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BRITISH CRITICISM OF AMERICAN LITERATURE
1844-1860
AS REFLECTED IN LITTELL'S LIVING AGE

By

Lelon Avalon Hill

A Thesis
Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts in English

University of New Mexico
1940

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This thesis, directed and approved by the candidate's committee, has been accepted by the Graduate Committee of the University of New Mexico in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

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PREFACE

The Library resources of the University of New Mexico were ample for the study. In reviewing sixty-seven volumes, ranging from six hundred and twenty to eight hundred and twenty-five pages, of Littell's Living Age, which extracts verbatim from British periodicals and newspapers, and in reading various works of American and British authors, literatures, histories of the period involved, and early magazines and periodicals, I have found material pertaining to the subject under discussion that would fill a good sized book. Therefore, having only limited time and space, I shall give the opinions of the British periodicals and newspapers that are to be found in Littell's Living Age.

In writing this thesis I shall try to give an unbiased comment on adverse as well as favorable criticism of American writers. It is rare that British critics in the nineteenth century are free from national or personal reactions preventing an objective view of the merits of another literature in the English language. In my approach to this subject, British Criticism of American Literature, 1844-1860, as Reflected in Littell's Living Age, I do not feel in the least that I am an authority, but I approach my subject with an open mind as free from prejudice as any American citizen could.

In the treatment of the subject, a short history of the early American magazine will be given, and some comments on the importance of magazines and periodical literature to show that this is an important source for valuable opinions of contemporary times. A short history of Littell's Living Age is given to show that this magazine is enough authority to give a cross section of the opinions of the British critics. Then a short discussion of the importance and history of the British periodicals used in Littell's will be given to show that they were the outstanding periodicals of their day, and that they represent the general British opinion.

The thesis proper shall consist of material only from Littell's Living Age, which will be divided as follows: (1) Attitude toward the intellectual life of America as shown by general comments from British periodicals found in Littell's, (2) Comments on the poets and their works, (3) Comments on essayists and their works which will take in works of theology, philosophy, sketches, and all other works not included in poetry, fiction, history, and biography, (4) Comments on fiction which includes novels, tales, and short stories, and (5) Comments on historical and biographical works and their authors.

I take pleasure in expressing my obligation to persons who have assisted me in various ways in the preparation

of this thesis. I extend my sincere gratitude to the many librarians, in particular, Miss Ruth Russell, Assistant Librarian, who have assisted me in finding materials. I wish to express my grateful thanks to Professor Arthur L. Campa, Associate Professor of Modern Languages, and Doctor Dane F. Smith, Assistant Professor of English, for reading, helpful suggestions, and criticisms. For suggesting the study, for valuable criticism and suggestions, and for reading and correcting the manuscript I wish to acknowledge with gratitude my indebtedness to Doctor Thomas Matthews Pearce, Associate Professor of English and Acting-Head of the Department.

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LITERARY IMPORTANCE OF THE EARLY AMERICAN MAGAZINES

Many critics assert that periodicals have in them little or nothing of reliable information or admirable literature. The long time editor of Harper's Monthly, Henry Mills Alden, said, "Periodical literature has done more for the American people than any other."[1] George Washington wrote in stately phrase to editor Carey:

> I consider such easy vehicles of knowledge as more highly calculated than any other to preserve the liberty, stimulate industry, and meliorate the morals of an enlightened and free people. [2]

Magazines provide democratic literature which is sometimes of high quality. Dr. Holland, editor of Scribner's Monthly, once spoke of the magazine as "the intellectual food of the people"; then added, doubtless expressing an aspiration rather than describing an attainment: "It stands in the very front rank of the agents of civilization."[3]

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[1] H. M. Alden, Magazine Writing and New Literature, (New York, 1908). Quoted by F. L. Mott, A History of American Magazines, Vol. I (New York, 1930), p. 1.

[2] G. Washington, American Museum, Preface to Vol. V. Letter dated June 25, 1788. Quoted by F. L. Mott, Ibid., p. 1.

[3] Dr. Holland, Scribner's Monthly, V, (March, 1873), 635. Mott, op. cit., p. 2.

Magazines play an important part in the economics of literature. A book publisher before the Senate in 1885 said:

> It is impossible to make books of most American authors pay unless they are first published and acquire recognition through columns of magazines. Were it not for that saving opportunity of the great American Magazine.....American authorship would be at a still lower ebb than at the present. [1]

Of the literature which appears in magazines William D. Howells, some three decades ago, wrote:

> In belles-lettres at least most of the best literature now sees the light in the magazines, and most of the second best appears first in book form. [2]

Magazine files furnish invaluable contemporaneous history of their times according to James Ford Rhodes in the Atlantic Monthly. He states:

> The journals are a very important source of history.....The duty of the historian is, not to decide if the newspapers are as good as they ought to be, but to measure their influence on the present, and to recognize their importance as an ample and contemporary record of the past. [3]

The first two American magazines were issued within three days of one another. The first plan for an American

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[1] Dana Estes, Senate Reports, Vol. VII, Report 1188, p. 55. Mott, op. cit., p. 3.

[2] W. D. Howells, Literature and Life, (New York, 1902), p. 9. Mott, loc. cit., p. 3.

[3] James Ford Rhodes, "Newspapers and Historical Sources," Atlantic Monthly, CIII (May, 1909), 650-57.

magazine was Benjamin Franklin's, but Andrew Bradford anticipated Franklin's publication by three days when, on February 13, 1741, he issued in Philadelphia his American Magazine or a Monthly View of the Political State of the British Colonies. Close upon the heels of its rival, then, came Franklin's General Magazine, and Historical Chronicle, For All the British Plantations in America, also published in Philadelphia. Both were published with the dating of January, 1741. A petty quarrel grew out of this competition--to no effect, for Bradford's Magazine, edited by John Webbe, lasted for only three months, and Franklin's but six. Both were given over largely to state papers, but the General Magazine had more pages and more variety than its rival.

Two years later, the Boston printers, Rogers and Towle, printed three numbers of their Boston Weekly Magazine. (March 2, 9, and 16, 1743.) This was an eight-page pamphlet containing periodical essays drawn from old English magazines with some verse and a page or two of news each week. The Boston Weekly proved to be an exordium to the more pretentious American Magazine and Historical Chronicle which Rogers and Towle undertook in September of the same year with the cooperation of certain Boston booksellers. This was the first really important magazine. It lasted for more than three years and was edited by the versatile Jeremy Gridley. The magazine was occupied with politics, and especially with

the War of Austrian Succession and the siege of Louisburg.

When we turn to a consideration of the contents of the magazines from 1741 to 1794, we are impressed first by the extraordinary prevalence of the eclectic system.

> Probably three-fourths of the total contents of these magazines were extracted from books, pamphlets, newspapers, and other magazines, both English and American. Much of the larger part of the selections was, of course, English. [1]

The contents of American magazines, 1741-1794, were varied in subject matter and form. They were largely borrowed, they were often ill written and oftener dull, and in the light of later years they were sometimes ridiculous; but they are invaluable as a mirror of the current ideas of writing and literary taste, and as a picture of the social and political life of America during the years they cover. "Moreover, most of the important American writing of the time will be found treasured up in volumes of these magazines."[2]

The Period of Nationalism, 1794-1825, in American magazine history must at least point out the facts that magazines of many kinds greatly increased in number, especially in the twenties; that there was a marked development of class periodicals, notably those devoted to religion; that

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[1] F. L. Mott, op. cit., p. 39.

[2] Ibid., p. 67.

politics occupied a large share of magazine energy to the detriment of belles-lettres; that weekly magazines of all kinds were prominent; that financial success was almost unknown to magazine publishers and editors; and that, in spite of large borrowings from English and other sources, there was a loud and insistent demand for a peculiarly American literature.

The Period of Expansion, 1825-1850, was a time of beginning rather than of climacteric achievement. It was remarkable for the greatly increased number of attempts to publish periodicals of many kinds, and for the development, especially, of two classes--women's magazines and cheap literary weeklies. It was interesting, too, for the great debate over slavery, and the somewhat less serious comment upon the many "isms" of the times. It was distinguished by the rise of the magazinists, and by the establishment in some quarters of higher rates of payment to contributors. 'Golden' it was not, so far as financial rewards to the average publisher or editor were concerned.[1]

The poverty of production during the first half of the century will cause no surprise to students of those times who reflect upon the difficulties which confronted editors and publishers. The wonder is that so many fledgling periodicals

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[1] F. L. Mott, Ibid., p. 525.

fluttered, for periods however brief, here and there in the colonies. Surely a faith born of enthusiasm, rather than a prospect of success derived from calm calculation, presided over these early ventures. "The expectation of failure is connected with the very name of a magazine,"[1] wrote Noah Webster in his American Magazine in 1788. The chief difficulties which such periodicals encountered may be listed as follows: (1) indifference, (a) of readers, and (b) of writers; (2) lack of adequate means of distribution; (3) losses in the collection of subscription accounts, and (4) manufacturing embarrassments.

New York Magazine utters a complaint as oft-repeated as plaintive at the end of its sixth year; "It is impossible to arrest the attention of those attached to the active scene of business."[2] The best index to the common indifference toward magazines is to be found in circulation. Probably the most successful of American magazines in the eighteenth century was Mathew Carey's American Museum. It began with twenty subscribers and rapidly progressed to about one thousand two hundred and fifty. The Pennsylvania Magazine

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[1] Noah Webster, American Magazine, I (Feb., 1788), 130. Mott, op. cit., p. 13.

[2] New York Magazine, Preface, Vol. VI (1795). Mott, Ibid., p. 13.

had a brief success in 1775, reaching "upwards of fifteen hundred",[1] according to Editor Thomas Paine. Charles Brockden Brown calculated that when his Monthly Magazine and Review should reach four hundred it would be self-supporting; it lasted less than two years. "Moreover,.....a considerable proportion of these subscribers did not pay their dues."[2]

Only less discouraging than the indifference of the general public was the unresponsiveness of possible contributors. Isiah Thomas, for example, begs "those gentlemen who will favor the Royal American Magazine with their 'Lucubrations' to do so at once."[3] There is a kind of despair in the wail found in the preface to the penultimate volume of the New York Magazine: "The want of originality has been much complained of.....numbers of the Sons and Daughters of Columbia are well qualified to shine in the walks of Literature; let each, then, lend a helping hand."[4]

It is probable that next to troubles springing from

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[1] Mary Agnes Best, Thomas Paine, (New York, 1927), p. 39. Mott, op. cit., p. 14.

[2] F. L. Mott, A History of American Magazines, p. 14.

[3] Isiah Thomas, Royal American Magazine, I,(Feb., 1774,) p. 80. Mott, op. cit., p. 15.

[4] New York Magazine, Preface to N. S. Vol. I (1796), Mott, op. cit., p. 15.

indifference, those encountered in distribution of the magazines perplexed publishers most sorely. Charles Brockden Brown wrote in the third volume of his New York Monthly Magazine:

> The thin population of the United States renders it impossible to procure sufficient support from any city, and the dispersed situation of readers, the embarrassments attending the diffusion of copies over a wide extent of country and the obstacles to a prompt collection of small sums furnish difficulties that are almost insuperable. [1]

The population of the British colonies in 1741 was probably not much over a million, while at the end of our period, in 1794, it was about four and a half millions, whites and blacks. This population was scattered over an area which measured over twelve hundred miles northeast to southwest along the seaboard, and, at some points, a thousand miles to the westward. In most regions the roads were "wretched not to say shameful."[2]

American postmasters frequently became publishers and franked their publications through the mail. The fact that the postmasters might send periodicals through the mail free or not at all, as they pleased, gave them great power over the press and led to discrimination against competitors and political opponents. Franklin, who had been appointed

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[1] C. B. Brown, Monthly Magazine, Preface to Vol. III Odated Jan. 1, 1801), Mott, op. cit., p. 16.

[2] Mott, op. cit., p. 16.

postmaster at Philadelphia in 1737, refused to allow his postriders to carry the first magazine published in America. For fifty years thereafter the various magazines either utilized the mail gratis or by means of small fees paid by the subscribers to postriders and postmasters. This practice was legalized by the Ordinance of 1782. In the Worcester Magazine for the first week in December, 1787, Edward Houghton

> informs the Publick that he has again commenced newscarrier, and will be happy to supply his former customers.....He will leave magazines for those who become his customers at the usual place. [1]

Delinquent subscribers were also one of the more important causes of the great failures of many of the earlier magazines. Mathew Carey wrote, shortly after beginning his Museum:

> After a careful examination of the various shoals on which periodicals have been wrecked in this and other countries, I am in dread of only one--which I am almost afraid to intimate. This shoal is a want of due punctuality in paying the subscriptions. [2]

Lastly, the difficulties of manufacture were enough to discourage the early magazine publisher.

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[1] Edward Houghton, Worcester Magazine, IV (December, 1787), p. 125. Mott, ibid., p. 17.

[2] Mathew Carey, American Museum (Preface Vol. II), ibid., p. 19.

> Presses, type, paper, and ink, had for the most part, to be imported from England, before the Revolutionary War began; thereafter for a long time supplies of these materials were inadequate both in quantity and quality. [1]

It can readily be seen that the earlier magazines in America were practically doomed from the start, and up to 1844 with the establishing of Littell's Living Age, magazines were not a paying thing. "The average life of a magazine in the period under consideration was only eighteen months. Sixty percent of the magazines reached the ripe age of three and a half years."[2]

The longest-lived of the eclectic, or "scissors and paste-pot" magazines has been Littell's Living Age, established in 1844, and still running. It is made up of reprints from foreign periodicals, sometimes quoting from English apparent sources articles which had been borrowed there from original American publications. In 1874 it absorbed Every Saturday, and in 1898 the Eclectic Magazine. It is indexed in Poole and Readers' Guide. Littell's is composed chiefly of reprints, usually abridged, from British, continental, and occasionally Asiatic periodicals, and translated, when occasion requires, into English. Its wide range makes accessible much material otherwise inaccessible to most libraries.

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[1] Isiah Thomas, "History of Printing in America," Worcester Magazine, I (1810), 343. Mott, op. cit., p. 20.

[2] F. L. Mott, A History of American Magazines, p. 21.

Editorial articles, notes on current affairs and business, domestic and foreign, and book notes are included, until 1894, in Littell's Living Age.

"The veteran Littell," exclaimed the New York Times in 1853, "age cannot wither nor custom stale his infinite variety!"[1] At this time Littell was less than sixty, and he had before him seventeen years more of service on the periodical which he founded, before death should force him to relinquish it entirely to his son. The Living Age was only nine years old, but the young writer on the Times had probably been reading other eclectic periodicals edited by Eliakim Littell and his brother in Philadelphia or Boston; for Littell had entered the business of making American magazines, from "the cream of literature" as early as 1818, when he was just twenty-one.

In 1844 Littell had disposed of his interest in the Museum of Foreign Literature and had gone to Boston to begin the Living Age, under the cordial approval and encouragement of Judge Story, Chancellor Kent, Mr. Prescott, John Quincy Adams, and other leading men of "taste and judgement."[2] The commendations of these men are quoted in advertisements. With the patronage of these great men, and under the skilful

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[1] Littell's Living Age, Preface Vol. XXVII (1853).

[2] Littell's Living Age, CV (June 18, 1870), 706.

scissors of Littell, the new weekly prospered. It appears never to have attained a large circulation, keeping well below ten thousand until 1880, and not much above that figure thereafter; but with nothing to pay for contributions beyond the price of subscription to English periodicals, the Living Age could subsist on a smaller list than could many of its contemporaries. When Eliakim Littell died in 1870, his son Robert, who had been trained in his father's publishing rooms and had been for some years a partner, took up the editorship without altering the policy of the weekly in the least.

