experienced upon the decease of the late lamented William Poole.

There are various explanations of this fall of Rachel, without resorting to the theory of superior genius in Ristori. Undoubtedly Paris loves novelty, and has been impatient of the disdainful sway of Rachel. Her reputed avarice and want of courtesy and generosity, her total failure to charm as a woman while she fascinated as an artist, have, naturally enough, after many years, fatigued the patience and disappointed the humane sympathies of a public whose mere curiosity had been long satisfied. Rachel seemed only more Parisian than Paris.

But when over the Alps came Ristori, lovely as a woman and eminent as an artist, then there was a new person who could make Paris weep at her greatness upon the stage, and her goodness away from it; who, in the plenitude of her first success, could shame the reported avarice of her fallen rival by offers of the sincerest generosity. When Ristori came, who seemed to have a virtue for every vice of Rachel, Paris, with one accord, hurried with hymns and incense to the new divinity. We regard it as a homage to the woman no less

than a tribute to the artist. We regard it as saying to Rachel that if, being humane and lovely, she chose, from pride, to rule by scornful superiority, she has greatly erred; or if, being really unlovely, she has held this crown only by her genius, she has yet to see human nature justify itself by preferring a humane to an inhuman power. The most splendid illustration of this kind of homage was the career of Jenny Lind in America. It was rather the fashion among the *dilettanti* to undervalue her excellence as an artist. A popular superficial criticism was fond of limiting her dramatic power to inferior rôles. She was denied passion and great artistic skill; she was accused of tricks. But, even had these things been true, what a career it was! It was unprecedented, and can never be repeated. Yet it was, at bottom, the success of a saint rather than that of a singer. Had she been a worse or better artist the homage would have been the same. If the public—and it is a happy fact—can love the woman even more than it admires the artist, her triumph is assured.

We look upon the enthusiasm for Ristori by no means as an unmingled tribute to superior genius. We make no question of her actual womanly charms. Even if appearance of generosity, of simplicity, and sweetness were only deep Italian

wile, and assumed, upon profound observation and consideration of human nature and the circumstances of Rachel's position in Paris, merely for the purpose of exciting applause, that applause would still be genuine, and would prove the loyalty of the public mind to what is truly lovely. It was our good-fortune to see Ristori in Italy, where, for the last ten years, she has been accounted the first Italian actress. She has there been seen by all the travelling world of Europe and America. It is not possible that so great a talent, as the Parisians consider it, could have been so long overlooked. We well remember Ristori as a charming, natural, simple actress; but of the surpassing power which Paris has discovered probably very few of us retain any recollection.





THACKERAY IN AMERICA



## THACKERAY IN AMERICA

MR. THACKERAY'S visit at least demonstrates that if we are unwilling to pay English authors for their books, we are ready to reward them handsomely for the opportunity of seeing and hearing them. If Mr. Dickens, instead of dining at other people's expense, and making speeches at his own, when he came to see us, had devoted an evening or two in the week to lecturing, his purse would have been fuller, his feelings sweeter, and his fame fairer. It was a Quixotic crusade, that of the Copyright, and the excellent Don has never forgiven the windmill that broke his spear.

Undoubtedly, when it was ascertained that Mr. Thackeray was coming, the public feeling on this side of the sea was very much divided as to his probable reception. "He'll come and humbug us, eat our dinners, pocket our money, and go home and abuse us, like that unmitigated snob Dickens," said Jonathan, chafing with the remembrance of that grand ball at the Park The-

atre and the Boz tableaux, and the universal wining and dining, to which the distinguished Dickens was subject while he was our guest.

“Let him have his say,” said others, “and we will have our look. We will pay a dollar to hear him, if we can see him at the same time; and as for the abuse, why, it takes even more than two such cubs of the roaring British Lion to frighten the American Eagle. Let him come, and give him fair play.”

He did come, and had fair play, and returned to England with a comfortable pot of gold holding \$12,000, and with the hope and promise of seeing us again in September, to discourse of something not less entertaining than the witty men and sparkling times of Anne. We think there was no disappointment with his lectures. Those who knew his books found the author in the lecturer. Those who did not know his books were charmed in the lecturer by what is charming in the author—the unaffected humanity, the tenderness, the sweetness, the genial play of fancy, and the sad touch of truth, with that glancing stroke of satire which, lightning-like, illumines while it withers. The lectures were even more delightful than the books, because the tone of the voice and the appearance of the man, the general personal magnetism, explained and alleviated so much that

would otherwise have seemed doubtful or unfair. For those who had long felt in the writings of Thackeray a reality quite inexpressible, there was a secret delight in finding it justified in his speaking; for he speaks as he writes—simply, directly, without flourish, without any cant of oratory, commending what he says by its intrinsic sense, and the sympathetic and humane way in which it was spoken. Thackeray is the kind of “stump orator” that would have pleased Carlyle. He never thrusts himself between you and his thought. If his conception of the time and his estimate of the men differ from your own, you have at least no doubt what his view is, nor how sincere and necessary it is to him. Mr. Thackeray considers Swift a misanthrope; he loves Goldsmith and Steele and Harry Fielding; he has no love for Sterne, great admiration for Pope, and alleviated admiration for Addison. How could it be otherwise? How could Thackeray not think Swift a misanthrope and Sterne a factitious sentimentalist? He is a man of instincts, not of thoughts: he sees and feels. He would be Shakespeare’s call-boy, rather than dine with the Dean of St. Patrick’s. He would take a pot of ale with Goldsmith, rather than a glass of burgundy with the “Reverend Mr. Sterne,” and that simply because he is Thackeray. He would have done it as Fielding would have

done it, because he values one genuine emotion above the most dazzling thought; because he is, in fine, a Bohemian, "a minion of the moon," a great, sweet, generous heart.

We say this with more unction now that we have personal proof of it in his public and private intercourse while he was here.

The popular Thackeray - theory, before his arrival, was of a severe satirist, who concealed scalpels in his sleeves and carried probes in his waistcoat pockets; a wearer of masks; a scoffer and sneerer, and general infidel of all high aims and noble character. Certainly we are justified in saying that his presence among us quite corrected this idea. We welcomed a friendly, genial man; not at all convinced that speech is heaven's first law, but willing to be silent when there is nothing to say; who decidedly refused to be lionized—not by sulking, but by stepping off the pedestal and challenging the common sympathies of all he met; a man who, in view of the thirty-odd editions of *Martin Farquhar Tupper*, was willing to confess that every author should "think small-beer of himself." Indeed, he has this rare quality, that his personal impression deepens, in kind, that of his writings. The quiet and comprehensive grasp of the fact, and the intellectual impossibility of holding fast anything but the fact, is as manifest

in the essayist upon the wits as in the author of *Henry Esmond* and *Vanity Fair*. Shall we say that this is the sum of his power, and the secret of his satire? It is not what might be, nor what we or other persons of well-regulated minds might wish, but it is the actual state of things that he sees and describes. How, then, can he help what we call satire, if he accept Mrs. Rawdon Crawley's invitation and describe her party? There was no more satire in it, so far as he is concerned, than in painting lilies white. A full-length portrait of the fair Lady Beatrix, too, must needs show a gay and vivid figure, superbly glittering across the vista of those stately days. Then, should Dab and Tab, the eminent critics, step up and demand that her eyes be a pale blue, and her stomacher higher around the neck? Do Dab and Tab expect to gather pears from peach-trees? Or, because their theory of dendrology convinces them that an ideal fruit-tree would supply any fruit desired upon application, do they denounce the non-pear-bearing peach-tree in the columns of their valuable journal? This is the drift of the fault found with Thackeray. He is not Fénelon, he is not Dickens, he is not Scott; he is not poetical, he is not ideal, he is not humane; he is not Tit, he is not Tat, complain the eminent Dabs and Tabs. Of course he is not, because he is Thackeray—a man who de-

scribes what he sees, motives as well as appearances—a man who believes that character is better than talent—that there is a worldly weakness superior to worldly wisdom—that Dick Steele may haunt the ale-house and be carried home muzzy, and yet be a more commendable character than the reverend Dean of St. Patrick's, who has genius enough to illuminate a century, but not sympathy enough to sweeten a drop of beer. And he represents this in a way that makes us see it as he does, and without exaggeration; for surely nothing could be more simple than his story of the life of "honest Dick Steele." If he allotted to that gentleman a consideration disproportioned to the space he occupies in literary history, it only showed the more strikingly how deeply the writer-lecturer's sympathy was touched by Steele's honest humanity.

An article in our April number complained that the tendency of his view of Anne's times was to a social laxity, which might be very exhilarating but was very dangerous; that the lecturer's warm commendation of fermented drinks, taken at a very early hour of the morning in tavern-rooms and club houses, was as deleterious to the moral health of enthusiastic young readers disposed to the literary life as the beverage itself to their physical health.



But this is not a charge to be brought against Thackeray. It is a quarrel with history and with the nature of literary life. Artists and authors have always been the good fellows of the world. That mental organization which predisposes a man to the pursuit of literature and art is made up of talent combined with ardent social sympathy, geniality, and passion, and leads him to taste every cup and try every experience. There is certainly no essential necessity that this class should be a dissipated and disreputable class, but by their very susceptibility to enjoyment they will always be the pleasure lovers and seekers. And here is the social compensation to the literary man for the surrender of those chances of fortune which men of other pursuits enjoy. If he makes less money, he makes more juice out of what he does make. If he cannot drink Burgundy he can quaff the nut-brown ale; while the most brilliant wit, the most salient fancy, the sweetest sympathy, the most genial culture, shall sparkle at his board more radiantly than a silver service, and give him the spirit of the tropics and the Rhine, whose fruits are on other tables. The golden light that transfigures talent and illuminates the world, and which we call genius, is erratic and erotic; and while in Milton it is austere, and in Wordsworth cool, and in Southey methodical, in Shakespeare it is fervent, with all

the results of fervor; in Raphael lovely, with all the excesses of love; in Dante moody, with all the whims of caprice. The old quarrel of Lombard Street with Grub Street is as profound as that of Osiris and Typho—it is the difference of sympathy. The Marquis of Westminster will take good care that no superfluous shilling escapes. Oliver Goldsmith will still spend his last shilling upon a brave and unnecessary banquet to his friends.

Whether this be a final fact of human organization or not, it is certainly a fact of history. Every man instinctively believes that Shakespeare stole deer, just as he disbelieves that Lord-mayor Whittington ever told a lie; and the secret of that instinct is the consciousness of the difference in organization. “Knaves, I have the power to hang ye,” says somebody in one of Beaumont and Fletcher’s plays. “And I do be hanged and scorn ye,” is the airy answer. “I had a pleasant hour the other evening,” said a friend to us, “over my cigar and a book.” “What book was that?” “A treatise conclusively proving the awful consequences of smoking.” De Quincey came up to London and declared war upon opium; but during a little amnesty, in which he lapsed into his old elysium, he wrote his best book depicting its horrors.

Our readers will not imagine that we are advo-

cating the claims of drunkenness nor defending social excess. We are only recognizing a fact and stating an obvious tendency. The most brilliant illustrations of every virtue are to be found in the literary guild, as well as the saddest beacons of warning; yet it will often occur that the last in talent and the first in excess of a picked company will be a man around whom sympathy most kindly lingers. We love Goldsmith more at the head of an ill-advised feast than Johnson and his friends leaving it, thoughtful and generous as their conduct was. The heart despises prudence.

In the single-hearted regard we know that pity has a larger share. Yet it is not so much that pity is commiseration for misfortune and deficiency, as that which is recognition of a necessary worldly ignorance. The literary class is the most innocent of all. The contempt of practical men for the poets is based upon a consciousness that they are not bad enough for a bad world. To a practical man nothing is so absurd as the lack of worldly shrewdness. The very complaint of the literary life that it does not amass wealth and live in palaces is the scorn of the practical man, for he cannot understand that intellectual opacity which prevents the literary man from seeing the necessity of the different pecuniary condition. It is

clear enough to the publisher who lays up fifty thousand a year why the author ends the year in debt. But the author is amazed that he who deals in ideas can only dine upon occasional chops, while the man who merely binds and sells ideas sits down to perpetual sirloin. If they should change places, fortune would change with them. The publisher turned author would still lay up his thousands; the publishing author would still directly lose thousands. It is simply because it is a matter of prudence, economy, and knowledge of the world. Thomas Hood made his ten thousand dollars a year, but if he lived at the rate of fifteen thousand he would hardly die rich. Mr. Jerdan, a gentleman who, in his *Autobiography*, advises energetic youth to betake themselves to the highway rather than to literature, was, we understand, in the receipt of an easy income, and was a welcome guest in pleasant houses; but living in a careless, shiftless, extravagant way, he was presently poor, and, instead of giving his memoirs the motto, *peccavi*, and inditing a warning, he dashes off a truculent defiance. Practical publishers and practical men of all sorts invest their earnings in Michigan Central or Cincinnati and Dayton instead, in steady works and devoted days, and reap a pleasant harvest of dividends. Our friends the authors invest in prime Havanas, Rhenish, in oyster suppers,

love and leisure, and divide a heavy percentage of headache, dyspepsia, and debt.

This is as true a view, from another point, as the one we have already taken. If the literary life has the pleasures of freedom, it has also its pains. It may be willing to resign the queen's drawing-room, with the illustrious galaxy of stars and garters, for the chamber with a party nobler than the nobility. The author's success is of a wholly different kind from that of the publisher, and he is thoughtless who demands both. Mr. Roe, who sells sugar, naturally complains that Mr. Doe, who sells molasses, makes money more rapidly. But Mr. Tennyson, who writes poems, can hardly make the same complaint of Mr. Moxon, who publishes them, as was very fairly shown in a number of the *Westminster Review*, when noticing Mr. Jerdan's book.

What we have said is strictly related to Mr. Thackeray's lectures, which discuss literature. All the men he commemorated were illustrations and exponents of the career of letters. They all, in various ways, showed the various phenomena of the temperament. And when in treating of them the critic came to Steele, he found one who was one of the most striking illustrations of one of the most universal aspects of literary life—the simple-hearted, unsuspecting, gay gallant and genial gen-

tleman ; ready with his sword or his pen, with a smile or a tear, the fair representative of the social tendency of his life. It seems to us that the Thackeray theory—the conclusion that he is a man who loves to depict madness, and has no sensibilities to the finer qualities of character—crumbled quite away before that lecture upon Steele. We know that it was not considered the best ; we know that many of the delighted audience were not sufficiently familiar with literary history fully to understand the position of the man in the lecturer's review ; but, as a key to Thackeray, it was, perhaps, the most valuable of all. We know in literature of no more gentle treatment ; we have not often encountered in men of the most rigorous and acknowledged virtue such humane tenderness ; we have not often heard from the most clerical lips words of such genuine Christianity. Steele's was a character which makes weakness amiable : it was a weakness, if you will, but it was certainly amiability, and it was a combination more attractive than many full-panoplied excellences. It was not presented as a model. Captain Steele in the tap-room was not painted as the ideal of virtuous manhood ; but it certainly was intimated that many admirable things were consonant with a free use of beer. It was frankly stated that if, in that character, virtue abounded, cakes and ale did



much more abound. Captain Richard Steele might have behaved much better than he did, but we should then have never heard of him. A few fine essays do not float a man into immortality, but the generous character, the heart sweet in all excesses and under all chances, is a spectacle too beautiful and too rare to be easily forgotten. A man is better than many books. Even a man who is not immaculate may have more virtuous influence than the discreetest saint. Let us remember how fondly the old painters lingered round the story of Magdalen, and thank Thackeray for his full-length Steele.

We conceive this to be the chief result of Thackeray's visit, that he convinced us of his intellectual integrity; he showed us how impossible it is for him to see the world and describe it other than he does. He does not profess cynicism, nor satirize society with malice; there is no man more humble, none more simple; his interests are human and concrete, not abstract. We have already said that he looks through and through at the fact. It is easy enough, and at some future time it will be done, to deduce the peculiarity of his writings from the character of his mind. There is no man who masks so little as he in assuming the author. His books are his observations reduced to writing. It seems to us as singular to demand that Dante

should be like Shakespeare as to quarrel with Thackeray's want of what is called ideal portraiture. Even if you thought, from reading his *Vanity Fair*, that he had no conception of noble women, certainly after the lecture upon Swift, after all the lectures, in which every allusion to women was so manly and delicate and sympathetic, you thought so no longer. It is clear that his sympathy is attracted to women—to that which is essentially womanly, feminine. Qualities common to both sexes do not necessarily charm him because he finds them in women. A certain degree of goodness must always be assumed. It is only the rare flowering that inspires special praise. You call Amelia's fondness for George Osborne foolish, fond idolatry. Thackeray smiles, as if all love were not idolatry of the fondest foolishness. What was Hero's—what was Francesco di Rimini's—what was Juliet's? They might have been more brilliant women than Amelia, and their idols of a larger mould than George, but the love was the same old foolish, fond idolatry. The passion of love and a profound and sensible knowledge, regard based upon prodigious knowledge of character and appreciation of talent, are different things. What is the historic and poetic splendor of love but the very fact, which constantly appears in Thackeray's stories, namely, that it is a glory which



dazzles and blinds. Men rarely love the women they ought to love, according to the ideal standards. It is this that makes the plot and mystery of life. Is it not the perpetual surprise of all Jane's friends that she should love Timothy instead of Thomas? and is not the courtly and accomplished Thomas sure to surrender to some accidental Lucy without position, wealth, style, worth, culture—without anything but heart? This is the fact, and it reappears in Thackeray, and it gives his books that air of reality which they possess beyond all modern story.

And it is this single perception of the fact which, simple as it is, is the rarest intellectual quality that made his lectures so interesting. The sun rose again upon the vanished century, and lighted those historic streets. The wits of Queen Anne ruled the hour, and we were bidden to their feast. Much reading of history and memoirs had not so sent the blood into those old English cheeks, and so moved those limbs in proper measure, as these swift glances through the eyes of genius. It was because, true to himself, Thackeray gave us his impression of those wits as men rather than authors. For he loves character more than thought. He is a man of the world, and not a scholar. He interprets the author by the man. When you are made intimate with young Swift, Sir William Tem-

ple's saturnine secretary, you more intelligently appreciate the Dean of St. Patrick's. When the surplice of Mr. Sterne is raised a little, more is seen than the reverend gentleman intends. Hogarth, the bluff Londoner, necessarily depicts a bluff, coarse, obvious morality. The hearty Fielding, the cool Addison, the genial Goldsmith, these are the figures that remain in memory, and their works are valuable as they indicate the man.

Mr. Thackeray's success was very great. He did not visit the West, nor Canada. He went home without seeing Niagara Falls. But wherever he did go he found a generous and social welcome, and a respectful and sympathetic hearing. He came to fulfil no mission, but he certainly knit more closely our sympathy with Englishmen. Heralded by various romantic memoirs, he smiled at them, stoutly asserted that he had been always able to command a good dinner, and to pay for it; nor did he seek to disguise that he hoped his American tour would help him to command and pay for more. He promised not to write a book about us, but we hope he will, for we can ill spare the criticism of such an observer. At least, we may be sure that the material gathered here will be worked up in some way. He found that we were not savages nor bores. He found that there were a hundred here for every score in England

who knew well and loved the men of whom he spoke. He found that the same red blood colors all the lips that speak the language he so nobly praised. He found friends instead of critics. He found those who, loving the author, loved the man more. He found a quiet welcome from those who are waiting to welcome him again and as sincerely.



SIR PHILIP SIDNEY



## SIR PHILIP SIDNEY

WEARIED of the world and saddened by the ruin of his fortunes, the Italian Count Maddalo turned from the street, which rang with tales of disaster and swarmed with melancholy faces, into his palace. Perplexed and anxious, he passed through the stately rooms in which hung the portraits of generations of ancestors. The day was hot; his blood was feverish, but the pictures seemed to him cool and remote in a holy calm. He looked at them earnestly; he remembered the long history of which his fathers were parts, he recalled their valor and their patience, and asked himself whether, after all, their manhood was not their patent of nobility; and stretching out his hands towards them, exclaimed: "Let me feel that I am indeed your son by sharing that manhood which made you noble."

