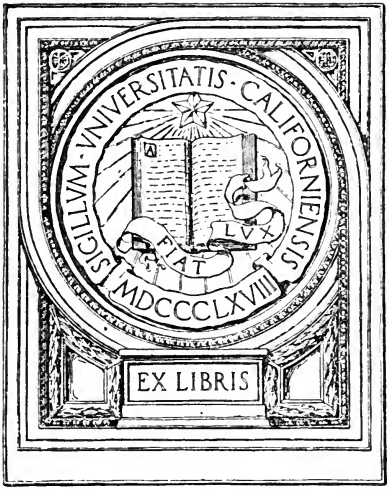

THE
OHIO STATE UNIVERSITY
BULLETIN

VOLUME XXVI SEPTEMBER 30, 1921 NUMBER 3
CONTRIBUTIONS IN ENGLISH NUMBER 2

A Study of the Local Literature of the Upper Ohio Valley

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE EARLY PIONEER AND INDIAN TALES

1820-1840

BY
MARY MEEK ATKESON

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT COLUMBUS
Entered as second-class matter November 17, 1905, at the postoffice at Columbus, Ohio, under Act of Congress, July 16, 1894

The Ohio State University Bulletin
VOLUME XXVI SEPTEMBER 30, 1921 NUMBER 3
CONTRIBUTIONS IN ENGLISH NUMBER 2

A Study of the Local Literature of the Upper Ohio Valley

WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE EARLY PIONEER AND INDIAN TALES

1820-1840

BY
MARY MEEK ATKESON

PUBLISHED BY THE UNIVERSITY AT COLUMBUS
Entered as second-class matter November 17, 1905, at the postoffice at Columbus, Ohio, under Act of Congress, July 16, 1894

PREFACE

The present study of early literature in the Ohio Valley has grown out of the writer's interest in the general problems of local literature. It follows, and is in part a development of, an earlier study of "West Virginia Literature," written as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts at West Virginia University in 1913. The interest shown by many readers in the earlier work has been a great encouragement to the writer to make further investigations in the same field.

To one who heard in childhood at some Ohio Valley fireside these old stories of pioneer and Indian days, and who later laboriously spelled through the hair-raising accounts of Doddridge and Withers, there is a perennial appeal in the story of our pioneers—their ideas and accomplishments and all their manner of life. In reading great numbers of these early tales the writer has observed a noticeable development in both the spirit and form of these local writings of the Valley, particularly in the expression of a new and progressive Americanism and a tendency toward a matter-of-fact or realistic view of frontier life, unknown in the earlier American writers. If this be true, then this local literature—crude and uncouth as it is in many respects—is also of interest in a general view of the development of American literature.

During the preparation of the present study the writer has been greatly assisted by general suggestions from Dean J. V. Denney and from Dr. George H. McKnight of the Ohio State University, and also by some special help in the study of the works of Chateaubriand from Dr. Madison Stathers of West Virginia University. The footnotes and bibliographical section will show to what extent the writer is indebted to earlier works on local literature.

A STUDY OF THE LOCAL LITERATURE OF THE UPPER OHIO VALLEY. WITH ESPECIAL REFERENCE TO THE PIONEER AND INDIAN TALES. 1820-1840

PART I

I. The Importance of the Ohio Valley Region in American History

In the past few years many historians have pointed out that the section of the country known as the upper Ohio Valley region—including parts of the present states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, West Virginia, and Kentucky—is of great significance in the development of the American commonwealth. It is true that the tidewater colonies asserted their political independence from England and formed the Union, but there was still a great predominance of English influence in their thought, their traditions, and customs, and a lack of a unifying national spirit. As Mr. Lounsbury has said,[1] "Political supremacy had been cast off, but the supremacy of opinion had remained absolutely unshaken. . . . . Out of the intellectual character of many of those who at that day pretended to be the representatives of the highest education in the country, it almost seemed that the element of manliness had been wholly eliminated; and that along with its sturdy democracy, whom no obstacles thwarted and no dangers daunted, the New World was also to give birth to a race of literary cowards and parasites." Frederick J. Turner has pointed out that,[2] "The tidewater part of the South represented typical Englishmen, modified by a warm climate and servile labor, and living in baronial fashion on great plantations; New England stood for a special English movement—Puritanism."

It was not until the great tide of immigration began to flow to the West that the real spirit of Americanism was born. For though that stream was composed largely of the same people who had been looking across the ocean for their inspiration in intellectual matters, the very crossing of the mountains, or the embarkation upon the waters of the Ohio brought a new spirit of freedom,

[1] *James Fenimore Cooper, American Men of Letters Series*, p. 18-19.
[2] *The Frontier in American History, American Historical Association Report*, 1893.

unlike that of any tidewater district. It was more than a matter of mere distance or of geographical barriers. Many of the early writers noticed the difference in feeling as soon as their faces turned toward the West. As Timothy Flint's hero, Francis Berrian, says, "Until I began to ascend the Allegheny hills, I did not feel all the ties of kindred and country completely severed. I could connect, by the chain of association, points that were distant, indeed, but not sundered by mountains, and which were washed in their whole extent by the same sea, and inhabited by men substantially of the same character and pursuits. But when the Ohio Valley opened upon my view from the summits of these mountains; when such a wide barrier, and so difficult as it then was to be passed, was interposed between me and 'faderland'; when I began to descend among a people of a different character and foreign pursuits, connected with New England's element by an almost interminable river, then I began to experience misgivings of mind, and the dismal feeling of homesickness." [3]

The very fact that the pioneers had had the courage to take their lives into their hands for that perilous journey gave them a sudden new knowledge of themselves, and of their potentialities. The old life, under the established order of the colonies had often been one of convention; the new life in the wilderness was merciless in its requirement of initiative and personal prowess. The man who had no natural ability for taking care of himself under difficult circumstances was usually soon eliminated by the ruthless natural forces, if not by the Indians. Hence, since he must work out his own salvation for his physical needs, with his axe and his gun, he soon began to feel that independence of mind which bows to no man-made law or traditional dictum. There was little need of laws in a land where a man could always move on to another neighborhood when he chose, and a tax was an impertinence scarcely to be considered at all.

The pioneer was essentially a man of action and progress. He was intent upon "getting along" and pushing farther and farther into the wilderness. It was his pride that he "could not abide" close neighbors or well-marked roads. "A greyhound," he said, "loves range, and an owl deep woods and hollow trees, and a trueborn Yankee loves nature and independence." He enjoyed his stirring life with its sharp contrasts and its constant tang of danger. Life

[3] *Francis Berrian*, 1826, p. 29.

itself was a continual romance—a quick series of interesting events—a continual anticipation of what might happen next, and a continual hope for a glorious ending. Beside such a reality it is no wonder that the old days in the East seemed tame and dull to him and that he looked to the West—forward and not backward—for his ideal of Americanism.

In religion he often turned away with dissatisfaction from the old dogmatic creeds, to listen to any wild orator who might possibly be voicing a new faith worthy of the great West. His spirit was as intense, as earnest, in religion as in other things. Open-minded as he was, and untrained intellectually, it is little wonder that he should follow any freakish sect, or self-appointed prophet. The older order was giving place to new in government, then why not in religion?

This extreme individualism naturally led the pioneer to question also the rules and laws by which his mental life had been governed. With this questioning came a new intellectual attitude toward all life. As has been remarked,[4] "The result is that to the frontier the American intellect owes its striking characteristics. That coarseness and strength, combined with acuteness and inquisitiveness; that practical, inventive turn of mind, quick to find expedients; that masterful grasp of material things, lacking in the artistic, but powerful to effect great ends; that restless nervous energy; that dominant individualism, working for good and for evil, and, withal, that buoyancy and exuberance which come with freedom,—these are the traits of the frontier, or traits called out elsewhere because of the existence of the frontier."

Hence, it came about that on this first frontier beyond the mountains—the upper Ohio Valley region—what we think of today as the modern American spirit was born. It was the outcome of wilderness conditions, of the onward call of the western plains, and of the feeling of separation from the old established life. Even as early as 1769, the pioneers, it has been said,[5] "had lost all remembrance of Europe and sympathy with things European; they had become as emphatically products native to the soil as were the tough and supple hickories out of which they fashioned the handles of their long light axes."

[4] Frederick J. Turner, *The Frontier in American History. Amer. Hist. Assn. Report*, 1893.
[5] Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, Vol. 1, p. 108.

II. Literary Influences in the Backwoods

The pioneers, in breaking away from former influences, did not by any means despise books, even though they were not a reading people and good books were few and far between. A book was considered a sacred thing, and the few volumes in a backwoods station were read and re-read and quoted from with great effect on important occasions. Anything "writ in a book" was felt to have almost miraculous power, and anyone who could read and write easily was looked up to by the whole community.

As to the books known and read in the early days we have few records. We know, however, that they knew from books or from oral transmission the stories of Jack and the giant, of the Cyclops and Ulysses, and tales of knight errantry. They also had many songs of Robin Hood, and tragical love—"love songs about murder" as they were called.[6] The following account of the reading of *Gulliver's Travels*, in part told in Daniel Boone's own words, is quoted from Roosevelt:[7] On an exploring excursion in 1770 a group of hunters read "for their amusement 'the history of Samuel Gulliver's Travels, wherein he gave an account of his young master, Glumdelick, caring him on a market day for a show to a town called Lulbegrud.' One of the men of the party was named Alexander Neely. One night he came into camp with two Indian scalps, taken from a Shawnee village he had found on a creek. He announced 'he had been that day to Lulbegrud, and had killed two Brobdignags in their capital.' To this day the creek is called Lulbegrud creek."

The pioneer cabin might boast of volumes of the Bible, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*. Another private library might contain—like that of the father of Daniel Drake[8]—the Bible, Aesop's *Fables* and the *Life of Franklin*.

Soon community libraries began to be formed, and from their lists of books we can learn what was read by the people of the Valley. The first library in the Northwest Territory was formed at Belpré, near Marietta, Ohio, in 1796. Some of the books known to be in this collection are *Tales* of Jonathan Carver, Locke's *On the Understanding*, *The Practical Farmer*, Robertson's *History of Scotland*, Johnson's *Lives of the Poets*, *History of Vermont*, *History of England*, and Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*. The Coonskin Li-

[6] Doddridge, *Notes*, p. 124-125.
[7] *Winning of the West*, Vol. 1, p. 143.
[8] *Beginning of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley*, p. 300.

brary of Ames township, Ohio, formed in 1803, contained, besides works of history and philosophy, *Evelina, Children of the Abbey, George Barnwell, Camilla,* and *The Beggar Girl.* Later purchases included *Don Quixote, Scottish Chiefs,* the *Spectator,* and *Arabian Nights.* Later libraries had similar collections. In general the libraries seemed to provide chiefly, history, biography, philosophy, and works of general reference, and in addition the sentimental novels and plays by popular English authors of the day. There was a prejudice against "fictitious stories" for young people, and with reason, for many of the books listed are of the most banal sentimentality. They became increasingly popular, however, and after a time had a decided effect upon the general attitude of the people toward life and literature.

Byron and Scott were well known, and to some extent also Wordsworth and Keats, but Byron was the great favorite. William B. Cairns has noted,[9] "As might be expected, Byron found eager readers, perhaps his most eager readers, in the West. The Pioneers saw nature as he saw it, and they regarded the rights of man much as he regarded them. Still they could not commend, or even excuse his morals. The backwoodsmen were not Puritans, who took pleasure in repressing passions and desires, but rather men whose passions and desires were so natural and whose habits of life were by necessity so restricted, that they could scarcely understand a life given over to cynical vice." In spite of this, however, Byron was much read, even by the younger people. We are told of a backwoods young lady,[10] "She had taste enough to enjoy the writings of Scott, but not so much as to enable her to dream over the rhapsodies of Byron." The Byronic Spenserian stanza was much affected by the local writers, and also the rhymed tetrameter verse of Scott's poems. Other forms frequently used were the stanza form of Gray's *Elegy* (evidently a very popular poem) and the couplet of Pope.

As the river towns began to grow in population they began to vie with one another as to which should have the most libraries and book shops, and some early volumes began to be published. Timothy Flint says of Cincinnati in his *Recollections of the Last Ten Years* (1826): "Efforts to promote polite literature have already been made in this town. If its only rival, Lexington, be, as

[9] *American Literature from 1815 to 1833,* p. 15.
[10] Hall, *Legends of the West,* 1853.

she contends, the Athens of the West, this place is struggling to become its Corinth. There were, eleven years since, two gazettes, and two booksellers' shops, although unhappily novels were the most salable article. The rudiments of general taste, were, however, as yet crude and unformed. The prevalent models of grandeur, beauty and taste, in composition and style, were those that characterized fourth of July orations in the first years of our independence." And again, he deplores the lack of interest in literature. The people are too busy, too much occupied in making farms and speculations, to think of literature."

Yet general reading must have become common by 1830, for Mrs. Trollope [11] was often surprised at the learning of the people around her in Cincinnati. She even met one astounding gentleman who had read—or at least pretended to have read—everything, with a real "terrestial superiority." He disliked Byron. Pope was "so entirely gone by, that in our country it is considered quite fustian to speak of him." Dryden, also, was out of date, and Shakespeare lacked sufficient refinement for "the age in which we live."

This gentleman, so afflicted with superiority, was merely a forerunner of the succeeding age in Ohio Valley life and literature. Influenced by the sentimental novels of the day, and by the visitors from eastern cities, the young men and women—particularly in the years from 1840 to 1860—were eagerly modeling themselves upon the heroes and heroines of their favorite stories. Probably it grew out of a consciousness of their backwoods crudeness—for the West was beginning to be self-conscious and to aspire to leadership in social affairs. Immediately "the social graces" became an important study.

It is rather amusing to note the sudden change, especially in the women of the Valley. But a generation or two before they had lived the wild free life of the forest, fought side by side with the men against the Indians, and, as Doddridge tells us, seemed even to enjoy the prospect of an Indian attack. Now, however, the young ladies became as limp and colorless as the heroine of a Cooper novel. "Sensibility" became the highest feminine virtue. They probably would have fainted at the sight of an Indian, they lost their appetites entirely, and spent their time in nothing more

---

[11] *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, 1828-31.

onerous than sketching or embroidery. If disappointed in love, they pined away in a beautiful and interesting manner and were laid to rest in flower-decked graves amid the most romantic surroundings. Indeed the mortality among beautiful young females—judging from the stories—seems to have been so heavy that one wonders that any of them lived to maturity.