That policy provided for the printing of sixty-four pages of varied material, chiefly from British periodicals, each week. There was some poetry, and a liberal allowance of fiction. The more famous English novelists, however, commonly sold their advance sheets to other American periodicals, and there is a great deal of second and third class fiction in the Living Age. It was the more serious material from the Edinburgh, the Quarterly, the Westminster, Blackwood's, Fraser, and later the Cornhill that was responsible for the great appeal of Littell's. It was never heavy, however, for the lighter weeklies such as Dickens' Household Words and All the Year Round, Bentley's Temple Bar, and Trollope's St. Paul's were freely drawn upon. Weeklies, too, as the Athenaeum and the Saturday Review were regularly laid under

tribute and even newspapers were quoted. "There was a special effort made, of course, to select material which would interest American readers; and nearly all of the comment of British periodicals on American affairs appeared in the Living Age."[1]

Robert Littell died in 1896, after a quarter century of editorship, and Frank Foxcroft came into control of the property. The scope of the weekly was thereupon somewhat broadened. For two years there was a supplement containing material from American magazines and new books, and for two years longer an appendix from new books alone. In 1898 the Living Age's New York rival, the Eclectic Magazine, was consolidated with it, (as Every Saturday had been many years earlier), and thereafter until 1900 there was both a monthly and a weekly edition of the Living Age, the former being a continuation of the Eclectic. A new department of notes on books and authors was added to the weekly fare in 1897.

The Atlantic Monthly Company purchased the Living Age (which had dropped the name Littell's on Robert Littell's death) from Colonel Du Pont in 1919, though the name of the publisher remained, as formerly, The Living Age Company. After a brief period of editorship by Ellery Sedgewick, president of the company, and Henry Sheahan, Victor S. Clark

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[1]F. L. Mott, op. cit., p. 748.

succeeded to the editorial chair. The scope and variety of sources was broadened, selections being made from the periodical literature of France, Germany, Italy, and Spain--and latterly from that of oriental countries as well. It was made a monthly in 1927.

"Few men", wrote the literary historiographer Allibone, "have labored so long and so successfully in the great cause of public education, and few therefore so well to the gratitude of their countrymen as Eliakim Littell."[1] The same tribute may perhaps be paid to two other conductors of the Living Age, each of whom guided its fortunes for about a quarter of a century--Robert S. Littell and Frank Foxcroft. The file of this periodical at present consists of 355 bound quarterly volumes, usually of 824 pages each. "It is difficult to open any volume without coming upon articles which are readable and arresting even today; and the mass of material--now piling up well toward a second hundred million words--is of inestimable value to the student."[2]

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[1] Allibone, Critical Dictionary of English Literature, Article on Littell. Mott, Ibid., p. 749.

[2] F. L. Mott, loc. cit.

CHAPTER II

BRITISH PERIODICALS WHICH APPEAR IN LITTELL

In 1810, in England, appeared the first of a distinctive school of weekly periodicals, combining surveys of politics, literature, the drama, and pictorial arts. This was the Examiner launched by John Hunt, and his more famous brother James Henry Leigh Hunt. In 1821, it was continued under Albany Tonblanque, a radical of the Benthamite school. In 1828, Joseph Hume and others raised money to enable Robert Rintoul to start The Spectator as an organ of "educated radicalism." After the death of Rintoul in 1858, the Spectator was remodelled in the hands of Meredith Townsend and Richard Holt Hutton. In 1855, The Saturday Review made its appearance without the compendium of news which had formed a large portion of The Spectator and The Examiner. "The paper was noted especially for the pungency of its satire, the brilliance of its style and the nicety of its scholarship."[1] A position of its own was achieved by The Economist, which for seventeen years was under the editorship of Walter Bagehot, whose great critical powers were devoted, primarily, but not exclusively, to "the elucidation of economical and political

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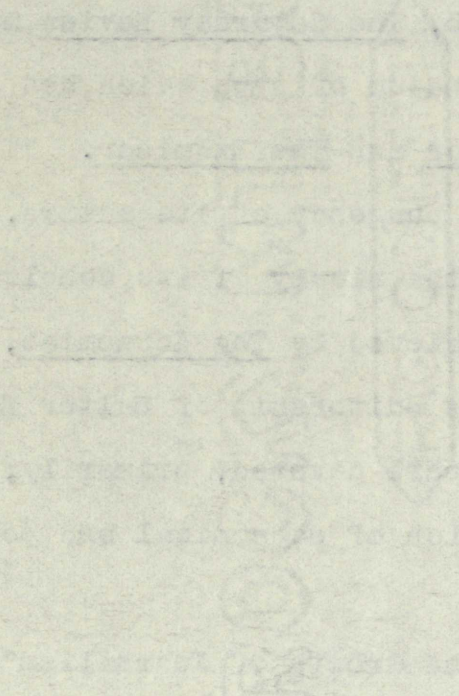
[1] J. S. R. Philips, "The Growth of Journalism", The Cambridge History of English Literature, III, p. 219.



questions."[1] From 1848 to 1853, Herbert Spencer acted as sub-editor of The Economist.

The general tendency in British periodicals until the beginning of 1800 was unsigned articles, which, of course, would not be given the weight of certain author's reputation. "The tendency of periodicals, the contributions to which, until recently, have been unsigned, has been to make the literary life for a time, flow, as it were, underground."[2] The Literary Gazette was established by William Jerdan in 1817, and was first published by Henry Colburn. George Crabbe, Mary Russell Mitford, and Barry Cornwall contributed prose and poetry to it. Its career extended well into the fifties. "It was intensely anti-American. Its criticisms were in general not very profound."[3] The Gazette usually spoke well of Irving, and it praised some of Cooper's novels. There was, indeed, some lessening of hostility after the first eight or ten years, though the old virulence was occasionally shown.

In 1828, it met an antagonist destined to win first place--The Athenaeum. In 1830, it was struggling for

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[1] Ibid., p. 219.

[2] Ibid., p. 159

[3] W. B. Cairns, British Criticism of American Writers, 1815-33 (University of Wisconsin Press, No. 14, 1922), p. 17.

existence when Charles Wentworth Dilke was placed in authority. The help given by John Francis was of great value, but Dilke, in addition to being an enterprising proprietor was also a man of letters, and by his own writings did much towards making secure the position of the paper. It would be impossible here to enumerate the nineteenth-century English writers who had more or less close connection with the Athenaeum. From the first it gave a considerable amount of space to American material. "The tone of its reviews was often patronizing, but can hardly be described as systematically unfriendly, especially after the first year or two."[1] John Bull, established in the first half of the century, deals mostly with society and political matters.

"During the period from 1815 to 1833 literary periodicals of all sorts in Great Britain were more numerous and more influential than ever before."[2] After London, Edinburgh was the chief center for such publications; but there were ambitious and sometimes successful attempts at local literary journals in many of the provincial cities. The solid reviews probably enjoyed their greatest prestige at this time--both the Edinburgh Review and the Quarterly Review having attained, it is said, their greatest circulation about 1818.

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[1] Ibid., p. 19.

[2] Ibid., p. 10.

The Edinburgh, the oldest and in the eyes of Americans the most conspicuous of the reviews, continued till 1829 under the leadership of Jeffrey.

> The Edinburgh really gave little attention to American literature in the strict sense of the word. Of the American writings reviewed between 1816 and 1833 only two or three works by Irving would, in the language of the time, have been called belles lettres; and these received a considerable amount of commendation. [1]

"The consistent hostility of the Quarterly to America was due in part to the idea that no good thing could come out of a democracy."[2] Like the Edinburgh, it received Irving but not Cooper or Bryant. There was, perhaps, a slight mitigation of feeling after Gifford gave up the editorship in 1824. In 1828, a liberal offer was made to Irving to contribute to the Quarterly, but he declined because the review had been so hostile to America.

The most important magazine was Blackwood's Magazine, established by business competitors of the publishers of the Edinburgh, and was conducted by a group of brilliant young Tories of the Scottish capital. Lockhart, Wilson (Christopher North), and Hogg were associated with it at first, and Maginn joined them a little later. In 1824-26, John Neal, who was in Europe at the time, contributed to Blackwood's a

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[1] Loc. cit., p. 10.

[2] Ibid., p. 12.

series of articles on American literature and on other subjects connected with America. Before and after the Neal episode the magazine printed no great number of reviews of American books. "In general, the attitude of the magazine, outside of the Neal papers, is mildly patronizing though not notably hostile. After the early days of the Sketch Book, Blackwood's commendation of Irving was lukewarm."[1]

The newer type of literary magazine came into prominence with Blackwood's Magazine, and before the end of the period the literary weeklies were making themselves felt. There were also political, religious, dramatic, and nondescript journals containing some literary criticism. Many periodicals were of slight intrinsic importance, but are necessary to show the true trend and consensus of British feeling.

The Edinburgh and the Quarterly reviews stand in a class by themselves, but several other so-called reviews and journals mostly occupied with criticism are also important for obtaining the general public opinion. The greater number of these were monthlies. The Eclectic Review, which had been published since 1805, was continued throughout the period. It paid a considerable amount of attention to American writings, both literary and informational.

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[1]Ibid., p. 16.

> Though it seemed inclined to be suspicious of American institutions, and to resent some things in the American attitude, it was not unfair in its literary judgments; and in later years it was inclined to praise anything of American origin, sometimes excessively. [1]

Though it reviewed works of all sorts, it had a predilection for religious books. The British Review and the London Critical Journal was a solid periodical with church leanings, and though it printed few reviews of American books, was friendly enough to America. The Westminster Review, founded in 1824, as the organ of the Unitarians, and edited first by Sir J. Bowring and later by J. S. Niells, was, on principal, extravagant in its praise of everything considered genuinely American. It attacked Irving, however, as a man who "had truckles too much to the English ruling class."

The London Magazine was founded to rival Blackwood's and was an organ of defense for the "Cockney School", which was a pet aversion of Lockhart and Wilson. Hunt, Hazlitt, Lamb, Keats, and De Quincey were among the early contributors to the London Magazine. This group of writers was always well disposed toward America, and some reviews of American books are extravagant in their praise. Fraser's, founded in 1830, with Manginn as editor and Coleridge, Thackeray, and Carlyle among the contributors, "is sometimes mildly

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[1] Ibid., p. 13.

patronizing, and sometimes very interesting"[1] in its comments on American literature. The Metropolitan, a monthly which began publication in 1831, and numbered among its contributors Campbell and Montgomery, reviewed a considerable number of American books.

A large number of literary weeklies were started between 1815 and 1844 and particularly in the last three years of this time. These were of various kinds and qualities; the best were ably edited. They gave brief notices, and even reviews of books that would not be made the subject of articles in the quarterlies, and that might escape notice in the monthlies. "As indicators of the feeling of the intelligent reading public as a whole they are especially valuable."[2]

Of the many church and religious periodicals it may be said in general that the organs of the Established Church were often suspicious of the new republic, while dissenting journals were more likely to look favorably on America, and hence on American literature. The Christian Observer, however, though supporting the Church of England, was most cordial to America. "Its cordiality was recognized by the fact that it was at the same time reprinted both in Boston and New York. It contained few reviews of purely literary works."[3]

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[1] Ibid., p. 17.

[2] Loc. cit. 17.

[3] Ibid., 10.

CHAPTER III

ATTITUDE OF GREAT BRITAIN TOWARD THE INTELLECTUAL LIFE OF AMERICA AS SHOWN BY GENERAL COMMENTS IN LITTELL'S LIVING AGE

General comments in British publications on American customs, American education, and American literature ranged from high praise either to hostile condemnation or to obliging condescension. The novelty of the first works of Irving, Cooper, and other contemporaries had worn off, and American literature was no longer a mere curiosity. It had not, however, wholly won respectful recognition. Until the appearance of Irving's Sketch Book, which was the first American work recognized in England as a work of pure literature, the United States was doing very little in literature to engage the attention of the English critic. The fact is that Great Britain, with an extraordinary bulk and diversity of literary production at home, and with a keener faculty for literary criticism, was passing judgment on what proved to be in a sense the beginnings of recognized individual American literature.

The Spectator in an article entitled "English Opinion of America" says:

> Our men of science frequently receive valuable contributions to their respective departments from their fellow-laborers in the Union. Cooper, Sedgwick, Bryant, Paulding, Brown, and a host of others, were acceptable to our literary circles. It was

clear that there was much of what was good and pleasant in the United States. There was a great deal in the character of the American Revolution and revolutionists. The robust and well-balanced mind of Franklin--the moral dignity of Washington--the fervid enthusiasm of Henry--the stern stoicism of Samuel Adams--would of themselves have commanded admiration under any circumstance." [1]

The magazine continues with its praise:

This traditionary faith in the practical workings of the constitution was confirmed by our occasional glimpses of the republic's progress in art, science, and literature. The American republic was the idol of the liberal party in England. Even the old tories entertained a sneaking kindness and respect for such an energetic offshoot of the English race. America was looked on as a young and enterprising relative, who did credit to the family; and all England was proud of her. [2]

It seems that the Spectator had suddenly changed, for it goes on to say:

Faith in American institutions and the American people, if not utterly lost in England, has shrunk to the lowest ebb. For our own parts, remembering Channing, and looking at the noble stand at present by Webster, Calhoun, and other American leaders, we have not yet relinquished hope. But we feel--and our American kinsmen ought to know it--that they who participate in our 'trembling hopes' are few indeed.

The British critics were looking for a poet who would be entirely of the spirit of the new republic. The Foreign Quarterly Review praises Bryant highly, saying that nature made him a poet, and the accident of birth placed him in the

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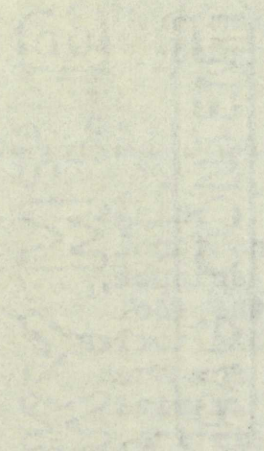
[1] Littell's, IX (April 24, 1846), 198. Spectator.

[2] Loc. cit., 198

[3] Loc. cit., 198



woods of America. The Review continues:

> We have been all along looking out for a purely American poet, who should be strictly national in the comprehensive sense of the term. The only man who approaches that character is William Cullen Bryant; but if Bryant were not a sound poet in all other aspects, his nationality would avail him nothing. [1]

The London Critic claims the stamp of genius for some of Lowell's poems, and says that most of them are overrated; but declares that the star of American poetry is fast approaching its full growth. The Critic goes on:

> We now close this volume, congratulating America upon the promise it manifestly displays of the advent of a poet whose name and fame will be her own. It is some consolation to see that as poetry fades here it is rising into vigorous maturity there, and we are pleased to have an opportunity of making it known to those of our own community who honor the Critic with their perusal." [2]

It also seems that the British critics were looking for something purely American in style, language, and subject matter from the new republic. The article on "American Annuals" from the Athenaeum plainly states this general view thus:

> Still whether in art or in poetry--(and both in a certain sense are one)--what we desire is originality, something purely American, not European; and until we see this we shall not be altogether

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[1] Littell's, I (May 11, 1844), 42. Foreign Quarterly Review.