We Americans laugh at ancestors; and if the best of them came back again, we should be as likely to laugh at his wig as listen to his wisdom. And in our evanescent houses and uneasy life we

would no more have ancient ranges of family pictures than Arabs in their tents. Yet we are constantly building and visiting the greatest portrait gallery of all in the histories we write and read; and the hour is never lost which we give to it. It may teach a maid humility to know that her mother was fairer. It may make a youth more modest to know that his grandsire was braver. For if the pictures of history show us that deformity is as old as grace, and that virtue was always martyred, they also show that crime, however prosperous for a time, is at last disastrous, and that there can be no permanent peace without justice and freedom.

Those pictures teach us also that character is inherited like name and treasure, and that all of us may have famous or infamous ancestors perhaps without knowing it. The melancholy poet, eating his own heart out in a city garret, is the child of Tasso. Grinding Ralph Nickleby, the usurer, is Shylock's grandson. The unjust judge, who declares that some men have no rights which others are bound to respect, is a later Jeffries on his bloody assizes, or dooming Algernon Sidney to the block once more for loving liberty; while he whose dull heart among the new duties of another time is never quickened with public spirit, and who as a citizen aims only at his own selfish ad-



vantage, is a later Benedict Arnold whom every generous heart despises.

From this lineage of character arises this great convenience—that as it is bad manners to criticise our neighbors by name, we may hit them many a sly rap over the shoulders of their ancestors who wore turbans, or helmets, or bagwigs, and lived long ago in other countries. The Church especially finds great comfort in this resource, and the backs of the whole Hebrew race must be sore with the scorings they get for the sins of Christian congregations. The timid Peter, the foolish Virgins, the wicked Herod, are pilloried every Sunday in the pulpit, to the great satisfaction of the Peters, Virgins, and Herods dozing in the pews. But when some ardent preacher, heading out of his metaphors, and jumping from Judea and the first century into the United States and the nineteenth, disturbs Peter's enjoyment of his ancestor's castigation by saying vehemently to his face with all the lightning of the law in his eye, and its thunders in his voice, "Thou art the man!" Peter recoils with decorous horror, begs his pastor to remember that he and Herod are sheep who were to be led by still waters; warns him not to bring politics into the pulpit, to talk not of living people, but of old pictures. So the poor shepherd is driven back to his pictures,

and cudgels Peter once more from behind a metaphor.

But the fairest use of these old pictures is to make us feel our common humanity, and to discover that what seems to us a hopelessly romantic ideal of character is a familiar fact of every day. Heroism is always the same, however the fashion of a hero's clothes may alter. Every hero in history is as near to a man as his neighbor, and if we should tell the simple truth of some of our neighbors, it would sound like poetry. Sir Philip Sidney wore doublet and hose, and died in Flanders three hundred years ago. His name is the synonym of manly honor, of generous scholarship, of the finest nobility, of the spiritual light that most irradiates human nature. Look at his portrait closely; it is no stranger that you see; it is no far-off Englishman. It is your friend, your son, your brother, your lover. Whoever knew Wendell Phillips knew Philip Sidney. It is the same spirit in a thousand forms; a perpetual presence, a constant benediction: Look at his portrait and

"The night shall be filled with music,  
And the cares that infest the day  
Shall fold their tents like the Arabs,  
And as silently steal away."

The gray walls, the red and peaked roof of the old house of Penshurst, stand in the pleasant Eng-

lish valley of the Medway, in soft and showery Kent. Kent is all garden, and there, in November, 1554, Philip Sidney was born. His father, Sir Henry Sidney, was a wise and honest man. Bred at court, his sturdy honor was never corrupted. King Edward died in his arms, and Queen Mary confirmed all his honors and offices three weeks before the birth of his oldest son, whom, in gratitude, he named Philip, for the queen's new Spanish husband. Philip's mother was Mary Dudley, daughter of the Duke of Northumberland, sister of the famous Earl of Leicester, sister also of Lord Guildford Dudley and sister-in-law of Lady Jane Grey. The little Philip was born into a sad household. Within fifteen months his grandfather and uncle had been beheaded for treason; and his sorrowing mother, a truly noble and tender woman, had been the victim of small-pox, and hid her grieving heart and poor scarred face in the silence and seclusion of Penshurst. On the south side of the house was the old garden or plaisance, sloping down to the Medway, where, in those English summers of three hundred years ago, when the cruel fires of Mary were busily burning at Smithfield, the lovely boy Philip, fair-featured, with a high forehead and ruddy brown hair, almost red—the same color as that of his nephew Algernon—walked with his shy moth-

er, picking daisies and chasing butterflies, and calling to her in a soft, musical voice; while within the house the grave father, when he was not away in Wales, of which he was lord-president, mused upon great events that were stirring in Europe—the abdication of Charles V., the fall of Calais, and the accession of Queen Elizabeth to the throne of England. The lordly banqueting-hall, in which the politics of three centuries ago were discussed at Penshurst, is still standing. You may still sit upon the wooden benches where Burleigh, Spenser, Ben Jonson, James I., and his son Prince Charles have sat, and where, a little later, the victim of Prince Charles's cruel son, Algernon Sidney, dreamed of noble manhood and went forth a noble man; while in those shady avenues of beech and oak outside, smooth Edmund Waller bowed and smirked, and sighed compliments to his Sacharissa, as he called Dorothy Sidney, Algernon's sister.

At the age of eleven Master Sidney was put to school at Shrewsbury, on the borders of Wales, of which country his father was lord-president. His fond friend, Fulke Greville, who was here at school with him, and afterwards wrote his life, says that even the masters found something in him to observe and learn. Study probably cost him little effort and few tears. We may be sure he stood at

the head of his class, and was a grave, good boy—not good as calves and blanc-mange are, but like wine and oak saplings. “My little Philip,” as his mother tenderly calls him, was no Miss Nancy. When he was older he wrote to his brother Robert, then upon his travels, that “if there were any good wars he should go to them.” So, at Shrewsbury he doubtless went to all the good wars among his school-mates, while during the short intervals of peace he mastered his humanities, and at last, when not yet fifteen years old, he was entered at Christ Church, Oxford.

Great good-fortune is the most searching test of character. If a man have fine friends, fine family, fine talents, and fine prospects, they are very likely to be the sirens in whose sweet singing he forgets everything but the pleasure of listening to it. If most of us had come of famous ancestry—if our father were a vice-regal governor—if the sovereign’s favorite were our uncle, who intended us for his heir—if a marriage were proposed with the beautiful daughter of the prime-minister, and we were ourselves young, handsome, and accomplished—and all this were three hundred years ago, before the rights of men and the dignity of labor had been much discussed, we should probably have come up to Oxford, of which our famous uncle was chancellor, in a state of what would be called

at Oxford to-day extreme bumptiousness. But Philip Sidney was too true a gentleman not to be a simple-hearted man; and although he was even then one of the most accomplished as well as fortunate youths in England, he writes to Lord Burleigh to confess with "heavy grief" that in scholarship he can neither satisfy Burleigh's expectation nor his own desire.

In the month of May, 1572, Philip Sidney left Oxford, and after staying a short time with his parents, following the fashion of young gentlemen of rank, he crossed over into France in the train of the Earl of Lincoln, who was Queen Elizabeth's extraordinary ambassador upon the subject of her marriage with the brother of Charles IX. of France. The young king immediately made Sidney a gentleman of the bedchamber, and Henry of Navarre found him a fit companion for a future king. The Paris that Sidney saw had then twice as many inhabitants as Boston has to-day. Montaigne called it the most beautiful city in the world, and it had a delusive air of peace. But the witch Catherine de' Medici sat in the smooth-tongued court like a spider in its web, spinning and spinning the meshes in which the hope of liberty was to be entangled. The gay city filled and glittered with the wedding guests of Henry and the king's sister Margaret—among others, the hero of St. Quentin,

Admiral Coligny. Gayer and gayer grew the city—smoother and smoother the court—faster and faster spun the black Italian spider—until on the 23d of August, the Eve of St. Bartholomew, the bloodiest deed in all the red annals of that metropolis was done, and the young Sidney looked shuddering from Walsingham House upon the streets reeking with the blood of his fellow Huguenots.

That night made Philip Sidney a man. He heard the applause of the Romish party ring through Europe—he heard the commendation of Philip of Spain—he knew that the most eloquent orator of the Church, Muretus, had congratulated the pope upon this signal victory of the truth. He knew that medals were stamped in commemoration of the brutal massacre, and he remembered that the same spirit that had struck at the gray head of Coligny had also murdered Egmont and Horne in the Netherlands; had calmly gazed in the person of Philip upon De Sezo perishing in the fire, and by the hand of Philip had denounced death against all who wrote, sold, or read Protestant books; and he knew that the same spirit, in the most thriving and intelligent country of Europe, the Netherlands, was blotting out prosperity in blood, and had driven at least a hundred thousand exiles into England.

Pondering these things, Sidney left Paris, and

at Frankfort met Hubert Languet. Languet was not only a Protestant, but, at heart, a Republican. He was the friend of Melancthon and of William of Orange, in whose service he died. One of the most accomplished scholars and shrewdest statesmen in Europe, honored and trusted by all the Protestant leaders, this wise man of fifty-four was so enamoured of the English youth of eighteen that they became life-long friends with the ardor of lovers, and Languet left his employment, as Fulke Greville says, "to become a nurse of knowledge to this hopeful young gentleman."

As they travelled by easy stages across Germany, where the campaign of Protestantism had begun, they knew that the decisive battle was yet to be fought. Europe was silent. The tumult of Charles V.'s reign was over, and that great monarch marched and countermarched no more from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. Charles had been victorious so long as he fought kings with words of steel. But the monk Martin Luther drew the sword of the spirit, and the conqueror quailed. Luther challenged the Church of Rome at its own door. The Vatican rained anathemas. It might as well have tried to blow out the stars; and all the fires of the furious popes who followed Leo were not sharp enough to consume the colossal heresy of free thought. But king and emperor



and pope fed the fire. The reign of terror blasted the Netherlands, and when it had succeeded there, when Italy, Austria, and Holland surrounded the states of Germany, Philip knew it would be the smothering coil of the serpent around the cradle of religious liberty. But the young Hercules of free thought throttled the serpent, and leaped forth to win his victorious and immortal race.

We can see it now, but Sidney could not know it. To him the future was as inscrutable as our own to the eyes of thirty years ago. Yet he and Languet must have discussed the time with curious earnestness as they passed through Germany until they reached Vienna. There Sidney devoted himself to knightly games, to tennis, to music, and especially to horsemanship, which he studied with Paglione, who, in praise of the horse, became such a poet that in the *Defence of Poesy* Sidney says that if he had not been a piece of a logician before he came to him, Paglione would have persuaded him to wish himself a horse.

At Vienna Philip parted with Languet, and arrived in Venice in the year 1573. The great modern days of Italy were passed. The golden age of the Medici was gone. Lorenzo the Magnificent had died nearly a century before, in the same year that Columbus had discovered America. His son, Pope Leo X., had eaten his last ortolan,

had flown his last falcon, had listened to his last comedy, and hummed his last tune, in the frescoed corridors of the Vatican. Upon its shining walls the fatal finger of Martin Luther, stretching out of Germany, had written "Mene, Mene." Beneath the terrible spell the walls were cracking and the earth was shaking, but the splendid pope, in his scarlet cloud of cardinals, saw only the wild beauty of Raphael's Madonnas and the pleasant pages of the recovered literature of pagan Greece. When Sidney stepped for the first time into his gondola at Venice, the famous Italian cathedrals and stately palaces were already built, and the great architects were gone. Dante, Boccaccio, Petrarch, who had created Italian literature, lived about as long before Sidney as we live after him. Cimabue and Giotto had begun; Raphael and Michel Angelo had perfected that art in which they have had no rivals—and they were gone. Andrea Doria steered the galleys of Genoa no more, and since the discovery of the Cape of Good Hope and the West Indies, the spices of the Indian sea were brought by Portuguese ships into the Baltic instead of the Adriatic. The glory of the Lombards, who were the first merchants of Europe, had passed away to the descendants of their old correspondents of Bruges and Ghent, until, with its five hundred ships daily coming and go-

ing, and on market days eight and nine hundred; with its two thousand heavy wagons creaking every week through the gates from France and Germany and Lorraine, Antwerp reigned in the place of Venice, and the long twilight that has never been broken was settling upon the Italy that Sidney saw.

But the soft splendor of its decline was worthy its prime. The universities of Bologna and Padua, of Salerno and Pisa, had fallen from the days when at Bologna alone there were twenty thousand students; but they were still thronged with pupils, and taught by renowned professors. When the young Sidney came to Venice, Titian was just tottering into the grave, nearly a hundred years old, but still holding the pencil which Charles V. had picked up and handed to him in his studio. Galileo was a youth of twenty, studying mathematics at Pisa. The melancholy Tasso was completing his *Jerusalem Delivered* under the cypress trees of the Villa d'Este. Palestrina was composing the masses which reformed church music, and the Christian charity of Charles Borromeo was making him a saint before he was canonized. Clad in the silk and velvet of Genoa, the young Englishman went to study geometry at Padua, where twenty years later Galileo would have been his teacher, and Sidney writes to Languet that he was per-

plexed whether to sit to Paul Veronese or to Tintoretto for his portrait.

But he had a shrewd eye for the follies of travellers, and speaks of their tendency to come home "full of disguisements not only of apparel but of our countenances, as though the credit of a traveller stood all upon his outside." He then adds a curious prophecy, which Shakespeare made haste to fulfil to the very letter. Sidney says, writing in 1578, "I think, ere it be long, like the mountebanks in Italy, we travellers shall be made sport of in comedies." Twenty years afterwards, Shakespeare makes Rosalind say in "As You Like It," "Farewell, Monsieur Traveller. Look you; lisp, and wear strange suits. Disable all the benefits of your own country. Be out of love with your nativity, and almost chide God for making you that countenance you are, or I will scarce think you have swam in a gondola."

But in all the gayeties and graces of his travel, Philip Sidney was not content to be merely an elegant lounger. He never forgot for a moment that all his gifts and accomplishments were only weapons to be kept burnished for his country's service. He was a boy of twenty, but his boy's warmth was tempered by the man's wisdom. "You are not over cheerful by nature," Languet writes to him; and when Sidney sat to Paul Vero-

nese, and sent his friend the portrait, Languet replies: "The painter has represented you sad and thoughtful."

He had reason to be so. He had seen the Massacre of St. Bartholomew, as many a young Sidney among ourselves saw the horrors of Kansas thirty years ago. He did not believe that a little timely patting on the back was statesmanship. If Spain were crushing the Netherlands, and hung upon the southern horizon of Europe a black and threatening cloud, he did not believe that the danger would be averted by gagging those who said the storm was coming. He did not hold the thermometer responsible for the weather. "I cannot think," he wrote in May, 1574, "there is any man possessed of common understanding who does not see to what these rough storms are driving by which all Christendom has been agitated now these many years." He did not suppose, as so many of us in our ignoble days, that while men were the same, the tragical differences which had been washed out with blood in all other ages could be drowned in milk and water in his own.

In 1575 Sidney returned to England. Every author who writes of this period breaks out into the most glowing praises of him. Indeed, he is the choice darling of English history. The only discordant note in the chorus of praise came long

afterwards in the voice of the pedantic dandy Horace Walpole, who called Goldsmith "an inspired idiot." This is not surprising, for the earnestness and heroic simplicity of Sidney were as incomprehensible to the affected trifler of Strawberry Hill as the fresh enthusiasm of his nephew Arthur to Major Pendennis. The Earl of Leicester, who seemed to love his nephew more than anything except his own ambition, presented his brilliant young relative to the queen, who made him her cup-bearer. Sidney was now twenty-one years old—the finest gentleman, and one of the most accomplished scholars in England. His learning was mainly in the classics and in languages; yet he confesses that he could never learn German, which was then hardly worth learning, and in his correspondence with Languet is very distrustful of the Latin, in which language they wrote. But in urging him to grapple with the German, Languet says to him, and it is a striking proof of the exquisite finish of Sidney's accomplishment, "I have watched you closely when speaking my own language (he was a Burgundian), but I hardly ever detected you pronouncing a single syllable wrongly."

In Sidney's time the classics had few rivals. After reading Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, Boccaccio, with Sanazzaro's *Arcadia*, in Italian; Rabelais, Froissart, and Comines, in French; Chaucer,

Gower, and the *Mirror for Magistrates* in English, what remained for an ardent young student to devour? When Sidney came home, Montaigne—whom he probably saw at the French court—was just writing his *Essays* at his château in the Gironde. The Portuguese Camoens had only just published his great poem, to which his own country would not listen, and of which no other had heard. The Italian Tasso's *Jerusalem* was still in manuscript, and the Spanish Ponce de Leon was little known to Europe. All was yet to come. In Spain, Cervantes, Lope de Vega, and Calderon; in France, Corneille and Racine and Molière, Fénelon and Bossuet, Rousseau and Voltaire; in Germany, everything except the Niebelungen and Hans Sachs's rhymes. When Philip Sidney kissed Elizabeth's hand as her cup-bearer, William Shakespeare, a boy of eleven, was grinding out his trousers on the restless seats of the free grammar-school at Stratford; young Francis Bacon, a youth of sixteen, was studying in France; a poor scholar at Cambridge, Edmund Spenser was just finishing his studies, and the younger brother of an old Devonshire family, Walter Raleigh, had just returned from campaigning in France; indeed, all the literature of modern times ] was subsequent to Philip Sidney. The young man shone at court, fascinating men and women,

courtiers, scholars, and divines; and in a few months was made special ambassador to condole with the Austrian emperor upon the death of his father. Upon this embassy he departed in great state. His mission was supposed to be purely complimentary; but he was really the beautiful eye with which England and Elizabeth, becoming the head of the Protestant movement, watched the disposition of the Protestant princes. On his way home, Sidney passed into the Low Countries to see William of Orange. He came, resplendent with chivalric magnificence, accompanied by the flower of English nobility, and met the grave William, who had been the richest citizen in the Netherlands, clad in an old serge cloak, and surrounded by plain Dutch burghers. But it was a meeting of men of one mind and heart in the great cause, and neither was disturbed by the tailoring of the other. The interview was the beginning of a faithful friendship, and among all the compliments Sidney received, none is so lofty and touching as that of William, the greatest man in Europe, who called him in their correspondence, "Philip, my master."

In 1577 Sidney was home again. He had a right to expect conspicuous advancement, but he got nothing. This was the more disagreeable, because living at Elizabeth's court was an expensive



luxury for a poor gentleman's son who had magnificent tastes. His father, Lord Henry Sidney, was lord-deputy of Ireland, but he was also an honest man, and, like most honest men in high public office, he was not rich. He wrote to Philip, begging him to remember whose son, not whose nephew, he was; for Philip's companions, the golden youth of the court, blazed in silks and velvets and jewels, until the government had to impose laws, as the subjects had brought luxury from Venice, and Elizabeth, who died the happy owner of three thousand dresses, issued a solemn proclamation against extravagance in dress.

At such a time, the brilliant nephew of Uncle Leicester would have been a quickly ruined man if he had not been Philip Sidney. He bowed and flirted at court, but he chafed under inaction. A marriage was planned for him with Penelope Devereux, sister of the famous Earl of Essex, one of the thousand fair and unfortunate women who flit across the page of history leaving only a name, and that written in tears. But Philip's father grew cool in the negotiation, and Philip himself was perfectly passive. Yet when a few years afterwards the lady was married to Lord Rich, who abused her, Sidney loved her, and wrote the sonnets to Stella, which are his best poetry, and which Charles Lamb so affectionately praised.

But while he loitered at court, beating all the courtiers with their own weapons in wit, in riding, in games, at tournament, the tales of American discovery shed a wondrous glamour upon the new continent. Nothing was too beautiful for belief, and the fiery feet of youth burned the English soil with eagerness to tread the unutterable Tropics. Francis Drake sailed from Plymouth to follow Magellan around the world, and he went in a manner consonant with the popular fancy of the countless riches that rewarded such adventures. His cooking-vessels were of silver; his table-plate of exquisite workmanship. The queen knighted him, gave him a sword, and said, "Whoever striketh at you, Drake, striketh at us." A band of musicians accompanied the fleet, and the English sailor went to circumnavigate the globe with the same nonchalant magnificence with which in other days the gorgeous Alcibiades, with flutes and soft recorders blowing under silken sails, came idling home from victory.