Nor did the young men fare any better. They, too, must conform their conduct strictly to the "cultured" ideal, and learn the perfection of dress and "polite conversation." That it was not always easy for the backwoods people who aspired to society to come up—or down—to such standards, is shown by various references to early types of the fashionable folk in several of the early tales. In *George Mason, The Young Backwoodsman,*[12] we are told how the young backwoods heroine managed a difficult situation. "To prove in fact, *a priori,* as they say, that Eliza Mason knew a thing or two, in the way of management, it is only necessary to relate one fact, that anticipating that her three young brothers, brought with devouring appetites from the simple diet of their cabin to such a sumptuous dinner, might create unpleasant notice by their voraciousness, she had given them their fill of sweetcake and raisins three times in the forenoon. . . . . After all, Eliza cast an anxious eye upon them as they sat below her at table, and saw with infinite satisfaction, that their total want of appetite gave their sylvan rusticity an air of well-bred indifference and fastidiousness."

Such a conception of manners probably came from the reading of such books as *The Children of the Abbey, Evelina, Camilla,* and Mrs. Radcliffe's stories, for various references show that these stories were known and generally much admired. Timothy Flint says of an old maid on an outing trip, "Miss Letitia found it in keeping to be romantic, and she talked over all she could remember of all the trumpery novels, that she had read, and found this one to be 'the most delightfullest, and that the most genteelest, and the other the most sentimentalist novel,' that she had ever read." In these earlier stories, however, such references are usually made for a humorous purpose and for contrast with the real manliness and womanliness of the backwoods characters. The fashion, though beginning, was not yet general enough to be accepted seriously.

[12] Timothy Flint, 1829.

In the period succeeding 1840, because of the increase in western magazines, literature became much greater in volume. Indian stories became increasingly common—but the Indian was now chiefly used to induce showers of sentimental—and becoming—tears. Even the pioneer began to be sentimentalized, and the wilderness scenery described was always that romantic enough to be suitable for "sensitive females." In fact, the literature of the Valley lost much of its earlier vigor and interest and the pioneer and development era was at an end.

III. Materials of the Present Study

The materials used in the present study of Ohio Valley literature have been gathered from many sources, including both public and private libraries, in Ohio, West Virginia, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania, and the Congressional Library at Washington, D. C. As far as possible poems and stories published in book form have been used, though occasionally reference is made to interesting articles in the western magazines. The body of material, even in the fragmentary state in which it is now available, is considerable, as is shown by the bibliographical list in the appendix. Altogether some hundreds of books have been examined by the writer, including all available histories and reference works which might have any bearing on the matter in hand. From such a mass of material, definite conclusions are difficult to draw, and yet there are certain well-marked tendencies, apparent after a careful inductive study of all the literature of the period. Wherever a variation has seemed to occur, it has been studied carefully and placed with reference to the general problems.

The dates set for the boundaries are somewhat arbitrary, for there is, of course, no definite break between one period and the next. The first date chosen represents about the time that Joseph Doddridge, the earliest writer, began to write, using the wilderness material. The closing date marks in general the rise of the full stream of sentimentalism which marks the succeeding age, and at the same time the loss of the earlier realistic tendencies.

The dates of books as given, are the dates of publication, and in general also place the time of writing. Such dates, however, are only approximate, for the material printed in book form was often gathered from previous work in the magazines, hence the stories might be of varying dates. Often, too, books were written some time before the author found a publisher for the volume—or had

money enough to have it published at his own expense. However, the exact time of writing, except for the order in a series of books, is not of great importance.

IV. Chief Difficulties of the Study

The chief difficulty of the present study lies in the elusive character of what the writer is trying to express. That quality which we call Americanism is easy enough to recognize in the large—but very difficult to prove in specific instances. It is as apparent in general as it is indefinable. Just as the foreign investigators, who visit our country for the purpose of studying the American spirit seldom please us by the specific cases they cite, so we ourselves find ourselves at a loss for definite illustrations of that particular principle which pervades our daily life.

In the present study the growth of the spirit of Americanism and of realism in the literature, although very apparent to the reader of numbers of these old tales, with their quaint expression of the new and the old together, must be shown chiefly by copious quotations. So, also, for literary influences it is difficult to point out, "Here the writer was influenced by Cooper," "Here is an echo of Byron," etc. Yet it is to be hoped that in the course of the study, through the careful details and the multiplicity of illustrations—chosen in each case for their literary bearing as well as for their content—the reader can come to a clear conception of the development which took place in this first twenty years of literary effort in the upper Ohio Valley.

V. Conclusion

The value of this study, the writer thinks, lies chiefly in its calling the reader's attention to the literature produced by the backwoodsmen themselves or by their immediate successors. It may also help to an understanding of the great debt that that elusive thing which we call the spirit of America owes to the pioneer—that spirit well typified both by the beloved Lincoln and the grim but kindly frontiersman, Uncle Sam,—for it was on the frontier, in the struggles with Indians and forest dangers, even more than at Concord and Bunker Hill, that modern progressive Americanism was born. If the present study can also prove the specific points at issue *i. e.*, that a new tendency toward realism arose in the literature, and that this led to a greater freedom of literary expression, it will have accomplished all that the writer hoped for.

PART II

I. The Change to Western Material and Ideals of Life

With so great a change in the character of life as came about in the settling of the Ohio Valley, a change in the literature was inevitable. If there was to be a literature at all it must in some measure be different from the old. Whether or not the local writers knew it, they must voice—however crudely—a spirit unknown before. The pioneer's delight in the life about him and his knowledge that it was but a passing phase of history, made him feel that every moment was precious in the rapidly changing story. There was a great impulse to write. No doubt many another pioneer, like James Hall,[1] "Launched upon the stream of literature and on the bewitching Ohio river at the same time." Each man felt that his own life was an epitome of great affairs. As Doddridge says of himself,[2] "One advantage, at least, results from having lived in a state of society ever on the change, and always for the better, it doubles the retrospect of life. . . . . Did not the definite number of my years teach me the contrary, I should think myself at least one hundred years old, instead of fifty." And he goes on to say that he has never heard a pioneer on his deathbed express regret for his life; he invariably felt that he had lived and experienced fully—beyond the power of common men.

The writers were usually men of long experience with the frontier, and each asserts as his chief claim to being heard the fact that he is setting down life just as it is. For instance, Joseph Doddridge says,[3] "As it respects the Backwoodsmen, I cannot be wrong, for I was brought up among them, and, I trust, that I have done justice to the customs and phraseology of the native sons of our forests." And James Hall explains in the preface of the *Legends of the West* (1853). "More than thirty years ago the author went to the valley. . . . The panther and the wolf still lurked in the forests, the marshes and the pools were alive with water fowl, and the broad plains, covered with unbroken carpets

[1] *Beginnings of Literature in the Ohio Valley*, Venable, p. 65.
[2] *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars*, p. 20.
[3] Preface to *Logan*, 1823.

of verdure and wild flowers, were tenanted by myriads of wild fowl." And Timothy Flint justifies his views of Indian character by the following,[4] "Thus I have inspected the northern, middle and southern Indians for the length of ten years; and I mention it only to prove that my opportunities of observation have been considerable, and that I do not undertake to form judgment of their character, without at least having seen much of it."

Many of the writers also express their desire to set down the swiftly passing events. Andrew Coffinberry,[5] in a "Parting Word to the Reader," says, "The interesting incidents connected with the border strife of the West, and more especially those attending the campaign and brilliant conquest of General Wayne, over the deluded aborigines, are fast fading from the memories of the human race. And even the wild and untameable natives of these now flourishing climes, are rapidly vanishing from among the things that be! From these considerations I felt an ardent desire to contribute my mite toward the temporary preservation of their memories."

As to material, these early writers were fortunate—the woods were full of it. If the writer could but adequately set down what he heard and saw, he felt sure that he would have the most interesting story in the world. The vigorous, picturesque race, the hills and mountains and rivers all cried aloud to be immortalized in literature. Each writer, as was said of Timothy Flint,[6] but "Painted on the glowing page the peerless valley of the West." He had no desire for better material.[7] "I cannot judge of the recollections of castles and towers that I have not seen. But I have seen all the grandeur which our cities can display. I have seen, too, these lonely tombs of the desert,—seen them rise from these boundless and unpeopled plains. My imagination has been filled and my heart has been full." So absorbed were they all with immediate and local matters, that in 1830 Mrs. Trollope, an Englishwoman, was astonished to find that in the backwoods, "Our classic literature, our princely dignities, our noble institutions, are all gone-by relics of the dark ages."[8]

Writer after writer attests the interestingness of the life about him and his sincere desire to write it down just as it is. James Hall says in the *Legends of the West* (1853), "The sole intention of

[4] *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, p. 136.
[5] *The Forest Rangers*, 1842.
[6] Quoted Venable, *Literary History of the Ohio Valley*, p. 323.
[7] Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, 1826.
[8] *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, p. 140.

the tales comprised in the following pages is to convey accurate descriptions of the scenery and population of the country in which the author resides." And again, speaking of *Harpe's Head*, he says, "Two of the characters are historical. Their deeds are still freshly remembered by many of the early settlers of Kentucky, and their names will be instantly recognized by all who are conversant with the traditions of that state. . . . . He has invented but little; but professes simply to connect together the traditions of a region in which he has long resided." William T. Coggeshall says of his *Stories of Frontier Adventure*, that they are "designed to illustrate frontier life and character." And Timothy Flint says of *Francis Berrian*, "No inconsiderable portion of these adventures is anything rather than fiction," and indeed many descriptions and incidents are transcribed almost exactly from his earlier *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*.

It was a great day for oral story-telling and every fireside in the pioneer region had its fund of local material ready to the writer's hand. When the family drew about the fire in the evening, the father or elder brother was always ready with a tale of adventure.

> "Then would the fearless forester disclose
> Most strange adventures with his sylvan foes,
> Of how his arts did over theirs prevail
> And how he followed far upon their bloody trail."[9]

As Daniel Drake says of his childhood in Kentucky,[10] "I well remember that Indian wars, midnight butcheries, captivities, and horse-stealings, were the daily topics of conversation." And he says that his childish dreams were often troubled with those two chief dangers of the forest, the copper-colored Indian and the copperhead snake. That these frontier tales have preserved the full effect of the oral accounts, is attested by Mrs. Trollope, in her account of her first experience with frontier literature at a time when she was ill of fever at Cincinnati.[11] "By the time these American studies were completed, I never closed my eyes without seeing myriads of bloody scalps floating round me; long slender figures of red Indians crept through my dreams with noiseless tread; panthers glared; forests blazed; and whichever way I fled, a light foot, a keen eye, and a long rifle were sure to be on my trail. An additional ounce of calomel hardly sufficed to neutralize the effect of

[9] *The Emigrant, or Reflections while Descending the Ohio,* Frederick W. Thomas, 1830.
[10] *Pioneer Life in Kentucky,* 1870, p. 23.
[11] *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* p. 156.

these raw head and bloody-bones adventures. I was advised to plunge immediately into a course of fashionable novels."

Though the tales were varying in form, there were many recurrent incidents which seemed especially to capture the imagination of the pioneer. Each story teller vied with the others in his desire to make an interesting story. As James Hall says,[12] "To while away the tedium of a dull day's ride, or a long winter evening. they recite their adventures, or communicate their observations on subjects familiar to them, but strange and curious to others. Scraps of history, reminiscences of noted men, incidents of the chase and of border violence, the deeds of their fathers in battle, the traditions of the wilderness and the lone path, form the staple of these discussions; and it was from such sources that the writer derived the lore which he has presented to the public." Many of the most popular story elements are well shown in a typical Indian adventure story by Timothy Flint.[13]—Note, too, the heroic size of the characters. "The narrations of a frontier circle, as they draw around their evening fire, often turn upon the exploits of the old race of men, the heroes of past days, who wore hunting shirts, and settled the country. Instances of undaunted heroism, of desperate daring, and seemingly of more than mortal endurance, are recorded of these people. In a boundless forest full of panthers and bears, and more dreadful Indians, with not a white within a hundred miles, a solitary adventurer penetrates the deepest wilderness, and begins to make the strokes of his axe resound among the trees. The Indians find him out, ambush, and imprison him. A more acute and desperate warrior than themselves, they wish to adopt him, and add his strength to their tribe. He feigns contentment, uses the savage's insinuations, outruns him in the use of his own ways of management, but watches his opportunity, and when their suspicion is lulled, and they fall asleep, he springs upon them, kills his keepers, and bounds away into unknown forests, pursued by them and their dogs. He leaves them all at fault, subsists many days upon berries and roots, and finally arrives at his little clearing, and resumes his axe. In a little palisade, three or four resolute men stand a siege of hundreds of assailants, kill many of them and mount calmly on the roof of their shelter, to pour water upon the fire, which burning arrows have kindled there, and achieve the work amidst a shower of balls."

---

[12] *Legends of the West*, 1853.

[13] *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, p. 161.

As he suggests, it was only natural that the stories grew somewhat in the telling, and took on a more than human character. There was also a tendency of the incidents to cluster about some well-known name, like that of Daniel Boone, or Lewis Wetzel. Often the incidents were woven together into real romances or extensive biographies, more or less true to facts, by the fireside story-tellers, long before they were ever used as literary material.

II. Evidences of the American Spirit

In these early stories there is something more than the mere use of the new wilderness material. There is a new spirit, so like what we think of as modern Americanism that it is almost startling. William B. Cairns has already noted this in the early western magazines.[14]

There is a breaking away from old ideals in literature as well as in life, and an insistence on the importance of the great and growing western country that is expansively American. All previous literary efforts, along with the conventions of the East, are but curious relics of a past age. The only age worth while is the future—in the West. No character in fiction is half so interesting as is one's nearest neighbor, and the other great men, the makers of the West. This attitude leads naturally to a decided realism of tone.