[2] Littell's, III (November 16, 1844), 165. London Critic.

satisfied.[1]

The Athenaeum, at a later date, claims that most of the poetry in America is British imitations, or copies, and yet, the periodical says, it has waited in vain for American poetry. It comments thus:

> Much that calls itself poetry and some that is so--comes to us from America; yet we have waited in vain for American poetry. Even what has reached us of the true ore has not the marks of the great continent--nothing to characterize it as American currency. The transatlantic poets give us back our own coin, thinned and deteriorated by transit. As if America had not the ore of song in all her rivers, and a mint of her own on every mountain, she does little more for the service of the Muse than melt down our English gold and recast it in British forms.[2]

In an article on Ralph Waldo Emerson, Tait's Magazine recognizes the fact that America is yet young in literature, and expects something great to come, in time, from the new nation. The editor says:

> American literature has been long a 'mountain in labor', and might have been expected to bring forth either a mouse or a monster. Many will deem the mouse aptly typified by the numerous small poets and essayists who abound in that country, and some will see the monster in the strange, eccentric, and untamable son of the wilderness before us. It is not, however, in this light that we regard Mr. Emerson. We look upon him as a genuine man, whose mistakes as well as merits unite in stamping on his character the ineffaceable marks of sincerity, dignified simplicity and independence, as well as a peculiar and

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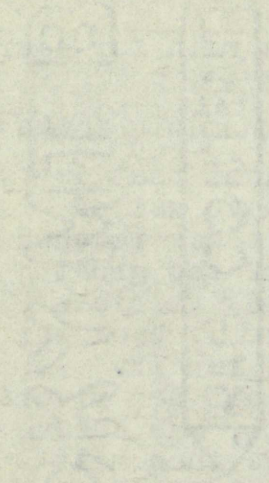
[1] Ibid., III (December 7, 1844), 364. Athenaeum.

[2] Littell's IX (April 18, 1846), 106. Athenaeum.



powerful genius.[1]

The Christian Remembrancer, in an article on "American Poetry," gives Bryant credit for some outstanding accomplishments, but states that he is no seer, and is rather sympathetic toward America for lack of an individual language. It states:

> In attempting some notice of the poetry of America, we must not forget that the Americans have not the advantage of a language founded on those peculiar ideas of republicanism and freedom of thought which form their boast and pride. But a short time has elapsed since they were first an independent people, and they have to express their national sentiments in a tongue whose structure little sympathizes with them--a tongue whose foundations were laid in the feudal age.[2]

The Tait's Magazine, although it praises Lowell as a young man of promise, shows the condescending attitude of many of the British publications of the time. Starting with "Young American", it states:

> The literature of his country is necessarily meagre, the authors, of any merit, to which it has given birth, are few in number, and their aspirations have not been high. It is, however, pleasing occasionally to note the appearance of a new candidate for fame in the department of poesy; still more, when the attempt is not devoid of merit, and of certain indications that show Mr. Lowell to be possessed of some of those attributes essential to every poet.[3]

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[1] Ibid., XVII (April 15, 1848), 97. Tait's Magazine.

[2] Littell's, XVII (June 3, 1848), 435. Christian Remembrancer.

[3] Ibid., XXXIII (April 24, 1852), 180. Tait's Magazine.

The fact that America was finally breaking through the shell of hostile criticism is shown by a quotation from Chamber's Journal as follows:

> Our transatlantic cousins.....Their literature and art are little else as yet than reflections of our own,.....in the works of more recent American authors....works which are now beginning to exhibit greater originality, and indicate the formation of what will in the course of time be worthy of being considered a national literature. And although a great poem, in the true sense of the term, has not yet reached us from the other side of the Atlantic, not a few remarkable ones may now be pointed to in the works of such men as Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, and Poe.

At last America wins a broad place in the sun of literature, in England as well as America, and the hostile criticism which gradually changed to a condescending attitude now breaks forth in stirring praise. The result was that some American writings were overrated, and others, whom time has given a high place in American literature, were hardly recognized at all. This depended largely upon the popularity of the author, his travels abroad, and the public reputation he could build up; not necessarily on the merits of his writings. In an article on "Henry Wadsworth Longfellow" from Chamber's, which seems to give the general British opinion of American literature, we read:

> We may safely allow that many of the most popular books of the day are the production of American

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[1] Ibid., XXXVII (April 16, 1853), 157. Chamber's Journal.

> authors. Two years ago, our reading public ran wild after Uncle Tom's Cabin; and the title-page of the Wide Wide World, Queechy, and other tales of the same class, met the eye on every hand. Even in the article of poetry, wherein she was once considered so peculiarly deficient, America has of late given us good measure. Among her poets, we would instance that eccentric but most original, Edgar Allen Poe, whose minstrelsy strikes us as the wild unearthly echoes of some strange spiritual music; Bryant, also; and Dana, James Russel Lowell, J. G. Whittier, the earnest anti-slavery writer; and last, but not least, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose name is a 'household word' to us all, belonging, as it does, to an author as widely known, as justly appreciated, and as warmly loved in England as in his native country. Decidedly, the star of American literature is in the ascendant. [1]

In fiction, America seemed to fare better by far in the opinions of the British critic. It was given a place of equal rank with that of the Englishman, and was even conceded, in many instances, a rank above that of the writers of the mother country. Irving has been mentioned before, for his Sketch Book. Some of Franklin's writings were widely read, it is true, but he was thought of as a statesman and scientist rather than a man of letters. Brown attracted some little attention when his romances were first published, but it was some time later that their greatest vogue came in England. Salmagundi had been reprinted in London, and in 1811, had been made the subject of an article in the Monthly Review.

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[1] Littell's, XLIII (Dec. 16, 1854), 522, Chambers'.

His Sketch Book was published in America in May, 1819, and in the August 24 issue of the Kaleidoscope, a slight literary weekly published at Liverpool, "The Wife" was reviewed with warm praise for its author. After Irving, the second American author to attract wide attention in England was James Fenimore Cooper. In many of the critical journals from 1832 to 1833 he takes an even more prominent place than does Irving. In an article, "On American Fiction", the Athenaeum comments favorably on the literature as a whole, saying: "That we have a kindliness for American literature, the readers of the Athenaeum need not now be told'."[1]

In an article on "American Works of Fiction" the Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review gives the Englishman much credit for the influence on, and the making of the American literature. Naming most of the important appearances in English fiction, it goes on to say:

> We have adverted to them, from being convinced that the authority they have exercised over the creative mind of America is almost unbounded. The same American in Paris and in London is not the same being; in the former position he is curious, silently observant of modes, humbly self-postponing in adopting them--but still at ease; when in our metropolis, the mortal will be found no less inquisitive, but receiving instruction--the inevitable impress of our social superiority (Time's fault, and not that of either church or state) with an uneasy, defying spirit, embarrassing alike to host and guest. [2]

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[1] Littell's, VII (Oct. 18, 1845), 110. Athenaeum.

[2] Littell's, II (Oct. 19, 1844), 646. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

The Athenaeum, in a discussion of the "American Annuals", continues in practically the same vein, but with a little praise thrown in for the American writer.

> Fashions in literature, and works in prose and verse, when transplanted to America, continue there to circulate, and even to increase in influence, long after they are forgotten in England. Poets, who have scarcely made their names heard in their native land, are there reprinted on fine paper, vended in elegant bindings; in like manner, annuals that have seen their day with us, are commencing it with them. We had reason last year, to bestow high commendation on one of this class of American publications, and are glad to be justified in repeating it on the present occasion. [1]

The North British Review, in discussing the "American Novels", accords the American fiction writer a place as high as that of the British writer, claiming that American and English literature are one and the same and that a hundred years will see no distinction in them, and also giving no lasting place in literature to American poetry.

> The above remarks have been suggested partly by the appearance and surprising popularity in Britain of certain American novels, especially of Mrs. Beecher Stowe and Elizabeth Witherell, which exhibit a gratifying contrast to the general run of modern novels, and partly by the publication of other works. We had to point out and to prove the fact that America has not yet produced one poet whose name has a chance of surviving the trial of a hundred years. The youth of America was that of Great Britain; and the great poets who lived before, and even after, the national schism, belong as much to her literature as they do to ours. In fact, the very notion of two literatures is an absurdity. The spirit of romance,

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[1] Littell's, III (Dec. 7, 1844), 361. Athenaeum.

> however, has not been so strictly metropolitan in its choice of an abiding place as that of poetry. If Coleridge, Wordsworth, Burns, and Tennyson, have had no rivals in America, it is not so with Dickens, Marryat, Bulwer, and Currer Bell. Against these names America may boldly set her Stowes, Coopers, Longfellows, and Hawthorne, in whom there is no mistaking an independence and originality which holds out high hopes of the share which the writers of America are destined to take in the English literature of the future. All the books at the head of this Article, [authors mentioned are : Hawthorne, Longfellow, Wetherell, Poe, and Stowe] have received in Britain a welcome of unmistakable heartiness.... .....This clear-sightedness, and the power of expressing it so as to impress others, is a very remarkable and unspeakably valuable quality of the American mind." [1]

In an article on "Nathaniel Hawthorne", the Universal Review claims that American literature is the best, that the influence of the democratic government is great on the rest of the world, and that the United States is one of the mightiest nations on earth.

> American literature is always an interesting subject, not only because it is literature, but because it is one of the elements in the solution of a problem which is important in a greater or less degree to the whole world--the moral and intellectual influence of democratic government. We see a nation, one of the mightiest on the earth, in the early years of its existence, and undergoing the process of formation and self-development--under influences scarcely less various than those which could have been invented for it by the most imaginative speculator. [2]

It seems that in historical writings the British

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[1] Littell's, XL (Jan. 7, 1854), 51-2 & 61. North British Review.

[2] Ibid., LXV (June 23, 1860), 707. Universal Review.

critic concedes the American the first place. The Spectator, in a discussion of Ticknor's History of Spanish Literature, attributes a high place to no other form of literature except historical writings for the American, but concedes to them other outstanding accomplishments. After decrying America's lack of originality in poetry, novels, essays, sketches, and tales, it goes on:

> In matters more directly this deficiency is reversed. If the Americans have not produced a Boerhaave, a Hunter, a Laennec, they have contributed their share to medical and surgical science. In jurisprudence and municipal law they have rivalled Europe. But it is in the literature of history that the Americans are most distinguished. Besides historical biographies, and historical collections, that equal those of any other people when the short period of their national existence is borne in mind, as well as several histories of a respectable character, they have Bancroft, Prescott, and Washington Irving, who, if not original in their class, are eminent of their class, combining extensive research with high literary excellence. [1]

In an article from the Westminster Review on the "Literature of the United States", signed by R. L., in which the main discussion is centered on The Prose Writers of America by Griswold and The Statesmen of America by Sarah Hytton Maury, The Review, after lambasting the United States for not exposing her blemishes and failings, goes on to state:

> However, when this [that America is young, cut off by the ocean from interest in movements and destinies of Europe, and her civilization has not yet come to maturity] is taken into account, it must be

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[1] Littell's XXV (April 6, 1850), 12. Spectator.

> acknowledged that the historical literature of America is very creditable. The names of Prescott and Bancroft redeem their country from the reproach of barrenness in this field. [1]

Mrs. Maury, an Englishwoman travelling in America, has some little credit to extend to America. In the same article she is quoted as saying: "'Oratory, or public speaking', says Mrs. Maury, in her recent work, [An Englishwoman in America], 'may be considered at the present moment as constituting, not only the best and most exalted, but the vital and essential portion of American literature.'"[2] The London Morning Chronicle confirms this opinion, and praises a work by Griswold, The Prose Writers of America, saying that he has tried to vindicate the charge that "Americans cannot be literary because they are practical", and that these charges, in England, "were never deemed worth a moment's attention by anybody who possessed the means of forming an opinion." The editor goes on to say:

> Coming so late into the field as the Americans have done, and finding the harvest well-nigh reaped, it is rather surprising that they should have seen so much to do, and have done it so well. Philosophers like Franklin and Edwards, theologians and moralists like Dwight and Channing; jurists such as Marshall, Kent, and Story; political essayists like Hamilton and Everett; novelists like Brown and Cooper; (Washington Irving is a universal genius) historians like Bancroft, Prescott, and Sparks, are

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[1] Littell's XVIII (Aug. 19, 1848), 365. Westminster Review.

[2] Ibid., 366

America.

> The literature of America still follows the footsteps of that of England. What Lamb and others have done for popular mind in this country, the essays of the United States are now seeking to do for the growing intelligence of the new world. They desire to indoctrinate it with a taste for our old poets, our old dramatist, and our sterling old writers, whose books, like dreams, have made the world of many studious spirits--one and entire, and as of chrysolite, perfect and pure. [1]

On the subject of essays a fitting remark from Blackwood's Magazine, brought forth by discussing Emerson's Essays, will close the general impression of the British toward America.

> The genius of America seems hitherto disposed to manifest itself rather in works of reason and reflection than in those displays of poetic fervor which are usually looked for in a nascent literature. As the first efforts of American genius were in the paths of grave and searching inquiry, so, too, at this present moment, if we were called upon to point out amongst the works of our trans-Atlantic brethren, our compatriots still in language, the one which, above all others, displayed the undoubted work, and one of philosophical character, we would single out: --we should point to the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson.....We are quite sure that no French or German critic could read the speculations of Emerson, without tracing in them the spirit of the nation to which this writer belongs. [2]

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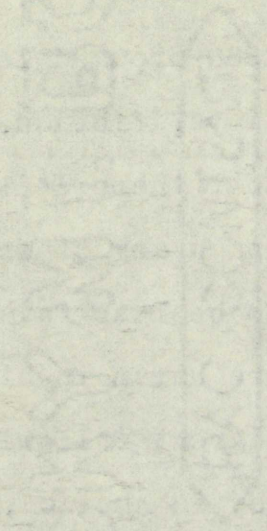
[1] Littell's, VII (Oct. 18, 1845), 106. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., VI, (Jan. 15, 1848), 97. Blackwood's Magazine.

CHAPTER IV

AMERICAN POETRY WRITERS

American poetry from 1844 to 1860 aroused less enthusiasm in England than did American essays, fiction, or history. This does not mean, however, that there is less comment on American poetry, in Littell's, than on any other class of literature, but the comment appears to be less favorable. In other words, the British critic is more harsh in his criticism of poetry. Bryant has never gained a great following in England; and although he was recognized in America, even by 1833, as the peer of Irving and Cooper, he held no such position abroad. The amount of his verse written in these early years was relatively small, and the quality was not such as to appeal to the English temper, or to satisfy critics who looked for something "distinctly American" in every transatlantic production. Before Irving kindly aided in bringing out a small volume of his in London in 1832, he was known to Englishmen only by scattered pieces, either in collections of American poetry, or fugitive in the periodicals. Specimens of the American Poets; with Critical Notices and a Preface, London, 1822, which contains selections from Pierpont, Paulding, (Halleck), Dabney, Maxwell, Bryant, Eastburn, Sands, and a group of lesser writers, gives high praise to Bryant, and says of Thanatopsis that there are few pieces in the



works of the very best of the living poets which exceed it in sublimity and compass of poetical thought.

Other poets could be placed before Bryant according to the time element, but since he was the earliest of the major American poets, Bryant will be considered first in this chapter. The Foreign Quarterly Review claims that Bryant is the American national poet that the British critics have been looking for.

> We have been all along looking out for a purely American poet, who should be strictly national in the comprehensive sense of the term. The only man who approaches that character is William Cullen Bryant; but if Bryant were not a sound poet in all other aspects, his nationality would avail him nothing. Nature made him a poet, and the accident of his birth has placed him amongst the forests of America. Out of this national inspiration he draws universal sympathies--not the less universal because their springs are ever close at hand, ever in view, and ever turned to with renewed affection. He does not thrust the American flag in our faces, and threaten the world with the terrors of gory peace; he exults in the issue of freedom for nobler ends and larger interests. He is the only one of the American poets who ascend to 'the height of this great argument', and lifts his theme above earthly taint of bigotry and prejudice. [1]

The editor states that his genius makes all men participators in his theme, seeking and developing the universality that lies at their core. He brings to the contemplation of nature in her grandest revelations, a pure and serious spirit. He continues:

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[1] Littell's, I (May 11, 1844), 42. Foreign Quarterly Review.