Philip Sidney, his heart alive to all romance, and longing to be his companion, saw him sail away. But he turned and saw the black Italian spider, whose sting he had seen on Bartholomew's Eve in Paris, still weaving her stealthy web, and seeking to entangle Elizabeth into a match with the Duke of Anjou. The queen was forty-six,

and Mounseer, as the English called him, twenty-three; and while she was coaxing herself to say the most fatal yes that ever woman said—when Burleigh, Leicester, Walsingham, all the safe, sound, conservative old gentlemen and counsellors were just ceasing to dissuade her—Philip Sidney, a youth of twenty-five, who knew that he had a country as well as a queen, that the hope of that country lay in the triumph of Protestantism, and that to marry Mounseer was to abandon that hope, and for the time betray mankind—Philip Sidney, a youth who did not believe that he could write gravely of sober things because he had written gayly of ladies' eyebrows, knowing as the true-hearted gentleman always knows that to-day it may be a man's turn to sit at a desk in an office, or bend over a book in college, or fashion a horseshoe at the forge, or toss flowers to some beauty at her window, and to-morrow to stand firm against a cruel church or a despotic court, a brutal snob or an ignorant public opinion—this youth, this immortal gentleman, wrote the letter which dissuaded her from the marriage, and which was as noble a triumph for Protestantism and human liberty as the defeat of the Spanish Armada.

I cannot follow this lovely life in detail, nor linger, as I would, upon his literary retirement.



The very name of Sidney's *Arcadia* is aromatic in the imagination, and its traditional place in our literature is unquestioned. In our day it is very little read, nor is it a very interesting story. But under its quaint and courtly conceit its tone is so pure and lofty, its courtesy and appreciation of women so hearty and honorable; it has so fine a moral atmosphere, such noble thoughts, such stately and beautiful descriptions, that to read it is like conversing with a hero. So there is no better reading than the *Defence of Poesy*, that noble hymn of loyalty to intellectual beauty. Hallam well calls Sidney "the first good prose writer" in our language, and scarcely had he finished in his *Defence* an exquisite criticism of English poetry to that time than the full choir of Elizabethan poets burst into

" the songs that fill  
The spacious times of great Elizabeth  
With sounds that echo still."

In 1582 Philip Sidney married the daughter of Walsingham, but in his retirement, whether steadfastly watching the great struggle upon the Continent or listening to the alluring music of far-off seas, he knew that the choice days of his life were passing, and if a career were not opened for him by the queen, he must make one for himself. William of Orange had been murdered; Eliza-

both promptly succeeded him as the active head of the Protestant world ; Philip of Spain was the great enemy. Strike him at home, said Sidney ; strike him at sea, but strike him everywhere ; and he arranged with Drake a descent upon Spanish America. He hurried privately to Plymouth to embark, but at the last moment a peer of the realm arrived from the queen forbidding his departure. The loyal gentleman bowed and obeyed.

But two months after his fleet sailed, on the 7th of November, 1585 (about the time that William Shakespeare first came to London), Elizabeth appointed Sidney governor of Flushing, in the Netherlands. He went thither gladly on the 18th, with three thousand men, to strike for the cause in which he believed. He had already told the queen that the spirit of the Netherlands was the spirit of God, and was invincible. His uncle, the Earl of Leicester, followed him as commander-in-chief. The earl was handsome at tournaments, but not fit for battle-fields, and Sidney was annoyed by his uncle's conduct ; but he writes to his father-in-law, Walsingham, in a strain full of the music of a noble soul, and fitly precluding his end : "I think a wise and constant man ought never to grieve while he doth play, as a man may say, his own part truly."

For that he was always ready. In the misty

dawn of the 22d of September, 1586, a force of three thousand Spaniards stole silently along to the relief of Zutphen, on the river Isel. Sidney, at the head of five hundred cavalry, rode forward to meet them. In the obscurity the battle was sharp and confused. Seeing his friend Lord Willoughby in special danger, Sidney spurred to the rescue. His horse was shot under him and fell. Springing upon another, he dashed forward again and succored his friend, but at the instant a shot struck him below the knee, glancing upward. His furious horse became unmanageable, and Sir Philip was obliged to leave the field. But as he passed slowly along to the rear of the soldiers, he felt faint with bleeding, and called for water. A cup was brought to him, but as he was lifting it to his mouth he saw a dying soldier staring at it with burning eyes. Philip Sidney paused before tasting it, leaned from the saddle, and handed it to the soldier, saying to him in the same soft, musical voice with which the boy called to his mother in the sunny garden at Penshurst, "Friend, thy necessity is yet greater than mine."

He was borne on to Araheim, and lived in suffering for twenty-six days. He conversed pleasantly and called for music, and said at last to his brother, whom he had loved as brothers seldom love: "Love my memory; cherish my friends.

Their faith to me may assure you they are honest. But, above all, govern your will and affections by the will and word of your Creator, in me beholding the end of this world with all her vanities." "And so," says old Stowe, with fond particularity, "he died, the 17th day of October, between two and three of the clock in the afternoon."

"The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,  
Await alike the inevitable hour.  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave."

This is the story of Philip Sidney. A letter, a book, a battle. How little to justify his unique fame! How invisible his performance among the illustrious events of his prodigious age! Yet is not the instinct of the human heart true; and in the stately society of his time, if Bacon were the philosopher, Shakespeare the poet, Burleigh the counsellor, Raleigh the soldier, Drake the sailor, Hooker the theologian, Essex the courtier, and Gresham the merchant, was not Philip Sidney as distinctively the gentleman? Heroes stood beside him in clusters, poets in constellations; all the illustrious men of the age achieved more tangible results than he, yet none of them has carved his name upon history more permanently and with a more diamond point; for he had that happy

harmony of mind and temper, of enthusiasm and good sense, of accomplishment and capacity, which is described by that most exquisite and most abused word, gentleman. His guitar hung by a ribbon at his side, but his sword hung upon leather beneath it. His knee bent gallantly to the queen, but it knelt reverently also to his Maker. And it was the crown of the gentleman that he was neither ashamed of the guitar nor of the sword; neither of the loyalty nor the prayer. For a gentleman is not an idler, a trifler, a dandy; he is not a scholar only, a soldier, a mechanic, a merchant; he is the flower of men, in whom the accomplishment of the scholar, the bravery of the soldier, the skill of the mechanic, the sagacity of the merchant, all have their part and appreciation. A sense of duty is his main-spring, and like a watch crusted with precious stones, his function is not to look prettily, but to tell the time of day. Philip Sidney was not a gentleman because his grandfather was the Duke of Northumberland and his father lord-deputy of Ireland, but because he was himself generous, simple, truthful, noble, refined. He was born with a gold spoon in his mouth, but the gold is only the test. In the mouths of the base it becomes brass and iron. George IV., called with bitter irony the first gentleman in Europe, was born with the gold spoon, but his acrid humors



turned it to the basest metal, betraying his mean soul. George Stephenson was born with the pewter spoon in his mouth, but the true temper of his soul turned it into pure gold. The test of a gentleman is his use, not his uselessness; whether that use be direct or indirect, whether it be actual service or only inspiring and aiding action. "To what purpose should our thoughts be directed to various kinds of knowledge," wrote Philip Sidney in 1578, "unless room be afforded for putting it into practice so that public advantage may be the result?" And Algernon Sidney said, nearly a century later: "I have ever had it in my mind that when God cast me into such a condition as that I cannot save my life but by doing an indecent thing, he shows me the time has come wherein I should resign it." And when that time came he did resign it; for every gentleman instinctively serves justice and liberty. He feels himself personally disgraced by an insult to humanity, for he, too, is only a man; and however stately his house may be and murmurous with music, however glowing with pictures and graceful with statues and reverend with books—however his horses may out-trot other horses, and his yachts outsail all yachts—the gentleman is king and master of these and not their servant; he wears them for ornament, like the ring upon his finger or the flower in his button-hole,

and if they go the gentleman remains. He knows that all their worth came from human genius and human training; and loving man more than the works of man, he instinctively shuns whatever in the shape of man is degraded, outraged, and forsaken. He does not make the poverty of others the reason for robbing them; he does not make the oppression of others the reason for oppressing them, for his gentility is his religion; and therefore with simple truth and tender audacity the old English dramatist Dekkar calls Him who gave the name to our religion, and who destroyed the plea that might makes right, "the first true gentleman that ever breathed."

But not only is Philip Sidney's story the poem of a gentleman, it is that of a young man. It was the age of young men. No man was thought flip-pant, whatever his years, who could say a good thing well, or do a brave thing successfully, or give the right advice at the right moment. The great men of the day were all young. At sixteen Bacon had already sketched his *Philosophy*. At seventeen Walter Raleigh had gone to find some good wars. At seventeen Edmund Spenser had first published. Before he was twenty, Alexander Farnese, Prince of Parma, and the greatest general of Sidney's time, had revealed his masterly genius. At twenty-one Don John of Austria had been

commander-in-chief against the Moors. The Prince of Condé and Henry of Navarre were leaders while they were yet boys. At twenty Francis Drake sailed, a captain, with John Hawkins; and at twenty-one the Washington of European history, to whom an American has for the first time paid just homage with an enthusiasm and eloquence of Sidney describing his friend—at twenty-one William of Orange commanded an army of Charles V.

When England wanted leaders in those tremendous days that shaped her destiny, it did just what America did in those recent perilous hours that determined hers—she sent young men with faith in their hearts and fire in their veins—not old men with feathers in their hats; and everywhere it is the young men who have made history. At thirty-two Alexander wept for another world to conquer. On his thirty-seventh birthday Raphael lay dead beneath his last picture. At thirty-six Mozart had sung his swan-song. At twenty-five Hannibal was commander-in-chief of the Carthaginian armies. At thirty-three Turenne was marshal of France. At twenty-seven Bonaparte was triumphant in Italy. At forty-five Wellington had conquered Bonaparte, and at forty-eight retired from active military service. At forty-three Washington was chief of the Continental army. On his forty-fifth

birthday Sherman was piercing the heart of the American Rebellion; and before he was forty-three Grant had "fought it out on this line" to perfect victory. Young men! Of course they were young men. Youth is the main-spring of the world. The experience of age is wise in action only when it is electrified by the enthusiasm of youth. Show me a land in which the young men are cold and sceptical and prematurely wise; which in polite indifference is called political wisdom, contempt for ideas common-sense, and honesty in politics Sunday-school statesmanship—show me a land in which the young men are more anxious about doing well than about doing right—and I will show you a country in which public corruption and ruin overtakes private infidelity and cowardice, and in which, if there were originally a hope for mankind, a faith in principle, and a conquering enthusiasm, that faith, hope, and enthusiasm are expiring like the deserted camp-fires of a retiring army. Woe to a man when his heart grows old! Woe to a nation when its young men shuffle in the gouty shoes and limp on the untimely crutches of age, instead of leaping along the course of life with the jubilant spring of their years and the sturdy play of their own muscles! Sir Philip Sidney's was the age of young men: and wherever there are self-reliance, universal hu-

man sympathy, and confidence in God, there is the age of youth and national triumph; just as whenever Joan of Arc leads the army, or Molly Stark dares to be a widow, or Rosa Bonheur paints, or Hattie Hosmer carves, or Jenny Lind sings, or Mrs. Patten steers the wrecked ship to port, or Florence Nightingale walks the midnight hospital—these are the age and the sphere of woman. Queen Elizabeth's was the age of young men; but so it is always when there are young men who can make an age.

And ours is such an age. We live in a country which has been saved by its young men. Before us opens a future which is to be secured by the young men. I have not held up Sir Philip Sidney as a reproach, but only for his brothers to admire—only that we may scatter the glamour of the past and of history, and understand that we do not live in the lees of time and the world's decrepitude. There is no country so fair that ours is not fairer; there is no age so heroic that ours is not as noble; there is no youth in history so romantic and beloved that in a thousand American homes you may not find his peer to-day. It is the Sidneys we have known who interpret this Philip of three hundred years ago. Dear, noble gentleman! he does not move alone in our imaginations, for our own memories supply his splendid society. We

too have seen, how often and how often, the bitter fight of the misty morning on the Isel—the ringing charge, the fatal fall. A thousand times we saw the same true Sidney heart that, dying, gave the cup of cold water to a fellow-soldier. And we, for whom the Sidneys died, let us thank God for showing us in our own experience, as in history, that the noblest traits of human character are still spanned by the rainbow of perfect beauty; and that human love and faith and fidelity, like day and night, like seed-time and harvest, shall never, never fail.

LONGFELLOW





## LONGFELLOW

IN the school readers of half a century ago there were two poems which every boy and girl read and declaimed and remembered. How much of that old literature has disappeared! How much that stirred the hearts and touched the fancies of those boys and girls, their children have never heard of! Willis's "Saturday Afternoon" and "Burial of Arnold" have floated away, almost out of sight, with Pierpont's "Bunker Hill" and Sprague's Fourth-of-July oration. The relentless winds of oblivion incessantly blow. Scraps of verse and rhetoric once so familiar are caught up, wafted noiselessly away, and lodged in neglected books and in the dark corners of fading memories, gradually vanish from familiar knowledge. But the two little poems of which we speak have survived. One of them was Bryant's "March," and the other was Longfellow's "April," and the names of the two poets singing of spring were thus associated in the spring-time of our poetry, as the fathers of which they will be always honored.

Both poems originally appeared in the *United States Literary Gazette*, and were included in the modest volume of selections from that journal which was published in Boston in 1826. The chief names in this little book are those of Bryant, Longfellow, Percival, Mellen, Dawes, and Jones. Percival has already become a name only ; Dawes, and Greenville Mellen, who, like Longfellow, was a son of Maine, are hardly known to this generation, and Jones does not even appear in Duyckinck's *Cyclopædia*. But in turning over the pages it is evident that Time has dealt justly with the youthful bards, and that the laurel rests upon the heads of the singers whose earliest strains fitly precluded the music of their prime. Longfellow was nineteen years old when the book was published. He had graduated at Bowdoin College the year before, and the verses had been written and printed in the *Gazette* while he was still a student.

The glimpses of the boy that we catch through the recollections of his old professor, Packard, and of his college mates, are of the same character as at every period of his life. They reveal a modest, refined, manly youth, devoted to study, of great personal charm and gentle manners. It is the boy that the older man suggested. To look back upon him is to trace the broad and clear and beautiful river far up the green meadows to the limpid rill.

His poetic taste and faculty were already apparent, and it is related that a version of an ode of Horace which he wrote in his Sophomore year so impressed one of the members of the examining board that when afterwards a chair of modern languages was established in the college, he proposed as its incumbent the young Sophomore whose fluent verse he remembered. The impression made by the young Longfellow is doubtlessly accurately described by one of his famous classmates, Hawthorne, for the class of '25 is a proud tradition of Bowdoin. In "P.'s Correspondence," one of the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, a quaint fancy of a letter from "my unfortunate friend P.," whose wits were a little disordered, there are grotesque hints of the fate of famous persons. P. talks with Burns at eighty-seven; Byron, grown old and fat, wears a wig and spectacles; Shelley is reconciled to the Church of England; Coleridge finishes "Christabel;" Keats writes a religious epic on the millennium; and George Canning is a peer. On our side of the sea, Dr. Channing had just published a volume of verses; Whittier had been lynched ten years before in South Carolina; and, continues P., "I remember, too, a lad just from college, Longfellow by name, who scattered some delicate verses to the winds, and went to Germany, and perished, I think, of intense application, at the

University of Göttingen." Longfellow, in turn, recalled his classmate Hawthorne—a shy, dark-haired youth flitting across the college grounds in a coat with bright buttons.

Among these delicate verses was the poem to "An April Day." As the work of a very young man it is singularly restrained and finished. It has the characteristic elegance and flowing melody of his later verse, and its half-pensive tone is not excessive nor immature. It is not, however, for this that it is most interesting, but because, with Bryant's "March," it is the fresh and simple note of a truly American strain. Perhaps the curious reader, enlightened by the observation of subsequent years, may find in the "March" a more vigorous love of nature, and in the "April" a tenderer tone of tranquil sentiment. But neither of the poems is the echo of a foreign music, nor an exercise of remembered reading. They both deal with the sights and sounds and suggestions of the American landscape in the early spring. In Longfellow's "April" there are none of the bishops' caps and foreign ornament of illustration to which Margaret Fuller afterwards objected in his verse. But these early associated poems, both of the younger and of the older singer, show an original movement of American literary genius, and, like the months which they celebrate, they foretold a summer.

That summer had been long awaited. In 1809, Buckminster said in his Phi Beta Kappa oration at Harvard College: "Our poets and historians, our critics and orators, the men of whom posterity are to stand in awe, and by whom they are to be instructed, are yet to appear among us." Happily, however, the orator thought that he beheld the promise of their coming, although he does not say where. But even as he spoke they were at hand. Irving's *Knickerbocker* was published in 1809, and Bryant's "Thanatopsis" was written in 1812. The *North American Review*, an enterprise of literary men in Boston and Cambridge, was begun in 1815, and Bryant and Longfellow were both contributors. But it was in the year 1821, the year in which Longfellow entered college, that the beginning of a distinctive American literature became most evident. There were signs of an independent intellectual movement both in the choice of subjects and in the character of treatment. This was the year of the publication of Bryant's first slim volume, and of Cooper's *Spy*, and of Dana's *Idle Man*. Irving's *Sketch Book* was already finished, Miss Sedgwick's *Hope Leslie* and Percival's first volume had been issued, and Halleck's and Drake's "Croakers" were already popular. In these works, as in all others of that time, there was indeed no evidence of great creative genius.

The poet and historian whom Buckminster foresaw, and who were to strike posterity with awe, had not yet appeared, but in the same year the voice of the orator whom he anticipated was heard upon Plymouth Rock in cadences massive and sonorous as the voice of the sea. In the year 1821 there was the plain evidence of an awakening original literary activity.

Longfellow was the youngest of the group in which he first appeared. His work was graceful, tender, pensive, gentle, melodious, the strain of a troubadour. When he went to Europe in 1826 to fit himself more fully for his professorship, he had but "scattered some delicate verses to the winds." When he returned, and published in 1833 his translations of "Coplas de Manrique" and other Spanish poems, he had apparently done no more. There was plainly shown an exquisite literary artist, a very Benvenuto of grace and skill. But he would hardly have been selected as the poet who was to take the strongest hold of the hearts of his countrymen, the singer whose sweet and hallowing spell was to be so deep and universal that at last it would be said in another country that to it also his death was a national loss.

The qualities of these early verses, however, were never lost. The genius of the poet steadily

and beautifully developed, flowering according to its nature. The most urbane and sympathetic of men, never aggressive, nor vehement, nor self-asserting, he was yet thoroughly independent, and the individuality of his genius held its tranquil way as surely as the river Charles, whose placid beauty he so often sang, wound through the meadows calm and free. When Longfellow came to Cambridge, the impulse of Transcendentalism in New England was deeply affecting scholarship and literature. It was represented by the most original of American thinkers and the typical American scholar, Emerson, and its elevating, purifying, and emancipating influences are memorable in our moral and intellectual history. Longfellow lived in the very heart of the movement. Its leaders were his cherished friends. He too was a scholar and a devoted student of German literature, who had drunk deeply also of the romance of German life. Indeed, his first important works stimulated the taste for German studies and the enjoyment of its literature more than any other impulse in this country. But he remained without the charmed Transcendental circle, serene and friendly and attentive. There are those whose career was wholly moulded by the intellectual revival of that time. But Longfellow was untouched by it, except as his sympathies were attracted by the vigor and purity

of its influence. His tastes, his interests, his activities, his career, would have been the same had that great light never shone. If he had been the ductile, echoing, imitative nature that the more ardent disciples of the faith supposed him to be, he would have been absorbed and swept away by the flood. But he was as untouched by it as Charles Lamb by the wars of Napoleon.

It was in the first flush of the Transcendental epoch that Longfellow's first important works appeared. In 1839, his prose romance of *Hyperion* was published, following the sketches of travel called *Outre-Mer*. He was living in Cambridge, in the famous house in which he died, and in which *Hyperion* and all of his familiar books were written. Under the form of a slight love tale, *Hyperion* is the diary of a poet's wandering in a storied and picturesque land, the hearty, home-like genius of whose life and literature is peculiarly akin to his own. The book bubbles and sings with snatches of the songs of the country; it reproduces the tone and feeling of the landscape, the grandeur of Switzerland, the rich romance of the Rhine; it decorates itself with a quaint scholarship, and is so steeped in the spirit of the country, so glowing with the palpitating tenderness of passion, that it is still eagerly bought at the chief points which it commemorates, and is



cherished by young hearts as no prose romance was ever cherished before.