Timothy Flint, in *George Mason, the Young Backwoodsman* (p. 76), takes issue with the fashionable novels of the day on this very question. "I know not how the reader feels, but I feel as much interest in the march of these barefoot boys along the deep forest, as I do in reading about the adventures and ridiculous distresses of fine dressed lords and ladies. Of all stupid things in the world, it is the most stupid, as we have before remarked, that the great mass of readers should have thought, that there was no dignity nor interest in any adventures, but those of men that have fine houses and coaches." And he proceeds with a tale of pioneer life and conditions in the new democratic world of the West. It is the story of a young backwoods boy, left when he is fourteen years old to care for his mother and the younger children. We hear of his struggle with the forest conditions, until finally, by his pluck and perseverance and other manly qualities, he becomes a pilot on one of the big river steamers, draws a big salary, makes the whole

[14] *American Literature from 1815-1833.*

family comfortable and happy, and marries the girl of his dreams. As a "success" story, except for a certain quaintness of style, it is so modern as almost to suggest the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* or of *The American*. It closes with a parting word of good American advice:

"My dear youthful reader, whenever you are in any way tempted to discouragement, remember the old maxim, that 'the darkest time in the night is just before day.' Exert yourself in hope. Be industrious, and while innocent and diligent, respect yourself, and hold yourself inferior to no one. Trust in God. Never despond, and assume the genuine American motto, 'Don't give up the ship'."

Timothy Flint's attitude toward the politician and the law-maker also seems very modern.[15] The following picture of the pioneer candidate is not yet seriously out of date: "He squeezed the good farmers' hands, and praised their chubby sons and daughters as far as he dared, without betraying his motive, and inquired how their cattle thrived, and how they managed their crops, and listened to the details of their affairs, apparently with great interest, at the same time that all his thoughts were a hundred miles from the matter. Economy was the burden of all his conversations with them, which were spiced with accounts of the extravagance and court affairs of Washington. He took care occasionally to intimate, that though everything was going on wrong now, it would be the easiest thing in the world to have affairs straight, if they would have the discretion to send a certain person there."

And again he shows the usual American impatience with the red tape of law-making.[16] Arthur Clenning has just been to Washington on a visit, but is not impressed by the law-makers. "On his return he told his wife, that it was an everlasting and long-winded establishment, that, as he was never strong at the lungs, it actually made him short breathed, to hear a famous speaker spout. He heard the moving speeches, that move all the audience, but toad-eaters and persons directly interested, from the house. He saw, too, with what a philosophic air of patience and resignation the members drew themselves up, to endure, with proper unction and profit, the penance of hearing a heavy speaker gleaning the shreds and gilt paper out of forty preceding speeches, and talking three hours on

[15] *Arthur Clenning*, 1828, p. 166.
[16] *Arthur Clenning*, 1828, p. 172.

a tack about nothing. He admitted, that it was a striking exhibition of a seventy horse power talking and legislation, and that there was something imposing in the puffing of the steam and the whirling of the wheels, and that was all there was in the sight."

It is quite noticeable, too, that in these passages there is a decided change, both in the general style and in the diction. They seem almost quoted verbatim from some western farmer's speech—quite unlike the correctness and dignity of Flint's usual style. In fact, he seems to be using western material from real life and just as he found it—so good (it must have seemed to him) that even though he had been trained in the principles of rhetoric at Harvard University he did not lay impious hands upon it. It was, indeed, not only the West expressed, but the West as the West expressed itself, and hence truly realistic and American.

There was generally evidenced a disregard of former standards and models in the literature of the Valley, with a free spirit unknown before. This was simply an evidence of the new western spirit. William B. Cairns has said,[17] "This feeling of literary independence was especially marked in the West, where it was nourished by the free spirit of the pioneer and by persistent traditions of earlier conflicts."

Many of the early writers also noticed this difference in spirit and often protested against it. Edward Deering Mansfield, recently from Princeton, after many ineffectual attempts to impress the classic proprieties on the backwoods writers of his acquaintance, says despairingly in Flint's *Review* of March, 1830: "There is a strong tendency in the West to prefer the unassisted energies of nature in literary efforts to the refinements of culture and the restrictions of rule. Learning is frequently thought idle and criticism little. This feeling springs from a principle of independent action, noble and just in the abstract, but inapplicable to the pursuit of literature."

Daniel Drake, in his *Discourse on the History, Character, and Prospects of the West* (1834), observes the new spirit in the readers as well as in the writers: "Many of our writers have received but little education, and are far more anxious about results than the polish of the machinery by which they are to be effected. They write for a people whose literary attainments are limited and imperfect; whose taste is for the strong rather than the elegant, and

[17] *American Literature from 1815-33*, p. 32.

who are not disposed or prepared to criticise any mode of expression which is striking or original, whatever may be the deformities of the drapery—consequently but little solicitude is felt by our authors about classic propriety." Then he proceeds to give a characteristic river man's explanation of the cause. Literature in the West, he thinks, must go "full steam ahead," sweeping before it all obstacles, as the big steamers overcome the obstructions in the western rivers. "In this region low-pressures are found not to answer—high steam succeeds much better; and although an orator may now and then explode and go off in vapor, the majority make more productive voyages than could be performed under the influence of a temperate heat."

Such writing was naturally much better in spirit than in form. Another influence which tended toward dash and carelessness was that of the English writers most popular in that day. Scott and Byron especially were imitated. "The example of these, if not in favor of quantity rather than quality, was certainly not in favor of careful revision. . . . . Cooper wrote as profusely as did Scott, and had a dazzling popularity."[18] There were current stories of how much Scott wrote in a day, and that Byron often wrote many pages in one burst of inspiration. Such an attitude would naturally lead to a large number of carelessly written stories from less gifted writers.

Besides that, the pioneer had a natural dislike for fine, painstaking work. He was used to hewing things out roughly, not polishing them—of beginning things greatly, not finishing them—it was a day of big things, and his methods were always extensive rather than intensive. Another reason for lack of finish was the actual lack of time for literary matters. Writing was not a profession, it was always done in scanty leisure time—perhaps after a long day of exacting physical work—and it was usually published without much revision. As William T. Coggeshall said in the preface to *Poets and Poetry of the West* (1861), "The poets of the West are, or have been, lawyers, doctors, teachers, preachers, mechanics, farmers, editors, printers, and housekeepers. They have written at intervals of leisure, snatched from engrossing cares and exacting duties. Their literary labors, consequently desultory, have rarely been given to elaborate performances, but rather to the emotion,

[18] William B. Cairns, *American Literature from 1815-1833*.

the impulse, or the passion of the hour .... exhibiting in a greater degree the feeling than the art of poetry."

When the writer had a natural wit, probably—as William Gallagher said of Timothy Flint—"He writes as he talks—rapidly, eloquently, poetically, carelessly." Moreover there was, of course, an actual lack of elementary education in many of the early writers of the Valley.

Yet the average backwoodsman was not daunted by his lack of knowledge. He braved the dangers of literature (though he realized they were many) as he had formerly braved the dangers of the forest—confident that somehow his quick native wit would see him through. Why, indeed, should one who had no fear of Indians quail before the difficulties of composition? Composition, the pioneer believed, is done in a sudden flash of inspiration. If this were true, then the heavenly fire might strike anywhere—and what place more likely than the beautiful and progressive valley of the Ohio?

This new democracy of letters was as revolutionary, in its way, as the political democracy had been. Doddridge asserts the doctrine of equal rights in one of his prefaces: "For attempting the task of doing justice to the character of Logan, I have no apology to make. My right to the use of the pen, and press is equal to that of any other man." *The Western Souvenir* of 1829, devoting its pages "exclusively to domestik literature," also makes the declaration of independence:

> "We've long seen your volumes o'erspreading the land,
> While the West country people strolled rifle in hand;
> And now we have come, with these hard palms of ours,
> To rival your poets in parlors and bowers.
> There are maids in the West, bright, witty and fair,
> Who will gladly accept of our new Souvenir.
>
> One hand to the paper, one touch to the pen,
> We have rallied around us the best of our men:—
> We have song, picture, silk and gold-leaf at command—
> 'Tis done; — Here we go with the fleet foot of deer—
> They'll have keen pens that battle our new Souvenir."

The writing, so far as it could be said to have literary form at all, seemed to be struggling toward a new method of expression, as if seeking a new style suitable for the expression of western ideas. It may be objected that a part of this apparent change might have come about more from an actual lack of knowledge of previous models, than from any tendency away from them. The fact seems to be, however, that the better educated writers were most inclined

to break away from the influence of conventional models. The really illiterate were usually little more than slavish copyists of Scott or Byron. Many times a writer, after using a conventional form for a time, changed to a freer style when he began to make use of local material, as if he realized that the stiff form was inadequate. Mr. Cairns has noticed,[19] "The couplet of Pope was affected at first, but when an author escaped from it he rarely used it again." This was also true of other set stanza forms, like that of Gray's *Elegy* or Byron's *Childe Harold.*

In a more general way, there was in the works of each writer an apparent advance toward modern American ideas. For instance, Timothy Flint—always a typical writer—advances from *Francis Berrian* in 1826, a story in which the chief interest is in far-off Meicxo—through the story of *Arthur Clenning,* laid chiefly on a desert island but with some genuine local interest at the end—to such purely American and pioneer studies as *George Mason, the Young Backwoodsman,* and *The Shoshonee Valley, an Indian Story.*

Doddridge tries in vain to make the backwoods material follow the conventional models. *Logan, Chief of the Cayuga Nation,* is written in a stiffly classic dramatic form, with Captain Furioso and Captain Pacificus in the *Dramatis Personae.* Even the backwoods characters speak a rigidly correct language. In *The Backwoodsman and the Dandy,* however, he uses a much freer style. Even his apology to his readers has in it a note of stalwart western independence. If his play is like the West he will bow to no criticism from prudish eastern readers. He says, "Some expressions in the dialogue may appear rough and uncouth, and a few of them objectionable on another ground. Let the blame, if any, rest where it ought; it is not the fault of the author, more than it was that of Shakespeare that 'the age in which he lived was not an age of delicacy.' If some expressions in the dialogue should excite the blush and blame of prudery, no matter. . . . . Its language is that which was in current use among our first settlers."

This tendency is clearly defined in all the writers whose work extended over a considerable period. They advance not only toward the expression of American ideas and ideals, but also to the expression of them in the American way, and, however crude these first attempts may be, they show the beginning of a new era that was to develop the American literature of the future.

[19] *American Literature from 1815-1833,* p. 67.

PART III

I. The Indian in Literature

(1) *Chateaubriand*

Previous to the year 1820 the Indian had been known as a literary type in the novels of Chateaubriand. Under the influence of Rousseau, Chateaubriand had been led to believe that man in his natural state is happiest and best. With this idea in mind he determined to make a trip to America for observation of the aborigines. He reached Baltimore in April, 1791, journeyed north to New York and Canada, and then south to Pittsburgh, and down the Ohio and Mississippi. Thence he went, by an indefinite route, to Florida for a time, then returned to Philadelphia, from which place he set sail in December, 1791. It is evident that, under the transportation conditions of that day, on this brief trip, he must have spent much of his time going from one place to another, and that he could not have sojourned for any great length of time with any one of the Indian tribes he describes so vividly. The natural beauty of Kentucky especially pleased him, and many of his most careful paintings of scenery have been identified as Kentucky scenes.[1]

After Chateaubriand's return to France he wrote several novels and other works featuring the American Indian. The novels most interesting to the American reader are: *Les Natchéz, Atala* and *René*. Among his characters he draws many types of Indians, many of whom are without counterpart in any American Indian story. Chactas in *Les Natchéz,* the Indian philosopher, has some points of likeness with the famous Logan. Adario is the perfect warrior. Even in his old age he had the straight form, the piercing eye, the cunning, and the proud and noble air of a youth. He was so devoted to freedom, that he preferred to kill his grandson rather than see him live in slavery. Ondureé, the villain, is far more like some border ruffian than like an Indian. The women, Céluta and Atala, are apparently much like Europeans.

Chateaubriand deserves much credit for being the first to present the Indian in literature, and for showing him as a real human being, but to an American his portraits are far from satisfactory.

[1] *Chateaubriand et L'Amerique,* Stathers, 1905.

To him the Indian was a somewhat child-like demigod—inhabiting the forests of America by divine right. Before the white man arrived he was perfect—living a free, natural, woodland life, beside which the Golden Age and the days of Arcady are commonplace. Any faults he may have at present have come from his association with the whites, who by their unbelievable cruelty have taught him to hate and to fight and introduced him to all the vices of civilization. The following brief quotation from *René* suggests this French point of view:

"Happy savages! Oh! that I could enjoy the peace which you always possess! While with so little satisfaction I ran through so many lands, you, seated quietly under your oaks, you let the days unnumbered flow along. Your thought was only for your wants, and you arrived, better than I, at the result of wisdom, like a child between sports and sleep."

The world is also indebted to Chateaubriand for some charming, if rather elaborate and sentimental, forest scenes. He called the attention even of the Americans to the real beauty of the wilderness, as well as to its possibilities for literary material. There is no doubt that he had a great influence upon Cooper, both with his Indian portraits and his descriptions of scenery. As the French Sainte-Beuve has said.[2]

"Rousseau avait decouvert et peint la nature alpestre, le jardin du Pays de Vaud et les belles forêts de nos climats; Bernardin de Saint-Pierre nous révéla le ciel et la végétation des Iles de l'Inde; mais à Chateaubriand, le premier, échut le *vaste* du Désert américain, de la forêt transatlantique. Ce fut sa grande conquête."

His difficulty was that he came to this country to prove certain preconceived theories, and he found what he came for—but little else. In fact, it is often difficult for an American, in reading a Chateaubriand novel, to remember that the character's skin was red or that his life did not have a European background, for Chateaubriand's experience with cultivated life, and the brevity of his acquaintance with the Indians often prevented him from giving them true Indian characteristics.