> His poetry is reflective in its flow by the sunshine of the imagination. His poems addressed to rivers, woods, and winds, all of which he has separately apostrophized, have the solemn grandeur of anthems, voicing remote and trackless solitude. Their beauty is affecting, because it is true and full of reverence. Faithful to his inspiration, he never interrupts the profound ideal that has entered his spirit to propitiate the genius loci--he is no middleman standing between his vernal glories and the enjoyment of the rest of mankind. He is wholly exempt from verbal prettiness, from vaunting imagery and New World conceits; he never paints on gauze; he is always in earnest, and always poetical. His manner is everywhere graceful and unaffected. Two collections of Mr. Bryant's poems have been published in London, and the reader may be presumed to be already acquainted with nearly all he has written. The following passage, descriptive of the train of thoughts suggested by the shutting in of the evening, has appeared only in the American editions:
>
> 'The summer day has closed--the sun is set:
> Well have they done their office, those bright hours
> The latest of whose train goes softly out
> In the west. etc.;
>
> When America shall have given birth to a few such poets as Bryant, she may begin to build up a national literature, to the recognition of which all the world will subscribe.[1]

The Christian Remembrancer, in an article on the poems of several poets of America, says that the Americans did not have the advantage of a language founded on the peculiarities of freedom, and that they have to write with a tongue that little suits their purpose. The editor continues:

> William Cullen Bryant is a poet, a poet of whom his country or any country may be proud--faithful to his vocation--honest, pure, and true. He has

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[1] Littell's, I (May 11, 1844), 42. Foreign Quarterly Review.

written many lines which, perhaps, we should wish blotted out, but none of which, with his opinion, he need be ashamed. Ignorance or prejudice makes him often unjust, but he never goes against his conscience; never profanes verse by the expression of mean, or vain or voluptuous thought. The true lessons of nature he takes seriously to heart. He is no seer, his vision does not reach further than other men's; but what lies before him he does understand, and draws true and sound lessons from. He reads the moral of nature, and we profit by his teachings..... [To A Waterfowl is quoted]--for very sweet and melodious we think it. [Poem on Ages is quoted]--Covers the whole period between the original propagation of the gospel, and the renaissance--some fourteen hundred years. For a stanza or two, we lose ourselves in high-sounding words, and miss the truthfulness and sobriety which are his ordinary characteristics. In spite, then, of national prepossessions and antipathies which offend, and aspirations which we can neither share nor sympathize in, we cannot rise from an attentive perusal of Bryant's collection without the persuasion that we have been holding pleasant communion with a wise, thoughtful, and original mind.

The Waning Moon is quoted. Written thirty years before, it is a fate of unfilled wishes and disappointed hopes, a brilliant opening, a dark retrospect. The peculiar poetic power of this author, however, lies in the description of nature; and this may be considered a national gift; an admission which is certainly due, after what has been said on the subject of nationality. For not only do the more distinguished American writers excel in this--and Bryant with a peculiar fidelity and grace. [1]

The New Monthly Magazine, in an article on "American Authorship", gives a very worthwhile opinion of Wilson, editor of Blackwood's Magazine, concerning Bryant.

Tuckerman, who is so decided an admirer of this bard,

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[1] Littell's, VII (June 3, 1848), 435-37, Christian Remembrancer.

admits a remarkable absence of those spontaneous bursts of tenderness and passion, which constitute the very essence of a large portion of modern verse. We remember, however, Wilson's quoting A Song of Pitcairn's Island with the remark, 'This is the kind of love-poetry in which we delight'--and his eulogizing The Hunter's Serenade as a'sweet love-lay', and the Song of Marion's Men as a spirit-stirring, beautiful ballad, instinct with the grace of Campbell and the vigor of Allan Cunningham.

Nor has Mr. Bryant ever, perhaps, been more justly appraised than by the same renowned critic, when he defines the chief charm of the poet's genius to consist in a tender pensiveness, a moral melancholy, breathing over all his contemplations, dreams, and reveries, even such as--in the main are glad and giving assurance of a pure spirit, benevolent to all living creatures, and habitually pious in the felt omnipresence of the creator. The inspiration of many of his poems is traced to 'profound sense of that sanctity of the affections.' That love, which is the support and the solace of the heart in all the duties and distresses of this life, is sometimes painted by Mr. Bryant in its purest form and brightest colors, as it beautifies and blesses the solitary wilderness. The tenderness and pathos which mark The Death of the Flowers, The Indian Girl's Lament, and The Rivulet. [1]

The New Monthly states that Bryant loves to put into simple verse some simple story of the heart, or fragment of legendary lore. For instance, the African Chief, or again The Hunter's Vision (slumber of a weary hunter), or again The Murdered Traveller, a touchingly mournful elegy on one who died a fearful death in a narrow glen. These lines from The Murdered Traveller are a fine specimen of the condensed,

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[1] Littell's, XXXIX (December 10, 1853), 658. New Monthly Magazine.

pithy, chaste picturesqueness in which Bryant excels. A corresponding terseness as well as delicacy distinguishes his similitudes, which if sparsely, are almost ever effectively introduced, and evidence true feeling and taste. He says:[Thanatopsis:]

> And this particular poem merits a higher estate, mingling, as it does so finely, 'a mild and healing sympathy' with man's 'darker musings.' As a descriptive poet, with the national characteristic of his country's scenery for a theme, those who are familiar with such characteristics, accord to Mr. Bryant lofty praise. He has caught, according to Tuckerman, the very spirit of American scenery, as well as faithfully pictured its details--'his best poems have anthem-like cadence, which accords with the vast scenes they celebrate'--his harp is strung with harmony with wild moan of the ancient boughs. Very graphic, however, are these lines-----
>
> 'Lo! they stretch
> In airy undulations, far away,
> As if the ocean, in its gentlest swell,
> Stood still, with all his rounded billows fixed,
> And motionless forever.------Motionless?
> The sunny ridges.'" [1]

The Athenaeum, in reviewing The Complete Poetical Works of William Cullen Bryant: collected and arranged by Himself--With an Introductory Essay on his Genius and Writings, by George Gilfillan, says that this is an edition of the soundest and soberest of American poets, under the guardianship of the loudest and most extravagant of British editors, and goes on to say:

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[1]Littell's, XXXIX (December, 10, 1853), 658-9. New Monthly Magazine.

> The gentleman of whom it has been said, that 'he thinks himself a great painter because he paints with a big brush.' The Rev. 'Georgeous' Gilfillan gives us a taste of his usual quality in an introductory essay; but as he fails to throw any particular light on the subject in hand, and as Mr. Bryant is already sufficiently known and valued in this country to render such recommendation unnecessary, we open the volume only for the purpose of presenting to our readers two of the Later Poems---The White-Footed Deer and Song From the Spanish Iglesias. [1]

The Portrait Gallery praises Bryant rather profusely, calling him, at twenty, a budding genius.

> William Cullen Bryant, incontestably the most ideal and philosophical of American poets, was born in Cummington, Massachusetts, on the third of November, 1794. When but little above eighteen years of age he wrote his noble poem of Thanatopsis, which was published in the North American Review, in 1816. This splendid emanation of Bryant's vigorous genius is full of sublime ideality and subtile philosophical thought. The language is full and fluent, and the versification as rolling and majestic as the images which it symbolizes and which it describes. The subtleties of thought and the elegances of expression, which so richly distinguish this great manifestation of the budding genius of Bryant recall not only the pictures which Akenside drew at the same age, but institutes another chapter in the history of literary parallels and coincidences. [Thanatopsis is quoted.] His longest poem, 'The Ages, was first presented to his country in this Homeric mode. With a keen and graphic eye he surveys the history of mankind in its past epochs. Bryant, with his eye bent upon the visioned future, saw hope and promise for man. The stanza in which The Ages is written is Spenserian, and the versification is not inferior to the Faerie Queene. Bryant's grand characteristics as a poet are lofty ideality, and a calm philosophical reflectiveness, that breathes its soft-toned vibrations from a deep

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[1] Littell's, XLI (June 24, 1854), 616. Athenaeum.

> and tender heart. The following song is like the fragrance of flowers compacted into form, and made eloquent with speech. [To The Evening Wind is quoted.] His song of the Hunter of the Prairie is one of those bold, free bursts that is sure to find its echo in the deep, green woods and on the ocean plains. [Hunter of the Prairie is quoted.] Bryant's countenance bespeaks thought and firmness and feeling. His poetry, as all genuine and sterling poetry must be, is a reflection of his heart and mind. In the expression of his love of nature and beauty and virtue and truth, Bryant is supple and persuasive as a summer zephyr; in the expression of his philosophy his poems are as deep and humanizing as the sound of smooth silenced waters; while his outbursts of sentiment are free as the wild winds amongst which he was nursed. [1]

The second author, Ralph Waldo Emerson, called at one time the "enraptured Yankee", and at another a mystic and a seer, on first acquaintance is not generally thought of as a poet, but as an essayist. Although he did write much poetry, most of the criticism from British periodicals, in Littell's, is on his essays. The Foreign Quarterly Review, in commenting on American poetry, expresses the idea that Emerson was not essentially a poet, but a prose writer.

> Ralph Waldo Emerson, although he has written very little in this way, comes accredited to us by unmistakable manifestations of original and poetical mind. He is the author of a volume of profound Essays, recently republished in England, under the editorship of Mr. Carlyle, who discovered in him a spiritual faculty congenial to his own. . . . . The same thoughtful spirit which pervades his prose writings is visible in his poetry, bathed in the 'purple light' of a rich fancy. Unfortunately, he has written too little to ensure him a great reputation; but what he has written is quaint and

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[1] Littell's, LXI (May 14, 1859), 387. Portrait Gallery.

> peculiar, and native to his own genius. From a little poem addressed To the Humble Bee, which, without being in the slightest degree an imitation, constantly reminds us of the gorgeous beauty of L'Allegro, we extract two or three passages. [Three passages are quoted.] This is not merely beautiful, though 'beauty is its own excuse for being.' There is pleasant wisdom in the bag of the 'yellow-breeched philosopher', who sees only what is fair and sips only what is sweet. Mr. Emerson evidently cares little about any reputation to be gained by writing verse; his intellect seeks other vents, where it is untrammelled by forms and conditions. But he cannot help his inspiration. He is a poet in his prose. [1]

Tait's Magazine, in commenting on Ralph Waldo Emerson; or, The Coming of Man--by George Gilfillan (who was a Presbyterian minister, and a very prolific English writer), which appeared in the Gallery of Literary Portraits, discusses some of Emerson's poetry. Tait's first claims that American literature has been long a "mountain in labor", and that it might be expected to bring forth a mouse or a monster.

> Many will deem the mouse aptly typified by the numerous small poets and essayists who abound in that country, and some will see the monster in the strange, eccentric, and untamable son of the wilderness before us. It is not, however, in this light that we regard Mr. Emerson. We look on him as a genuine man, whose mistakes as well as merits unite in stamping on his character the ineffaceable works of sincerity, dignified simplicity and independence, as well as peculiar and powerful genius. (And first is a little volume of his poems.) They are not wholes, but extracts from the volume of his mind. They are, as he truly calls some of them, Woodnotes,

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[1] Littell's I (May 11, 1844), 41-2. Foreign Quarterly Review.

> as beautiful, changeful, capricious, and unfathomable often, as the song of the bird which is so with many of the poems of Emerson. They mean absolutely nothing--they are mere nonsense-verse--except to those who have learned their cipher, and whose heart instinctively dances to their time. It is often a wordless music--a wild wailing-rhythm--a sound inexplicable but no more absurd or meaningless than the note of the flute or the thrill of the mountain bagpipe. He leads us into the same mystic region, and we feel that even in nature there are things unutterable, which it is not possible for the tongue of man to utter, and which yet are real as the earth and the heavens--what we understand is excellent, what we do not understand is likely to be excellent too! [1]

Tait's says that he has a penchant for framing brain-webs of all sorts and sizes; and because they hang beautifully in the sunbeam, and wave gracefully in the breeze, and are to his eye peopled with a fairy race, he deems them worthy of all acceptation. In fact, nothing is more astounding about this writer than the mingled originality and the triteness of his matter. Emerson's object of worship has been by many called nature. The editor goes on to say:

> Emerson may be denominated emphatically the man of contrasts. At times he is, we have seen, the most commonplace, at other times the most paradoxical of thinkers. So is he at once one of the clearest and one of the most obscure writers. He is seldom muddy; but either transparent as crystal or utterly opaque. He is certainly, apart altogether from his verse, the truest poet America has produced. His prose is not upon occasion, and elaborately dyed with poetic hues. Let him be assured that,

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[1] Littell's, XVII (April 15, 1848), 97-102. Tait's Magazine.

> exquisite as many of his poems are, other writings are a truer and richer choice, their short and mellow sentences moving to the breath of his spirit as musically as the pinecones to the breeze . . . . But in two points we deem Emerson superior to Longfellow--in originality, and in nationality--two points which, indeed, run into one. Longfellow is rather a German than an American. He is Jean Paul, with the madcap and creative elements omitted. His fancy is richer than his imagination is powerful. Emerson, on the contrary, has grafted his Germanism upon a strong gnarled trunk of aboriginal power, and his mind is often intuitive into principles, as well as fermenting with golden imagery. When we take into account this author's poetic tendencies and idealistic training, we are astonished that he should be often the most practical of moralists. And yet it is so. His refined theories frequently bend down like rainbows, and rest their bases on earth. He often seeks to translate transcendental truth into life and action. The great lessons of a practical kind which Emerson teaches, or tries to teach his countrymen, are faith, hope, charity, and self-reliance. His writing sometimes wants the edge and point which can be gained only by rough contact with the world; and it is often rather an inarticulate murmur. We think that we can observe in many of Emerson's later essays, and some of his poems, symptoms of deepening obscurity; the twilight of his thought seems rusting down into night. His utterances are becoming vaguer, and more elaborately oracular. [1]

The Christian Remembrancer says that such of the thoughts of Emerson that are beyond the flight of prose he puts into poetry.

> Mr. Emerson is known to all the world as a lecturer--the preacher and writer of a new philosophy. Such of his thoughts as are beyond the flight of prose, he puts into verse, and published in the wonderful volume before us, where they excite the idolatrous worship of his admirers, who think it

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[1] Littell's XVII (April 15, 1848), 97-162. Tait's Magazine.