*Hyperion*, indeed, is a poet's and lover's romance. It is full of deep feeling, of that intense and delighted appreciation of nature in her grander forms, and of scenes consecrated by poetic tradition, which belongs to a singularly fine, sensitive, and receptive nature, when exalted by pure and lofty affection; and it has the fulness and swing of youth, saddened by experience indeed, yet rising with renewed hope, like a field of springing grain in May bowed by the west wind, and touched with the shadow of a cloud, but presently lifting itself again to heaven. A clear sweet humor and blitheness of heart blend in this romance. What is called its artificial tone is not insincerity; it is the play of an artist conscious of his skill and revelling in it, even while his hand and his heart are deeply in earnest. *Werther* is a romance, Disraeli's *Wondrous Tale of Alroy* is a romance, but they belong to the realm of Beverley and Julia in Sheridan's *Rivals*. In *Hyperion*, with all its elaborate picturesqueness, its spicy literary atmosphere, and imaginative outline, there is a breezy freshness and simplicity and healthiness of feeling which leaves it still unique.

In the same year with *Hyperion* came the *Voices of the Night*, a volume of poems which

contained the "Coplas de Manrique" and the translations, with a selection from the verses of the *Literary Gazette*, which the author playfully reclaims in a note from their vagabond and precarious existence in the corners of newspapers—gathering his children from wanderings in lanes and alleys, and introducing them decorously to the world. A few later poems were added, and these, with the *Hyperion*, showed a new and distinctive literary talent. In both of these volumes there is the purity of spirit, the elegance of form, the romantic tone, the airy grace, which were already associated with Longfellow's name. But there are other qualities. The boy of nineteen, the poet of Bowdoin, has become a scholar and a traveller. The teeming hours, the ample opportunities of youth, have not been neglected or squandered, but, like a golden-banded bee, humming as he sails, the young poet has drained all the flowers of literature of their nectar, and has built for himself a hive of sweetness. More than this, he had proved in his own experience the truth of Irving's tender remark, that an early sorrow is often the truest benediction for the poet.

Through all the romantic grace and elegance of the *Voices of the Night* and *Hyperion*, however, there is a moral earnestness which is even more remarkable in the poems than in the romance. No

volume of poems ever published in the country was so popular. Severe critics indeed, while acknowledging its melody and charm, thought it too morally didactic, the work of a student too fondly enamoured of foreign literatures. But while they conceded taste and facility, two of the poems at least—the “Psalm of Life” and the “Footsteps of Angels”—penetrated the common heart at once, and have held it ever since. A young Scotchman saw them reprinted in some paper or magazine, and, meeting a literary lady in London, repeated them to her, and then to a literary assembly at her house; and the presence of a new poet was at once acknowledged. If the “Midnight Mass for the Dying Year” in its form and phrase and conception recalled a land of cathedrals and a historic religious ritual, and had but a vague and remote charm for the woodman in the pine forests of Maine and the farmer on the Illinois prairie, yet the “Psalm of Life” was the very heart-beat of the American conscience, and the “Footsteps of Angels” was a hymn of the fond yearning of every loving heart.

During the period of more than forty years from the publication of the *Voices of the Night* to his death, the fame of Longfellow constantly increased. It was not because his genius, like that of another scholarly poet, Gray, seldom blossomed

in song, so that his renown rested upon a few gem-like verses. He was not intimidated by his own fame. During those forty years he wrote and published constantly. Other great fames arose around him. New poets began to sing. Popular historians took their places. But still with Bryant the name of Longfellow was always associated at the head of American singers, and far beyond that of any other American author was his name known through all the reading world. The volume of *Voices of the Night* was followed by similar collections, then by *The Spanish Student*, *Evangeline*, *The Golden Legend*, *Hiawatha*, *The Courtship of Miles Standish*, *The Tales of a Wayside Inn*, *The New England Tragedies*, *The Masque of Pandora*, *The Hanging of the Crane*, the *Morituri Salutamus*, the *Kéramos*. But all of these, like stately birds

“Sailing with supreme dominion  
Through the upper realms of air,”

were attended by shorter poems, sonnets, “birds of passage,” as the poet called his swallow flights of song. In all these larger poems, while the characteristics of the earlier volumes were more amply developed and illustrated, and the subtle beauty of the skill became even more exquisite,

the essential qualities of the work remain unchanged, and the charm of a poet and his significance in the literature and development of his country were never more readily defined.

Child of New England, and trained by her best influences; of a temperament singularly sweet and serene, and with the sturdy rectitude of his race; refined and softened by wide contact with other lands and many men; born in prosperity, accomplished in all literatures, and himself a literary artist of consummate elegance, he was the fine flower of the Puritan stock under its changed modern conditions. Out of strength had come forth sweetness. The grim iconoclast, "humming a surly hymn," had issued in the Christian gentleman. Captain Miles Standish had risen into Sir Philip Sidney. The austere morality that relentlessly ruled the elder New England reappeared in the genius of this singer in the most gracious and captivating form. The grave nature of Bryant in his early secluded life among the solitary hills of Western Massachusetts had been tinged by them with their own sobriety. There was something of the sombre forest, of the gray rocky face of stern New England in his granitic verse. But what delicate wild-flowers nodded in the clefts! What scent of the pine-tree, what music of gurgling water, filled the cool air! What bird high poised

upon its solitary way through heaven-taught faith to him who pursued his way alone!

But while the same moral tone in the poetry both of Bryant and of Longfellow shows them to be children of the same soil and tradition, and shows also that they saw plainly, what poets of the greatest genius have often not seen at all, that in the morality of human life lies its true beauty, the different aspect of Puritan development which they displayed was due to difference of temperament and circumstance. The foundations of our distinctive literature were largely laid in New England, and they rest upon morality. Literary New England had never a trace of literary Bohemia. The most illustrious group, and the earliest, of American authors and scholars and literary men, the Boston and Cambridge group of the last generation—Channing, the two Danas, Sparks, Everett, Bancroft, Ticknor, Prescott, Norton, Ripley, Palfrey, Emerson, Parker, Hawthorne, Longfellow, Holmes, Whittier, Agassiz, Lowell, Motley—have been all sober and industrious citizens of whom Judge Sewall would have approved. Their lives as well as their works have ennobled literature. They have illustrated the moral sanity of genius.

Longfellow shares this trait with them all. It is the moral purity of his verse which at once charms

the heart, and in his first most famous poem, the "Psalm of Life," it is the direct inculcation of a moral purpose. Those who insist that literary art, like all other art, should not concern itself positively with morality, must reflect that the heart of this age has been touched as truly by Longfellow, however differently, as that of any time by its master-poet. This, indeed, is his peculiar distinction. Among the great poetic names of the century in English literature, Burns, in a general way, is the poet of love; Wordsworth, of lofty contemplation of nature; Byron, of passion; Shelley, of aspiration; Keats, of romance; Scott, of heroic legend; and not less, and quite as distinctively, Longfellow, of the domestic affections. He is the poet of the household, of the fireside, of the universal home feeling. The infinite tenderness and patience, the pathos, and the beauty of daily life, of familiar emotion, and the common scene, these are the significance of that verse whose beautiful and simple melody, softly murmuring for more than forty years, made the singer the most widely beloved of living men.

Longfellow's genius was not a great creative force. It burst into no tempests of mighty passion. It did not wrestle with the haughtily veiled problems of fate and free-will absolute. It had no dramatic movement and variety, no eccentricity

and grotesqueness and unexpectedness. It was not Lear, nor Faust, nor Manfred, nor Romeo. A carnation is not a passion-flower. Indeed, no poet of so universal and sincere a popularity ever sang so little of love as a passion. None of his smaller poems are love poems; and *Evangeline* is a tale, not of fiery romance, but of affection "that hopes and endures and is patient," of the unwasting "beauty and strength of woman's devotion," of the constantly tried and tested virtue that makes up the happiness of daily life. No one has described so well as Longfellow himself the character and influence of his own poetry:

"Come read to me some poem,  
 Some simple and heart-felt lay,  
 That shall soothe this restless feeling,  
 And banish the thoughts of day.

"Not from the grand old masters,  
 Not from the bards sublime,  
 Whose distant footsteps echo  
 Through the corridors of Time.

. . . . .

"Such songs have power to quiet  
 The restless pulse of care,  
 And come like the benediction  
 That follows after prayer."

This was the office of Longfellow in literature, and how perfectly it was fulfilled! It was not



a wilful purpose, but he carefully guarded the fountain of his song from contamination or diversion, and this was its natural overflow. During the long period of his literary activity there were many "schools" and styles and fashions of poetry. The influence first of Byron, then of Keats, is manifest in the poetry of the last generation, and in later days a voluptuous vagueness and barbaric splendor, as of the lower empire in literature, have corroded the vigor of much modern verse. But no perfumed blaudishment of doubtful goddesses won Longfellow from his sweet and domestic Muse. The clear thought, the true feeling, the pure aspiration, is expressed with limpid simplicity:

"Strong without rage; without o'erflowing, full."

The most delightful picture in Goldsmith's life is that of the youth wandering through rural Europe, stopping at the little villages in the peaceful summer sunset, and sweetly playing melodies upon his flute for the lads and lasses to dance upon the green. Who that reads "The Traveller" and "The Deserted Village" does not hear in their pensive music the far-away fluting of that kind-hearted wanderer, and see the lovely idyl of that simple life? So sings this poet to the young men and maidens in the soft summer air. They follow

his measures with fascinated hearts, for they hear in them their own hearts singing; they catch the music of their dearest hope, of their best endeavor; they hear the voices of the peaceful joy that hallows faithful affection, of the benediction that belongs to self-sacrifice and devotion. And now that the singer is gone, and his voice is silent, those hushed hearts recall the words of Father Felicien, Evangeline's pastor:

“Forty years of my life have I labored among you, and  
taught you  
Not in word alone, but in deed, to love one another.”

It is this fidelity of his genius to itself, the universal feeling to which he gives expression, and the perfection of his literary workmanship, which is sure to give Longfellow a permanent place in literature. His poems are apples of gold in pictures of silver. There is nothing in them excessive, nothing overwrought, nothing strained into turgidity, obscurity, and nonsense. There is sometimes, indeed, a fine stateliness, as in the “Arsenal at Springfield,” and even a resounding splendor of diction, as in “Sandalphon.” But when the melody is most delicate it is simple. The poet throws nothing into the mist to make it large. How purely melodious his verse can be without losing the

thought or its most transparent expression is seen in "The Evening Star" and "Snow-Flakes."

The literary decoration of his style, the aroma and color and richness, so to speak, which it derives from his ample accomplishment in literature, are incomparable. His verse is embroidered with allusions and names and illustrations wrought with a taste so true and a skill so rare that the robe, though it be cloth of gold, is as finely flexible as linen, and still beautifully reveals, not conceals, the living form.

This scholarly allusion and literary tone were at one time criticised as showing that Longfellow's genius was really an exotic grown under glass, or a smooth-throated mocking-bird warbling a foreign melody. A recent admirable paper in the *Evening Post* intimates that the kindly poet took the suggestion in good part, and modified his strain. But there was never any interruption or change in the continuity of his work. *Evangeline* and *Hia-watha* and *The Courtship of Miles Standish* blossom as naturally out of his evident and characteristic taste and tendency as *The Golden Legend* or the *Masque of Pandora*. In the *Tales of a Wayside Inn* the "Ride of Paul Revere" is as natural a play of his power as "King Robert of Sicily." The various aspect and character of nature upon the American continent is nowhere so fully, beau-

tifully, and accurately portrayed as in *Evangeline*. The scenery of the poem is the vast American landscape, boundless prairie and wooded hill, brimming river and green valley, sparkling savanna and broad bayou, city and village, camp and wigwam, peopled with the children of many races, and all the blended panorama seen in the magic light of imagination. So, too, the poetic character of the Indian legend is preserved with conscientious care and fit monotony of rippling music in *Hiawatha*. But this is an accident and an incident. It is not the theme which determines the poet. All Scotland, indeed, sings and glows in the verse of Burns, but very little of England is seen or heard in that of Byron.

In no other conspicuous figure in literary history are the man and the poet more indissolubly blended than in Longfellow. The poet was the man, and the man the poet. What he was to the stranger reading in distant lands, by

“The long wash of Australasian seas,”

that he was to the most intimate of his friends. His life and character were perfectly reflected in his books. There is no purity or grace or feeling or spotless charm in his verse which did not belong to the man. There was never an explanation to be offered for him; no allowance was necessary for

the eccentricity or grotesqueness or wilfulness or humor of genius. Simple, modest, frank, manly, he was the good citizen, the self-respecting gentleman, the symmetrical man.

He lived in an interesting historic house in a venerable university town, itself the suburb of a great city; the highway running by his gate and dividing the smooth grass and modest green terraces about the house from the fields and meadows that sloped gently to the placid Charles, and the low range of distant hills that made the horizon. Through the little gate passed an endless procession of pilgrims of every degree and from every country to pay homage to their American friend. Every morning came the letters of those who could not come in person, and with infinite urbanity and sympathy and patience the master of the house received them all, and his gracious hospitality but deepened the admiration and affection of the guests. His nearer friends sometimes remonstrated at his sweet courtesy to such annoying "devastators of the day." But to an urgent complaint of his endless favor to a flagrant offender, Longfellow only answered, good-humoredly, "If I did not speak kindly to him, there is not a man in the world who would." On the day that he was taken ill, six days only before his death, three school-boys came out from Boston on their Saturday hol-

iday to ask his autograph. The benign lover of children welcomed them heartily, showed them a hundred interesting objects in his house, then wrote his name for them, and for the last time.

Few men had known deeper sorrow. But no man ever mounted upon his sorrow more surely to higher things. Blessed and beloved, the singer is gone, but his song remains, and its pure and imperishable melody is the song of the lark in the morning of our literature :

“Type of the wise who soar but never roam,  
True to the kindred points of heaven and home.”

OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES





## OLIVER WENDELL HOLMES

IN 1817 Bryant's "Thanatopsis" was published in the *North American Review*. Richard Henry Dana, the elder, who was then one of the editors, said that it could not be an American poem, for there was no American who could have written it. But it does not seem to have produced a remarkable impression upon the public mind. The planet rose silently and unobserved. Ten years afterwards, in 1827, Dana's own "Buccaneer" was published, and Christopher North, in *Blackwood*, saluted it as "by far the most original and powerful of American poetical compositions." But it produced in this country no general effect which is remembered. Nine years later, in 1836, Holmes's "Metrical Essay" was delivered before the Phi Beta Kappa Society at Harvard College, and was as distinct an event in literary circles as Edward Everett's oration before the same society in 1824, or Ralph Waldo Emerson's in 1837, or Horace Bushnell's in 1848, or Wendell Phillips's in 1881. Holmes was then twenty-seven years old, and had

just returned from his professional studies in Europe, where, as in his college days at Cambridge, where he was born, he had toyed with many Muses, yet still, with native Yankee prudence, held fast the hand of Æsculapius. His poem, like the address of Emerson in the next year, showed how completely the modern spirit of refined and exquisite literary cultivation and of free and undaunted thought had superseded the uncouth literary form and stern and rigid Calvinism of the Mathers and early Boston.

The melody and grace of Goldsmith's line, but with a fresh local spirit, have not been more perfectly reproduced, nor with a more distinct revelation of a new spirit, than in this poem. It is retrospective and contemplative, but it is also full of the buoyancy of youth, of the consciousness of poetic skill, and of blithe anticipation. Its tender reminiscence and occasional fond elegiac strain are but clouds of the morning. Its literary form is exquisite, and its general impression is that of bright, elastic, confident power. It was by no means, however, a first work, nor was the poet unknown in his own home. But the "Metrical Essay" introduced him to a larger public, while the fugitive pieces already known were the assurance that the more important poem was not a happy chance, but the development of a quality

already proved. Seven years before, in 1829, the year he graduated at Harvard, Holmes began to contribute to *The Collegian*, a college magazine. Two years later, in 1831, appeared the *New England Magazine*, in which the young writer, as he might himself say, took the road with his double team of verse and prose, holding the ribbons with unsurpassed lightness and grace and skill, now for two generations guiding those fleet and well-groomed coursers, which still show their heels to panting rivals, the prancing team behind which we have all driven and are still driving with constant and undiminished delight.

Mr. F. B. Sanborn, whose tribute to Holmes on his eightieth birthday shows how thorough was his research for that labor of love, tells us that his first contribution to the *New England Magazine* was published in the third or September number of the first year, 1831. It was a copy of verses of an unpromising title—"To an Insect." But that particular insect, seemingly the creature of a day, proved to be immortal, for it was the katydid, whose voice is perennial:

"Thou sayest an undisputed thing  
In such a solemn way."

In the contributions of the young graduate the high spirits of a frolicsome fancy effervesce and

sparkle. But their quality of a new literary tone and spirit is very evident. The ease and fun of these bright prolusions, without impudence or coarseness, the poetic touch and refinement, were as unmistakable as the brisk pungency of the gibe. The stately and scholarly Boston of Channing, Dana, Everett, and Ticknor might indeed have looked askance at the literary claims of such lines as these "Thoughts in Dejection" of a poet wondering if the path to Parnassus lay over Charlestown or Chelsea bridge :

"What is a poet's fame?  
Sad hints about his reason,  
And sadder praise from gazetteers,  
To be returned in season.

"For him the future holds  
No civic wreath above him;  
Nor slated roof nor varnished chair,  
Nor wife nor child to love him.

"Maid of the village inn,  
Who workest woe on satin,  
The grass in black, the graves in green,  
The epitaph in Latin,

"Trust not to them who say  
In stanzas they adore thee;  
Oh, rather sleep in church-yard clay,  
With maudlin cherubs o'er thee!"

The lines to the katydid, with "L'Inconnue"—

"Is thy name Mary, maiden fair?"—

published in the magazine at about the same time, disclose Holmes's natural melody and his fine instinct for literary form. But his lyrical fervor finds its most jubilant expression at this time in "Old Ironsides," written at the turning-point in the poet's life, when he had renounced the study of the law, and was deciding upon medicine as his profession. The proposal to destroy the frigate *Constitution*, fondly and familiarly known as "Old Ironsides," kindled a patriotic frenzy in the sensitive Boston boy, which burst forth into the noble lyric,

"Ay, tear her tattered ensign down!"

There had been no American poetry with a truer lilt of song than these early verses, and there has been none since. Two years later, in 1833, Holmes went to complete his medical studies in Paris, and the lines to a grisette—

"Ah, Clemence, when I saw thee last  
Trip down the Rue de Seine!"—

published upon his return in his first volume of verse, are a charming illustration of his lyrical genius. His limpid line never flowed more clearly than in this poem. It has the pensive tone of all his best poems of the kind, but it is the half-happy sadness of youth.

All these early verses have an assured literary

form. The scope and strain were new, but their most significant quality was not melody nor pensive grace, but humor. This was ingrained and genuine. Sometimes it was rollicking, as in "The Height of the Ridiculous" and "The September Gale." Sometimes it was drolly meditative, as in "Evening, by a Tailor." Sometimes it was a tearful smile of the deepest feeling, as in the most charming and perfect of these poems, "The Last Leaf," in which delicate and searching pathos is exquisitely fused with tender gayety. The haunting music and meaning of the lines,

"The mossy marbles rest  
 On the lips that he has pressed  
     In their bloom,  
 And the names he loved to hear  
 Have been carved for many a year  
     On the tomb,"

lingered always in the memory of Lincoln, whose simple sincerity and native melancholy would instinctively have rejected any false note. It is in such melody as that of the "Last Leaf" that we feel how truly the grim old Puritan strength has become sweetness.

To this poetic grace and humor and music, which at that time were unrivalled, although the early notes of a tuneful choir of awakening songsters were already heard, the young Holmes added

the brisk and crisp and sparkling charm of his prose. From the beginning his coursers were paired, and with equal pace they have constantly held the road. In the *New England Magazine* for November in the same year, 1831, a short paper was published called the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table." The tone of placid dogmatism and infallible finality with which the bulls of the domestic pope are delivered is delightfully familiar. This earliest one has perhaps more of the cardinal's preliminary scarlet than of the mature papal white, but in its first note the voice of the Autocrat is unmistakable :

"Somebody was rigmarolling the other day about the artificial distinctions of society.