Just how well the stories of Chateaubriand were known to the writers of the Valley is doubtful. Certainly some of them were known to the early college-trained writers. For instance Timothy Flint in 1826 makes his hero, Francis Berrian, say, (p. 105) "I

[2] *Chateaubriand et son groupe*, Vol. 8, p. 130.

have heard your daughter quote Chateaubriand. Some passages in his travels are to me of the highest order of poetry, and abundant aliment for day-dreams. Nothing can be more delightful than some of those periods, where he relates his impressions in the midst of the magnificence and boundlessness of the savage nature of our forests, when the moon rises upon them, and diffuses over them the great secret of melancholy. I might instance that passage, that even the hypocrites have admitted was so beautiful, in the *Genie du Christianisme, 'Description d'une belle Nuit, dans les Forêts du Nouveau Monde,'* and many others in the romance of *Atala.*"

And in a later preface, R. M. Bird, author of *Nick of the Woods* (1830?) explains: "At the period when Nick of the Woods was written the genius of Chateaubriand and of our own Cooper (not to speak of Marmontel before them) had thrown a poetical illusion over the Indian character; and the red men were presented —almost stereotyped in the popular mind—as the embodiments of grand and tender sentiments—a new style of the *beau ideal*—brave, gentle, loving, refined, romantic personages—nature's nobles, the chivalry of the forest."

A general knowledge of the Chateaubriand point of view is credited to a common soldier of 1794 by Andrew Coffinberry.[3] While it is quite likely that the author cared little for the historical accuracy of his character's views, at least this would indicate that the Chateaubriand stories were fairly well known before 1842. Somewhat later, translations of several of the Chateaubriand stories appeared in the western magazines,[4] and later writers show more strongly the effect of this influence.

(2) *Cooper*

In American literature the decade from 1820-1830 is especially noteworthy for the work of James Fenimore Cooper, and it also includes the dates of some of the early work of the Ohio Valley writers. In 1822 Cooper wrote his first romance of early American days, *The Pioneers,* although it was not published until the next year. This work, written only to "please himself" as he said, shows very clearly the influence of Scott, who was then in the height of his popularity. Though rather awkwardly managed as to plot, it showed the possibilities of pioneer types of character in fiction

[3] *The Forest Rangers,* 1842.

[4] *Rene',* translated by I. W. Taylor, Esq., in *Western Journal and Civilian,* 1854, etc.

and created a great deal of interest. In 1826 appeared *The Last of the Mohicians,* also somewhat after the manner of Scott, and probably indebted to Chateaubriand to some extent for its delineation of Indian character.

Yet Cooper's Indians, though not by any means ethnological studies, were at least nearer the real aborigines than were those of Chateaubriand. He showed some of their bad qualities as well as their good ones, and under their high romantic coloring, real Indian traits are usually traceable. If they do not seem very real, at least in their nobility of character, stateliness of form, and eloquence of speech they are picturesque figures—fit creatures for the grandeur and sublimity of their forest background.

With the immediate popularity of *The Last of the Mohicans,* the Indian in American literature, so far as the North and East were concerned, became a fixed type. In almost every story with the Indian as central figure, it was not difficult to trace in him the lineaments of Uncas or Chingachgook or some other of the red heroes of the Cooper novels. Like these prototypes, he crept his way through the story with soundless tread against a romantic and picturesque forest background. This resemblance was but natural, for the Indian had been almost unknown in American literature before the days of Cooper, and the popularity and real power of his tales set firmly in the minds of the reading public this particular type of Indian character. Indeed, whether true or false, it will probably always remain to the great majority of readers, in our own and other countries, as the only important Indian type.

Later (1855) Longfellow elaborated a similar Indian character in *Hiawatha*—a romantic figure, rather a development of the Cooper Indian than as that of Chateaubriand.

There were many reasons why this type was easily accepted in spite of its fanciful nature. By the time the Cooper novels were written, the horrors of Indian warfare had become little more than a memory to the people of the East and North. There was not much opportunity for Uncas or Chingachgook to be compared with real Indians in actual and only too realistic warfare, and few remembered the days of the bloody struggle. The picturesque Indian figure, with its glamour of romance and its sounding oratory, seemed somehow akin to the American's idea of his own great country. By these striking stories of the aboriginals, America gained a new importance to the European reader and a recognition

that was very pleasing to the American heart. The stories were highly romantic, and in his breathless interest in the outcome, the reader seldom paused to inquire as to the realism of the characters, so that any failure in the drawing was easily overlooked and the Cooper Indian was accepted by both the American and the European reading public.

(3) *The Ohio Valley View of the Indian*

Most of the early writers of the Ohio Valley, if they knew the stories of Chateaubriand, certainly had little sympathy with his view of the Indian, nor would they have been much more in accord with Cooper's presentation. To them the Indian was neither a mere poetical figure nor an academic curiosity. Indeed, he was all too real—a fiendish enemy to be overcome at all hazards and by almost any method. If the writers themselves had not suffered at his hands —if they had not seen,

> "The flush of dying agony
> Yet fresh upon each well-known face,"

at least they knew many people who had lost their loved ones and had themselves endured torture and captivity. They were writing for a people "whose remembrance still bleeds at the recollection of the loss of their relatives, who have perished under the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savages." The Indian seemed to them, even yet, a serious and an ever-present menace, and the immediate contact did not tend to improve their opinion of the race.[5]

Naturally such writers, and such readers, could not well accept the conventionalized Indian either of Cooper or Chateaubriand. The attitude of the backwoodsmen generally is well expressed by an old soldier in Coffinberry's *The Forest Rangers* (1842).

> " 'Tis true that often I have read,
> An Indian in his native grandeur,
> High-minded, tall, erect and slender,
> Maintains his honor towards his friend,
> Whatever loss or risks attend—
> That in fierce combat, knife to knife,
> He will, to save him, lose his life;—
> That he is worthy imitation
> By any scientific nation!
> But, though I say it with regret,
> *Such specimens I have not met,*
> But found them still a treacherous race,
> Whose cruelties mankind disgrace."

[5] *Narrative of Charles Johnston*, 1827, p. 249. Even as late as 1822 there were thousands of Indians in Ohio.

And R. M. Bird in his preface to *Nick of the Woods* (1830?) says, "Such conceptions as Atala and Uncas are beautiful unrealities and fictions merely, as imaginary and contrary to nature as the shepherd swains of the old pastoral school of rhyme and romance—at all events, that one does not find beings of that class, or anything in the slightest degree resembling them, among the tribes now known to travellers and legislators. The Indian is doubtless a gentleman; but he is a gentleman *who wears a very dirty shirt*, and lives a very miserable life."

It is true that some of the Ohio Valley writers mention at times in their stories certain Indian tribes that live a somewhat idyllic life in the great forest,—particularly James Hall, in *The Black Steed of the Prairies*,[6] and Timothy Flint, in *The Shoshonee Valley* (1830).—Probably it was the early Chateaubriand influence which caused their minds to turn in this direction—in fact, that influence is noticeable throughout in Flint's story. However, it is noticeable, too, that in both instances the writers place these happy tribes well beyond the bounds of their own, or their readers', actual knowledge—at the Rocky Mountains and beyond—and that both are careful to leave the impression that such tribes are very different from any Indians known in the Ohio or Mississippi Valley. Timothy Flint even makes them nearly white. "Vague accounts of them by wandering savages, hunters, and *coureurs du bois*, have been the sources, most probably, whence have been formed the western fables, touching the existence of a nation in this region, descended from the Welsh."

Since the pioneer writer could not often use the conventionalized Indian of literature in his tales, he was forced to a more or less realistic study of the Indian as he knew him in the Valley. It is interesting to note what are the lineaments of the race as he saw them in the local tribes, for he certainly had a better opportunity for first-hand study than did either Cooper or Chateaubriand. Hence his picture of the Indian is probably nearer the real truth than that of any of the earlier writers.

(a) *The Indian of an Inferior Race.*

One thing of which the pioneer writer, as well as the average pioneer, was most certain, was that the Indian was actually inferior

[6] *The Wilderness and the Warpath*, 1846.

to the white man. The Indians showed themselves inferior by their barbarous warfare. Surely no race capable of such atrocious cruelty was worthy of existence. It is often to justify the pioneer in this attitude that the writer spreads his page with the loathsome details of savage warfare. "Should my countrymen be still charged with barbarism in the prosecution of the Indian war, let him who harbors this unfavorable impression concerning them, portray in imagination the horrid scenes of slaughter which frequently met their view in the course of the Indian war. Let him, if he can bear the reflection, look at helpless infancy, virgin beauty and hoary age, dishonored by the ghastly wounds of the tomahawk and scalping knife of the savage. Let him hear the shrieks of the victims of the Indian tortured by fire, and smell the surrounding air, rendered sickening by the effluvia of the burning flesh and blood. Let him hear the yells and view the hellish features of the surrounding circle of savage warriors rioting in all the luxuriance of vengeance, while applying the flaming torches to the parched limbs of the sufferers, and then suppose those murdered infants, matrons, virgins, and victims of torture, were his friends and relations, the wife, sister, or brother; what would be his feelings?" [7]

And such scenes were not merely chance incidents of the Indians' revenge upon the whites for some real or fancied injury, but they were the natural and usual outcome of the Indians' real character. As James Hall says,[8] "Those who are unacquainted with the Indian character—could scarcely understand how the mere lust of carnage, whetted by continual indulgence, becomes a master passion of the soul, irrespective of any desire for plunder or conquest, or of any present or prospective advantage. Neither infancy, nor imbecility, nor sex, affords any protection; as man bruises the head of the serpent, so does the Indian crush the offspring of his enemy; and the absence of the warrior only entices the brutal destroyer to seek his prey with redoubled diligence."

Did the Indians not war among themselves with bloody violence before the white man came? Did they not, even then, destroy innocent women and children and torture their captives? Then why should they be spared, who themselves spared no one? How could one be inhumane to a race of such horrible inhumanity? In Joseph Doddridge's play, *Logan, the Last of the Race of Shikel-*

[7] Doddridge, *Notes on the Settlement and Indian Wars*, 1824, p. 161.
[8] *Wilderness and the Warpath*, 1846.

limus (1823), the First Lieutenant expresses this view: "If the Indians have not already done mischief, they will soon do it. . . . . An Indian ought to be killed, he is naturally a murderer, and if not at war, it is only because he is chained down by fear." And Captain Furioso, as usual, goes even further, "He is a wolf or a bear, that lives upon the destruction of everything about him. He is a beast of prey."

The Indians also showed their inferiority in that they did not appreciate or use the beautiful country they inhabited. The pioneer was quite sure that,[9] "Nature did not make these clear waters and beautiful woods merely for the use of treacherous Indians." Land, reasoned the pioneer, is for use—and as the Indians made no use of it, according to the pioneer's ideas at least, they should give way to their betters. When someone says, in Doddridge's play,[10] that the Indians have the first right to the land, the First Lieutenant indignantly replies, "On their own ground! What ground can an Indian have? I would as soon apply to a buffalo, for a right to the land over the river, as to the Indian. I could prove that he marked the earth with his feet, had eaten the weeds and brushed the bushes with his tail, and made paths to the salt licks, and what has the Indian done more?"

Neither had the Indians developed any "improvements" to make life more comfortable, even in the villages they had lived in for generations. Certainly they could have no kinship with the superior white race. As Blair, a veteran soldier, says,[11]

> "Still nothing has e'en yet been done
> To 'meliorate their hard condition—
> Surely the race must lack ambition.
> No wigwam boasts a clapboard roof,
> Or any covering waterproof.
> With ours their blood was never blended
> From common stock we ne'er descended."

With such a race the pioneer felt little common human feeling. They were not only not civilized, but would never accept civilization.[12] "The young white prisoners, adopted into Indian families, often become complete Indians, but in how few instances did ever an Indian become civilized?" Hence they must be driven back, peaceably if possible, but always driven back, to make way for the mightier race and the march of civilization.

---

[9] James Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853, p. 256.
[10] *Logan*, 1823.
[11] Coffinberry, *The Forest Rangers*, 1842.
[12] Doddridge, *Notes*, 1824.

In war the Indian had invented nothing more deadly than the arrow and the tomahawk, and himself acknowledged his inferiority by using the white man's rifle and keen-edged knife. Since it was a matter of war between the races, the pioneer felt that he had won the wilderness by right of arms. Was he not a conqueror, often over many times his number of Indians? Then the fertile valleys were the spoils. Why should there be treaties of peace, and talk of paying for the land which he had already won? The Indian must accept the decision, and was in the wrong in any attempt to reconquer the territory for himself.

(b) *The Indian Marked by Fate for Destruction*

Another thing of which the pioneer writer seemed sure was that the Indian was somehow fated for destruction, and that he, the pioneer, was only the chance agent of that inexorable fate. The races, he reasoned, have always followed each other in successive waves; it is the natural law of earth.

> " 'Tis just, though stern,
> That race o'erwhelmed by race, in turn
> Should pass away." [13]

And later poets have often taken the same attitude.

> "O what a wonder man! He lives his time,
> His little hour, in passion's, glory's strife;—
> Bards come and spin the melancholy rhyme
> Over his noteless bones." [14]

As for the Indian, he is simply passing as the ages have decreed, before the coming of a better man. Micah P. Flint says in *The Hunter* (1826):

> "It hath been his bitter doom,
> To fall before that happier race,
> Which now hath fixed its dwelling place,
> On these wide plains, once all his own."

And Captain Furioso even finds a Biblical reason for destroying the Indians, when he says, "They are Canaanites, whom Providence has doomed to utter extermination." No doubt many of the pioneers felt themselves thus upheld by their God and providence, even in the worst of their outrages against the redmen.

---

[13] Micah P. Flint, *Hunter and Other Poems*, 1826.
[14] Coates Kinney, *Keuka and Other Poems*, 1855, p. 161.

The following stanza from an early poem leaves the reader in doubt. Is it as grimly cynical as it sounds, or is it, by chance, intended to be humorous?[15]

> "The forest primeval has gone from us now,—
> The trails are all turned by the white man's plow,
> While our Liberty Bell was ringing their knell,
> It proclaimed to Progress, that 'All is well.' "

This is the "It's-too-bad-but-it-can't-be-helped" attitude, which no doubt did much to ease the consciences of the hardy pioneers over many a white man's brutality. The Indians could not, in the very nature of things, hold this beautiful country forever. They would not give it up without a ferocious struggle. Those who took part in this struggle were the forerunners of civilization—pushed on from behind, like persons in a crowd—and so not really responsible for their aggressive acts. At least if they had not led the way someone else would have done so, they were merely the agents of manifest destiny.