> slight honor, indeed, to place him at the head of poets of his country; while, to us, much of these same compositions appear the most unequivocal nonsense which was ever gravely brought before the world. [Extract given from the Coming of Man.] It is said of the defective artist that he dashes a sponge against his muddy uninspired canvas, anticipating in the splash and squander of colors, an accident may reveal some happy conjunction of towers, rocks, and sunbeams, which unassisted genius could not conceive. Mr. Emerson often appears to us to try the same experiment with pen and ink. [Garbled Extracts--the whole poem of Uriel quoted as an example.] Mr. Emerson's poetry has much besides nonsense. [1]

The third American poet in this series, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, who, it might be said, really began his career as a poet in 1839 with the publication of Voices of the Night, was very popular in his own day, and received more comment in Littell's Living Age from the British critics than, with one exception, any other poet. The Foreign Quarterly Review, in discussing American poetry, intimates rather strongly that Longfellow is really European, since he received some of his education in Europe, and accords him first place as to rank among the American poets. After discussing Bryant and Emerson the editor continues:

> Only one name now remains, that of the most accomplished of the brotherhood, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. But we have some doubts whether he can be fairly considered an indigenous specimen. His mind was educated in Europe . . . . We must not be

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[1] Littell's, XVII (June 3, 1848), 450. Christian Remembrancer.

surprised to find his poetry deeply colored by these experiences, and cultivated by a height of refinement far above the taste of his countrymen. But America claims him and is entitled to him; and has much reason to be proud of this ripe and elegant scholar. He is unquestionably the first of her poets, the most thoughtful and chaste; the most elaborate and finished. Taking leave of the others, with a just appreciation of the last mentioned two or three, and coming suddenly upon Longfellow's lyric, is like passing out of a ragged country into a rich Eastern garden, with the music of birds and falling waters singing in our ears at every step. His poems are distinguished by severe intellectual beauty, by dulcet sweetness of expression, a wise and hopeful spirit, and complete command over every variety of rhythm. They are neither numerous nor long; but of that compact texture which will last for posterity. His translations from the continental languages are admirable; and in one of them, from the Swedish of Bishop Tegner, he has successfully rendered into English, the 'inexorable hexameters' of the original.

We believe nearly all Mr. Longfellow's poems have been reprinted in England; and we hope they may be extensively diffused, and received with the honorable welcome they deserve. From the Prelude to the Voices of the Night, we take a few stanzas of exquisite grace and tenderness. [The latter poem is quoted.] The artful modulation of these lines is not less worthy of critical notice than the pathos of the emotion which literally gushes like tears through them. [1]

The Critic, in commenting on The Waif, a collection of poems, says, "But Longfellow's poem was written for the occasion so lately as December last, and possessing much novelty of thought, and not a little true poetry."[2]

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[1] Littell's, I (May 11,1844), 42-4. Foreign Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., VI (July 23, 1845), 196. Critic.

The Tait's Magazine, after praising Emerson continues:

> In calling him the truest poet of America, we are not forgetful of the claims of Longfellow. His Excelsior goes up, like one of those gods who left the earth when man fell--with such mournful dignity and lingering steps does the hero and does the poem ascend. [1]

Fraser's Magazine, in criticizing Evangeline, A Tale of Acadie, says that this is an American poem, full of the beauties of really indigenous American growth; and hails its appearance with greater satisfaction since it is the first genuine Castalian fount which has burst from the soil of America. The editor says that the verse writers have produced some very graceful and pleasing lines, some animated and stirring strains; but that still they are little more than imitations of favorite poets of the old country. The writer goes on to say that the United States should not be expected to produce a new spirit in every branch of literature since it must draw its life-blood from and have as its background in English poetry of the past. To this general remark he adds:

> We conceive the poem of Longfellow, now before us, to be a happy exception. Not only are the scenes and history American, but the mode of narration has a peculiar and native simplicity; the local coloring is laid on with a broad and familiar brush, and heightened frequently by livlier touches which 'stick fiery off', and light up the whole picture. Indeed, if there be any general character of imitation in Evangeline, it rather is with reference to German than English models. Nor is it at all an unworthy

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[1] Ibid., VII (April 15, 1848), 100. Tait's Magazine.

course for an American poet, to take for his model the most perfect of domestic epics, the Odessey of the Nineteenth Century. (Goethe's Herman and Dorothea.) In both we have details of a simple, rural life, and the loves of dwellers in small towns presented to us. In both the trials arising from this calamity (a wide-wasting war) bring into view strength and view of the heroine's character. But in the course of the stories there is a wide difference. We have given such specimens as our space allowed of the pictures of rural life and scenery, which are the peculiar charm of this poem. But in taking our leave of the poem here, we cannot help remarking the great advantage which Mr. Longfellow has derived from his use of the hexametar. This kind of verse has the privilege of liberating the poet from the conventions of the usual forms of versification, which cling so closely to modern writers, especially in descriptive poetry, and deprive them, in a great degree, of the simplicity and truth of reality. The images so presented seem as if they came fresh from nature. In general, Mr. Longfellow's hexameters are good. They have, without doing any violence to the pronunciation, the mixed trisyllables and dissyllable flow, which is the character of this kind of verse. [1]

The Christian Remembrancer, in an article on "American Poetry", discusses several American poets, and then, of Longfellow, says:

We have to apologize, perhaps, for having so long omitted, any formal mention of Longfellow, whose name must occur among the first to our thoughts in any mention of the poets of America. The turn of his mind, however, is towards European literature, and his poetry is formed on that model. He has translated with great success, both from German and Swedish poets. His poetry has altogether a different tone from that of his countrymen. We should pronounce it richer in fancy and less clear in thought. His most recent work, Evangeline, is an American story of great pathos, and contains fine

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[1] Littell's, XVII (April 22, 1848), 145-7. Fraser's Magazine.

> passages, but the metre in which he has chosen to write it, we cannot care for a tale of unvarying sadness told in hexameters, a measure which we believe the English ear will never be brought to tolerate in its own language. To us it is simply a masquerade and disguise--a sort of joke, and therefore most unfit for a melancholy theme.

The Metropolitan, in discussing Professor Longfellow, says that American poets have grown and strengthened with America's growth, and that their voice has gone out through all the world and has borne highest wisdom and truth. The editor continues:

> Since Barlow's Columbiad was bought up by the trunkmaker, American poetry has merited and received from us, a far warmer welcome. What Cooper and Irving have done in one direction, a cloud of witnesses have effected in another. Bryant, Flint, Whittier, and Margaret and Lucretia Davidson, have won for America no inconsiderable share of poetic renown. Still more recently, have the poems of James Russel sic Lowell, and Ralph Waldo Emerson, found readers on this side of the Atlantic. We do not quarrel with America, that it has not yet published its ponderous epic, that it cannot point to its 'gorgeous tragedy in sceptred pall.' The poetic development differs at different times.
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> With the name of one who claims to stand amongst the first of American poets, Professor Longfellow, the readers of The Metropolitan must be already familiar. His longest poem, Evangeline, though written in a metre, which elsewhere he describes as 'that inexorable hexameter, in which it must be confessed the motions of the English muse are not unlike those of a prisoner, dancing to the music of his chains,' was not long ago warmly commended in these pages. Not one with any pretension to poetic feeling can read its delicious portraiture of rustic scenery, and of a mode of life long since defunct, without the most intense delight. Evangeline is his longest and most artistic poem. His other publications are entitled, Voices of the Night, Poems on Slavery, and Additional Poems, also Ballads of Translations. His poems are of an order to which we

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[1] Littell's, XVII (June 3, 1848), 449. Christian Remembrancer.

have none akin. Germany, more than England, has been the source of his inspiration. Our writers of short poems--Wordsworth, Coleridge, Shelley--have nothing in common with him. He is still further removed from our lyric writers, from Burns to Moore. He writes, like Cowper, with a purpose, and his verses have a liquid flow, to which the former can lay no claim. Of Longfellow's graphic power of description, the following is a favorable specimen. It is headed Woods in the Winter. To our minds the foregoing is very natural and suggestive. We extract from the Voices of Night, the noble Psalm of Life, which, we doubt not, has inspired many a youthful heart with high hopes and indomitable resolves. To the man of little faith, sinking beneath the waves of life, it is fitted to come as an inspiration and celestial voice. Our purpose, by this time, is already attained. We have endeavored to introduce Longfellow to the English reader. Sure are we that this voice from the 'far west' will be welcomed and responded to, in many an English home. [1]

The New Monthly, in "American Authorship", praises Longfellow highly, and gives comments by two English writers.

Our own indolence or incompetence disposes us to steer in this middle course in a notice of works of Professor Longfellow. Mr. Coventry Patmore may assure us he is highly overrated, and Mr. George Gilfillan may assert that his reputation is hitherto only nascent, and his depth but partly fathomed. On the other hand, we avow a most cordial and lively admiration of the author of the Golden Legend and Evangeline, of the noble Excelsior strains, that stir even stagnant souls as with the sound of a trumpet--echoes of silver trumpets heard from the battlement of a temple not made with hands--and of the Psalm of Life, so invigorating, elevating, and seasonable--and of the Voices of the Night, so sweetly solemn, so tender and true. Professor Longfellow's poems have been described as 'rather golden recollections than present vision.' But he sings

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[1] Littell's, XIX (December 16, 1848), 481-83. Metropolitan.

> emphatically with a purpose, and a high one. Like Wordsworth's Wanderer he is 'rich in love and humanity.' At the same time, he is gay and sprightly in his movements; some of his verses are almost frivolous in the tone and finical in form; he plays with his theme, when so disposed, and seasons his compositions with liberal spicery of quaint phantasien and scholary concetti. He may be said to have two publics--one which comes for strong meat, to strengthen and sustain--another, for 'trifle' and confectionery, to tickle an epicurean palate.
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> In simile-making, Mr. Longfellow is au fait. Like Cocker, he is dab at figures. Figurative he loves to be, sometimes at too great an expense--nor are they so 'rich' in quality, though in quantity more 'rare.' Often sweet and significant, they are frequently forced and far-fetched. [1]

Professor Longfellow evidently has paid great attention to the study of metrical law, and is endowed with a quick ear for the capabilities of rhythm, but he is too fond of experimentalizing, and trying to turn unwieldly forms into plastic graces; comments the author, and goes on to say:

> Evangeline is so fair and good that it would require something more deadly than hexameters to be fatal to her beaming vitality. But if Evangeline shall live, there are shorter pieces from the same hand that shall outlive her. Among a crowd of poetical miscellanies we may name Excelsior--of which one well known critic has enthusiastically declared, that he can no more conceive of a world without it than a world without the chefs d'oeuvres of Homer, Shakspear, [sic] and Milton. Each stanza is a picture, and by a master. The Psalm of Life, The Light of Stars, The Reaper and the Flowers, It is Always May, are all beautiful--some of them aeolian harp-like in airy harmony, and sinking into the soul like, what they profess to be, voices of the night. [2]

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[1] Littell's, XXXIX (November 12, 1853), 417-20. New Monthly Magazine.

[2] Loc. cit.

Chambers praises Longfellow highly, saying that he is as warmly loved in England as at home, and that the poetry of Longfellow has found a wide-spread popularity in the hearts of people.

> Even in the article of poetry, wherein she was once considered so peculiarly deficient, America has of late given us good measure. Among her poets, we would instance the eccentric but most original genius, Edgar Allen Poe [sic], whose minstrelsy strikes us as the wild unearthly echoes of some strange spiritual music. Bryant, also; and Dana, James Russel [sic] Lowell, J. G. Whittier, the earnest anti-slavery writer; and last, but not least, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, whose name is a 'household word' to us all, belonging, as it does, to an author as widely known, as justly appreciated, and as warmly loved in England as in his own native country. Decidedly, the star of American literature is in the ascendant.
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> He seldom stirs within us the fountains of deep thought, nor does he often arouse us to strange vague speculation upon the more solemn mysteries of our being and destiny. A right healthy, cheerful philosophy pervades the whole of our author's writings, and contrasts strongly with the tendencies towards the regions of vague doubtful thought, so rife among many of the younger poets of our modern time. Longfellow's thought of the attitude we should assume in reference to life and its trials, is beautifully elucidated in a charming little poem called--The Light of Stars. Even in the midst of dire distress and sorrow, the poet looks upward cheerily through the dark clouds towards the bright shining of the happy sunlight beyond. So he sings in his hymn, entitled Resignation. It is through the medium of strains such as this, and as the Footsteps of Angels, Reaper and the Flowers, etc., that the poetry of Longfellow has found so widespread a popularity in the heart of the people. Our author's forte lies in simple, earnest themes. He is never more at home than when he depicts the Village Blacksmith, and learns from him the lesson, that--
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> 'Thus at the flaming forge of life
> Our fortunes must be wrought
> Thus on its sounding anvil shaped
> Each burning deed and thought.'

Receiving his gift from above reverently, with pure hands, and a lowly trustful spirit, he must 'look into his heart, and write.' When Longfellow does this, his minstrelsy rings most sweetly and clearly, and the greater part of his poetry is happily pervaded by a beautiful simplicity of thought and expression. It is otherwise, however, in his most ambitious production--The Golden Legend. Here the author enters boldly upon the regions of mysticism and--fails. Elsie is a charming character--simple, graceful, and most womanly in her pure devotion. Although abounding in passages of exquisite poetry and flashes of real genius, The Golden Legend contains much of extravagance and we are afraid we must add, absurdity. It is not a true work of art, and it wants altogether force and purpose. Evangeline is better sustained throughout, and appears to us a more perfect poem in every way. We have no great love for the English hexameter. It is unsuited to the genius of our language. Our author's translations deserve especial praise, for the beauty and truthfulness with which the spirit of the original is preserved. He has very cleverly rendered Bishop Tegner's poem on The Children of the Lord's Supper, in hexameter measure of the original. The ballads from the German are perhaps among our author's most successful efforts. They are transfusions of the poetic spirit of one language into another rather than translations. We would instance as particularly fine, the Castle by the Sea, the Black Knight, and the Luck of Edenhall, all from Uhland; the mournful, but most musical Song of the Silent Land, from the Swiss poet Salis; and the following verses from Pfizer, called The Two Locks of Hair. [The poem is quoted.] In conclusion, we wish right heartily for long life, and health, and strength, and gladness, for the author of Evangeline, and Excelsior, and the Psalm of Life. May he give us yet many volumes of spirit-cheering song!

The Examiner claims that The Song of Hiawatha is Longfellow's most original production.

The Song of Hiawatha is a tale of Indian mythology. With this main story are interwoven tradition and legend,

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[1]Littell's, XLIII (December 16, 1854), 522-25.

Chamber's.

descriptions of scenery and sketches of life, pathetic, humorous, fanciful, playful, all very fresh and new, and all tinted with the rich coloring of an Indian summer. The metre of the poem has been boldly chosen--but we are not disposed to think unwisely. Its unrhymed trochees appear at first monotonous and strange; but as we read on we see their meaning and intention better, and still as we advance they speak to us more and more clearly. The most original of his productions. [1]

The Athenaeum says of the same poem:

At length we have an American sang by an American singer. He has taken for his theme an Indian legend. The tale itself is beautiful, fanciful, and new, and he has worked it up into a poem of many parts. The measure is novel as well as the matter. It is a rhymeless verse, with something of forest music in its rise and fall. It is beyond all doubt that this Song of Hiawatha will increase Mr. Longfellow's reputation as a singer. The verse as we have said and proved by extracts, is sweet and simple, is full of local and national color, has a tone and rings of its own; in a word, the story of Hiawatha is the poet's most original production. America has found a Pactolus within her border:--why should not her poets endow her with a new Parnassus? [2]

The same magazine, the Athenaeum, in a short article signed by William Howitt, claims that Hiawatha is somewhat Finlandic in lines, etc., and claims that Evangeline is the other original American poem.

He has most admirably succeeded in the use of those repetitions of epithets, phrases, and lines which abound in the Finlandic poetry. I would in conclusion suggest that this is not the first

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[1] Ibid., XLVIII (January 5, 1856), 48. Examiner.

[2] Littell's, XLVIII (January 12, 1856), 48. Athenaeum.

> essentially American poem. Longfellow's Evangeline is that poem: American in subject, in character and scenery. Longfellow has the double merit of writing the two first thoroughly American poems, one dealing with the White and one dealing with the Red Man. [1]

Chamber's Journal cannot look upon Longfellow as a great poet.