" 'Madam,' said I, 'society is the same in all large places. I divide it thus :

" '1. People of cultivation who live in large houses.

" '2. People of cultivation who live in small houses.

" '3. People without cultivation who live in large houses.

" '4. People without cultivation who live in small houses.

" '5. Scrubs.'

"An individual at the upper end of the table turned pale and left the room as I finished with the monosyllable."

" 'Tis sixty years since," but that drop is of the same characteristic transparency and sparkle as in the latest Tea-Cup.

The time in which the *New England Magazine* was published, and these firstlings of Holmes's muse appeared, was one of prophetic literary stir

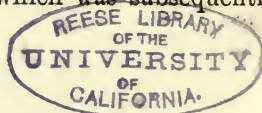
in New England. There were other signs than those in letters of the breaking-up of the long Puritan winter. A more striking and extreme reaction from the New England tradition could not well be imagined than that which was offered by Nathaniel Parker Willis, of whom Holmes himself says "that he was at the time something between a remembrance of Count D'Orsay and an anticipation of Oscar Wilde." Willis was a kindly saunterer, the first Boston dandy, who began his literary career with grotesque propriety as a sentimentalizer of Bible stories, a performance which Lowell gayly called inspiration and water. In what now seems a languid, Byronic way, he figured as a Yankee Pelham or Vivian Grey. Yet in his prose and verse there was a tacit protest against the old order, and that it was felt is shown by the bitterness of ridicule and taunt and insult with which, both publicly and privately, this most amiable youth was attacked, who, at that time, had never said an ill-natured word of anybody, and who was always most generous in his treatment of his fellow-authors.

The epoch of Willis and the *New England Magazine* is very notable in the history of American literature. The traditions of that literature were grave and even sombre. Irving, indeed, in his Knickerbocker and Rip Van Winkle and Ich-



abod Crane, and in the general gayety of his literary touch, had emancipated it from strict allegiance to the solemnity of its precedents, and had lighted it with a smile. He supplied a quality of grace and cheerfulness which it had lacked, and without unduly magnifying his charming genius, it had a natural, fresh, and smiling spirit, which, amid the funereal, theologic gloom, suggests the sweetness and brightness of morning. In its effect it is a breath of Chaucer. When Knickerbocker was published, Joel Barlow's "Hasty-Pudding" was the chief achievement of American literary humor. Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner were not yet "the wits of Hartford." Those who bore that name held it by brevet. Indeed, the humor of our early literature is pathetic. In no State was the ecclesiastical dominance more absolute than in Connecticut, and nothing shows more truly how absolute and grim it was than the fact that the performances of the "wits" in that State were regarded — gravely, it must have been — as humor.

For a long time there was no vital response in New England to the chord touched by Irving. Yet Boston was then unquestionably the chief seat of American letters. Dennie had established his *Portfolio* in Philadelphia in 1801, but in 1805 the *Monthly Anthology*, which was subsequently



reproduced in the *North American Review*, appeared in Boston, and was the organ or illustration of the most important literary and intellectual life of the country at that time. The opening of the century saw the revolt against the supremacy of the old Puritan Church of New England—a revolt within its own pale. This clerical protest against the austere dogmas of Calvinism in its ancient seat was coincident with the overthrow in the national government of Federalism and the political triumph of Jefferson and his party. Simultaneously also with the religious and political disturbance was felt the new intellectual and literary impulse of which the *Anthology* was the organ. But the religious and literary movements were not in sympathy with the political revolution, although they were all indications of emancipation from the dominance of old traditions, the mental restlessness of a people coming gradually to national consciousness.

Mr. Henry Adams, in remarking upon this situation in his history of Madison's administration, points out that leaders of the religious protest which is known as the Unitarian Secession in New England were also leaders in the intellectual and literary awakening of the time, but had no sympathy with Jefferson or admiration of France. Bryant's father was a Federalist; the club that

conducted the *Anthology* and the *North American Review* was composed of Federalists; and the youth whose "Thanatopsis" is the chief distinction of the beginning of that *Review*, and the morning star of American poetry, was, as a boy of thirteen, the author of the "Embargo," a performance in which the valiant Jack gave the giant Jefferson no quarter. The religious secession took its definite form in Dr. Channing's sermon at the ordination of Jared Sparks in Baltimore in 1819, which powerfully arraigned the dominant theology of the time. This was the year in which Irving's *Sketch Book* was published. Bryant's first volume followed a year or two later, and our distinctive literary epoch opened.

Ten years afterwards, when Bryant had left New England, Dr. Channing was its most dignified and characteristic name in literature. But he was distinctively a preacher, and his serene and sweet genius never unbent into a frolicsome mood. As early as 1820 a volume of Robert Burns's poems fell into Whittier's hands like a spark into tinder, and the flame that has so long illuminated and cheered began to blaze. It was, however, a softened ray, not yet the tongue of lyric fire which it afterwards became. But none of the poets smiled as they sang. The Muse of New England was staid and stately — or was she, after all, not a true

daughter of Jove, but a tenth Muse, an Anne Bradstreet? The rollicking laugh of Knickerbocker was a solitary sound in the American air until the blithe carol of Holmes returned a kindred echo.

Willis was the sign of the breaking spell. But his light touch could not avail. The Puritan spell could be broken only by Puritan force, and it is the lineal descendants of Puritanism, often the sons of clergymen—Emerson and Holmes and Longfellow and Hawthorne and Whittier—who emancipated our literature from its Puritan subjection. In 1829 Willis, as editor of *Peter Parley's Token* and the *American Monthly Magazine*, was aided by Longfellow and Hawthorne and Motley and Hildreth and Mrs. Child and Mrs. Sigourney, and the elder Bishop Doane, Park Benjamin and George B. Cheever, Albert Pike and Rufus Dawes, as contributors. Willis himself was a copious writer, and in the *American Monthly* first appeared the titles of "Inkling of Adventure" and "Pencilings by the Way," which he afterwards reproduced for some of his best literary work. The *Monthly* failed, and in 1831, the year that the *New England Magazine* began, it was merged in the New York *Mirror*, of which Willis became associate editor, leaving his native city forever, and never forgiving its injustice towards him. In the heyday of his happy social career in

England he wrote to his mother, "The mines of Golconda would not tempt me to return and live in Boston."

This was the literary situation when Holmes was preludeing in the magazine. The acknowledged poets in Boston were Dana, Sprague, and Pierpont. Are these names familiar to the readers of this essay? How much of their poetry can those readers repeat? No one knows more surely than he who writes of a living author how hard it is to forecast fame, and how dangerous is prophecy. When Edward Everett saluted Percival's early volume as the harbinger of literary triumphs, and Emerson greeted Walt Whitman at "the opening of a great career," they generalized a strong personal impression. They identified their own preference with the public taste. On the other hand, Hawthorne says truly of himself that he was long the most obscure man of letters in America. Yet he had already published the *Twice-told Tales* and the *Mosses from an Old Manse*, the two series of stories in which the character and quality of his genius are fully disclosed. But although Longfellow hailed the publication of the first collection as the rising of a new star, the tone of his comment is not that of the discoverer of a planet shining for all, but of an individual poetic pleasure. The prescience of fame is very infrequent. The

village gazes in wonder at the return of the famous man who was born on the farm under the hill, and whose latent greatness nobody suspected; while the youth who printed verses in the corner of the county paper, and drew the fascinated glances of palpitating maidens in the meeting-house, and seemed to the farmers to have associated himself at once with Shakespeare and Tupper and the great literary or "littery folks," never emerges from the poet's department in the paper in which unconsciously and forever he has been cornered. It would be a grim Puritan jest if that department had been named from the corner of the famous dead in Westminster Abbey.

If the Boston of sixty years ago had ventured to prophesy for itself literary renown, it is easy to see upon what reputations of the time it would have rested its claims. But if the most familiar names of that time are familiar no longer, if Kettell and poems from the *United States Gazette* seem to be cemeteries of departed reputations, the fate of the singers need not be deplored as if Fame had forgotten them. Fame never knew them. Fame does not retain the name of every minstrel who passes singing. But to say that Fame does not know them is not dispraise. They sang for the hearers of their day, as the players played. Is it nothing to please those who listen, because those

who are out of hearing do not stop and applaud? If we recall the names most eminent in our literature, whether they were destined for a longer or shorter date, we shall see that they are undeniably illustrations of the survival of the fittest. Turning over the noble volumes of Stedman and Miss Hutchinson, in which, as on a vast plain, the whole line of American literature is drawn up for inspection and review, and marches past like the ghostly midnight columns of Napoleon's grand army, we cannot quarrel with the verdict of time, nor feel that injustice has been done to *Thamis* or to *Cawdor*. There are singers of a day, but not less singers because they are of a day. The insect that flashes in the sunbeam does not survive like the elephant. The splendor of the most gorgeous butterfly does not endure with the faint hue of the hills that gives *Athens* its *Pindaric* name. And there are singers who do not sing. What says *Holmes*, with eager sympathy and pity, in one of his most familiar and most beautiful lyrics?—

“ We count the broken lyres that rest  
Where the sweet waiting singers slumber,  
But o'er their silent sister's breast  
The wild flowers who will stoop to number?  
A few can touch the magic string,  
And noisy fame is proud to win them;  
Alas, for those that never sing,  
And die with all their music in them!”

But as he says also that the capacities of listeners at lectures differ widely, some holding a gallon, others a quart, and others only a pint or a gill, so of the singers who are not voiceless, their voices differ in volume. Some are organs that fill the air with glorious and continuous music; some are trumpets blowing a ringing peal, then sinking into silence; some are harps of melancholy but faint vibration; still others are flutes and pipes, whose sweet or shrill note has a dying fall. Some are heard as the wind or sea is heard; some like the rustle of leaves; some like the chirp of birds. Some are heard long and far away; others across the field; others hardly across the street. Fame is perhaps but the term of a longer or shorter fight with oblivion; but it is the warrior who "drinks delight of battle with his peers," and holds his own in the fray, who finally commands the eye and the heart. There were poets pleasantly singing to our grandfathers whose songs we do not hear, but the unheeded voice of the youngest songster of that time is a voice we heed to-day. Holmes wrote but two "Autocrat" papers in the *New England Magazine*—one in November, 1831, and the other in February, 1832. The year after the publication of the second paper he went to Paris, where for three years he studied medicine, not as a poet, but as a physician, and he returned in 1836



an admirably trained and highly accomplished professional man. But the Phi Beta Kappa poem of that year, like the tender lyric to Clemence upon leaving Paris, shows not only that the poet was not dead, but that he did not even sleep. The "Metrical Essay" was the serious announcement that the poet was not lost in the man of science, an announcement which was followed by the publication in the same year (1836) of his first volume of poems. This was three years before the publication of Longfellow's first volume of verses, *The Voices of the Night*.

Holmes's devotion to the two Muses of science and letters was uniform and untiring, as it was also to the two literary forms of verse and prose. But although a man of letters, like the other eminent men of letters in New England, he had no trace of the Bohemian. Willis was the only noted literary figure that ever mistook Boston for a seaport in Bohemia, and he early discovered his error. The fraternity which has given to Boston its literary primacy has been always distinguished not only for propriety of life and respectability in its true sense of worthiness and respect, but for the possession of the virtues of fidelity, industry, and good sense, which have carried so far both the influence and the renown of New England. Nowhere has the Bohemian tradition been more

happily and completely shattered than in the circle to which Holmes returned from his European studies to take his place. American citizenship in its most attractive aspect has been signally illustrated in that circle, and it is not without reason that the government has so often selected from it our chief American representatives in other countries.

Dr. Holmes, as he was now called, and has continued to be called, practised his profession in Boston; but whether because of some lurking popular doubt of a poet's probable skill as a physician, or from some lack of taste on his part for the details of professional practice, like his kinsman, Wendell Phillips, and innumerable other young beginners, he sometimes awaited a professional call longer than was agreeable. But he wrote medical papers, and was summoned to lecture to the medical school at Dartmouth College in New Hampshire, and later at Pittsfield in Massachusetts, while his unfailing charm as an occasional poet gave him a distinctive name. Holmes's felicity in occasional poems is extraordinary. The "Metrical Essay" was the first and chief of the long series of such verses, among which the songs of '29, the poems addressed year after year to his college classmates of that year, have a delightful and endless grace, tenderness, wit, and point. Peg-

asus draws well in harness the triumphant chariot of '29, in which the lucky classmates of the poet move to a unique and happy renown.

As a reader, Holmes was the permanent challenge of Mrs. Browning's sighing regret that poets never read their own verses to their worth. Park Benjamin, who heard the Phi Beta Kappa poem, said of its delivery: "A brilliant, airy, and *spirituelle* manner varied with striking flexibility to the changing sentiment of the poem, now deeply impassioned, now gayly joyous and nonchalant, and anon springing up into almost an actual flight of rhapsody, rendered the delivery of this poem a rich, nearly a dramatic entertainment." This was no less true in later years when he read some of his poems in New York at Bishop Potter's, then rector of Grace Church, or of the reading of the poem at the doctors' dinner given to him by the physicians of New York a little later.

Holmes's readings were like improvisations. The poems were expressed and interpreted by the whole personality of the poet. The most subtle touch of thought, the melody of fond regret, the brilliant passage of description, the culmination of latent fun exploding in a keen and resistless jest, all these were vivified in the sensitive play of manner and modulation of tone of the reader, so that a poem by Holmes at the Harvard Commence-

ment dinner was one of the anticipated delights which never failed. This temperament implied an oratorical power which naturally drew the poet into the lecture lyceum when it was in its prime, in the decade between 1850 and 1860. During that time the popular lecture was a distinct and effective public force, and not the least of its services was its part in instructing and training the public conscience for the great contest of the Civil War.

The year 1831, in which Holmes's literary activity began, was also the year on whose first day the first number of Garrison's *Liberator* appeared, and the final period of the slavery controversy opened. But neither this storm of agitation nor the transcendental mist that a few years later overhung intellectual New England greatly affected the poet.

In the first number of the "Autocrat" there is a passage upon puns, which, crackling with fun, shows his sensitive scepticism. The "Autocrat" says: "In a case lately decided before Miller, J., Doe presented Roe a subscription paper, and urged the claims of suffering humanity. Roe replied by asking when charity was like a top. It was in evidence that Doe preserved a dignified silence. Roe then said, 'When it begins to hum.' There are temperaments of a refined suspicious-

ness to which, when the plea of reform is urged, the claims of suffering humanity at once begin to hum. The very word reform irritates a peculiar kind of sensibility, as a red flag stirs the fury of a bull. A noted party leader said, with inexpressible scorn, 'When Dr. Johnson defined the word patriotism as the last refuge of a scoundrel, he had not learned the infinite possibilities of the word *refa-a-r-m.*'"

The acidity of this jest is wholly unknown to the "Autocrat," who has moved always with reform, if not always with reformers, and whose protest against bigotry is as searching as it is sparkling. Not only has his ear been quick to detect the hum of Mr. Honeythunder's loud appeal, but his eye to catch the often ludicrous aspect of honest whimsey. During all the early years of his literary career he flew his flashing darts at all the "isms," and he fell under the doubt and censure of those earnest children of the time whom the gay and clever sceptics derided as apostles of the newness. When Holmes appeared upon the lecture platform it was to discourse of literature or science, or to treat some text of social manners or morals with a crisp Poor Richard sense and mother wit, and a brilliancy of illustration, epigram, and humor that fascinated the most obdurate "come-outer." Holmes's lectures on the English poets at

the Lowell Institute were among the most noted of that distinguished platform, and everywhere the poet was one of the most popular of "attractions." There were not wanting those who maintained that his use of the platform was the correct one, and that the orators who, often by happy but incisive indirection, fought the good fight of the hour abused their opportunity.

It was while Holmes was still a professor, but still also touching the lyre and writing scientific essays and charming the great audiences of the lecture lyceum, that in the first number of the *Atlantic Monthly*, in November, 1857, the "Autocrat of the Breakfast Table" remarked, "I was just going to say, when I was interrupted," and resumed the colloquies of the *New England Magazine*. He had been interrupted twenty-two years before. But as he began again it was plain that it was the same voice, yet fuller, stronger, richer, and that we were listening to one of the wisest of wits and sharpest of observers. Emerson warns us that superlatives are to be avoided. But it will not be denied that the "Autocrat" belongs in the highest rank of modern magazine or periodical literature, of which the essays of "Elia" are the type. The form of the "Autocrat"—a semi-dramatic, conversational, descriptive monologue—is not peculiar to Holmes's work, but the treat-

ment of it is absolutely original. The manner is as individual and unmistakable as that of Elia himself. It would be everywhere recognized as the Autocrat's. During the intermission of the papers the more noted Macaulay flowers of literature, as the Autocrat calls them, had bloomed; Carlyle's *Sartor Resartus* and reviews, Christopher North's *Noctes* (now fallen into ancient night), Thackeray's *Roundabout Papers*, Lowell's *Hosea Biglow*—a whole library of magazine and periodical literature of the first importance had appeared. But the Autocrat began again, after a quarter of a century, musical with so rich a chorus, and his voice was clear, penetrating, masterful, and distinctively his own.

The cadet branch of English literature—the familiar colloquial periodical essay, a comment upon men and manners and life—is a delightful branch of the family, and traces itself back to Dick Steele and Addison. Hazlitt, who belonged to it, said that he preferred the *Tatler* to the *Spectator*; and Thackeray, who consorted with it proudly, although he was of the elder branch, restored Sir Richard, whose habits had cost him a great deal of his reputation, to general favor. The familiar essay is susceptible, as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries show, of great variety and charm of treatment. What would the Chris-

tian Hero, writing to his Prue that he would be with her in a pint of wine's time, have said to "Blakesmoor" and "Oxford in the Vacation"? Yet Lamb and Steele are both consummate masters of the essay, and Holmes, in the "Autocrat," has given it a new charm. The little realm of the Autocrat, his lieges of the table, the persons of the drama, are at once as definitely outlined as Sir Roger's club. Unconsciously and resistlessly we are drawn within the circle; we are admitted *ad eundem*, and become the targets of the wit, the irony, the shrewd and sharp epigram, the airy whim, the sparkling fancy, the curious and recondite thought, the happy allusion, the felicitous analogy, of the sovereign master of the feast.

The index of the *Autocrat* is in itself a unique work. It reveals the whimsical discursiveness of the book; the restless hovering of that brilliant talk over every topic, fancy, feeling, fact; a humming-bird sipping the one honeyed drop from every flower; or a huma, to use its own droll and capital symbol of the lyceum lecturer, the bird that never lights. There are few books that leave more distinctly the impression of a mind teeming with riches of many kinds. It is, in the Yankee phrase, thoroughly wideawake. There is no languor, and it permits none in the reader, who must move along the page warily, lest in the gay profusion



of the grove, unwittingly defrauding himself of delight, he miss some flower half hidden, some gem chance-dropped, some darting bird. Howells's *Letters* was called a chamber-window book, a book supplying in solitude the charm of the best society. We could all name a few such in our own literature. Would any of them, or many, take precedence of the *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table*?

It is in this book that the value of the scientific training to the man of letters is illustrated, not only in furnishing noble and strong analogies, but in precision of observation and accuracy of statement. In Holmes's style, the definiteness of form and the clearness of expression are graces and virtues which are due to his exact scientific study, as well as to the daylight quality of his mind.

The delicate apprehension of the finer and tenderer feelings which is disclosed in the little passages of narrative in the record of the *Autocrat* and of his legitimate brothers, the Professor and the Poet, at the Breakfast Table, gives a grace and a sweetness to the work which naturally flow into the music of the poems with which the diary of a conversation often ends. These traits in the *Autocrat* suggested that he would yet tell a distinct story, which indeed came while the trilogy of the Breakfast Table was yet proceeding. *Elsie*

*Venner* and the *Guardian Angel*, the two novels of Holmes's, are full of the same briskness and acuteness of observation, the same effusiveness of humor and characteristic Americanism, as the *Autocrat*. Certain aspects of New England life and character are treated in these stories with incomparable vivacity and insight. Holmes's picture is of a later New England than Hawthorne's, but it is its lineal descendant. It is another facet of the Puritan diamond which flashes with different light in the genius of Hawthorne, Emerson, Lowell, Whittier, Longfellow, Holmes, and Judd in *Margaret*. For, with all his lyrical instinct and rollicking humor, Holmes is essentially a New-Englander, and one of the most faithful and shrewd interpreters of New England.