(c) *The Indian's Rights Lost by His Treatment of the Whites*

Such ideas as the pioneers may have had originally concerning the claim of the Indians to the land were often overcome by a knowledge of their revolting cruelty toward the whites. Indian outrages, especially upon women and children, redden the pages of many an early tale and the diabolical yell of the savage in revenge,

> "Wielding the tom'hawk and the scalping knife
> With fiend-like fury and terrific form."

curdles the reader's blood, as the story pauses with hideous detail over the destruction of some settler's forest home. As Withers says,[16] "Such scenes . . . . will not soon be effaced from the memory; and the lively interest excited in the bosoms of many, for the fate of those who there treacherously perished, unabated by time, still gleams in the countenance, when tradition recounts the tale of their unhappy lot."

Even the kindest-hearted and most easy-going of the pioneers, willing to grant the Indians all their good qualities, willing to grant that any cruelty to a combatant is fair in war, recoils in horror from their bloody attacks on women and children. Such a hunter

[15] *The Shawnees of Wapakoneta, Poems on Ohio*, p. 59.
[16] *Chronicles of Border Warfare*, 1831.

says,[17] "They have no more bowels of compassion than a wolf. But, after all, the Indians have some good qualities. They are prime hunters, I will say that for them, and they are true to one another. I don't blame them a grain for their hatred of the Long Knives. That game is fair, for two can play it. But their thirst for human blood, and their cruelty to women and children is ridiculous."

We are told again,[18] "The tomahawk flies with unpitying and unsparing fury. The writhing of their victims inspires a horrible joy. Nor need we wonder at the enmity that exists between them and the frontier people, when we know how often such enemies have been let loose upon their women and children."

Such an attitude of antagonism to the Indian was not the growth of a short time, it had often been taught the pioneer from his babyhood. The Indian "had to do with men who had long been taught to consider the savage a natural enemy, as hateful as the serpent and as irreconcilable as the wolf; men whose ears had been accustomed from infancy to legends of border warfare, in which the savage was always represented as the aggressor, and as a fiend stimulated by hellish passions, and continually plotting some detestable outrage or horrible revenge. . . . . They had grown up in a hatred of the perpetrators of such enormities, which the philanthropists could hardly condemn, as it originated in generous feelings, and was kept alive by the repeated violation of the most sacred rights and the best affections."[19]

It was such an attitude which led to many outrages upon the Indians, even upon Indian women and children. As Captain Furioso said,[20] "I would kill all, nits will be lice." It was also such an attitude which led even the better pioneers to excuse, to some extent, at least, not only the murders of the Indian Hater—always a recognized type of backwoodsman—but also such slaughter as that of the Conestoga Indians at Lancaster and the Christian Indians at Gnadenhutten.

Yet the Indian's right had defenders even in these early days. It was usually the strong man, who could most nearly hold his own with the Indian—or even beat him at his own game—who gave him justice. As usual, this view is expressed in Doddridge's *Logan*, this time by the Second Lieutenant: "They have at least the right

[17] James Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853, p. 256.
[18] Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, 1826, p. 139.
[19] Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853.
[20] Doddridge, *Logan*, 1823.

of possession to the country. Providence placed them here, long before the white man knew anything of this quarter of the earth." And Captain Pacificus does not believe in the general butchery: "To tell the honest truth, I think but little of the bravery of any man who can ever harbor a thought of committing murder in cold blood. At all events, the man who can kill a woman or child, must be a coward."

(d) *Observation of Indian Life and Types of Character*

There is, however, in these stories, a real appreciation of certain types of Indian character and much excellent observation of Indian life. Timothy Flint gives a picture of an Indian supper.[21] "It would be difficult to imagine a happier assemblage of human beings, than those young and hungry red men, now exulting around their bright fires, feasting high upon salmon, a ration of corn cakes, distributed on this joyous occasion, roasted prairie potatoes, and a reasonable allowance of spirits. When they paused for the merry tale, or shouts of laughter, in the intervals, the pleasant sound was heard of their horses, advancing step by step upon the grass, and greedily biting it off to the roots."

And what could be more realistically drawn than the following picture?[22] "There is a peculiar excitement operating upon the red men in cases of burning, which renders the beholders as inaccessible to feeling, and as inexorable to pity, as the sufferer seems to be incapable of pain. The preparations were all executed under his eye. He saw the warriors eagerly adding faggot to faggot, and mixing green billets with dry. He heard them carelessly discussing all the circumstances of torment, they were preparing. The medicine men, hideously painted, stood apart, beating their drums, and at intervals starting the death song, in which the rest joined in those horrible strains, which had so rung in their ears at the tent in the morning. He saw these warriors, so peaceful in their repose, so shepherdlike, when reclining in the shade of their camp in the slumber of their passions, apparently transformed by this scene and singing to the rage and fury of demons. They yelled, leapt aloft in the air, and danced; and when they paused for a moment, it was to resume the fearful chaunt of their death song. An insatiable delight in the groans and agony of the victim had been created by the spectacle. He made his last effort to operate

[21] *The Shoshonee Valley*, Vol. 2, p. 103, 1830.
[22] *Shoshonee Valley*, Vol. 2, pp. 186.—

upon their obdurate natures, in thrilling entreaties, uttered in screams of terror, that they should not fire the pile, until they had a return to his message to his friends. He struggled with his pinions, till his unheeded cries to the young chief for mercy sunk away from exhaustion. The serious and calm indifference of the chief might have been taken for the result of deafness. Not so the rest. Their shouts of laughter, and the energy of their dancing were increased to tenfold vehemence. 'The fair pale face cries, like an old woman,' they shouted amidst their peals of merriment. The medicine men, meanwhile, beat their drums with a seriousness as inflexible, and an industry as uninterrupted, as though the ceremony could not proceed, if they were for a moment to remit their beating. They occasionally chaunted, 'We hear their spirits cry for vengeance. Wait till the sun casts no shadow, and the debt shall be paid.'

"The stake was a sapling shaft, stripped of its bark, fifty feet in height, and planted perpendicularly. The moment to fire the pile was when that stake should cast no shadow; and the fearful shortening of that shadow was noted by the quailing eye of the victim, who was bound fast to it. A human hand might now have spanned the shadow. The whooping and the 'Cheowanna-ha! ha!' at that moment could only have been aptly imaged by that impressive figure, the sound of many waters. The young chief raised his hand. 'The eye of the Master of Life is now directly upon us,' he said; and as his hand fell, a few low notes upon the drums, and the death song sinking almost under the breath of the warriors, and an imitation of the cry of one in the last struggles of dissolution, was the signal to fire the pile. The oldest warrior of the expedition seized a flaming brand from a fire in the centre of the camp, kindled on purpose. He flourished it swiftly three times above his head. He then calmly applied it to the pile, amidst shrieks from the victim, which none but a redman's heart could have endured.

"As the fire streamed aloft, 'I saw,' said Pentanona, 'big drops rise on the forehead of the base squaw. You know that Pentanona cannot say the thing that is not. I saw the hairs on his head become white, before they kindled in the blaze. After all, our warriors, who suspended their dancing, and their songs, to feast on the groans of the squaw, were robbed of their joy. The green wood hissed with the steam of a hot, but slow fire; and we intended to have danced, and sung to his cries, till the setting sun. But as the fire began to scorch his locks, we saw him fall lifeless and motionless.' "

Naturally a popular figure was that of the kind-hearted Indian brave who sometimes saved the white captives from torture, and refused to kill women and children. Tecumseh was often mentioned as having these characteristics. The following description is from Coffinberry's *The Forest Rangers* (1842):

"Young Muh-qua was a chieftain brave,
Who oft had risked his life to save
A female's or an infant's life,
From tomahawk or scalping knife;
Oft had he stayed base Girty's hand. . . .
His soul disdained to butcher those
That he deemed not his nation's foes;
In his lone camp did scalps abound,
Yet none but soldiers' there were found."

Another popular figure was the defiant warrior. Whether right or wrong in his warfare, he never failed to elicit praise for his stoicism at death. Certain writers, like Withers, in the *Chronicles of Border Warfare*, tried to minimize this appreciation by saying that the Indian did not actually feel the torture as a white man would, *i.e.*, that his nervous system was not so highly organized. This was certainly not generally believed, however, and this type of Indian is celebrated in many poems and stories. The following is a vigorous specimen of such writing:

"Amid the flames, proud to the last,
His warrior-spirit rose,
And looks of scorn unblenching, cast
Upon his circling foes.
Think ye I feel these harmless fires
No—by the spirit of my sires
I, that have made your wigwams red,
Your women captive borne,
And from your bravest chieftain's head
The badge of triumph torn;
Think ye I feel these harmless fires?
No—by the spirits of my sires!" [23]

Another popular poem, written by Wm. R. Schenck, was published in Coggeshall's *Poetry of the West:*

"Then higher build my funeral throne,
Then higher raise the raging flame,
And not one murmur, not one groan
Shall sully Orvan's deathless fame . . . .
Remember how before me sank
Your bravest friends, your failing ranks:
Remember how my hatchet drank
Your warmest, choicest blood,
I scorn your power; I scorn your wrath;
I curse you with my latest breath."

[23] M. P. Flint, *Hunter and Other Poems* 1826.

And another warrior, Senatchmine, is celebrated by John H. Bryant in the same collection:

> "For he was of unblenching eye,
> Honored in youth, revered in age,
> Of princely port and bearing high,
> And brave, and eloquent, and sage."

Even the "white hater," the opposite type from the backwoods Indian hater, has his place in the stories. The following is from Timothy Flint's story of Oolemba in the *Western Souvenir* (1829): "Wansimmet ran to the spot where the blood of the wounded paleface stained the black mould. He kissed it. A gloomy joy marked his countenance, and we saw, that between him and that race an everlasting war was proclaimed."

Indian eloquence was much appreciated. The Logan speech was widely known, and other examples of oratory were often quoted in the western magazines. In many of the stories and poems careful imitations of the Indian style were worked out, often with considerable success. The following description of an eloquent warrior is from *Francis Berrian* [24]:

"I entered into this speech with intense interest for I had heard much of Indian eloquence. The gesture was vehement. An arm, which had once been muscular and brawny, waved with graceful motion from under a buffalo robe, thrown half across the shoulder. To give emphasis to the close of every sentence, the speaker raised himself, and poised the weight of his body on his toes. It was garnished with the usual figures of the clouds, the winds, thunder, and generally images drawn from the most striking phenomena of nature."

This example of Indian eloquence was published in the *Western Souvenir* in 1829. It was said to have been delivered at a council near Detroit in 1788: "Fathers!—What has happened this day has sunk deep into my heart, and will never be forgotten. I foretell, that the sunshine of this day's peace will warm and protect us and our children. To confirm it—I here present my right hand; —the hand that never yet was given in deceit;—and which never raised the tomahawk in peace, or spared an enemy in war. And I assure you of my friendship with a tongue which has never mocked at the truth."

---

[24] Timothy Flint, 1826, p. 45.

Sometimes the Indian character, especially that of the squaws, was used in a humorous way. In *Francis Berrian* [25] the hero is proposed to by the squaw. "In fact she let me know, without circumlocution, that the honor she intended me was no other, than to offer me all her wealth, consisting in a large quantity of vermillion, a complete assortment of Indian finery, a rifle, a yager, dogs, mules, horses, cows, and that, upon which she seemed to have affixed the least value, some ingots of silver; and all this only with the incumbrance of a fine athletic squaw, six feet and an inch in height, and with broad copper-colored cheeks, painted as red as vermillion could make them." Her actual proposal was as follows: "You silly. You weak. You baby-hands. No catch horse. No kill buffalo. No good, but for sit still—read book. Never mind. Me like. Me make rich. Me make big man. Me your squaw."

All this appreciation of the Indian, however, is very different from the sentimental attitude of Chateaubriand or the heroics of Cooper. It always shows a knowledge of real Indians and of their actual characteristics, and a genuine desire to express that truth upon the pages of their stories.

2. *The Pioneer in Ohio Valley Literature*

But if the pioneer writer failed to see many high heroic qualities in the Indian he was just as matter-of-fact in his attitude toward himself. Not only is he not a blood-thirsty villain—the Chateaubriand spoiler of the red man's paradise—but also he is not even a romantic Leather Stocking.

First of all, pioneers, he thinks, are not all alike by any means. Their types are almost as numerous as the trees in their own forests. Half the charm of the life along the Ohio River was the constant succession of clearly marked personalities. Life had not a conventional, typical quality—it was all new and stirring with odd characters and odd possibilities. As Daniel Drake said of his childhood,[26] "I had not only variety of character, but variety of topics, presented to me . . . and the very apprehension of them served to enlarge the horizon of my childhood; while the diversities of character greatly augmented the area of my social sympathies, especially in the humbler walks of life."

---

[25] Timothy Flint, 1826. Vol. 1, p. 57.

[26] *Pioneer Life in Kentucky*, 1870, p. 211.

a. *The Hunter*

Two very distinct classes of backwoodsmen, to the backwoodsman himself, were the hunters and the settlers. The first white men in the wilderness were usually the hunters. These were solitary men who loved the wild life of the forest for itself and preferred its dangers to the conventions even of the pioneer settlements. It was their frequent remark that they "could not abide'" towns or even scattered settlements, and they loved to tell how they would lose their way in some frontier village when the trackless forest was like an open book to them. As Withers says in the *Chronicles of Border Warfare* (1831)[27] "There were also in every settlement, individuals, who had been drawn to them solely by their love of hunting, and an attachment to the wild, unshackled scenes of a wilderness life. These were, perhaps, totally regardless of all the inconveniences, resulting from their new situation except that of being continually pent up in the forts; and thus debarred the enjoyment of their favorite pastime." Free lances in the forest as they were, by their keen observation and knowledge of the Indians they often saved the settlements by warning them of an attack or by joining their garrison at the critical moment.

The hunter type of backwoodsman seldom cared much for the other pioneers. He felt that the wilderness belonged rightfully to himself. "Nature did not make these clear waters and beautiful woods merely for the use of treacherous Indians,—no—nor for land speculators and pedlars. . . . There are settlements already where a woodsman cannot find his way for the roads and the farms." [28]

Daniel Boone was often mentioned as the supreme type of the backwoods hunter, and many of the hunter incidents have clustered about his name. Wm. Ross Wallace, in an early poem (1840?), makes him say,[29]

> "Ha! how the woods give way before the step
> Of these newcomers! What a sickening smell
> Clings round my cabin, wafted from their town
> Ten miles away!"