> We cannot look upon Longfellow as a great poet--we who are accustomed to Milton, Shakspeare, and Burns; nevertheless, he is the best we could expect of a young country like America. We take Longfellow to be the most popular poet living. We believe his poems sell more, and are read more, than any other. In Hiawatha, Longfellow has gone right away from European subjects and their second hand influences, . . . and struck out a new and rich vein in the poetic mind. [2]

The National Magazine, in discussing "Longfellow's New Poems"--The Courtship of Miles Standish and Other Poems, says that the announcement of a new poem by Professor Longfellow is enough to kindle high expectation and awaken immediate attention. The editor continues:

> Turn to one of his works, whether his Evangeline, Voices of the Night, The Golden Legend, or The Song of Hiawatha, it is the religious sentiment that forms the pervading motive, that initiates the strain, and lives in every line. The spirit of piety animates his numbers, and underlies every versicle. Poetry with Longfellow is the appropriate expression of devotion. We cherish no wonder, therefore, when we find the theme and argument of his last work is connected with the Puritan morality and the labors of the Pilgrim Fathers in America. The subject fits the style of the poet, and is

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[1] Ibid., XLVIII (January 19, 1856), 173. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., XLVIII (February 16, 1856), 431. Chamber's Journal.

besides of that national interest which should mark American poetry with a native character, and suggest an originality in the treatment, as well as a speciality in the topics which it is evoked to illustrate, interpret, and elevate, by the force of the imagination, the play of the fancy, and the ardor of passion. The title of the new poem is The Courtship of Miles Standish.

It is in hexameters, and recalls the Evangeline in more than one particular. Nine is the mystic number of the parts into which the poem is divided; and verily, from the success of the experiment, we are disposed to believe that there is virtue in the monad. Nothing can be more exquisite than the feeling of different portions of this delightful story. All this in the true vein of pastoral beauty. Other smaller poems are in the volume, expressive of different moods of mind, meditation, passionate, legendary, sentimental, amorous, and religious.

Catawba Wine, The Haunted House, The Ropewalk, and In the Churchyard at Cambridge[1] are given as examples.

The National Review lists several poems and prose works for discussion, and affirms what several other periodicals have either said or intimated, that Longfellow is unquestionably the most popular poet of the day. The writer continues:

The moral and intellectual quality of the Voices of the Night is such as appeals to the sympathies, and falls within the comprehension, of every reader. The Footsteps of Angels, The Reaper and the Flowers, The Light of Stars, Midnight Mass for the Dying Year, merely develop, prettily and fancifully, common ideas, too, suggested in their entireness by the very title of the poems. So intelligible and unobjectionable is Mr. Longfellow's thought, so obvious and universally admitted his moral tendency, that we can quite believe what we have heard, that people who neither understand nor care for other poetry buy his as a sort of thing that 'deserves encouragement.' The same commonplaceness of intellectual character is shown in those of Mr. Longfellow's poems in which the interest is historical. Mr. Longfellow has the abstract and generalized impressions of the past

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[1] Littell's, LIX (Nov. 6,1858), 455-6. National Magazine

which every one derives from reading history; and where he endeavors to reproduce it he gives us the conventional idea and the traditional costume of the period.

As a describer of nature Mr. Longfellow holds a higher place than as an interpreter of the life of man, either in the present or past. The American poets are all, as far as we have observed, comparitively strong in depicting natural scenery, while deficient in thought and culture. It is scenery of this vast and impressive kind that Mr. Longfellow describes best. [Extract from Evangeline is given.] One of his best touches is an early poem, Woods in Winter. [Extracts are given.] None of Mr. Longfellow's poems show such creative or dramatic power except Hiawatha. His poetical faculty is well adapted for the narration of some simple story which keeps the even tenor of its way among the pastoral occupations and fireside incidents of a primitive people: and such have been the subjects he has chosen for his longest poems, Evangeline, and The Courtship of Miles Standish; of which the earlier poem is in our opinion far better than the latter one. Both the story and the characters are more interesting, the scenery is more varied and more richly colored, and the later poem contains no incident nearly as good as the passing of Evangeline and her lover close by each other in their boats without either being aware of it. The hexameter metre in which they are written is not altogether unadapted to their subject, or to the fluent garrulity of Mr. Longfellow's nattative. . . . . Yet this forms the groundwork of many of his most attractive and most popular poems, and in one or two cases is employed with really beautiful and poetical effect, as in his recent poem of The Two Angels, in which he has transcended his limits in depth of feeling and force. Mr. Longfellow's plays have, in our opinion, less merit even than his longer poems. He has no dramatic power; and it is impossible to take the slightest interest in the colorless and unreal personages of The Spanish Student and The Golden Legend. There are occasional descriptions in them marked by a certain weak grace and delicacy of language . . . . He is a born poet, though not a poet of the highest rank; his strength lies in the melodious and graceful expression of some

'Familiar matter of to-day

Some natural sorrow, loss or pain,[1]
That has been, and may be again.'

The next poet, Edgar Allan Poe, vies with Longfellow for first place in the amount and variety of comment received from the British critic in Littell's Living Age. Poe became instantly famous with the publication of The Raven which made its first official appearance in the Evening Mirror, under the editorship of N. P. Willis, in 1845. It probably had appeared in the American Review earlier; for the Critic of The Raven says:

> We copy the following poem from the American Review, on account of its unusual beauty. Mr. Willis copies it into The Mirror with the following remarks: 'In our opinion it is the most effective single example of fugitive poetry ever published in this country; and unsurpassed in ingenuity of versification, and consistent sustaining imaginative life. It is one of those dainties bred in a book which we feed on. It will stick to the memory of everybody who reads it.' [Raven is quoted.][2]

The same magazine, the Critic, four months later in commenting on The Tales of Poe, says this of his poetry: "Mr. Poe is familiar to us as a poet of considerable power. We remember the fine conception and musical execution of some of his stanzas."[3]

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[1] Littell's, LX (Feb. 12, 1859), 399-404. National Review.

[2] Littell's, VI (July 26, 1845), 185. Critic.

[3] Ibid., VII (Nov. 15, 1845), 343. Critic.

In reviewing The Raven, and Other Poems by Edgar A. Poe, the Athenaeum states that the English have waited in vain for poetry from America that was purely nationalistic, and that America does little more for the service of the Muse than to melt down English gold and recast it in British form. The editor goes on to say:

> It is Mr. Poe's fancy to be original and it might, therefore, have been hoped that he would choose to be so after a native fashion . . . . Electing to be mystical, we should have been grateful to Mr. Poe for a mysticism caught up on his own mountains--fed on the far prairie--watered by the mighty rivers of the land--toned by the voice of the giant cataracts--colored by the hues of the transatlantic heavens--and ministered to by those new and peculiar moral influences which should have an exponent in every utterance of the American mind. But Mr. Poe has taken his mystical degree in one of the worst of our London schools, where the art, as taught, consists in saying plain things enough after a fashion which makes them hard to be understood, and commonplaces in a sort of mysterious form which causes them to sound oracular. This is to be regretted, because Mr. Poe has a sense of picture and of music; and now and then, from out of the cloud, of a familiar pattern, in which it is his pleasure to involve himself, come an echo and a sigh which there is no difficulty in recognizing as a breathing of the muse . . . . But Mr. Poe is the author of a volume of tales; to which allusion may be made here, as collateral illustrations at once of the merits and defects of his poetry. With very considerable power of description, there is yet a fondness for the mystical in subject and manner--a constant straining after effect in intention, to which he has not the art of communicating an air of spontaneity by the covering of a warm and glowing style . . . . Yet, as we have said, the poet, too, has occasioned whispers from dreamland; and there are times when, from the maze of his eccentricities, a quaint spirit looks out, to whom these seem even to add something of character--when the very curiosities and crookednesses in the form of the instrument appear to lend something

> towards the fashioning of the wild and peculiar tone that issues through it. We are tempted to quote The Raven, as a strange specimen of the author's mannerisms . . . . That the author has both music and imagination may be gathered from his own poem of Dreamland. The sense of the vague and mysterious, no doubt, may be conveyed by mysterious music; but the character and meaning of the mystery wants some more intelligible exponent. [1]

In commenting on Poe's Tales, the Literary Gazette has this to say of his Haunted Palace:

> Let us, in conclusion, draw the reader's attention to the only piece of Poe-try-- . . . wherewith Mr. Poe has favored us in this book. It occurs in the otherwise condemned tale of Usher; and not only half redeems that ill-considered production, but makes us wish for many more such staves. Its title is the Haunted Palace, and it purports to be a madman's rhapsody on his mind. [2]

In reading a poem from Poe, the Christian Remembrancer is reminded of Tennyson.

> The following lines remind us of Tennyson, without being an imitation. They are from the pen of Edgar Poe, a writer apparently of not much note, but are yet striking. The dreamy charm is broken somewhat painfully towards the end, by the direct mention of one feature of dissolution, which is characteristic of his countrymen's want of delicacy, or, as they would think, absence of squeamishness in such matters. [The Sleeper is quoted]. [3]

Tait's Magazine, in discussing Poe's Tales, says;

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[1] Littell's, IX (Apr. 18, 1846), 106. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., IX (May 23, 1846), 106. Literary Gazette.

[3] Littell's, XVII (June 3, 1848), 450. Christian Remembrancer.

> For though to allow any literary excellence to our American brethren is considered tolerably good proof of a low standard of taste, we venture to say that a half-dozen such poems as The Raven would have placed Edgar Poe in the foremost ranks of modern poetry.[1]

Chambers Journal, calling the Americans transatlantic cousins, points out that American literature is little more than a reflection of the English, but that recent authors are appearing more original, and in time will produce a literature worthy of being called national. The Journal follows this with:

> Poe, as a writer of more than ordinary power, and as one who has evinced far more originality than any of his contemporaries, is especially worthy of attention, and we therefore propose, in the course of this article, to present our readers with an outline of his strange, sad history, and a few selections from such of his poems as are most remarkable . . . .
>
> In 1848, (he) produced Eureka. It is a prose poem on the cosmogony of the universe, a work of rare power and the effect of which in America was beyond anything that had been experienced for years. Draped in the sombre or the flaming garments with which his imagination invested them, we see the poet himself, and all his mocking or upbraiding thoughts, wandering wildly through the melancholy numbers. There is a deep and beautiful tenderness, too, in some of his lyrics, as witness the exquisite poem of Annabel Lee--the expression of his sorrow for the death of his gentle wife. This strain of sorrow is only equalled by those in which the poet mourns over the wreck of his wasted life. He had no more severe censor than that which spoke within his own soul.

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[1] Littell's, XXXIII (May 29, 1852), 422. Tait's Magazine.

This is strikingly manifest in the poem entitled The Haunted Palace. [Extracts are given]. . . . but in his poems there are almost always glimpses afforded of a ruined beauty, and an analytic treatment of emotion, sufficient to give them moral tone. The Raven is the most remarkable proof of this (the expression of his own sorrow, and the phantom of his past.) This remarkable poem occupies, we think, the most prominent position among the originalities of American imaginative literature. [Extracts are given].

The peculiar irregular music of Poe's poetry is not the least striking proof of its original character. Style may always be imitated within the ordinary limits of mere versification, but that structure of rhythmical cadence which takes its form from the things expressed, is peculiarly the work of genius. Some stanzas from a piece, entitled The Bells, will suffice to illustrate the power he shows in maintaining the completeness of the harmony between the idea and its expression. [Extracts]. This is an achievement in versification which even Southey, curious and studiously desirous of excelling in such things, has not equalled; it greatly surpasses most of his efforts, indeed, inasmuch as the imagination evinced in the last stanzas we have quoted surpasses mere feats in rhyme.

We have already said that Poe's poetry may be regarded as in a very special sense the expression of his own selfconsciousness. Wild and melancholy as is its general character, there are a few strains which show that the spirit of the wretched poet was sometimes visited by dreams of surpassing beauty--glimpses of purity--of passionate yet exalted love, and of a higher faith than that of his ordinary life even at its best. It would seem as if in these his genius vindicated itself by a protest of beauty against the gloomy broodings of a disquieted conscience or the frenzied excesses of a vicious life; and yet the beauty ever wears the hue of sadness. Judging from the works he has left, Poe is unquestionably the most original imaginative writer America has yet produced. There is not a line in all his poetry which suggests the idea of imitation. [1]

The Critic, after commenting on the style of his fiction, continues with his poetry:

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[1] Littell's, XXXVII (Apr. 16, 1853), 157-61. Chambers' Journal.

> And of poems, dirges either in form or in spirit, into which the genius of desolation has shed its dreariest essence--of verses, gay with apparent, but shallow joy, and of others dark with a misery which reminds us of the helpless, hopeless, infinite misery which sometimes visits the soul in dreams. But, amid all this diversity of tone and of subject, the leading qualities of his mind are obvious. These consist of a strong imagination--an imagination, however, more fertile in incidents, forms, and characters, than in images; keen power of analysis, rather than synthetic genius; immense inventiveness; hot passions, cooled down by the presence of art, till they resemble sculptured flame; and an unlimited command of words, phrases, musical combinations of sound, and all the other materials of an intellectual workman. [1]

After discussing some of Poe's tales the editor points out the difference between his prose and poetry and continues:

> Its chief distinction, as a whole, from his prose, is its peculiar music. He knows the effect which can be produced by ringing changes on particular words. His short flights are exceedingly beautiful and some of his poems are miracles of melody. [The Raven and Ulalume are given as examples.] [2]

Fraser's Magazine accords Poe the place of a true poet.

> He was a true poet, though he wrote little poetry; and his more successful pieces in verse produce an impression akin to that produced by nearly all his prose. His power was confined almost entirely to the region of the awful, the mysterious, and the horrible. He wrote verse very slowly, and his best poems are finished with extraordinary care; though the wonderful flow of his rhythm has nothing of the constraint of visible elaboration. . . . . There is a good deal of mannerism in Poe's versification. He is very fond of making use of the refrain; and he sometimes lingers on the same lines and cadences

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[1] Littell's, XLI (April 22, 1854), 166. Critic.

[2] Ibid., 169. Critic.

> in a way which palls upon the ear. The poem entitled The Bells sets out with a peculiar music of its own; but before its close it has degenerated into something almost like nursery rhymes. [Stanza is quoted.] The flow of all Poe's verses is remarkable for ease and gracefulness; it is hardly ever hampered by the difficulties of rhyme and rhythm which exist to a greater degree in the metres of which he makes use. The Raven [Stanzas already quoted] have afforded those readers who are not familiar with the poem some notion of the singular character of its measure. [1]

After discussing his tales the Edinburgh Review gives a short comment on his poetry which will fittingly close the remarks on Poe.

> With one remarkable exception, his verses do not differ materially from others of the same time. They are neither very good or very bad. The blank verse is not good; but some of the smaller pieces have a smoothness and liquid flow that are pleasant enough. One short poem, said to have been written at the age of fourteen, and addressed To Helen is full of promise. Of all Mr. Poe's poem's, however, The Raven is by far the first. It is, like the larger part of the author's writings, of a gloomy cast; but its merit is great; and it ranks in that rare and remarkable class of productions which suffice singly to make a reputation. [2]

Oliver Wendell Holmes made but few claims on immortality, and posterity has obligingly accepted him at his own modest estimation of his merits. Holmes is undoubtedly a distinguished writer of light verse, and light verse is

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[1] Littell's, LVII (July 18, 1857), 150. Fraser's Magazine.