The colloquial habit of the *Autocrat* is not lost in the stories, and it is so marked generally in Holmes's writings as to be called distinctive. It is a fascinating gift, when it is so restrained by taste and instinctive refinement as not to become what is known as bumptiousness. Thackeray, even in his novels, is apt to drop into this vein, to talk about the persons of his drama with his reader, instead of leaving them to play out their part alone. This trait offends some of Thackeray's audience, to whom it seems like the manager's hand thrust into the box to help out the play of the

puppets. They resent not "the damnable faces" of the actors, but the damnable sermonizing of the author, and exhort him to permit the play to begin. Thackeray frankly acknowledged his tendency to preach, as he called it. But it was part of the man. Without the private personal touch of the essayist in his stories they would not be his. This colloquial habit is very winning when governed by a natural delicacy and an exquisite literary instinct. It is the quality of all the authors who are distinctly beloved as persons by their readers, and it is to this class that Holmes especially belongs.

It is not a quality which is easily analyzed, but it blends a power of sympathetic observation and appreciation both of the thing observed and the reader to whom the observation is addressed. The Autocrat, as he converses, brightens with his own clear thought, with the happy quip, the airy fancy. He is sure of your delight, not only in the thought, but in its deft expression. He in turn is delighted with your delight. He warms to the responsive mind and heart, and feels the mutual joy. The personal relation is established, and the Autocrat's audience become his friends, to whom he describes with infinite glee the effect of his remarks upon his lieges at table. No other author takes the reader into his personal confidence more close-



ly than Holmes, and none reveals his personal temperament more clearly. This confidential relation becomes even more simple and intimate as time chastens the eagerness of youth and matures the keen brilliancy of the blossom into the softer bloom of the fruit. The colloquies of the Autocrat under the characteristic title of "Over the Tea-Cups" are full of the same shrewd sense and wise comment and tender thought. The kindly mentor takes the reader by the button or lays his hand upon his shoulder, not with the rude familiarity of the bully or the boor, but with the courtesy of Montaigne, the friendliness of John Aubrey, or the wise cheer of Selden. The reader glows with the pleasure of an individual greeting, and a wide diocese of those whom the Autocrat never saw plume themselves proudly upon his personal acquaintance.

In this discursive talk about one of the American authors who have vindicated the position of American letters in the literature of the language we have not mentioned all his works. It is the quality rather than the quantity with which we are concerned, the upright, honorable, pure quality of the poet, the wit, the scholar, for whom the most devoted reader is called to make no plea, no apology. The versatility of his power is obvious, but scarcely less so the uniformity of his work.

It is a power which was early mature. For many a year he has dwelt upon a high table-land where the air is equable and inspiring, yet, as we have hinted, ever softer and sweeter. The lyric of to-day glows with the same ardor as the fervent apostrophe to "Old Ironsides" or the tripping salutation to the remembered and regretted Clemence; it is only less eager. The young Autocrat who remarked that the word "scrub" dismissed from table a fellow-boarder who turned pale, now with the same smiling acuteness remarks the imprudent politeness which tries to assure him that it is no matter if he is a little older. Did anybody say so? The easy agility with which he cleared "the seven-barred gate" has carried him over the eight bars, and we are all in hot pursuit. For just sixty years since his first gay and tender note was heard, Holmes has been fulfilling the promise of his matin song. He has become a patriarch of our literature, and all his countrymen are his lovers.



WASHINGTON IRVING





## WASHINGTON IRVING

FORTY years ago, upon a pleasant afternoon, you might have seen tripping with an elastic step along Broadway, in New York, a figure which even then would have been called quaint. It was a man of about sixty-six or sixty-seven years old, of a rather solid frame, wearing a Talma, as a short cloak of the time was called, that hung from the shoulders, and low shoes, neatly tied, which were observable at a time when boots were generally worn. The head was slightly declined to one side, the face was smoothly shaven, and the eyes twinkled with kindly humor and shrewdness. There was a chirping, cheery, old-school air in the whole appearance, an undeniable Dutch aspect, which, in the streets of New Amsterdam, irresistibly recalled Diedrich Knickerbocker. The observer might easily have supposed that he saw some later descendant of the renowned Wouter Van Twiller refined into a nineteenth-century gentleman. The occasional start of interest as the figure was recognized by some one in the passing

throng, the respectful bow, and the sudden turn to scan him more closely, indicated that he was not unknown. Indeed, he was the American of his time universally known. This modest and kindly man was the creator of Diedrich Knickerbocker and Rip Van Winkle. He was the father of our literature, and at that time its patriarch. He was Washington Irving.

At the same time you might have seen another man, of slight figure and rustic aspect, with an air of seriousness, if not severity, moving with the crowd, but with something remote and reserved in his air, as if in the city he bore with him another atmosphere, and were still secluded among solitary hills. In the bright and busy street of the city which was always cosmopolitan, and in which there lingers a tradition, constantly renewed, of good-natured banter of the losel Yankee, this figure passed like the grave genius of New England. By a little play of fancy the first figure might have seemed the smiling spirit of genial cheerfulness and humor, of kindly sympathy even with the foibles and weaknesses of poor human nature; and the other the mentor of its earnest endeavor and serious duty. For he was the first of our poets, whose "Thanatopsis" was the hymn of his meditations among the primeval forests of his native hills, and who, in his last years, sat at the door of

his early home and looked across the valley of the Westfield to the little town of Plainfield upon the wooded heights beyond, whose chief distinction is that there he wrote the "Waterfowl"; for this graver figure was the poet Bryant.

If in the same walk you had passed those two figures, you would have seen not only the first of our famous prose writers and the first of our acknowledged poets, but also the representatives of the two fundamental and distinctive qualities of our American literature, as of all literature—its grave, reflective, earnest character, and its sportive, genial, and humorous genius.

At the time of which I speak another figure also was familiar in Broadway, but less generally recognized as it passed than either of the others, although, perhaps, even more widely known to fame than they. This was Cooper, who gave us so many of the heroes of our childhood's delight, but who at this time was himself the hero of innumerable lawsuits, undertaken to chastise the press for what he believed to be unjust and libelous comments upon himself. Now that the uproar of that litigation is silent, and its occasion forgotten, it seems comical that a man for whom fame had already rendered a favorable judgment should be busily seeking the opinion of local courts upon transitory newspaper opinions of him-

self and his writings. It is as if Dickens, when the whole English-reading world—judges on the bench and bishops in their studies, cobblers in their stalls and grooms in the stables—were all laughing over Pickwick, should have sued the *Eatanswill Gazette* for calling him a clown. Thackeray pronounces Cooper's Long Tom Coffin one of the prizemen of fiction. That is a final judgment by the chief-justice. But who knows what was the verdict in Cooper's lawsuits to vindicate himself, and who cares? When Cooper died there was a great commemorative meeting in New York. Daniel Webster presided, and praised the storyteller; Bryant read a discourse upon him, while Irving sat by his side. One of the triumvirate of our early literature was gone, and two remained to foresee their own future in the honors paid to him. Indeed, it was to see them, quite as much as to hear of their dead comrade, that the multitude assembled that evening; and the one who was seen with the most interest was Irving, the one in whom the city of New York naturally feels a peculiar right and pride, as the most renowned of her children.

If I say that he made personally the same impression that his works make, you can easily see the man. As you read the story of his life you feel its constant gayety and cheerfulness. It was

the life of a literary man and a man of society—a life without events, or only the events of all our lives, except that it lacks the great event of marriage. In place of it there is a tender and pathetic romance. Irving lived to be seventy-six years old. At twenty-six he was engaged to a beautiful girl, who died. He never married; but after his death, in a little box of which he always kept the key, was found the miniature of a lovely girl, and with it a braid of fair hair, and a slip of paper on which was written the name Matilda Hoffman, with some pages upon which the writing was long since faded. That fair face Irving kept all his life in a more secret and sacred shrine. It looks out, now and then, with unchanged loveliness from some pensive passage, which he seems to write with wistful melancholy of remembrance. That fond and immortal presence constantly renewed the gentle humanity, the tenderness of feeling, the sweet healthfulness and generous sympathy which never failed in his life and writings.

He was born in the city of New York in 1783, the year in which the Revolution ended in the acknowledgment of American independence. The British army marched out of the city, and the American army, with Washington at the head, marched in. "The patriot's work is ended just as my boy is born," said the patriotic mother,

“and the boy shall be named Washington.” Six years later, when Washington returned to New York to be inaugurated President, he was one day going into a shop when the boy’s Scotch nurse democratically stopped the new republican chief magistrate and said to him, “Please your honor, here’s a bairn was named for you.” The great man turned and looked kindly on his little namesake, laid his hand upon his head, and blessed his future biographer.

The name of no other American has been so curiously confused with Washington’s as that of Irving. Many a young fellow puzzles over the connection which the name seems vaguely to imply, and in other lands the identity of the men is confounded. When Irving first went to Europe, a very young man, well-educated, courteous, with great geniality of manner and charm of conversation, he was received by Prince Torlonia, the banker, in Rome, with unusual and flattering civility. His travelling companion, who had been treated by the prince with entire indifference, was perplexed at the warmth of Irving’s welcome. Irving laughingly said that it only proved the prince’s remarkable discrimination. But the young travellers laughed still more when the prince unconsciously revealed the secret of his attentions by taking his guest aside, and asking

him how nearly he was related to General Washington.

Many years afterwards, when he had become famous, an English lady and her daughter paused in an Italian gallery before a bust of Washington. "And who was Washington, mamma?" asked the daughter. "Why, my dear, I am surprised at your ignorance," answered the mother, "he was the author of the *Sketch Book*." Long ago in Berlin I was talking with some American friends one evening at a café, and observed a German intently listening to our conversation as if trying his ability to understand the language. Presently he said to me, politely, "You are English, no?" But when I replied "No, we are Americans"—"Americans! he exclaimed enthusiastically, grasping my hand and shaking it warmly, "Americans, ach! we all know your great General Washington Irving."

Irving's father was a Presbyterian deacon, in whose heart the sterner traditions of the Covenanters lingered. He tried hard to teach his son to contemn amusement, and to impale his youth upon the five points of Calvinism, rather than to play ball. But it was John Knox trying to curb the tricky Ariel. Perhaps from some bright maternal ancestor the boy had derived his sweet gayety of nature which nothing could repress. His airy spirits bubbled like a sunny fountain in that some-

what arid household. He read at ten a translation of the *Orlando Furioso*, and his father's yard, doubtless trim and well kept as besemed a deacon's yard, became at once a field of chivalry. Candles were forbidden him in his chamber, but when he made the acquaintance of *Robinson Crusoe* and *Sindbad the Sailor*, he secreted lights to illuminate his innocent revels with those immortal playmates.

The amusements which were permitted were of too depressing a character to be tolerated by the healthy boy, who, like the duck taking to the water from under the wing of the astonished hen, sometimes escaped from the serious house at night by dropping from a window, and with a delight that must have torn his father's heart with anguish had he known it, tasted the forbidden fruit of the theatre. It was a Presbyterian boy who tasted it then; but in the same city many years afterwards it was a Quaker boy whom I knew who was also enamoured of the play. "John," said his grieved father, "is this dreadful thing true that I hear of thee? Has thee ever been to see the play-actress Frances Kemble?" "Yes, father," answered the heroic John. "I hope thee has not been more than once, John," said the afflicted father. "Yes, father," replied John, resolved to make a clean breast of his sins, "more than thirty times."



It is useless to try to prevent blue-birds from flying in the spring. The blithe creatures made to soar and sing will not be restrained. The same kind Providence that made Calvin made Shakespeare. The sun is higher than the clouds, and smiles are as heaven-born as tears. In Emerson's poem the squirrel says to the mountain :

“You're not so small as I,  
And not half so spry :

. . . . .

If I cannot carry forests on my back  
Neither can you crack a nut.”

It was in vain to try to thwart the young Irving's genius. Yet the boy who a little later was to light with rosy cheer the air which, as Wendell Phillips said, was still black with sermons; who was to give to our literature its first distinctly humorous strain, and innocently to amuse the world, was somehow or other, as he said, “taught to feel that everything pleasant was wicked.”

If that were so, what a sinner Washington Irving was! If to make life easier by making it pleasanter, if to outwit trouble by gay banter, if with satire that smiles but never stings to correct foibles and to quicken good impulses; if to deepen and strengthen human sympathy, is not to be a human benefactor, what makes one? When Dr.

Johnson said of Garrick that his death eclipsed the gayety of nations, he did not mean merely that the player would no longer make men laugh, but that he could no longer make them better. "If, however," said Irving—and Willis selected the words for the motto of his second volume of verse published in 1827—"I can by a lucky chance, in these days of evil, rub out one wrinkle from the brow of care, or beguile the heavy heart of one moment of sadness; if I can, now and then, penetrate the gathering film of misanthropy, prompt a benevolent view of human nature, and make my reader more in good-humor with his fellow-beings and himself, surely, surely I shall not then have written entirely in vain."

That cannot be said to have been the spirit of any American author before Irving. Our colonial literature was mainly political and theological. You have only to return to the early New England days in the stories of Hawthorne, the magician who restores with a shuddering spell that old, sombre life, to understand the character of its reading. The books that were not treatises upon special topics all seemed to say with one of the grim bards of Calvinism :

"My thoughts on awful subjects roll,  
Damnation and the dead."

Literature, in its proper sense, there was none. There was no imaginative creation, no play of fancy and humor, no subtle charm of the ideal life, no grace and delight of expression, which are essential to literature. The perpetual twilight and chill of the New England Puritan world were an arctic winter in which no flower of poesy bloomed and no bird sang. One of the French players who came to this country with Rachel says, in his journal, with a startled air, as if he had remarked in Americans a universal touch of lunacy, that he was invited to take a pleasure-drive to Greenwood Cemetery. Evidently he was not familiar with Froissart's epigram nor with the annals of the Puritan fathers, or he would have known that their favorite pleasure-ground was the graveyard. Judge Sewell's Journal, the best picture of daily New England life in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, is a portrait framed in black and hung with thick crape. It is a register of funerals—a book which seems to require a suit of sables for its proper reading.

The early Christians dwelt so often and so long in the catacombs that when they emerged, accustomed to associate life with the tomb, they doubtless regarded the whole world as a cemetery. The American Puritans inherited the disposition from their early confessors, and so powerful was the

tendency that it laid its sombre spirit upon the earliest enduring poem in our literature, and the fresh and smiling nature of the new world was first depicted by our literary art as a tomb :

“The hills,  
 Rock-ribbed and ancient as the sun; the vales  
 Stretching in pensive quietness between;  
 The venerable woods; rivers that move  
 In majesty; and the complaining brooks  
 That make the meadows green; and, poured round all,  
 Old ocean’s gray and melancholy waste,  
 Are but the solemn decorations all  
 Of the great tomb of man.”

“Thanatopsis” is the swan-song of Puritanism. Indeed, when New England Puritanism could sing, as for the first time it did in the verse of Bryant, the great change was accomplished. Out of strength had come forth sweetness. I am not decrying the Puritans. They were the stern builders of the modern world, the unconscious heralds of wider liberty, and a kindlier future for mankind. But

“God works in a mysterious way  
 His wonders to perform,”

and never more mysteriously than when he chose as the pioneers of religious liberty in the New World those who hung Quakers, and as the founders of civil equality those who permitted only members of their own Church to vote.

Irving was not a studious boy. He did not go to college. He read some law at sixteen, but he read much more literature, and sauntered in the country about New York with his gun and fishing-rod. He sailed up the Hudson, and explored for the first time the realm that was presently to be his forever by the right of eminent domain of the imagination. New York was a snug little city in those days. At the beginning of the century it was all below the present City Hall, and the young fellow, who was born a cosmopolitan, greatly enjoyed the charms of the modest society in which the Dutch and the English circles were still somewhat separated, and in which such literary cultivation as there was was necessarily foreign. But while he enjoyed he observed, and his literary instinct began to stir.

Under the name of "Jonathan Oldstyle," the young Irving printed in his brother's newspaper essays in the style of the *Spectator*, discussing topics of the town, and the modest theatre in John Street and its chance actors, as if it had been Drury Lane with Garrick and Mrs. Siddons. The little town kindly smiled upon the lively efforts of the Presbyterian deacon's son; and its welcome of his small essays, the provincial echo of the famous Queen Anne's men in London, is a touching revelation of our scant and spare native literary talent. The essays

are forgotten now, but they were enough to bring Charles Brockden Brown to find the young author, and to tempt him, but in vain, to write for *The Literary Magazine and American Register*, which the novelist was just beginning in Philadelphia, a pioneer of American literary magazines, which Brown sustained for five years.

The youthful Addison of New Amsterdam was a delicate lad, and when he came of age he sailed for France and the Mediterranean, and passed two years in travelling. Napoleon Bonaparte was emperor, and at war with England, and the young American, despite his passport, was everywhere believed to be an Englishman. Travelling was hard work in those days of war, but the cheery youth proved the truth of the proverb that a light heart and a whole pair of breeches go round the world. At Messina, in Sicily, he saw Nelson's fleet pass through the strait, looking for the French ships; and before the year ended the famous battle of Trafalgar had been fought, and at Greenwich in England Irving saw the body of the great sailor lying in state, wrapped in his flag of victory. At Rome he made the acquaintance of Washington Allston, and almost resolved to be a painter. In Paris he saw Madame de Staël, who overwhelmed him with eager questions about his remote and unknown country, and in London he

was enchanted by Mrs. Siddons. Some years afterwards, when the *Sketch Book* had made him famous, he was presented to Mrs. Siddons, and the great actress said to him, in her deepest voice and with her stateliest manner, "You've made me weep." The modest young author was utterly abashed, and could say nothing. After the publication of his *Bracebridge Hall* he was once more presented to her, and again with gloomy grandeur she said to him, "You've made me weep again." This time Irving received the solemn salute with more composure, and doubtless retorted with a compliment magnificent enough even for the sovereign Queen of Tragedy, who, as her niece Mrs. Fanny Kemble said of her, never laid aside her great manner, and at the dinner-table brandished her fork and stabbed the potatoes.

Irving returned from this tour with established health—a refined, agreeable, exceedingly handsome and charming gentleman; with a confirmed taste for society, and a delightful store of interesting recollection and anecdote. With a group of cultivated and lively friends of his own age he dined and supped and enjoyed the town, and a little anecdote which he was fond of telling shows that the good old times were not unlike the good new times: One morning, after a gay dinner, Irving met one of his fellow-revellers, who told him that

on the way home, after draining the parting bumper, he had fallen through a grating in the sidewalk, which had been carelessly left open, into the vault beneath. It was impossible to climb out, and at first the solitude was rather dismal, he said; but several of the other guests fell in, in the course of the evening, and, on the whole, they had quite a pleasant time of it.

In the midst of this frolicking life, and growing out of it, Irving's real literary career began. With his brother William, and his friend James K. Paulding, who afterwards wrote the *Dutchman's Fireside*, and was one of the recognized American authors of fifty years ago, he issued every fortnight a periodical, which ran for twenty numbers, and stopped in the midst of its success. It was modelled upon the *Spectator* and Goldsmith's *Citizen of the World*, describing and criticising the manners and morals of the town with extravagant humor and pungency, and a rollicking independence which must have been both startling and stimulating.

Perhaps, also, the town was secretly pleased to discover that it was sufficiently important to be worthy of such bright raillery and humorous reproof. *Salmagundi* was only a lively *jeu d'esprit*, and Irving was never proud of it. "I know," said Paulding, writing to him in later life, "you



consider old Sal as a sort of saucy, flippant trollope, belonging to nobody, and not worth fathering." But, nevertheless, Irving's genius was trying its wings in it, and pluming itself for flight. *Salmagundi* undoubtedly, to a later taste, is rather crude and cumbrous fun, but it is interesting as the immediate forerunner of our earliest work of sustained humor, and of the wit of Holmes and Lowell at a later date. When it was discontinued, at the beginning of 1808, Irving and his brother began the *History of New York*, which was originally designed to be a parody of a particular book. But the work was interrupted by the business difficulties of the brother, and at last Irving resumed it alone, recast it entirely, and as he finished it the engagement with Matilda Hoffman ended with her death, and the long and secret romance of his life began.