By the hunter the Indians were regarded chiefly as a nuisance, interfering with what would otherwise be the perfect joy of the

[27] P. 131.
[28] Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853, p. 257
[29] Coggeshall's *Poetry of the West.*

wilderness life. Speaking of Indian raiding one of them says,[30] "It does no good to nobody, and is ruinous to the pleasant business of hunting; for a man cannot take a little hunt of a month or two, without the danger of having his cabin burnt, and his family murdered in his absence."

b. *The Settler*

After the hunter came the settler, practical and busy, developing a home for his family in the wilderness. The settler, as he saw himself, was merely a practical man. He was there for business. His chief concern was to open up a clearing, to shelter and feed his family, and to protect them, if he could, from the perils of the forest, whatever they might be. The Indian was but an incident—though often a most distressing one—in his busy life. If the Indian would let him alone, the pioneer argued, he would let the Indian alone and call it quits. But when the tribes persisted in their outrages, the settler was compelled to try to remove the trouble.

> "With veteran arms, the forest they subdued,
> With veteran hearts, subdued the savage foe." [31]

His hardness of heart toward even their women and children was often not at all from the lust for blood, but from a hard practical sense of necessity. He set about removing the Indians as the southerner often sets about the lynching of a negro—not from any liking for the bloody business—but because he considers it a stern necessity for the safety of his family and of the community. As Withers says in his *Chronicles of Border Warfare* (1831), in speaking of Indian barbarities: "They gave birth to a vindictive feeling in many, which led to the perpetration of similar enormities and sunk civilized man to the degraded level of the barbarian. They served, too, to arouse them to greater exertion, to subdue the savage foe in justifiable warfare, and thus prevent their unpleasant recurrence."

That such destruction was often done with thoroughness, numerous references in these early stories indicate. For instance in *Nick of the Woods* (1830?) we are told, "But the triumph was not completed until the village, with its fields of standing corn, had been entirely destroyed—a work of cruel vengeance, yet not so

[30] *Legends of the West*, 1853, p. 256.
[31] Doddridge, *Elegy on His Family Vault*, 1823. P. 300.

much of vengeance as of policy; since the destruction of their crops, by driving the savages to seek a winter's subsistence for their families in the forest, necessarily prevented their making warlike inroads upon their white neighbors during that time." And Micah P. Flint tells of the destruction of an Indian village.[32]

"The village wrapped in sheets of flame,
The piercing shriek of wild despair,
That fainter still, and fainter came;
Till woman's voice was silent there."

The settler did not think of himself as being inhumane—he simply did not consider the Indians as being quite human. They were like the wolves and the panthers and other forest dangers—all "varmin" so far as he was concerned.

Toward a white man, even of the worst type, the settler was seldom cruel. Between the races a very distinct line was drawn. Even the fierce Indian hater of *The Forest Rangers*,[33] who has just boasted of having killed and scalped no less than fifty Indians, has compunctions of conscience about such a renegade as Simon Girty. He remarks,

"What we can do
With this vile critter, I don't know;
I wish he'd just got killed at fust,
For, stranger, now if I be cust,
I cannot kill the tory villain;
Acaze the very thoughts of killin
A white man—thongh I know its nonsense,
Looks mean and goes agin my conscience."

Toward his fellow backwoodsmen the settler was usually both kind and helpful. He was the

"Son of the trackless forest, large and wild,
Of manners stern, of understanding strong,
As nature rude; but yet in feeling mild." [34]

Many references attest this same quality. "It is a matter of reliable history, that many of the early Western Pioneers—the men who drove back the wild beast and the skulking Indian, and turned the wilderness into cultivated fields, were men of the kindest nature, and most benevolent impulses." [35]

"Simple, honest and inoffensive in their manners, kind and just to each other, they were intrepid, fierce and vindictive in war. Under

[32] *Hunter and Other Poems*, 1826.
[33] Coffinberry, 1842.
[34] Doddridge, *Elegy on His Family Vault*. 1823.
[35] Coggeshall, *Stories of Frontier Adventure*, 1862, p. 129.

an appearance of apathy, with a gait of apparent indolence, and with careless habits, they were muscular and hardy, patient of fatigue, ardent in their temperment, warm-hearted and hospitable."[36]

The backwoodsmen, according to Timothy Flint, are "a hardy, adventurous, hospitable, rough, but sincere and upright race of people. . . . They are averse to all, even the most necessary restraints. They are destitute of the forms and observances of society and religion; but they are sincere and kind without professions, and have a coarse, but substantial morality." [37] And he has also characterized them in verse,[38]

> "And those rude foresters, who lead the van,
> Who through untrodden wilds the highway pave,
> On which the march of civilized man
> Rolls steady onward to the western wave,
> Reckless of law, but generous and brave,
> They ever met with welcome kind,
> Which I received as freely as they gave.
> And oft beneath their cabins rude did find
> That noblest guest, a happy, independent mind."

And Joseph Doddridge makes the backwoodsman analyze his own character very thoroughly,[39] "Why, we was not very fine to be sure, but we was civil enough; for the war which placed our night caps in danger every day, made us very lovin to one another; one man then was worth as much as twenty is now. . . . A backwoodsman is a queer sort of fellow; he never gives an affront, and he never takes one; if you call him a rogue, a liar, or a simple barbarian, he will be sure to knock you down, or try for it. If he's not a man of larnin, he has plain good sense. If his dress is not fine, his inside works are good and his heart is sound."

One never finds these early writers expressing that view which grew common somewhat later, that the pioneer was working "that his children might reap," that "he suffered that we might be comfortable." Such an attitude is that of a soft race looking backward, and though it is intended for appreciation, it is probable it would not altogether have pleased the hardy pioneer. It was true, of course, that the pioneer was working for posterity. He no doubt hoped that his children, and others not his children, might profit

---

[36] Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1854.
[37] Flint, *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, 1826, p. 173.
[38] *Ibid*, 1826, p. 360.
[39] *The Backwoodsman and the Dandy*, 1823, p. 44.

by his labors. He liked to think in a broad way that he was working for the advancement of civilization. But for himself he invented no heroics. He was in the wilderness because he liked it, because he preferred it to the hard, circumscribed life of the country he had left. There were disadvantages, it was true; but the advantages were most important in the settler's eyes. He liked the freedom of the woods, the power to do what he pleased. He was usually vigorous physically so that what would seem hardship to his posterity was really his chief joy. Again and again this idea of pleasure is expressed in the early works.

"Danger was but excitement; and when came
The tide of emigration, life grew tame;
Then would they seek some unknown wild anew,
And soon above the trees the smoke was curling blue." [40]

"My palace built by God's own hand,
The world's fresh prime has seen;
Wide stretch its living halls away,
Pillared and roofed with green,
My music is the wind that now
Pours loud its swelling bars,
Now lulls in dying cadences—
My festal lamps are stars." [41]

"The hunt, the shot, the glorious chase,
The captured elk or deer;
The camp, the big bright fire and there
The rich and wholesome cheer:—
The sweet, sound sleep at dead of night
By our campfire blazing high—
Unbroken by the wolf's long howl
And the panther springing by." [42]

Joseph D. Canning, Esq., writes of the hunter,[43]

"Though far to the sunrise the wanderer's home,
He loved in the gardens of nature to roam;
By her melodies charmed, by her varying tale,
He followed through forest and prairie her trail."

And often we are told how the old pioneer looks longingly backward from the "civilized" life that he has won.[44]

" 'Tis mine no longer to indulge in what
Gave life its bliss, jeweled the day with joys,
And made my slumbers through the night as sweet
As infant's dreaming on its mother's breast.
The blood is sluggish in each limb, and I
No longer chase the startled deer or track
The wily fox or climb the mountain side."

[40] Frederick W. Thomas, *The Emigrant*, 1830, p. 74.
[41] Ephraim Peabody, *Poems on Ohio*, p. 80.
[42] William D. Gallegher, *Poems on Ohio*, p. 100.
[43] William's *American Pioneer*, Vol. 1, 116.
[44] Thos. H. Shreve, *Reflections of an Aged Pioneer*, 1830, *Poems on Ohio*, p. 103.

Many times the early writer delights in a realistic picture of the family life, like this from the pen of Timothy Flint.[45] "A brilliant blaze, kindled with dry wood, enlightened the whole interior structure of this fresh-looking, rough-cast, timbered apartment. The faithful dog, that had followed them all the way from their late home, and now doubly dear to them, as associated with their fond remembrances of that country, sat beside the table, looking earnestly upon its contents, apparently as hungry, and as happy, as the children, wagging his tail and occasionally interpolating a yelp of joy, as an interjection in the pauses of the gay conversation. The prolonged and distant howl of the wolves, the ludicrous and almost terrific noises of a hundred owls, the scream of other nocturnal animals, the measured creaking of the crickets and catadeds, and the gathering roar of autumnal winds along the forest, only sweetened a sense of present protection to the children, and rendered the brightness and shelter of the scene within more delightful, by contrast with the boundless and savage forest without."

Such were the joys of the pioneer. Perhaps at times he missed the comforts of civilization, but not often, if we are to believe his own account of himself. It was only the homesick wife and children who looked longingly toward the great mountains which shut them from their former home. The pioneer himself had only ridicule for the "weak-kneed" fellow who wanted to go "back East." When such a character appears in the stories he, like the Dandy, is only as a foil to the true backwoodsman who is the hero of the tale. The true backwoodsman was in his element, and knew it. He bowed to no man and almost to no circumstances, and he felt that a certain honor was due him on this account. As Doddridge says,[46] "If he is not rich or great, he knows that he is a father of his country."

c. *The Indian Hater*

By far the most clearly marked type in the early stories is that of the Indian hater. He was a product of frontier life and conditions and might be of any race or nationality. Usually he was a man who had seen all he held dear in the world destroyed with horrible brutality by the Indians. In his agony of soul he vowed to spend the rest of his life in securing revenge for that destruction—

[45] George Mason, *The Young Backwoodsman*, 1829, p. 11.
[46] *Backwoodsman and the Dandy*, 1823, p. 50.

and he kept that vow religiously. We are told by Micah P. Flint, in *The Hunter* (1826), of such a man who looked upon his ruined home,

> "And vowed by every murdered shade,
> To wreak the vengeance, yet unpaid,
> To seek the serpent in his nest;
> And sweep from earth this common pest."

And he gives his later history:

> "Love and Hope forever fled;
> And in their place Revenge arose;
> For that I fought; for that I bled,
> Exulting o'er my fallen foes
> With all a tiger's wildness."

This species of insanity, for such it seems to have been, was usually accompanied by other indications of a deranged mind, though sometimes the victim seemed sane upon every other subject. Such a man usually lived alone in the forect, hunting and trapping, in the intervals of his pursuit of the main bsuiness of his life. In his killing of Indians he made no fine distinctions—warriors after an attack on a settlement, women at their tasks, little dusky children sailing boats in the river, Indians who had been friendly to the whites, all fell before his deadly knife or gun. He had, as the pioneers said, "no jedgement" in his work.

Some of the pioneers were inclined to wink at the Indian hater's faults,[47] "It would seem hard to break with him for the matter of a few Indians. People don't think the Indians of much account, nohow." But most of all because of their sympathy with his sorrows. For, "Few of us could lay our hands upon our hearts and say we would not do the same in his situation."

They appreciated his assistance, too, when he struck down Indians making for the settlement, warned them of an Indian attack, or assisted in the recovery of captured relatives. Yet he was, they said, "a little too keen on the track of a moccasin." They knew he was in general, a menace, rather than a protection, for his ruthless destruction of the redmen sometimes drew upon the innocent settlers a particularly bitter attack, which they would otherwise have escaped. And long after peace would have come to the frontier the Indian hater, with his insane animosity to the race as a whole, kept the Indians stirred to the point of vengeance and did much to nullify the peace treaties drawn up by the wiser backwoodsmen.

---

[47] Hall, *Wilderness and the Warpath*, 1846, p. 138.

In the early stories the Indian hater often speaks for himself, in a vigorous backwoods style. The Indian hater of *The Forest Rangers* says,[48]

> ". . . . I mean to spend my life,
> In gittin vengeance for my wife.
> Sence then, about these woods I've bin,
> A-killin Injins when I kin."

In Coggeshall's *Stories of Frontier Adventure* (1863) a pioneer says to an Indian hater, "You don't shoot Injins jist because they ain't white"? To which he replies, "I'd shoot 'em anyhow, but you know I've got a big spite agin 'em, an' I shan't give up 'till every moccasin's druv out o' this country." And again, "We'd chase 'em if they hadn't no women!"

There are also numerous descriptions of the Indian hater in action. James Hall particularly liked to study this strange character as he saw him in the West.[49] "The veteran seemed to be animated with a supernatural strength and activity, and to be actuated by an inhuman ferocity. Wherever his blow fell, it crushed; but his fury was unabated. Blood seemed to whet his appetite for blood. As he struck down the last enemy within his reach, he halted, and his eye seemed to gloat upon the victims of his revenge. His cheek was flushed, his nostrils distended, and his muscles full of action—like those of a pawing war horse. In a moment his excitement began to subside, and he exclaimed, 'God forgive my soul the sin of bloodguiltiness.'" Again he described Monson, an Indian hater, when he sees an Indian.[50] "His eyes rolled wildly, as if he had been suddenly stung to madness, gleaming with a strange fierceness—an intense luster, like that which flashes from the eyeballs of a panther, when crouched in a dark covert ready to dart upon his prey."

Yet at times, apparently, the Indian hater had some slight feeling of pity for his innocent victims. In Micah P. Flint's *The Hunter* (1826), he returns to look at the ruins of an Indian village which he has destroyed, where,

> "Full many a human skull, and bone
> Was bleaching in the nightly dew. . . .
> I passed along that desert glade
> And sated Vengeance almost wept
> To see the wreck itself had made."

---

[48] Coffinberry, *Forest Rangers*, 1842, p. 164.
[49] Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853.
[50] Hall, *Wilderness and the War Path*, 1846, p. 138.