[2] Ibid., LVII (June 13, 1858), 808. Edinburgh Review.

not easy to write. At least, such seems to be the general thought of the Christian Remembrancer when it says:

> To begin with an example in a lighter vein. Oliver W. Holmes, we are assured, has won for himself an undying reputation as a poet. 'He possesses a rich vein of humor, with learning and originality, and great skill as an artist.' Thus gifted, he writes a playful piece, called The Dilemma, on the conflicting merits of black eyes and blue. 1

Eliza Cook's Journal states that America can show a list of poets who stand out among the stars of the mental galaxy, but few poets whose writings show real humor or genuine wit. The editor continues:

> The author of the volume of poems now before us is amongst the foremost in this peculiar phase of rhyme, and is held by our transatlantic brothers in the same degree that we hold the great and gifted Thomas Hood; but we are inclined to value Dr. Holmes much more for his truthful satire than his 'racy fun', we admire his appropriate and teeming fancies, rather than his attempts at the 'comic'. We can justly award Dr. Holmes a high place, if he is to be tested by graphic power, clever and finished versification, and artistic merit. We should say his fame will be built upon such poems as Astraea, rather than on Lines to the Portrait of a Lady. There is great beauty and graceful pathos in the former, with no small philosophical weight. [Extract quoted.] One of our great favorites in the volume is the poem of The Ploughman, and the exquisite bit of painting in the lines we extract from it must strike all who have ever looked into 'the team a-field.' [Extract.] Dr. Holmes is a poet of whom America may be justly proud. His versification is easy, his diction strong and apt, and his power of censure very poignant and elevated. We certainly

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1Littell's, XVII (June 3, 1848) 446. Christian Remembrancer.

> estimate him most in the higher walks of poetry, and hope to see great things from his pen yet. [1]

In speaking of the Poetical Works of Oliver Wendell Holmes, the Athenaeum states that it is to America's credit that she is anxious to possess a choir of poets, but that Dr. Holmes won his popularity on a different basis from the other poets. The writer continues:

> There are strains of didactic thought, humorous fancy, pathetic feeling--there is an Augustan sonority and neatness of versification--in the poems of Dr. Holmes. There is nothing like gross or direct imitation in this worthy little volume. It must be described as containing the poetry of a university man--a man of the world, too, loving social pleasures, skirmishes of wit, and exercises of intellect--anything but a hermit, or dreamer, or martyr-student, or other such visionary passionately sick of society and no less passionately in love with waterfalls, mountains, the moon, the sea, and some nameless lady. The principal poems in this collection are, Poetry; a Metrical Essay, in which some pleasing and tuneful fugitive lyrics are set. All the above are in heroic measure. We cannot but feel that the mixture of manners and the want of some prominent subject and definite argument militate against the entire success of any one of these exercises. The impression produced by particular passages, by the general use of language and handling of rhyme, is more than ordinary pleasing, but it is not distinct. [2]
> [Examples quoted are: [The Last Leaf, Daily Trials, The Parting Word.]]

Beginning with, "Professor Holmes is distinguished in materia medica as well as in lays and lyrics," the New Monthly Magazine, in an article on "American Authorship", which will

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[1] Ibid., XXXV (Dec. 4, 1852), 447. Eliza Cook's Journal

[2] Littell's, XXXV(Nov. 27, 1852), 410. Athenaeum.

serve to close the few remarks on Holmes, continues:

> His versification is smooth and finished, without being tame or strait-laced. He takes pains with it, because to the poet's painting 'tis 'verse bestows the varnish and the frame.' His management of the 'proud heroic', in serious and sustained efforts, reminds us more of Campbell than any other poet we can name. But it is in that school of graceful badinage and piquant satire that Dr. Holmes is most efficient. Too earnest not to be sometimes a grave censor, too thoughtful not to introduce occasionally didactic passages, too humane and genial a spirit to indulge in the satirist's scowl, and sneer, and snappish moroseness, he has the power to be pungent and mordant in sarcasm to a degree, while his will is to temper his irony with so much good-humor, fun, and mercurial fancy, and generous feeling, that the more gentle hearts of the more gentle sex pronounce him excellent. [1]

The author states that in some of his poems the Doctor is not without considerable pomp and pretension. He says that he uses the terms in no slighting tone. He continues:

> Poetry; A Metrical Essay, parts of Terpsichore, Urania, and Astraea, Pittsfield Cemetery, The Ploughman, and various pieces among the lyrical effusions, are marked by a dignity, precision, and sonorous elevation, often highly effective. The diction occasionally becomes almost too ambitious--verging on the efflorescence of a certain English M. D., yclept Erasmus Darwin--so that we now and then pause to make sure that it is not the satirist in his bravura, instead of the bard in his solemnity, that we hear. Many of the more labored efforts of his muse have an imposing eloquence--rather crude and unchastened, however, and to be ranked perhaps with what himself now calls his 'questionable extravagances.' To the class distinguished by tenderness of feeling, or a quietly pervading pathos, belong--

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[1] Littell's, XXXIX (Oct. 8, 1853) 100-1. New Monthly Magazine.

with varying orders of merit--the touching stanzas entitled Departed Days, the pensive record of An Evening Thought, From a Bachelor's Private Journal, La Grisette, The Last Reader, and a Souvenir.

An interfusion of this pathetic vein with quaint humor is one of Dr. Holmes' most notable 'qualities'; as in the stanzas called The Last Leaf where childhood depicts old age tottering through the streets--contrasting the shrivelled weakness of the decrepit man with the well-vouched tradition of his past comeliness and vigor. In a like spirit, dashed with a few drops of the Thackeray essence, are the lines headed Questions and Answers. In such alliance of the humorous and fanciful lies a main charm in this writer's production. Fancy he has in abundance, as he proves on all occasions, grave and gay. Sometimes, indeed, he indulges in similes that may be thought rather curious than felicitous. A punster, however, Dr. Holmes will be. As a satirist, to shoot Folly as it flies, Dr. Holmes bends a bow of strength. His arrows are polished, neatly pointed, gaily feathered, and whirr through the air with cutting emphasis. And he hath his quiver full of them. But, to his honor be it recorded, he knows how and when to stay his hand, and check himself if about to use a shaft of undue size and weight, or dipped in gall of bitterness. There is pleasant and ptquant raillery in the stanzas to My Aunt.

On the whole, here we have, in the words of a French critic, 'un poete d'elite et qui comte: c'est une nature individuelle tres-fine et tres-marquee'--one to whom we owe 'des vers gracieux et aimables, vifs et legers, d'une gaiete nuancee de sentiment.' And one that we hope to meet again and again. [1]

All the fairies brought their gifts to the cradle of Lowell save that fairy who could have given him a unity of purpose which makes Emerson or Thoreau stand out so completely as individuals. His poetry has been variously judged.

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[1] Littell's, XXXIX (Oct. 8, 1853), 100-1. New Monthly Magazine.

The London Inquirer starts the ball rolling for Lowell in praise and some very fair criticism. The volume commented on is Poems by James Russel [sic] Lowell published by E. C. Mandle, London.

> We have no hesitation in saying that there is enough in this volume to establish Mr. Lowell's claim to a high place, as a thoughtful and true-hearted poet. His sentiment is of the loftiest order--his imagination pure, rich, and vivid. His faults are chiefly those of style and execution. Occasional instances are not wanting of bad taste in the selection of words and epithets--and of imperfect versification. Many of the minor pieces are of little worth, and might well have been omitted. Indeed, the main interest of the work is concentrated in a few of the larger poems. But these are of sufficient merit to redeem a much more husky volume than the one before us.
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> Mr. Lowell is one to whom the universe has never been silent and uncommunicative. He has, with reverent love, received those 'wondrous voices which to the calm and silent spirit come.' Wisdom and beauty he has found hidden in every form around him. Hope and faith are his heart's pillars--hope for man--faith in truth, love, right. A loving spirit flows from his soul into his poetry. The woes and wanderings of humanity are touched with exquisite tenderness. And still in evil the living germ of good is laid bare:--'God doth not work as man works, but makes all the crooked paths of ill to goodness tend.' The first and longest poem in the volume, A Legend of Brittany, is full of beauty, lavished on a repulsive subject. The story of the piece is a very old and common and mournful one, but the genius of the author has clothed it with fresh interest and beauty. The following is almost perfect in its way: [Part of the Poem quoted.] The finest and most characteristic poem in the volume is the Ode. It gives us a clear insight into the author's noble spirit and philosophy. [Quoted.] This, if we do not greatly err in our judgment, is genuine poetry, of the finest texture, and calculated to exert a most beneficient influence. Amongst the remaining poems we would direct special attention to those severally entitled A Glance Behind the Curtain, Rhoecus, and Prometheus. [Two fragments quoted.] Many of the

> minor poems have much merit--but we are unable to particularize. As Mr. Lowell's defects, and we have noticed many, we must content ourselves with remarking generally, that they occur in the details of execution. We have neither time nor inclination to undertake the ungrateful task of cataloguing them. In conclusion, we heartily commend these poems to our readers, confident in our judgment, when we assign Mr. Lowell a place amongst the noble brotherhood of earnest, thoughtful, spiritual poets. [1]

The London Noncomformist, in studying the same volume, comments that the British periodicals have been watching with an eager eye the progress of the transatlantic neighbors, and have not hitherto regarded them as distinguished par excellence in the realm of imagination, and since America was busy in setting up a material world, there was hardly leisure for an ideal one, but the good time will come. Every American bud of literature is welcome. He continues:

> The volume lying before us introduces to us, and perhaps to our readers, a new aspirant to the poetical crown in the person of Mr. Lowell. The trump of fame has not yet sounded this gentleman's genius into our ears; but the advertisement informs us that 'his writings have already obtained considerable reputation in His own country' and the surprise of the traveller who, having casually picked up a stone from his path intending to hurl it into the next brook, is withheld from his purpose by discerning it to be a jasper or an agate, was not greater than ours when we discovered the **real** value of this literary production. We hold the word 'poet' to be one not to be profusely applied; but that Mr. Lowell is a poet we are prepared to maintain, if need be, before all the gods of Parnassus . . . . We will not, therefore, say

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[1] Littell's, III (Nov. 16, 1844), 161-2. London Inquirer.

that we approve without exceptions; that there are no false and forced rhymes; that there are no words coined beyond even the license of the Horatian limit; that there is not exuberant imagery without a clear substratum of meaning; that there is no sound emitted distinct from that of the true poetic metal, or that there is not more of the Endymion school than our modest partialities like to patronize; but if there be not in this volume abundant indications of the 'fine frenzy' which 'reaches from heaven to earth, and from earth to heaven,' we confess ourselves unable to distinguish between the pure water of the jewel and its mere pasty counterfeit.

The Fountain is singularly fresh and beautiful. [The poem is quoted.] We had marked several other passages for extracts. But we have said enough to indicate the merits of the work, which Mr. Mudie is entitled to our thanks for having republished in so beautiful form. 1

The London Critic says that a true poet is of all times and of all countries, and America's great shortcoming is the lack of individuality in her poets. He goes on to say:

Now the most serious complaint we have to prefer against Mr. Lowell, that indeed which somewhat dims the bright hope of future greatness we should otherwise have entertained for him, is the besetting sin of all the poets America has produced--they are not national, there is no individuality about him. For aught that appears in the subjects of these poems, or the treatment of them, the thoughts, or the turn of them, the writer may have existed at any era since the flood, or in any quarter of the habitable globe. . . . . This defect is peculiar to American poetry, but Mr. Lowell has others that are common to him with all young poets. There is an apparent want of workmanlike skill in parts and often there is a slovenliness, the result of too much haste in composition, or too little patience in correction.

But many and great merits are his, or we should not have devoted so much attention to his volume.

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[1] Littell's, III (Nov. 16, 1844), 162. London Nonconformist.

It is because we discern the promise of a rich harvest that we seek to cultivate the early buds here put forth. Some of the leaves will reward the plucking, and though the book, as a whole, scarcely deserves the reputation it has won on its own soil, and will not enjoy the fame anticipated for it on ours, we light upon a fragment here and there which could not have come from the verse manufactory of any mock-poet, but has the stamp of genius broadly stamped upon its forehead. The volume commences with a poem of some length, entitled A Legend of Brittany, the opening stanzas of which convey a very fair notion of Mr. Lowell's style, and exhibits both his excellencies and his defects. [Margaret quoted.] Another stanza from a subsequent part of the same poem contains a pretty thought, prettily expressed. [An extract of Humility of Love is quoted.] We have before noticed the tendencies of American literature towards the German philosophy. The sentiments Carlyle has diffused here have been taught by Emerson there, and we see them continually reproduced in the books that come to us across the Atlantic. Of this school Mr. Lowell is no unworthy pupil, as will appear from this singular but beautiful poem, quaintly entitled An Incident in a Railway Car. [Quoted.]

The same strain of philosophy runs through the volume, and it adds much to its value that the poet never omits to read a useful lesson when opportunity offers; and so unobtrusively that the moral is rather felt than seen. Occasionally, indeed, he tells a tale, and reads a truthful homily upon it. Such is the poem entitled Rhoecus, embodying the old classic legend, which runs thus: [Story is told in poetry.] A collection of sonnets closes the volume, but they are rather clumsily constructed, and want the combination of terseness of thought with elegance of expression essential to that form of poetry. We conclude with a song, the sentiment of which is startling, but true, The Fatherland. [Quoted.] We now close this volume, congratulating America upon the promise it manifestly displays of the advent of a poet whose name and fame will be her own. 1

The Examiner, in commenting on Lowell's Collection

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1 Littell's, III (Nov. 16, 1844), 163-5. London Critic.

of Poems, says:

> And where is the young poet whose writings have lately brought us the best promise we have had from America? Mr. Russell Lowell, the author of a Legend of Brittany and some smaller poems, seems to us a genuine poet; and with workmanship and duration in him, which all poets in posse have not. [1]

Tait's Magazine comments on American literature in general, and then passes on to the Poetical Works of Lowell.

> The literature of his country is necessarily meagre, the authors, of any merit, to which it has given birth few in number, and their aspirations have not been high. It is, however, pleasing occasionally to note the appearance of a new candidate for fame in the department of poesy; still more, when the attempt is not devoid of merit, and of certain indications that show Mr. Lowell to be possessed of some of those attributes essential to every poet.
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> Still, his writings are evidently those of a young man, and of one whose reading and researches have not been extensive. We find frequently the recurrence of the same idea similarly expressed, the use of figures that sound somewhat too trite and familiar, and an occasional straining after effect in a manner too obviously labored. Mr. Lowell has, we understand, some reputation at home, though as an author he is scarcely known here. We recommend Mr. Lowell to study more, to avoid commonplace expressions, and to Reprendre cent fois le rabot et la lime. If he thinks proper to attend to these friendly suggestions, we shall see in a few years of what he is really capable. [She Came and Went is quoted as an opinion of Lowell's poems.] [2]

John Greenleaf Whittier's fame abroad was slow in coming, due probably to the fact that most of his writings

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[1] Ibid., VI (July 12, 1845), 57, Examiner.

[2] Littell's, XXXIII, (Apr. 24, 1852), 180. Tait's Magazine.

were occasional, and that he was so intense in his anti-slavery crusade. He is mentioned several times with the outstanding poets of America, but there is only one review of his works in Littell's, I to LXVII. It was probably 1850 before a London edition of his Poetical Works, appeared. In the volumes of Littell's following this study he is praised highly. The Christian Remembrancer has a short paragraph on Whittier.

> Whittier's whole poem of Mogg Megon is an example of the style we deprecate. The tale altogether seems written with the malicious design of destroying illusions. On whatever page the eye rests it encounters something savage and inhumane; and yet on a gentler theme Mr. Whittier can write well. 1

The Metropolitan mentions Whittier in connection with others. "Bryant, Dana, Percival, Brainerd, Lydia Sigourney, Willis, Flint, Whittier, and Margaret and Lucretia Davidson, have won for America no inconsiderable share of poetic renown."[2] Chambers Journal points him out as one of the writers of remarkable poetry in connection with others.