Knickerbocker's *History* was published just before Christmas, 1809, and made a merry Christmas for our grandfathers and grandmothers eighty years ago. The fun began before the book was published. In October the curiosity of the town of eighty thousand inhabitants was awakened by a series of skilful paragraphs in the *Evening Post*. The art of advertising was never more ingeniously illustrated. Mr. Fulkerson himself would have paid homage to the artist. One day the quid-

nunes found this paragraph in the paper. It was headed,

“DISTRESSING.

“Left his lodgings, some time since, and has not since been heard of, a small elderly gentleman, dressed in an old black coat and cocked hat, by the name of Knickerbocker. As there are some reasons for believing that he is not entirely in his right mind, and, as great anxiety is entertained about him, any information concerning him left either at the Columbian Hotel, Mulberry Street, or at the office of this paper, will be thankfully received.

“P. S.—Printers of newspapers would be aiding the cause of humanity by giving an insertion to the above.

“October 25th.”

This was followed within a fortnight by another ingenious lure :

“*To the Editor of the Evening Post :*

“SIR,—Having read in your paper of the 26th October last a paragraph respecting an old gentleman by the name of Knickerbocker, who was missing from his lodgings, if it would be any relief to his friends, or furnish them with any clue to discover where he is, you may inform them that a person answering the description was seen by the passengers of the Albany stage early in the morning, about four or five weeks ago, resting himself by the side of the road, a little above Kingsbridge. He had in his hands a small bundle, tied in a red bandana handkerchief. He appeared to be travelling northward, and was very much fatigued and exhausted.

“November 6.

A TRAVELLER.”

Ten days after came a letter signed by Seth Handaside, landlord of the Independent Handaside :

“COLUMBIAN HOTEL, Mulberry Street.

“SIR,—You have been kind enough to publish in your paper a paragraph about Mr. Diedrich Knickerbocker, who

was missing so strangely from his lodgings some time since. Nothing satisfactory has been heard from the old gentleman since, but a very curious written Book has been found in his room in his own handwriting. Now, I wish you to notice him, if he is still alive, that if he does not return and pay off his bill for board and lodging, I shall have to dispose of his Book to satisfy me for the same."

This is very simple jesting, but at that time it was very effective in a town that enjoyed the high spirits of *Salmagundi*. Moreover, the book which was announced in this lively strain was as unprecedented as the announcement. It was a very serious time and country, and the work of the small elderly gentleman who carried a little bundle tied in a red bandana handkerchief appeared in the midst of the sober and dry effusions of our Puritan literature, and of an eager and energetic life still engrossed with the subjection of a continent and the establishment of a new nation. It was the work of a young man of twenty-six, who lived fifty years afterwards with constantly increasing fame, making many and admirable contributions to literature. But nothing that followed surpassed the joyous brilliancy and gay felicity of his first book, which was at once acknowledged as the wittiest book that America had produced.

Knickerbocker's *History* is a prolonged and elaborate and audacious burlesque of the early annals of New Amsterdam. The undaunted Goth

of the legend who plucked the Roman senator by the beard was not a more ruthless iconoclast than this son of New Amsterdam, who drew its grave ancestors from venerable obscurity by flooding them with the cheerful light of blameless fun. To pass the vague and venerable traditions of the austere and heroic founders of the city through the alembic of a youth's hilarious creative humor, and to turn them out in forms resistlessly grotesque, but with their identity unimpaired, was a stroke as daring as it was successful. But the skill and power with which this is done can be best appreciated by those who are most familiar with the history which the gleeful genius burlesques.

Irving follows the actual story closely, and the characters that he develops faithfully, although with rollicking caricature, are historical. Indeed, the fidelity is so absolute that the fiction is welded with the fact. The days of the Dutch ascendancy in New York are inextricably associated with this ludicrous narrative. It is impossible not to think of the forefathers of New Amsterdam as Knickerbocker describes them. The Wouter Van Twiller, the Wilhemus Kieft, the Peter Stuyvesant, who are familiarly and popularly known, are not themselves, but the figures drawn by Diedrich Knickerbocker. In comical despair, the historian Grahame, whose *Colonial History* is still among

the best, says of Knickerbocker: "If Sancho Panza had been a real governor, misrepresented by the wit of Cervantes, his future historian would have found it no easy matter to bespeak a grave attention to the annals of his administration."

The gayety of this blithe genius bursting in upon our staid literature is irresistible. Irving's temperament, his travels, his humor, gave him a cosmopolitan point of view; and his little native city, with its local sense of importance, and its droll aristocratic traditions springing from Dutch burgomasters and traders, impressed his merry genius like a complacent Cranford or Tarascon taking itself with a provincial seriousness, which, to his sympathetic fancy, was an exhaustless fountain of fun. Part of the fun to us, and perhaps to Irving, was the indignation with which it was received by the descendants of the Dutch families in the city and State. The excited drawing-rooms denounced it as scandalous satire and ridicule. Even Irving's friend, Gulian Verplanck, nine years afterwards, deepening the comedy of his remark by his evident unconsciousness of the drollery of his gravity, grieved that the author's exuberance of genuine humor should be wasted on a coarse caricature. Irving, who was then in Europe, saw Verplanck's strictures just as he had written *Rip Van Winkle*, and he wrote to a friend at home

that he could not help laughing at Verplanck's outburst of filial feeling for his ancestors, adding, in the true Knickerbocker vein, "Remember me heartily to him, and tell him that I mean to grow wiser and better and older every day, and to lay the castigation he has given seriously to heart."

The success of Knickerbocker's *History* was immediate, and it was the first American work of literature which arrested attention in Europe.

Sir Walter Scott, who was then the most famous of English poets, and was about to publish the first of the Waverley Novels, was delighted with a humor which he thought recalled Swift's, and a sentiment that seemed to him as tender as Sterne's. He wrote a generous acknowledgment to the American friend who had sent him the book, and in later years he welcomed Diedrich Knickerbocker at Abbotsford, and the American has given a charming and vivid picture of Scott's home and its master.

But the success of his book did not at once determine Irving's choice of a career. He was still a gilded youth who enjoyed the gay idleness of society, and who found in writing only another and pleasant recreation. He had been bred in the conservative tradition which looked upon livelihood by literature as the deliberate choice of Grub Street, and the wretchedness of Goldsmith as the

necessary and natural fate of authors; but it is droll that, although he recoiled from the uncertainty of support by literary labor, he was willing to try the very doubtful chances of office-holding as a means of securing leisure for literary pursuits. He offered himself as a candidate for appointment as the clerk of a court in the city. By tradition and sympathy he was a Federalist, but he had taken no active part in politics, and his chance was slight. He went to Albany, however, and in a lively letter he paints a familiar picture of the crowd of office-hunters who, he says, "like a cloud of locusts, have descended upon the city to devour every plant and herb and every green thing." He was sick with a cold, and stifled in rooms heated by stoves, and was utterly disgusted, as he says, "by the servility and duplicity and rascality I have witnessed among the swarms of scrub politicians who crawl about the great metropolis of our State like so many vermin about the head of the body politic."

Again the good old times were apparently very much like the good new times. Thirty-nine years after Irving's discomfiture in trying to get a public office, Hawthorne was turned out of one that he held, and wrote to a friend: "It seems to me that an inoffensive man of letters, having obtained a pitiful little office on no other plea than his pitiful

little literature, ought not to be left at the mercy of these thick-skulled and no-hearted ruffians." The language is strong, but the epithets are singularly well-chosen. The distinctive qualities of the ring-leaders, whether of high or low degree, in the degradation of public trusts into private and party spoils, have never been more accurately or effectively described than by the words "thick-skulled" and "no-hearted."

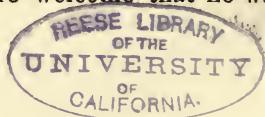
The story of the sturdy beggar who asked General Jackson to give him the mission to France, and finally came down to a request for an old coat, well illustrates a system which regards public office not as a public trust, but as private alms. The service of the State, whether military or civil, is an object of high and generous ambition, because it involves the leadership of men. But if Irving and Hawthorne thought that what is called office-seeking is disgusting, it was not because the public service is not noble and dignified, but because we choose to allow it to be so often dependent, not upon fitness and character, but upon the personal or political favor of the "thick-skulled" and "no-hearted."

But the problem of a career was soon solved. In the year 1810 Irving formed a business connection with two of his brothers, and the next five years were passed in New York, Philadelphia, and



Washington, forming various literary plans, looking out for his business interests, sparkling in society; and when war with England began, serving upon the governor's military staff as Colonel Washington Irving. In the spring of 1815 he sailed to roam again through Europe, but the illness of his brother compelled him to remain in England in charge of the business. "London," as a shrewd and celebrated American recently said, "was then as it is now, the social centre of the world." Irving saw famous men and women, and his charming sweetness and humor opened all doors and hearts. But the business fell into distress, then into disaster, and in the beginning of 1818 the house failed. He was now thrown wholly upon his literary resources, which did *not* fail, and in the spring of 1819, when he was thirty-six years old, the first number of the *Sketch Book* was issued in New York.

The merry, exuberant, satirical Diedrich Knickerbocker was transformed into the genial, urbane, and tender-hearted Geoffrey Crayon. Our fathers and grandfathers knew him well. They had been bred upon Addison and Goldsmith, the essayists and the poets of the eighteenth century, and in Geoffrey Crayon they recognized and welcomed another member of that delightful literary society. He was all the more welcome that he was



an American—one of themselves. The bland and courteous Geoffrey, indeed, had few rivals among his countrymen. In our little American world of letters at that time he came and conquered. Bryant's "Thanatopsis," had been published only two years before; Halleck's and Drake's lively but strictly local "Croakers" were still appearing, and Edward Everett had just hailed Percival's first volume as authorizing great expectations.

But prophecy is always dangerous. The year before, Sydney Smith had said, in the *Edinburgh Review*, "Literature the Americans have none—no native literature we mean. It is all imported. They had a Franklin, indeed, and may afford to live half a century on his fame. There is, or was, a Mr. Dwight, who wrote some poems, and his baptismal name was Timothy. There is also a small account of Virginia by Jefferson, and an epic poem by Mr. Joel Barlow, and some pieces of pleasantry by Mr. Irving. But why should Americans write books, when a six weeks' passage brings them, in their own tongue, *our* sense, science, and genius, on bales and hogsheads? Prairies, steamboats, grist-mills are their natural objects for centuries to come. Then, when they have got to the Pacific Ocean, epic poems, plays, pleasures of memory, and all the elegant gratifications of an ancient people who have tamed the

wild earth, and sat down to amuse themselves. This is the natural march of human affairs." As the sarcastic Yorkshire canon, sitting on the Edinburgh Olympus, wiped his pen, the *Sketch Book* was published. The good canon was right as to our small literary product, but even an *Edinburgh Review* could not wisely play the prophet.

This Mr. Everett also discovered, for his "great expectations" of Percival were not fulfilled. A desponding student of our poetry recently sighs that Percival is a forgotten poet, and then, seizing a promiscuous assortment of names, exclaims that Charles Sprague, William Wirt, Washington Irving, and Jack Downing may be referred to as forgotten authors. But this is the luxury of woe. Why should not Percival be a forgotten poet? That is to say, what is there in the verse of Percival that should command interest and attention to-day? He was a remarkably accomplished man and a most excellent gentleman, and his name is very familiar in the reading-books of the time when grandfathers of to-day were going to school. But he was a noted poet not because he took rank with his contemporaries—with Byron and Scott and Keats and Shelley and Coleridge and Wordsworth—but because there were very few Americans who wrote verses, and our fathers patriotically stood by them.

Yet because the note of a singer of another day is not heard by us, it does not follow that he did not touch the heart of his time. Grenville Mellen is a forgotten poet also, and Rufus Dawes and John Neal and James G. Eastburn. If the gentle reader will turn to the pages of Kettell, or any early American anthology, he will seem to himself to be walking among tombs. Upon each page might be suitably inscribed, "Sacred to the memory" of almost every one of the singers. But can we say with honest reproach, "forgotten poets"? The loiterer in the wood hears the song of the wood-thrush, but is the hermit-bird wronged, or is his song less sweet, because it is not echoed round the world? Is Fame to be held responsible for not retaining the name of every minstrel who loiters by and touches his harp lightly, and sings a sweet song as he passes on? Is it a hard fate to give pleasure to those who listen because those out of hearing do not applaud?

Many an author may have a tone and a touch which please the ear and taste of his own day, and which, as characteristic of a time, may be only curious to a later taste, like the costumes and dances of our great-grandmothers. But young America, sauntering at the club and at Newport, would not willingly wear the boots of Beau Nash, nor even the cloak of Beau Brummel. The law which pro-

vides that nothing shall be lost is equally observable in the realm of literary fame. Is anything of literature lost that deserves longer remembrance? or, more properly, can it be lost? A fair answer to the question can be found in the reply to another, whether delving in Kettell, or in any other anthology, reveals treasures dropped by Fame as precious as those she carries.

There are two ways in which authors survive: one by the constant reading of his works, the other by his name. Is Milton a forgotten author? But how much is he read, compared with the contemporary singers? Is Plato forgotten? Yet how many know him except by name? Irving thus far holds both. Time, like a thrifty husbandman, winnows its wheat, blowing away much chaff, but the golden grain remains. This is true not only of the whole multitude of authors, but of the works of each author. How many of them really survive in the anthology only? *Astoria* and *Captain Bonneville* and *Mahomet* and other books of Irving will disappear; but *Knickerbocker* and *Rip Van Winkle* still buffet the relentless wave of oblivion, and their buoyancy is undiminished.

As for Sprague—a mild, genial, charming gentleman, who carried his simple freshness of nature and of manner to the end, and about whose veneration

able head in State Street always shone the faint halo of early poetic renown—his literary talent was essentially for a day, not for all time. But what then? On Christmas Eve we hear the passing music in the street that supplies for us the song of the waits. Distant and melodious, it pensively recalls the days and the faces and the voices that are no more. But the singers are not the same waits that we heard long ago; still less are they those that the youth of a century ago heard with the same musing melancholy. But the substance of the song, and the emotion which it awakens, and the tender pathos of association—these are all the same. Sprague was a wait of yesterday, of last year, of fifty years ago. Others sing in the street the song that he sang, and, singing, they pass on, and the sweet strain grows fainter, softer, and fainter and fainter, and the echoes answer, “Dying, dying, dying,” and it is gone.

See how tenderly Mr. Stedman speaks of the troubadours who are singing for us now, whose names are familiar, who trill and twitter in the magazines, and in tasteful and delicate volumes, which seem to tempt the stream of time to suffer such light and graceful barks to slip along unnoted to future ages. But the kindly critic's tone forecasts the fate of the sparkling ventures.

Moore tells us of the Indian maids upon the banks of the Ganges who light a tiny taper, and, on a frail little chip, set it afloat upon the river. It twinkles and dwindles, and flashes and expires. Mr. Stedman watches the minor poets trimming their tapers and carefully launching their chips upon the brimming river. "Pleasant journey," he cries cheerily from the shore, as if he were speaking to hearty Captain Cook going up the side of his great ship, and shaking out his mighty canvas to circumnavigate the globe. "Pleasant journey," cries the cheery critic; but there is a wistful something in his tone that betrays a consciousness of the swift extinction of the pretty perfumed flickering flame.

So scant, indeed, was the blossom of our literature when the *Sketch Book* was published, that even twenty years later, when Emerson described the college Commencement Day as the only tribute of a country too busy to give to letters any more, Geoffrey Crayon, with the exception of Cooper, had really no American competitors. Long afterwards I met Mr. Irving one morning at the office of Mr. Putnam, his publisher, and in his cordial way, with a twinkle in his eye, and in his pleasant husky voice, he said, "You young literary fellows to-day have a harder time than we old fellows had. You trip over each other's heels;

there are so many of you. We had it all our own way. But the account is square, for you can make as much by a lecture as we made by a book." Then, laughing slyly, he added, "A pretty figure I should make lecturing in this voice." Indeed, his modesty forbade him to risk that voice in public addresses.

Irving, I think, made but one speech. It was at the dinner given to him upon his return from Europe in 1832, after his absence of seventeen years. Like other distinguished Americans who have felt the fascination of the old home of their ancestors, and who have not thought that a narrow heart and a barbaric disdain of everything foreign attested the truest patriotism, he was suspected of some alienation from his country. His speech was full of emotion, and his protestation of love for his native land was received with boundless acclamation. But he could not overcome his aversion to speech-making. When Dickens came, and the great dinner was given to him in New York, Irving was predestined to preside. Nobody else could be even mentioned. He was himself conscious of it, and was filled with melancholy forebodings. Professor Felton, of Harvard, compared Irving's haunting terror and dismay at the prospect of this speech to that of Mr. Pickwick at the prospect of leading that dreadful horse all day.



Poor Irving went about muttering, "I shall certainly break down. I know I shall break down." At last the day, the hour, and the very moment itself arrived, and he rose to propose the health of Dickens. He began pleasantly and smoothly in two or three sentences, then hesitated, stammered, smiled, and stopped; tried in vain to begin again, then gracefully gave it up, announced the toast—"Charles Dickens, the guest of the nation"—then sank into his chair amid immense applause, whispering to his neighbor, "There, I told you I should break down, and I've done it."

When Thackeray came, Irving consented to preside at a dinner if speeches were absolutely forbidden. The condition was faithfully observed, but it was the most extraordinary instance of American self-command on record. Whenever two or three Americans are gathered together, somebody must make a speech; and no wonder, because somebody always speaks so well. The custom is now so confirmed that it is foolish and useless to oppose it.

I remember a few years since that a dinner was given to a famous American artist long resident abroad, and, as the condition of the attendance of a distinguished guest whose presence was greatly desired, the same agreement was made that Irving required at the Thackeray dinner. It was a com-

pany of exceedingly clever and brilliant men, but the gayety of the feast was extinguished by the general consciousness that the situation was abnormal. It was a fruit without flavor, a flower without fragrance, a symphony without melody, a dinner without speeches. But the dinner of which I speak, when the condition of Irving's presence was that there should be no speeches, was the great exception. It was the only dinner of the kind that I have ever known. But Irving's cheery anecdote and gayety, the songs and banter of the company, the happy chat and sparkling wit, took the place of eloquence, and I recall no dinner more delightful.

However scant was our literature when the *Sketch Book* appeared, it is a mistake to suppose that Irving owes his success to English admiration. That was, undoubtedly, very agreeable to him and to his countrymen. But it is well to correct a misapprehension which is still cherished. Many years ago an English critic said that Irving was much more relished and admired in England than in his own country, and added: "It is only recently critics on the lookout for a literature have elevated him to his proper and almost more than his proper place. This docility to English guidance in the case of their best, or almost their best, prose writer, may perhaps be followed by a similar docility in the

case of their best, or almost their best, poet, Poe, whom also England had preceded the United States in recognizing." This comical patron is all the more amusing from his comparative estimate of Poe.

If it were true that Irving's countrymen had not recognized and honored him from the first, it might be suspected that it was because they were descendants of the people who showed little contemporaneous appreciation of Shakespeare. But it is certainly creditable to the literary England which was busy idolizing Scott and Byron, that it recognized also the charming genius of Irving, and that Leslie, the painter, could truly write of him, "Geoffrey Crayon is the most fashionable fellow of the day."

But while the English appreciation of Irving is very creditable to England, English conceit must not go so far as to suppose that it was that appreciation which commended him to his own countrymen. At the time when Sydney Smith wrote the article from which we have quoted there was apparently an almost literary sterility in this country, and the professional critics of the critical journals were, as Professor Lounsbury says in his admirable *Life of Cooper*, undoubtedly greatly affected by English opinion. But there was an American reading public independent of the few literary

periodicals, as was shown when Cooper's *Spy* was published at the end of 1821, the year in which Bryant's first volume of poems and Dana's *Idle Man* appeared. Cooper had published his *Precaution* in 1819, a book which Professor Lounsbury is one of the very few men who are known to have read. He was an unknown author. But the *Spy* was instantly successful. Some of the timid English journals awaited the English opinion, for Murray had declined, upon Gifford's advice, to publish the book. But a publisher was found, and England and Europe followed America in their approval. Cooper always said, and truly, that it was to his countrymen alone that he owed his first success, and his biographer concedes that the success of the *Spy* was determined before the opinion of Europe was known.