There is no evidence, however, that a man who became an Indian hater ever reformed. The few who lived to be old, stayed on in the growing settlements, pathetic wrecks of pioneer conditions.

The fact that the Indian hater had often been a man of sensitive nature and gentle impulses, until changed by the Indian outrages, rendered his case all the more pitiable. Probably the number of actual Indian haters was not great—he was the exception, not the rule—but his lonely, vindictive, picturesque figure, and his sorrowful history, appealed very strongly to pioneer hearts and rendered him the most outstanding character in all their literature.

(d) *The Desperado*

Another type of backwoodsman was the desperado or outlaw. The frontier of the country has always drawn to itself from the older settlements, not only those who wanted freedom but also those who wanted license. Along the Ohio River in the early days were great numbers of men who found in the laxness of frontier life the opportunity to commit all those crimes interdicted by the laws of the older communities. When once apprehended by the settlers these criminals were vigorously dealt with, and their bodies often mutilated and exposed to view at the cross roads. Yet in the free forest life such bands of men often operated almost unsuspected for several years. These early stories are full of references to counterfeiters, robbers, bandits, and murderers,—only less to be feared than the Indians themselves. Scarcely a backwoods community but had its robbers' cave somewhere in the vicinity to curdle the blood of the chance wayfarer out after dark. James Hall made a careful study of these degenerate outcasts in *Harpe's Head*,[51] showing also the attitude of the other pioneers toward them.

The Outlaw, a crude poem, published by Charles A. Jones in 1835, tells the story of an outlaw band operating along the river from Cave In Rock. He described them as:

> "A fierce and numerous robber band,
> The plague and terror of the land,
> Met to pillage and to slay,
> And make their fellow men their prey."

They kill a traveller and he is soon:

> "Fast anchored in the sleeping wave,
> Full many a murdered victim's grave."

[51] *Legends of the West*, 1853.

The band is finally destroyed, however, so the pioneer boats can again ply up and down the river in safety.

> "Their crews no more will deem they see
> A robber's form in every tree,
> And grasp their rifles and prepare
> For deeds of blood and carnage there."

In later, and more lurid, stories such dens were often made use of for the incarceration of interesting and beautiful heroines, who were loved—invariably, it seems,—by the gallant leader of the robber band. These earlier stories, however, go to no such lengths of romance, but almost always treat the robber caves with much realism. The robbers are real men to them, and the caves are described with care as to the details of the interior and of the furniture required by a robber band.

(e) *Other Types*

Another interesting type on the frontier was the missionary or preacher. He varied all the way from a wild prophet like the Leatherwood God with his horselike snort, to the Anglican clergyman preaching under the forest trees in his robes of office, much to the amusement of his backwoods congregation. Apparently there was not a backwoods preacher who was not a notable character in some respect, and the story writers enjoyed picturing his weaknesses as well as his good qualities. The following description is from Timothy Flint's *Francis Berrian* [52]: The preacher's voice had "a vile trick of the profession which had accustomed him to twang through his nostrils, with a sound, not unlike a brazen trumpet. . . . . Occasionally deep sighs, and groans half suppressed, as from distress of cholic, an assumption of canonical and immaculate sanctity, frequent ejaculation of the words 'Gracious Lord', did not conceal from any observer of ordinary acuteness, the quickness of his apprehension upon every point of worldly advantage." And his description of the feminine saint is quite as good: "The sister was a well-formed and rather pretty woman; half fine and half Quakerish in her dress, of unlettered shrewdness, and the severe sanctity of restraint, so characteristic of the profession. A certain smile, that showed brilliant and fine teeth, and a pretty movement of the head, evidenced a little spice of woman, mixed up with the ingredients of the saint."

[52] Vol. II, (1826, p. 128).

But the types are too many to enumerate. There was the river boatman,[53] the pedlar, the dandy, the young lady of sentiment, and as many different types of foreigners as there were nationalities represented in the backwoods county. Much of the interest of the stories lies in their contrasting of widely different types—as they appeared on the frontier. The Yankee and the Virginian, the Virginian and the raw frontiersman, the Irishman and the German, the backwoodsman and the dandy, the frontier girl and the society lady, the Harvard graduate and the ignorant squatter, the pedlar and the easy-going hunter, the preacher and the outlaw—there was an infinite possibility of setting one over against another in the ever-shifting life along the river.

One rather early story, possibly not written by a resident, secures a particularly stirring effect by introducing nearly all these types of character. This is the novel variously known in different editions as *New Hope* or *The Rescue, Young Kate* or *The Rescue*, and *The Allens, A Tale of the Great Kanawha Valley*. The date of its original publication seems to be about 1840. The following account of this interesting story is quoted from an earlier study[54]: The story begins, "On a fine day in October, 1798, a young gentleman and lady were standing near that remarkable canal worn down by the action of the swiftly rushing water of the falls of the Great Kanawha." They are brother and sister, Matilda and Henry Ballenger, the tenderly reared children of an eastern Virginian, who, having lost his fortune, has withdrawn to the backwoods of the Kanawha, and named his home "New Hope." Among their acquaintances are, Ben Bramble, a kind-hearted backwoodsman and hunter (probably suggested by the character of Daniel Boone), and a land agent, Isaac Forster, who acts with power of attorney for Virginian owners of western lands. Forster is the villian,—smooth-spoken, unscrupulous, and crafty, a very Iago in his designs upon the helpless Virginians. Then there is the pioneer pedler, a gang of counterfeiters, numerous tavern keepers, the German, the Irishman, and the negro servants of the Ballengers—truly a varied and contrasting group of characters!

Later writers recognized in this method a possibility of arousing interest even in a crudely managed tale. About 1850 whole series of "best sellers" appeared and became well known—not for

[53] Particularly well drawn in *Mike Fink the Last of the Boatmen*, Morgan Neville, 1829.
[54] *Writers of West Virginia.*

their pictures of pioneer conditions, but for their succession of hair-raising incidents. Every stirring happening of fifty years of frontier history, with many a lurid addition from the writer's imagination, dashed through the story with no motivation of character nor logical succession of events. Indians and beautiful maidens, and wild beasts and prairie fire and robbers, all mixed together in a very hodge-podge of wild western material—and held the reader's breathless interest to the end. For a time these cheap tales were very popular. As W. H. Venable says of the novels of Emerson Bennett,[55] "There are grave and respectable men, and women, not of the 'lower million,' who, if put to the confessional must own that there was a time when, lured by the *Prairie Flower* or *The Forest Rose* or *Kate Clarendon*, or *The Artist's Bride*, or *The Outlaw's Daughter*, they followed the complicated plot, sympathizing in the romantic adventures of brave young heroes, lovely orphan heiresses, impossible Indians, mixed up with love and prairie fire, and the sharp crack of a rifle, with robbers and panthers, in woods and cavern, by land and water, in city and solitude, to the breathless end of the last chapter, in which the villain is slain, and the lost bride is restored to her happy lover." Even yet, it is said, these lurid stories are occasionally brought out in new editions for Ohio Valley readers.

Yet in the early literature these types of character are not by any means mere conventions. Crude as the descriptions are at times they seem always to come from a sincere desire to set down upon the page that which has been seen with the eyes or actually experienced in life. An Indian hater is not a typical figure, but an individual expressed with as careful particulars as if he were the only one in the whole wilderness—though he may have some qualities in common with other Indian haters. This careful realism, which is the chief charm of this early Ohio Valley literature, seems to arise from a sincere belief in the writer that his own life "sot down in a book," as was the backwoods phrase, must be more interesting than any other literature in the world. And the modern reader turning these old pages finds himself rebuilding in his imagination from these materials the whole edifice of early life in the backwoods of the valley.

[55] *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley*, p. 293.

3. *The Realistic Attitude Toward Natural Scenery in Ohio Valley Literature*

It would be too much to say that the realistic description of natural scenery developed any special characteristics in the early writings of the Ohio Valley. Already Scott and Wordsworth and Bryant and many other writers, both in prose and in poetry, had given much attention to the realistic presentation of natural scenery. Yet, taken in connection with the attitude shown by pioneer writers toward the Indian and the pioneer, the tendency here toward realism has some significance.

The pioneers were generally expert observers of nature and for good reason, for life itself often depended upon intelligent observation. They passed this on to a great extent to their children, the earliest lessons of the backwoods boy or girl was in careful and accurate use of the senses. We are told of the backwoods hunter,[56] "Though unacquainted with books, he had perused certain parts of the great volume of nature with diligent attention. The changes of the seasons, the atmospherical phenomena, the growth of plants, the habits of animals, had for years engaged his observing powers." And Andrew Coffinberry says of a lone forester[57]

> "Your close attentive observation,
> Affords a fund of information,
> Of greater value in this wood
> Than all the intellectual food
> That e'er was gleaned from books or schools,
> Or journals writ by travelled fools."

Joseph Doddridge vigorously describes the observant woodsman in action.[58] "Let the imagination of the reader pursue the solitary track of the adventurer into this solitary wilderness. Bending his course toward the setting sun, over undulating hills, under the shade of large forest trees, and wading through the rank weeds and grass which then covered the earth. Now viewing from the top of a hill the winding course of a creek whose stream he wished to explore, doubtful of its course and of his own, he ascertains the cardinal points of north and south by the thickness of the moss and bark on the north side of the ancient trees. Now descending into a valley and presaging his approach to a river by seeing large ash, bass-wood and sugar trees, beautifully festooned with wild grape

[56] Hall, *Legends of the West*, 1853
[57] *The Forest Rangers*, 1842.
[58] *Notes*, 1824, p. 22.

vines. Watchful as Argus, his restless eye catches everything about him."

Then, apparently fearful the reader may take the pioneer for a mere nature lover, he adds, "But let not the reader suppose that the pilgrim of the wilderness could feast his imagination with the romantic beauties of nature without any drawback from conflicting passions. His situation did not afford him much time for contemplation."

Yet the pioneer was a nature lover in a way, and not at all indifferent to the beauty around him. The charm of the Great Wilderness had possessed him before he left his eastern home. He had seen in anticipation the vast outlook from the mountains, the limitless reaches of the forest, and the beauty of the streams and the waterfalls. As Timothy Flint says of the people he knew,[59] "Enthusiasm and strong excitement naturally inspire eloquence, and these people become eloquent in relating their early remembrances of the beauty of this country." And we are told of the backwoods preacher who, in the midst of an impassioned attempt to picture the joys of Heaven, expressed the climax by saying that Heaven is a "Kentuck of a place!" Kentucky is also celebrated in many poems. Micah P. Flint thus described a Kentucky sugar-camp.[60]

"To fancy's eye it might have seemed
As though the golden days of yore
Had circled back to earth once more;
And brought again that guileless mirth
Which bards have sung and sages dreamed
In bright reversion yet for earth."

The natural beauties around him often made the pioneer think of literature. Such charms of the landscape, he thought, should be written down in books for the unfortunate people still dragging out an existence on the other side of the mountains. Were these natural wonders not greater than anything told of in the old libraries? How could a poem or story fail to be great with such a collection of natural beauties on its pages? He had strongly the feeling, common among West Virginians even yet—and probably among all mountain dwellers—that a mountain or a waterfall needs only to be described to become a poem, and that any story rises to the grandeur of its natural setting.

[59] *Recollections of the Last Ten Years*, 1826, p. 67.
[60] *The Hunter and Other Poems*, 1826.

And in his literary forest scenes, the pioneer, who found his way so readily through the trackless forest was not likely to care for inaccurate details. He had little use for the romantic scenery, which later became popular in the ladies' magazines, which depended for its charm on some weird "atmosphere" or "touching" association. The woodsman was seldom touched by such charms. If there were to be forests in the stories, he liked them exactly as they were, true to all the cardinal points of the backwoodsman's lore. For instance he might pause with real appreciation over every detail of this somewhat elaborate description of a pioneer field:[61] "A hundred times his delight was excited by seeing the gray and black squirrels skip away from the trees which he began to fell. The parroquets, in their splendid livery of green and gold, were fluttering among the sycamores, raising their shrill scream, as disagreeable as their plumage is brilliant, and seemed to be scolding at these meddlers with the freshness of their empire. The red-bird, springing away from the briar copse, which he began to disturb with his grubbing hoe; the powerful mocking-bird, seated at his leisure on a dead branch and pouring its gay song, and imitating every noise that was heard; the loud and joyous bark of the family dog, as he was pursuing his own sport beside them, digging for an opossum; the morning crow of the cock; the distant cry of the hounds in the settlement, ringing through the forests, the morning mists, lying like the finest drapery of muslin, spread over the tops of the trees; these, and a thousand mingled and joyous morning cries of animals in the woods, filled his young and susceptible heart with the purest joy."

And again, (p. 32) "The red-bud in a thousand places was one compact tuft of peach-blow flowers. The umbrella tops of the dogwoods were covered with their large blossoms of brilliant white. At every step the feet trampled upon clusters of violets. The swelling buds and the half-formed leaves diffused on every side the delicious aroma of spring." Indeed Timothy Flint never seems tired of rehearsing the beauties of spring, "that season nowhere more delightful than on the shores of the Ohio."

Even when he falls into a sentimental vein, his observation is almost as careful. For instance in *The Shoshonee Valley*:[62] "The evening saw their camp fire blazing amidst a beautiful wood, on

[61] Flint, *George Mason*, 1829, p. 29.
[62] P. 102-3.

the banks of the wide and flush salmon stream. The vernal leaves were formed. Innumerable water dwellers croaked around. The whippoorwills were pouring forth their monotonous song. Fire flies gleamed in the grass and on the branches. The happy horses, turned loose, were rioting in the fresh grass. The warriors with their blazing torches rushed into the stream; and with shouts and peals of laughter, as reckless, as though they had never experienced other sensations than those of abundance and joy, were throwing the salmon on shore."

The following poetical description also shows the early writer's delight in details,[63]

"Through the deep vale below the river flowed,
Falling at times in silver sheets—then hid
The overhanging wilderness amid—
Now hurrying 'tween the jagged rocks and rude;
Yet not a murmur rose to where they stood.
The infrequent clouds drifted across the sky
Ever and ever floating silently.
Upon the topmost crag, splintered and bare,
Its angles glittering in the morning's glare
With an unsteady wing
And naked talons balancing,
An eagle sat and screamed to the silence;—hill
And wood and silent cloud echoed his accents shrill."