Nearly three years before, in May, 1819, the first number of Irving's *Sketch Book* was published. He sent the manuscript to his brother, who had regretted Irving's refusal of a government place in the Navy Board, and to whom he wrote, "My talents are merely literary, and all my habits of thinking, reading, etc., have been in a different direction from that required for the active politician. . . . In fact, I consider myself at present as making a literary experiment, in the course of which I only care to be kept in bread and cheese. Should it

not succeed—should my writings not acquire critical applause—I am content to throw up the pen, and that to any commonplace employment. But if they should succeed, it would repay me for a world of care and privation to be placed among the established authors of my country, and to win the affection of my countrymen.”

The first number of the *Sketch Book* was published simultaneously in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Baltimore. Its success was immediate. In September, 1819, Irving wrote: “The manner in which the work has been received, and the eulogiums that have been passed upon it in the American papers and periodical works, have quite overwhelmed me. . . . I feel almost appalled by such success.” The echo of the acclamation reached England. Murray at first declined to publish it, as he had at first declined Cooper’s *Spy*. But when England ascertained that the American judgment was correct, and that it was a popular work, Murray was willing to publish it.

The delightful genius which his country had recognized with joy it never ceased proudly and tenderly to honor. When, in 1832, he returned to his native land, as his latest biographer, Mr. Warner, records, “America greeted her most famous literary man with a spontaneous outburst of love and admiration.” It was in his own country

that he had published his works. It was his own countrymen whose applause apprised England of the charm of the new author; and it is a humorous mentor who now teaches us that it was our happy docility to English guidance which enabled us to recognize and honor him.

Was it docility to the same beneficent guidance which enabled us to perceive the genius of Carlyle, whose works we first collected, and taught England to read and admire? Did it enable us, also, to inform England that in Robert Browning she had another poet? Was it the same docility which enabled us to reveal to England one of her most philosophic observers in Herbert Spencer, and to offer to Darwin his most appreciative correspondents and interpreters in Chauncey Wright, John Fiske, and Professors Gray and Wyman? There are many offences to be scored against us, but failure to know our own literary genius is not one of them.

Indeed, there is not one great literary fame in America that was not first recognized here. Not to one of them has docility to English literary opinion conducted us, as is often believed. Bryant and Cooper and Irving, Bancroft and Prescott and Motley, Emerson and Channing, Longfellow, Hawthorne, Lowell, Whittier, and Holmes were authors whom we were content to admire

and love without knowing or asking whether England had heard of them, or what she thought of them. The "greatness" of Poe England may have preceded us in recognizing. That is an assertion which we are not disposed to dispute. But Walter Scott was not more immediately popular and beloved in England than was Washington Irving in America; and American guidance led England to Scott quite as much as English guidance drew America to Irving.

The first number of the *Sketch Book* contained the tale of Rip Van Winkle, one of the most charming and suggestive of legends, whose hero is an exceedingly pathetic creation. It is, indeed, a mere sketch, a hint, a suggestion; but the imagination readily completes it. It is the more remarkable and interesting because, although the first American literary creation, it is not in the least characteristic of American life, but, on the contrary, is a quiet and delicate satire upon it. The kindly vagabond asserts the charm of loitering idleness in the sweet leisure of woods and fields against the characteristic American excitement of the overflowing crowd and crushing competition of the city, its tremendous energy and incessant devotion to money-getting.

It is not necessary to defend poor Rip, or to justify the morality of his example. It is the im-

agination that interprets him ; and how soothing to those who give their lives to the furious accumulation of the means of living to behold that figure stretched by the brook, or finding nuts with the children, or sauntering homeward at sunset ! Later figures of our literature allure us—Hester Prynne, wrapped in her cloak of Nersus, the Scarlet Letter, Hosea Biglow, Evangeline, Uncle Tom, and Topsy—but the charm of this figure is unfading. The new writers introduce us to their worlds, and with pleasure we make the acquaintance of new friends. The new standards of another literary spirit are raised, a fresh literary impulse surrounds us ; but it is not thunder that we hear in the Kaatskills on a still summer afternoon—it is the distant game of Hendrick Hudson and his men ; and on the shore of our river, rattling and roaring with the frenzied haste and endless activity of prosperous industry, still Rip Van Winkle lounges idly by, an unwasted figure of the imagination, the constant and unconscious satirist of American life.

He seems to me peculiarly congenial with the temperament of Irving. He, too, was essentially a loiterer. He had the same freshness of sympathy, the same gentleness of nature, the same taste for leisure and repose. His genius was reminiscent, and, as with all humorists, its climate was



that of April. The sun and the shower chased each other. Irving's intellectual habit was emotional rather than thoughtful. In politics and public affairs he took no part, although office was often urged upon him, as when the friends of General Jackson wished him to go as representative to Congress, or President Van Buren offered him the secretaryship of the navy, or Tammany Hall, in New York, unanimously and vociferously nominated him for mayor, an incident in the later annals of the city which transcends the most humorous touch in *Knickerbocker's History*. He was appointed secretary of legation in England in 1829, and in 1842, when Daniel Webster was secretary of state, minister to Spain.

But what we call practical politics was always distasteful to him. The spirit which I once heard laugh at a young man new in politics because he treated "the boys" with his own good cigars instead of buying bad ones at the saloon—the spirit which I once heard assure a man of public ability and fitness that he could never reach political office unless he pushed himself, and paid agents to buy votes, because no man could expect an office to be handed to him on a gold plate—the spirit which, to my knowledge, displayed a handful of bank-notes in the anteroom of a legislature, and exclaimed, "That's what makes the laws!"—this

was a spirit which, like other honorable men and patriotic Americans, Irving despised.

He was a gentleman of manly feeling and of moral refinement, who had had glimpses of what is called "the inside" of politics; and, as he believed these qualities would make participation in politics uncomfortable, he abstained. To those of us who are wiser than he, who know that simple honesty and public spirit and self-respect and contempt of sneaking and fawning and bribery and crawling are the conditions of political preferment, Irving, in not perceiving this, must naturally seem to be a queer, wrong-headed, and rather super-celestial American, who had lived too much in the heated atmosphere of European aristocracies and altogether too little in the pure and bracing air of American ward politics and caucuses and conventions. To use an old New York phrase, Irving preferred to stroll and fish and chat with Rip Van Winkle rather than to "run wid der machine."

The *Sketch Book* made Irving famous, and with its predecessor, *Knickerbocker*, and its successor, *Bracebridge Hall*, disclosed the essential quality of his genius. But all these books performed another and greater service than that of winning the world to read an American book: this was the restoration of a kindlier feeling between the two countries which, by all ties, should be the two

most friendly countries on the globe. The books were written when our old bitterness of feeling against England had been renewed by the later war. In the thirty years since the Revolution ended we had patriotically fostered the quarrel with John Bull. Our domestic politics had turned largely upon that feeling, and the game of French and English was played almost as fiercely upon our side of the ocean as upon their own.

The great epoch of our extraordinary material development and prosperity had not opened, and, even had John Bull been friendlier than he was, it would have been the very flattery of falsehood had he complimented our literature, our science, our art. Sydney Smith's question, "Who reads an American book?" was contemptuous and exasperating. But here was an American who wrote books which John Bull was delighted to read, and was compelled to confess that they depicted the most characteristic and attractive aspects of his own life with more delicate grace than that of any living Englishman.

It was Irving who recalled the old English Christmas. It was his cordial and picturesque description of the great holiday of Christendom which preceded and stimulated Dickens's *Christmas Carols* and Thackeray's *Holiday Tales*. It was the genial spirit of Christmas, native to his

gentle heart and his happy temperament, which made Irving, as Thackeray called him, a peacemaker between the mother-country and her proud and sensitive offspring of the West. He showed John Bull that England is ours as well as his.

“Old fellow,” he said, “you cannot help yourself. It is the same blood that flows in our veins, the same language that we speak, the same traditions that we cherish. If you love liberty, so do we; if you will see fair play, so will we. It is natural to you, so it is to us. We cannot escape our blood. Shakespeare is not your poet more than ours. If your ancestors danced round the Maypole, so did our ancestors in your ancestors’ shoes. If Old England cherished Christmas and New England did not, Bradford and Endicott and Cotton were Englishmen, not Americans. If old English life and customs and traditions are dear to you, listen to my story, and judge whether they are less dear to us.” Then, with a merry smile, the young stranger holds out his hand to John Bull, and exclaims, “Behold, here is my arm! I bare it before your eyes, and here it is—it is the strawberry-mark; come to my bosom, I am your long-lost brother.”

It was an incalculable service which Irving rendered in renewing a common feeling between England and America. It was involuntary, be-

cause in writing he had no such purpose. He was only following the bent of his own taste, and his works reflected only his individual sympathies. But it was this very fact—it was the English instinct in the American, the appreciation native in the heart of the Western stranger of the true poetic charm of England—which was the spell of the magician. Irving had the same imaginative enthusiasm for traditional and poetic England that Burke had for political England. Indeed, it is an England which never actually existed except in the English and American imagination. The coarse, mercenary, material England which Lecky photographs in his history of the eighteenth century was the same England in which Burke lived, and which his glowing imagination exalted into the magnificent image of constitutional liberty before which he bowed his great head. So with the old England that Irving drew. He saw with poetic fancy a rural Arcadia, and reproduced the vision with airy grace and called it England. No wonder that John Bull was delighted with an artist who could paint so fascinating a picture, and write under it John Bull's portrait.

To change a word in Marvell's noble lines, when Irving was in England

“He nothing common saw or mean  
Upon that memorable scene.”

Only an American could have seen England as he described it, and invested it with an enchantment which the mass of Englishmen had neither suspected nor perceived. Irving's instinct was that of Hawthorne afterwards, who called England "Our Old Home." There is a foolish American habit growing patriotically out of our old contentions with England, and politically out of our desire to conciliate the Irish vote in this country, of branding as servile and un-American the natural susceptibility of people of English descent, but natives of another land, to the charm of their ancestral country. But the American is greatly to be pitied who thinks to prove the purity of his patriotism by flouting the land in which he has a legitimate right, the land of Alfred and Runnymede, of Chaucer and Shakespeare and Milton, of Hampden and Cromwell, of Newton and Bunyan, of Somers and Chatham and Edmund Burke, the cradle of constitutional liberty and parliamentary government. If the great body of the literature of our language in which we delight, if the sources of our law and politics, if the great exploits of contemporary scholarship and science, are largely beyond our boundaries, yet are legitimately ours as well as all that we have ourselves achieved, why should we spurn any of our just and hereditary share in the great English traditions of civilization and freedom?

Irving returned to America in 1832, and here he afterwards remained, except during his absence as minister in Spain. In an earlier visit to that country he had felt the spell of its romantic history, and had written the *Life of Columbus*, the *Conquest of Granada*, and the *Chronicles of the Alhambra*. During all his later years he was busy with his pen, and, while the modest author had risen to the chief place in American literature, its later constellation was rising into the heavens.

But his intrinsic modesty never disappeared either from the works or the character of the benign writer. In the height of his renown there was no kind of presumption or conceit in his simple and generous breast. Some time after his return from his long absence in Europe, and before Putnam became his publisher, Irving found some disinclination upon the part of publishers to issue new editions of his books, and he expressed, with entire good humor, the belief that he had had his day.

It is doubtless true, as *Blackwood* remarked, with what we may call *Blackwood* courtesy, when Mr. Lowell was American minister in England, that Shakespeare, Milton, Dryden, Addison, Pope, and so many more "will not be replaced by Mr. Washington Irving and Mr. Lowell." But it is equally

true that, since Swift, *Blackwood* cannot find in English literature political satire more trenchant, humorous, forcible, and effective than the *Biglow Papers*, and nothing in Swift more original. It is said that it is ludicrous to compare the mild humor of Rip Van Winkle with the "robustious fun of Swift." But this is a curious "derangement of epitaphs." Swift has wit, and satiric power, and burning invective, and ribaldry, and caustic, scornful humor; but fun, in any just sense, he has not. He is too fierce to be funny. The tender and imaginative play of Rip Van Winkle are wholly beyond the reach of Swift.

Irving and other American writers are not the rivals of their British associates in the literature of the English language—they are worthy comrades. Wordsworth and Byron are not Shakespeare and Milton, but they are nevertheless Wordsworth and Byron, and their place is secure. So the brows of Irving and Cooper, of Bryant and Longfellow, and of Lowell, of Emerson and Hawthorne do not crave the laurels of any other master. The perturbed spirit of *Blackwood* may rest in the confident assurance that no generous and intelligent student of our literature admires Gibbon less because he enjoys Macaulay, or depreciates Bacon because he delights in Emerson, or denies the sting of Gulliver because he feels the light touch of



Knickerbocker. It is with good fame as with true love:

“True love in this differs from gold and clay,  
That to divide is not to take away.”

In the year that Irving published the *Sketch Book*, Cooper published his first novel, and two years before Bryant's *Thanatopsis* had been published. When, forty years afterwards, in the last year of his life, the last volume of the *Life of Washington* was issued, Irving and Bryant and Cooper were no longer the solitary chiefs of our literature. An illustrious company had received the torch unextinguished from their hands—Whittier, Hawthorne, Emerson, Longfellow, Holmes, Lowell, Bancroft, Prescott, Motley, Parkman, Mrs. Stowe, had all taken their places, yet all gladly and proudly acknowledged Irving as the patriarch. It is our happy fortune that these names, of which we are all proud, are not those of men of letters only, but of typical American citizens. The old traditions of the literary life, the mad roustering, the dissipation, Grub Street, the sponging-house, the bailiff, the garret, and the jail, genius that fawns for place and flatters for hire, the golden talent wrapped in a napkin, and often a dirty and ragged napkin, have vanished in our American annals of letters. Pure,

upright, faithful, industrious, honorable, and honored, there is scarcely one American author of eminence who may not be counted as a good and useful citizen of the Republic of the Union, and a shining light of the Republic of Letters.

Of Washington Irving, as of so many of this noble company, it is especially true that the author was the man. The healthy fun and merry satire of Diedrich Knickerbocker, the sweet humor and quick sympathy and simple pathos of Geoffrey Crayon, were those of the modest master of Sunnyside. Every literary man of Irving's time, whether old or young, had nothing but affectionate praise of his artless urbanity and exhaustless good-nature. These qualities are delightfully reflected in Thackeray's stories of him in the *Roundabout Papers* upon Irving and Macaulay, "the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time."

"He came to one of my lectures in Washington," Thackeray says, "and the retiring President, Mr. Fillmore, and his successor, Mr. Pierce, were present. 'Two kings of Brentford smelling at one rose,' said Irving, with his good-natured smile. In his little bower of a home at Sunnyside he was always accessible. One English newspaper man came and introduced himself, and partook of luncheon with the family, and, while the host fell into a little doze, as was his habit, the wary Englishman

took a swift inventory of everything in the house, and served up the description to the British public, including the nap of his entertainer. At another time, Irving said, 'Two persons came to me, and one held me in conversation while the other miscreant took my portrait.'" Thackeray tells these little stories with admiring sympathy. His manly heart always grew tender over his fellow-authors who had no acrid drop in their humor, and Irving's was as sweet as dew.

It is late for a fresh compliment to be paid to him, but the London *Spectator* paid it in 1883, the year of his centenary, by saying, "Since the time of Pope more than one hundred essayists have attempted to excel or to equal the *Tatler* and *Spectator*. One alone, in a few of his best efforts, may be said to have rivalled them, and he is Washington Irving." The *Spectator* adds that one has surpassed them, "the incomparable Elia."

Irving's temperament, however, was much more congenial with that of the early essayists than Charles Lamb's, and his pictures of English country life in *Bracebridge Hall* have just the delicate, imaginative touch of the sketches of Sir Roger de Coverley. But in treating distinctively English topics, however airy and vivid his touch may be, Irving is manifestly enthralled by his admiration for the literary masters of the Anne time, and by

the spirit of their writing. It is in the Knickerbocker world that he is characteristically at home. Indeed, it is his humorous and graphic fancy more than the sober veracity of history which has given popular and perpetual form to the early life of New York, and it is Irving who has enriched it with romantic tradition such as suffuses the story of no other State.

The bay, the river, the city, the Kaatskill Mountains, as Choate said of Faneuil Hall and Webster, breathe and burn of him. He has charmed the Hudson with a peculiar spell. The quaint life of its old Dutch villages, the droll legend of Sleepy Hollow, the pathetic fate of Rip Van Winkle, the drowsy wisdom of Communipaw, the marvelous municipality of New Amsterdam, and the Nose of Anthony guarding the Highlands, with the myriad sly and graphic allusions and descriptions strewn all through his books, have made the river Irving's river, and the state Irving's state, and the city Irving's city, so that the first instinctive question of every lover of Irving from beyond the state, as he enters Central Park and beholds its memorial statues, is, "Where is the statue of Irving?"

Unhappily, echo, and not the park guide-book, answers. There is, indeed, a bust, and, in a general sense, "*Si monumentum*" may serve for a re-

ply. From that point of view, indeed, Westminster Abbey, as the monument of English heroes in letters and arms, in the Church and the State, would be superfluous. But the abbey is a shrine of pilgrimage because of the very fact that it is the burial-place of famous Englishmen. The Central Park, in New York, is already a Walhalla of famous men, and the statue that would first suggest itself as peculiarly fitting for the Park is of the New-Yorker who first made New York distinctively famous in literature—the New-Yorker whose kindly genius first made American literature respected by the world.

Reversing the question, "Where be the bad people buried?" the wondering pilgrim in the Park asks, "Where be Irving and Bryant and Cooper?" They were not Americans only, but, by birth or choice, New-Yorkers, and the three distinctive figures of our early literature. It was very touching to see the venerable Bryant, in the soft May sunshine, when the statue of Halleck was unveiled, standing with bare head and speaking of his old friend and comrade. But who that listened could not see, through tender mists of years, the grave and reverend form of the speaker himself, transformed to marble or bronze, sitting serene forever beneath the shadowing trees, side by side with the poet of Faust and the worshipper of Highland Mary?

But Bryant would have been the first to name Washington Irving as the most renowned distinctively American man of letters whose figure, reproduced characteristically and with simple quaintness, should decorate the Park. To a statue of Washington Irving all the gates should open, as every heart would open, in welcome. That half-humorous turn of the head and almost the twinkling eye, that brisk and jaunty air, that springing step, that modest and gentle and benign presence, all these could be suggested by the artist, and in their happy combination the pleased loiterer would perceive old Diedrich Knickerbocker and the summer dreamer of the Hudson legends, the charming biographer of Columbus and of Goldsmith, the cheerful gossip of Wolfert's Roost, and the mellow and courteous Geoffrey Crayon, who first taught incredulous Europe that beyond the sea there were men also, and that at last all the world must read an American book.

Irving was seventy-six years old when he died, late in 1859. Born in the year in which the Revolution ended, he died on the eve of the civil war. His life exactly covered the period during which the American republic was an experiment. It ended just as the invincible power of free institutions was to be finally demonstrated. His life had been one of singular happiness, both of tempera-

ment and circumstance. His nature was too simple and gentle to breed rivalries or to tolerate animosities. Through the sharpest struggles of our politics he passed without bitterness of feeling and with universal respect, and his eyes happily closed before seeing a civil war which, although the most righteous of all wars, would have broken his heart. The country was proud of him: the older authors knew in him not a rival, but a friend, the younger loved him as a father. Such love, I think, is better than fame. On the day of his burial in the ground overlooking the Hudson and the valley of Sleepy Hollow, unable to reach Tarrytown in time for the funeral, I came down the shore of the river which he loved and immortalized. As the train hastened and wound along, I saw the Catskills draped in autumnal mist, not concealing, but irradiating them with lingering and pathetic splendor. Far away towards the south the river-bank on which his home lay was Sunnyside still, for the sky was cloudless and soft with serene sunshine. I could not but remember his last words to me, more than a year before, when his book was finished and his health was failing: "I am getting ready to go; I am shutting up my doors and windows," and I could not but feel that they were all open now, and bright with the light of eternal morning.







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