And Cincinnati is described by Edward A. McLaughlin in 1841,[64]

"City of gardens, verdant parks, sweet bowers;
Blooming upon thy bosom, bright and fair,
Wet with the dews of spring and summer's showers,
And fanned by every breath of wandering air;
Rustling the foliage of the green groves, where
The bluebird's matin wakes the smiling morn,
And sparkling humming-birds of plumage rare,
With tuneful pinions on the zephyrs borne,
Disport the flowers among, and glitter and adorn."

In many of the tales of the frontier it is true, the scene becomes of little importance except as a general background, and the interest is in the characters or the incidents. James Hall remarks in one story,[65] "As the travellers passed along, I am not aware that either of them cast a thought upon the romantic and picturesque beauties by which they were surrounded," thereby cleverly saving himself the trouble of picturing them for the reader. Later stories, like those of Ned Buntline and Emerson Bennett, use scenery only as the conventional background of a lurid story which might have hap-

[63] Ephraim Peabody, *Poems on Ohio*, p. 4-5.
[64] *Poems on Ohio.*
[65] *Legends of the West*, 1853, p. 271.

pened as well in New York or Florida as on the upper Ohio. Caves, cliffs, and streams are managed to fit the story, rather than pictured with fidelity to nature.

The poets were, naturally, often given to elaborate descriptions, and the grandeur of the full stream of the Ohio sweeping onward to the West early impressed them. One of the early poets, Thomas J. Lees, gives the following picture of the stream,[66]

"How oft o'er these green banks, at eventide
I roam, to view the glorious setting sun,
When Phoebus, robed in majesty, descends
Upon the peaks of yon blue western hills;
Flings his broad beams on the transparent breast
Of this unruffled, fair and glitt'ring flood,
And decks profuse with many a varied dye,
The changing beauties of the glowing heaven;
Which, when reflected in the glassy stream,
Attract at once our deep admiring gaze.
Beneath the flood a beauteous world appears,
A world of fairy forms and brilliant hues;
Too soon they change, take wings, and flit away,
Like fancy's vision or a magic spell. . . . .
. . . . . Then freely roamed
The surly bear, the nimble footed deer,
The antler'd elk, the lordly buffaloe,
The lofty eagle—freedom's favorite bird,
Sat on his native rock; and from the bough
Of hoary sycamore, the red-bird poured
His softest, sweetest note."

Hence, we see that there were two classes of early writers, in regard to their use of natural scenery. One class, the realists, made much of it and delighted to picture the infinite details of the wilderness scenes with loving fidelity—the other reduced the forest background to a mere convention. Yet the former class is much the larger of the two. The descriptions of Ohio Valley scenery seem numberless. One begins to feel that every stream or cliff or waterfall in the whole valley has been immortalized in some kind of verse. The poets, like the story writers, never tire of singing the beauties of the forests. The redbud and the dogwood and the buckeye and the wild honeysuckle, are told over times without number in the backwoods rosary. The Indian mounds also excited much poetry, probably from the baffling mystery of their birth and their obvious moral of the passing of human life, as well as for their beauty. There is scarcely a valley poet but has at least one or two "Lines to a Mound" to his credit. The beautiful Blennerhassett's Island, embraced by the shining river, with its striking contrast of

[66] *Musings of Carol*, 1831.

the magnificent white palace against the surrounding forests, and the romantic and tragic story of its owners, was also a favorite subject with the early poets. One of these was, of course, Mrs. Blennerhassett herself [67]—though her verse has little but its historic interest. Frederick W. Thomas thus apostrophizes the beautiful island as he descends the Ohio.[68]

"Isle of the beautiful! how much thou art,
Now in they desolation, like the fate
Of those who came in innocence of heart,
With thy green Eden to assimilate;
Then Art her coronal to Nature gave,
To deck thy brow, Queen of the onward wave!
And woman came, the beautiful and good,
And made her happy home 'mid thy embracing flood.

Alas! another came: his blandishment,
The fascination of his smooth address,
That read so well the very heart's intent,
And could so well its every thought express,—
Won thy fair spirits to his dark design,
And gave our country, too, her Cataline."

In many of these frontier poems there is a suggestion of the leisurely descriptive method of Thomson's *Seasons* or of some of the poems of Bryant. Few of them are vigorous enough to suggest Scott or deep enough in their insight to suggest Wordsworth. Though a moral lesson was thought almost necessary to a poem, particularly to the New England born writers, it was usually tacked on in the last stanza—not growing out of the very substance of the poem. None of it is great poetry, and little of it is even good. The early writer delighted most in the more apparent phases of natural beauty and particularly those that are awe-inspiring, the things that appeal most to the average mind—it was not his fortune to be the seer or the artist and grasp the connection between these natural manifestations and the problems of human life.

[67] *Widow of the Rock and Other Poems*, 1823.
[68] *The Emigrant*, 1833.

Conclusion

If the writer has succeeded at all in presenting an impression of this early Ohio Valley literature, the reader must feel that these writings have a certain very real vigor and vitality. Reading these old tales—most of them long since out of print, and mouldering unread on old library shelves—is not by any means the melancholy business it seems at first thought. Bad as they are, they have life; they are seldom mediocre or correctly dull.

Even their faults have an entertaining quality of their own. In Coffinberry's crude tale,[69] when the sturdy backwoods hero passes through the forest he sees a panther just ready to spring upon him. He looks at "The ravenous beast, that threatens on his flesh to feast." But instead of the action the reader expects in such a situation—"Thus did the man soliloquize"—

> "Is this the sequel of the past,
> To die by this fierce beast at last?
> Is this unlooked for immolation,
> Of my bright hopes the consumation?"

And he proceeds with a full page of these deep moral reflections—while the ferocious panther most obligingly waits!

Many of the writers would be of interest for their personality alone. One cannot regret having become acquainted with the very sensible and independent Joseph Doddridge, the genial and kindly Timothy Flint (always seeing the better side of everyone he meets on his travels), and the courteous James Hall, who is always an interested and unprejudiced observer of everything about him in the West. They are great and far-seeing men in their way. They believe devoutly in the West and they deal with western material with a loving enthusiasm which renders their pages interesting even when their literary technique is most crude. They are not writing to glorify themselves, but only to gain for the West that glory that is hers by right. Even in their sturdy independence there is little

---

[69] *The Forest Rangers*, 1842.

egotism or desire for personal fame. Coffinberry,[70] for instance, says that his story is told by

> "A bard without a name,
> Who fain would sing of wildwood fare,
> The redman's vast retreat,
> And paint its ills and terrors where
> Its varied evils meet."

And W. D. Gallagher thus addresses the Ohio River:[71]

> "And he who now thy name would twine
> With his and poesy's and wed,
> Them thus, knows not that e'er his line,
> Save on thy borders shall be read."

It is not to be expected, or perhaps desired, that these early writings will be read except by the student of literary history—they have served their purpose, and their day has passed long since. Like the hunters in the trackless forest, these early writers but blazed the way for those who were to follow them to the real achievements of the West. And yet because they were the path-finders, they deserve our consideration. What American literature would have been if these writers had not struck the new note of progressive western Americanism and of realistic truth to local conditions, no one can say. Yet one cannot read these stories and poems without feeling strongly that here our American literature first set foot upon that trail which it has mainly followed in its later development.

To these early writers the credit belongs that in our later literature the Indian is neither an angel nor a demon, but has real ethnological characteristics. They have influenced later writers to study the pioneer and his life at first hand, or through authentic accounts, rather than to make him a creature of the imagination. They first used in literature the homely, but truly American, speech of the common people of the Valley. Is it not significant that William Dean Howells, the leader of the later realistic school of American writers, grew up in the Ohio Valley? Perhaps it is even worthy of notice that Mark Twain lived under very similar river conditions and influences in the farther West. Who can say how many other later writers, consciously or unconsciously, have followed this early forest trail toward the new lands of American ideas and ideals? For

[70] *Forest Rangers*, 1842.
[71] *Our Western Land*, Poems on Ohio, p. 26.

in their raw newness there is the beginning of a new day. They express a new spirit of realism and of enthusiasm for the life of the West. They develop a peculiar American style and show a tendency toward fresh forms of expression and to their pioneer struggle we owe much of that particular quality of Americanism we find expressed in the literature of yesterday and today.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Reference Works

Cairns, William B., *On the Development of American Literature from 1815-1833.* University of Wisconsin, 1901.

Drake, Daniel, *Pioneer Life in Kentucky.* Cincinnati, 1870.

Howe, *Historical Collections.*

Roosevelt, Theodore, *Winning of the West.*

Sainte Beuve, *Chateaubriand et Son groupe.*

Stathers, Madison, *Chateaubriand et l' Amerique.* Grenoble, 1905.

Trollope, Francis M., *Domestic Manners of the Americans,* 1828-31. New York, reprint, 1904.

Turner, Frederick J., *The Frontier in American History, American Historical Association Report,* 1893.

Venable, W. H., *Beginnings of Literary Culture in the Ohio Valley,* Cincinnati, 1891.

Early Ohio Valley Literature, 1820-1840

Bennett, Emerson, *Western Romances,* 2 Vols. 1847, Reprint.

Bird, R. M., *Nick o' the Woods,* 1830?

Blennerhassett, Margaret Agnew, *The Widow of the Rock and Other Poems,* Montreal, 1823.

Coffinberry, Andrew, *The Forest Rangers, a Poetical Tale of the Western Wilderness in 1794.* Connected with and comprising the march and battle of General Wayne's Army and abounding with interesting incidents of fact and fiction. In Seven Cantos. Columbus, 1842.

Coggeshall, William T., *Stories of Frontier Adventure in the South and West,* New York, 1863.

De Hass, Wills, *History of the Early Settlement and Indian Wars of West Virginia.* Wheeling, 1851.

Doddridge, Joseph. 1. *Notes on the Indian Wars of the Western Parts of Virginia and Pennsylvania, from the year 1753 until the year 1783 inclusive. Together with a view of the state of the Western Country.* Wellsburgh, Va., 1824. 4. *Logan, A Dramatic Piece. Logan: The Last of the Race of Shikellimus, Chief of the Cayuga Nation:* Wellsburgh, 1823, Reprint, Cincinnati, 1868.

Drake, Benjamin. 1. *The great Indian Chief of the West, or Life and Adventures of Black Hawk.* Cincinnati, 1854. 2. *Life of Tecumseh and of his Brother the Prophet, with a historical sketch of the Shawanoe Indians.* Cincinnati, 1850. 3. *Tales and Sketches of the Queen City,* Cincinnati, 1839.

Drake, Daniel. *Remarks on the Importance of Promoting Literary and Social Concert in the Valley of the Mississippi as a means of elevating its Character and perpetuating the Union.* 1833.

Flint, Micah P. *The Hunter and Other Poems,* Boston, 1826.

Flint, Timothy. 1. *The First White Man of the West,* (Boone)? 2. *Francis Berrian, or The Mexican Patriot,* First edition, 1826. Second edition, Philadelphia, 1834. 3. *George Mason the Young Backwoodsman, or "Don't Give Up the Ship,"* Boston, 1829. 4. *The Life and Adventures of Arthur Clenning.* Philadelphia, 1828. 5. *The Lost Child and Other Poems,* 1830. 6 *Recollections of the Last Ten Years passed in Occasional Residences and Journeyings in the Valley of the Mississippi, from Pittsburgh and the Missouri, and from Florida to the Spanish Frontier.* Boston, 1826. 7. *The Shoshonee Valley: A Romance.* Cincinnati, 1830.

Gallagher, W. D. 1. *Miami Woods and Other Poems,* (First part written in 1839) Cincinnati, 1881. 2. *Selections from the Poetical Literature of the West,* Cincinnati, 1841.

Guest, Moses. *Poems on Several Occasions*—to which are annexed: *Extracts from a Journal kept by the author while he followed the sea; and during a journey from New Brunswick to Montreal and Quebec.* Cincinnati, 1824.

Gurley, L. B. *The Wyandot's Bride,* 1836? An epic of 200 lines.

Hall, James. 1. *Kentucky. A Tale.* In Two Volumes. London, 1834. 2. *Legends of the West.* New York, 1853. Second edition, 1854. 3. *The Soldier's Bride and Other Tales,* 1832. 4. *Tales of the Border,* 1834. 5. *The Western Souvenir, a Christmas and New Year's Gift for 1829.* Cincinnati. 6. *Wilderness and the Warpath.* New York, 1846.

Jones, Charles A. *The Outlaw and Other Poems,* 1835.

Kinney, Coates, *Keeuka and Other Poems,* 1855.

Lees, Thomas J. 1. *Musings of Carol, containing an Essay on Liberty, The Desperado, A Tale of the Ocean, and other original poems.* Wheeling, 1831. 2. *Poetical Works,* Wheeling, 1839.

Lewis, John. *New Hope or The Rescue: A Tale of the Great Kanawha.* Also known as *Young Kate,* or *The Rescue,* and *The Allens*). New York, one edition, 1844.

Loskeil, George Henry. *Extempore on a Wagon—A Metrical Narrative of a Journey from Bethlehem, Pa. to the Indian town of Goshen, Ohio, in the autumn of 1803.* Lancaster, Pa. 1887.

Martzolff, C. L. *Poems on Ohio.* Columbus, 1911. (Contains many early poems).

Neville, Morgan. *Mike Fink, Last of the Boatmen,* in *Western Souvenir,* 1829.

Patterson, A. W. *History of the Backwoods; or the Region of the Ohio: Authentic from the earliest accounts. Embracing many events, notices of prominent pioneers, sketches of early settlements, etc.* Pittsburgh, 1843.

Stuart, John. *Memoirs of Indian Wars and Other Occurrences.* Richmond, 1832.

Thomas, Frederick W. *The Emigrant, or Reflections while descending the Ohio, a poem.* Cincinnati, 1833.

Withers, Alexander Scott. *Chronicles of Border Warfare, or a History of the Settlement by the Whites, of North-Western Virginia, and of the Indian Wars and Massacres, in that section of the State; with Reflections, Anecdotes, etc.* Clarksburg, 1831.