> And although a great poem, in the true sense of the term, has not yet reached us from the other side of the Atlantic, not a few remarkable ones may now be pointed to in the works of such men as Longfellow, Bryant, Lowell, Whittier, and Poe. 3

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[1] Littell's, XXII (June 3, 1848), 466. Christian Remembrancer.

[2] Ibid., XIX (Dec. 16, 1848), 481. Metropolitan.

[3] Ibid., XXXVII (Apr. 16, 1853), 157. Chambers Journal

The Athenaeum, in connection with others, states that he is famous.

> Many indications have lately apprized us that Dr. Holmes is valued and put forward as one of their favorite writers of verse on pleas different from those that have won popularity for Longfellow, Bryant, and Whittier--for the macreontic of Biblical sketches of Mr. N. P. Willis--and for the distorted yet powerful ballads of Edgar Poe. [1]

Eliza Cook's Journal names him as one of the stars of mental galaxy of America.

> America can now show a tolerable list of poets. Such names as Longfellow, Whittier, Bryant, stand out among the stars of her mental galaxy, and redeem a host of puny, twaddling poetasters, that twinkle and flutter like spangles on Columbine's petticoat. [2]

Chamber's places his name with the other outstanding poets.

> America of late has given us good measure. Among her poets we would instance that eccentric but original genius, Edgar Allen [sic] Poe . . . Bryant; and Dana, James Russel [sic] Lowell, J. G. Whittier, the earnest anti-slavery writer. [3]

In other volumes of Littell's not included in this study, Whittier is praised highly by the Athenaeum, and the Gentleman's Magazine.

A few of the lesser lights in the stars of mental

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[1] Ibid., XXXV (Nov. 27, 1852), 410. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., XXXV (Dec. 14, 1852) 447. Eliza Cook's Journal.

[3] Ibid., XLIII (Dec. 16, 1854) 522. Chambers.

galaxy in the particular field of the American Muses deserve some mention in this study, who nevertheless were somewhat popular in their own day. Fitz-Greene Halleck heads the list, and gets some warm praise from the Foreign Quarterly Review.

> Fitz-Green Halleck has acquired a wider celebrity, (than Emerson), and won it well. He is the author amongst other things, of a noble lyric, Marco Bozzaris. Had he written nothing more he must have earned a high popularity; but he has written much more, equally distinguished by a refined taste and cultivated judgment. But Marco Bozzaris, containing not more than a hundred lines, or thereabouts, is his master-piece. It is consecrated to the Greek chief of that name who fell in an attack on the Turkish camp at Laspi, and is, as a whole, one of the most perfect specimens of versification we are acquainted with in American literature. . . . . In this piece we catch that 'stepping in music' of the rhythm which constitutes the secret charm of the Hohenlinden, we are glad to recognize in all his productions, apart from incidental resemblance of this kind, a knowledge as complete, as it is rare amongst his contemporaries of the musical mysteries of his art. It is in this Mr. Halleck excels, and it is for this melodiousness of structure that his lines are admired even where their real merit is least understood . . . . But here is an extract from a poem called Red Jacket, which will abundantly exhibit the freedom and airiness of Mr. Halleck's versification. [Red Jacket is given.] [1]

Frances Anne Butler, a poetess unknown today to the general reader, was evidently popular in her day, as the Athenaeum praises her rather highly.

> We have before given our decided opinion of Mrs.

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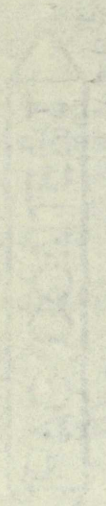
[1] Littell's, I (May 11, 1844), 41. Foreign Quarterly Review.



> Butler's genius as a poet--that opinion at first cautiously expressed, but, on further evidence, strongly pronounced. There is a masculine strength and vigor in her verses, not a little remarkable in an age when men are proud to write effeminately . . . . Nothing that Mrs. Butler has written is chargeable with fault . . . . The poems before us are lyrical, descriptive, and didactic, with some few sonnets; but are all alike distinguished by an earnestness of purpose and energy of style. [Several selections quoted from the following: A Wish, On a Forget-Me-Not, and On a Musical Box.] We have now quoted enough to show the lofty and intellectual attributes of the poetess. [1]

According to Littell's, Morris' songs spread wider and were remembered longer than any other poet's. He is highly praised in an article, "English Critic on American Songs," by S. C. Hall from the People's Journal.

> Before us lies a heap of songs and ballads, the production of the rich fancy and warm heart of George P. Morris. Morris, indeed, appears to have been almost a universal genius. He saw the want of his country--it had no literature, no drama, no school of painting. Considering its juvenility as a nation, republican America, indeed, has been amazingly prolific of good writers. The large share Morris has had in awakening the latent talent of his countrymen, must ever be to him a high source of gratulation. And then, as an original writer, he has won for himself a high place amongst literary Americans, he is in fact, known throughout the States as the 'Songwriter of America'. We know of none who have written more charmingly of love than George P. Morris. . . . . None have described more eloquently the beauty and dignity of true affection--of passion based upon esteem; and his fame is certain to endure while the Anglo-Saxon woman has a hearthstone over which to repeat her most cherished household words. [Seasons of Love is quoted.] [2]

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[1] Littell's, II (Sept. 28, 1844), 455. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., XXVIII (Jan. 4, 1851), 35-6. People's Journal.

The New Monthly Magazine is not very well disposed toward American poetry, and in an article on "American Authorship" accuses Dana of being an imitator of the English bards.

> America is a fact. Even the dim-eyed, bespectacled Old World can see and acknowledge that. Compared with her other attainments, America's poetry is backward, stunted, and unshapen. Imitation is in effect, the vice of transatlantic verse; the very head and front of its offending. The time has been when Richard Henry Dana was regarded as America's brightest orb of song. And there are probably still those who claim for him this bright particular starshine. His verses are distinguished by meditative calmness, religious aspirations, and manly simplicity. This simplicity, indeed, trenches on the bald and barren, and has been called morbid in its character. His diction is often common-place and prosaic, but occasionally indulges in abrupt, and often spasmodic, intervals of 'strong endeavor.' Sometimes unruffled and musical, it is at others rasping, rugged, grating, to 'ears polite.' That Mr. Dana specifically and of set purpose imitates any one particular bard, we do not believe. His tendency, however, is to the reflective standpoint of Wordsworth and Coleridge; and his doctrines of idealism and super-sensual insight, are now widely and earnestly affirmed . . . .
>
> Although evidently predisposed to poetry of a meditative cast, and of soothing,' all serene' purpose, Mr. Dana's longest and best known effort is in quite a different key, and adventures the treatment of a dramatic theme with 'striking effects', in a suitably rapid and exciting manner. The Buccaneer is a legend connected with an island on the New England coast. The legend is a telling one and Mr. Dana has told it impressively. Some stanzas are excellent--others curt and rugged to a degree. The Changes of Home is, as the subject demands, meditative and pathetic. More popular, and charged with more than one homethrust at the feeling, are lines called The Husband's and the Wife's Grave. The Dying Raven was Mr. Dana's earliest production in verse--appearing in 1825 under Bryant, and a fine memorial it is, tender and true, of a sympathetic nature, which has a reverent faith in the truth that 'He who made us, made and loveth all.' The Pleasure Boat goes

> telling pleasantly on its way, to a soft breeze and musical murmur of accompaniment. And such, with the Spirit of the Pilgrims, and a few lyrics, comprise, so far as we are informed, the lays of the minstrel whom we have thus inadequately but impartially, 'when found, made a note of.' [1]

Nathaniel Parker Willis seems to have been fairly popular in his day as a poet. In commenting on The Dashes at Life With a Free Pencil the Athenaeum speaks of his poetry thus:

> To sum up: the realities of these volumes lie in their last forty pages, where a few poems are collected. We cannot treat the verse which follows as make-believe. They will have a place among the Poems of the Heart. Thoughts While Making the Grave of a New-Born Child is quoted.

The Christian Remembrancer says that the handsome volume of Mr. Willis opens with scripture sketches which made his early fame, and that he chooses subjects which require delineation of the sublime zeal, heroism, and devotion, but that they are but shallow excuses for an elaborate portrait of the character in the scene. When this is done he has not begun his subject.

> One notable instance of this delusion may be seen in his Hizpah. His forte lies in describing beauty. In Jairus' Daughter, our author descends to still greater minuteness of detail. He has indeed throughout no idea of the spiritual and ideal in beauty: it is all form, and thus is not only without moral, but without that effect it is alone worthy the efforts of poetry to produce.

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[1] Ibid., XXXVII (June 18, 1853), 762-5. New Monthly Magazine.

[2] Ibid., III (Oct. 18, 1845), 75. Athenaeum.

[3] Ibid., XVII (June 3, 1848), 442-3. Christian Remembrancer.

The New Monthly Magazine in an article on "American Authorship", after commenting on his prose, continues with his poetry:

> [His] poetry is often distinguished by touching beauty and simple purity of tone. [A good example is Healing of the Daughter of Jairus.] Melanie is a melodiously accented and feelingly rendered tale of brotherly devotion. The Dying Alchymist is another of his most successful pieces--a very effectively told story of an aged suicide. The dramatic poem entitled Lord Ivon has won large approval--containing passages of more sustained vigor and less finical pretense than the author's want. Some of his shorter fragments, devoted to household ties and the domestic affections, are, however, his likeliest claims to anything beyond ephemeral repute--marked as these are, sometimes in a memorable degree, by a tenderness and sincerity of emotion that at once conciliates censorship. Nevertheless Mr. Willis can hardly be ranked very high among poets, and those American poets. His strains are too glib and fluent, too dainty sweet and prettily equipped, too evidently the recreation of an easy-minded essayist, instead of being fraught with sighs from the depths of a soul travailing in the greatness of its strength. [1]

There are other poets who are in some instances merely mentioned. Paulding is mentioned, and Philip Freneau is, in a discussion of America in general, said to be the outstanding poet of the earlier group. The popularity of Thoreau comes later than the time included in this thesis, although he is mentioned. Walt Whitman was praised later on as a true poet by the Contemporary Review, and Sidney Lanier is merely mentioned.

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[1] Ibid., XL (Jan. 7, 1854), 89-90. New Monthly Magazine

The remarks on Songs of Summer by Richard Henry Stoddard by the Spectator seems fitting to close this chapter on the American Muses.

> The poems are scarcely to be called songs; for some are tales, and others are rhapsodies on political or (as the writer may think) philosophical subjects. The bulk of the pieces are occasional; short enough for songs, though few are songs proper in the usual acceptation of the word. There is nothing very lofty in Mr. Stoddard's muse, nor does he make any pretensions to loftiness. There is freshness of treatment and style in the smaller pieces, not original, but imitating the last novelties of Tennyson, and a few American poets of no great mark but whose manner has yet become trite. A conventional prettiness is what Mr. Stoddard generally attains, with occasionally something more than prettiness in stanze. These, from a song, that recalls a poem of Holmes, are about the best in the volume.
>
> 'I would recall my early dreams,
> But they are dead to me;
> As well with last year's withered buds
> Reclothe a this year's tree:
> It is not what I might have been,
> But what I yet may be.
> That thought alone avails me now,
> And all regrets are vain:
> They seem to bring a dreamy bliss,
> But bring a certain pain:
> To him who works, and only him
> The Past returns again.' [1]

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[1] Littell's, LIV (July 4, 1857), 47. New Monthly Magazine.

CHAPTER V

ESSAYISTS OF AMERICA

Under this chapter will be included the criticisms of essays, philosophical, theological, and oratorical works, travel sketches, works of criticism, and various works not included under the chapters on poetry, fiction and history. There are various writers including Longfellow and Poe who might be included in this chapter, but the comments that their critical works received were few, and those usually in connection with poetry or fiction.

Most of the British comment centers around one man, Emerson, and judging from the amount of criticism he received he must have been very popular in England. Washington Irving's Sketch Book, however, was the first production of an American author to be extravagantly acclaimed by English reviewers. The Colonial and Foreign Quarterly Review, says of The Sketch Book: "Dare we say, that, in the extravagant popularity of this writer's Sketch Book . . . was more distinctly implied contempt of Americans, than in most of the attacks which have been landed against their taste and intellect?"[1] On the same work The Westminster Review has a short comment: "The author of the Sketch Book, whom Hazlitt contemptuously calls ' a

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[1] Littell's, II (Oct. 19, 1844), 648. Colonial and Foreign Quarterly Review.

mere filagree man', frequently pleases by touches of quaint humor and natural sentiment at times bordering on the pathetic."[1]

The second Life of the eminent American essayist and divine, William Ellery Channing, when it appeared in France, drew a short comment on Channing from the Examiner.

> Channing was, nevertheless, neither a philosopher speaking to the world from the bosom of a peaceful retirement, nor a pastor exclusively occupied with the feeding of his flock. His life, which, owing to the serenity of his fine intellect, produces such calm impression on those who study it, was mingled with all the events of the day. 2

Chamber's Journal says that Dr. Channing's writings have been widely diffused, and have exerted a remarkable influence in England as well as America.

> It is pleasing to add, that objections to the theological tenets of Dr. Channing do not prevent our entertaining a high admiration of his general writings; but this admiration rises to a far higher feeling as we study his biography; for we see that, 'singularly lofty as is the spirit which his writings breathe, he was true to them in heart and life': and we find the secret of his eloquence in the power which elevated ideas and enlarged conceptions of all that is just, pure, grand, beautiful, loving, and holy. 3

Margaret Fuller draws a short remark from the Spectator

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[1] Ibid., XVIII (Aug. 19, 1848), 367. Westminster Review.

[2] Ibid., LV (Nov. 7, 1857), 378. Examiner.

[3] Ibid., XIX (Oct. 14, 1848), 78. Chamber's Journal.

on her Papers on Literature and Art.

> These two volumes, slender in bulk but rich in matter, are all we have yet seen of the writings of the author. If this be a fault in us it is one which we long to repair, for we have seen enough to assure us that Margaret Fuller is worthy to hold her place among the highest order of female writers of our day. The volumes before us consist of essays and reviews, reprinted, with one exception, from American periodicals. The selection, we are told, is a very limited one; and on the reception it meets with will depend whether or not a more complete selection from the author's miscellanies shall be given to the world in due time. The present volume presents to us the thoughts of a full and discerning mind, delicately susceptible of all impressions of beauty; earnest, generous, and serene; expressing itself in language of a varied compass, for the most part singularly graceful and appropriate. The criticism in these volumes, if not always faultless, is at least always elevated and genial. It is of that best kind which expands the mind of the student and prompts him to new trains of thought. [1]

William Gilmore Simms evokes a short discussion from the Athenaeum on his Views and Reviews in American Literature, History, and Fiction, by the author of The Yemassee.

> A collection of miscellanies contributed to the American reviews and magazines, by a popular author. Though repelled from time to time, by a certain aridity of style, there is a fairness of tone in the better critical literature of America which we have always recognized as excellent:--and it characterizes these papers. A large portion of them, too, attracts us by its nationality. Mr. Simms seeks to make his countrymen American in their literature--not copyists at second-hand of the fashions of England, the follies of France, the philosophies of Germany, or enthusiasms of Italy. In his pages, they appear a grave, self-respecting people; who own a past, and a picturesque, and a poetry of their own; and have around them a

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[1] Ibid., XI (Nov. 14, 1846), 344. Spectator.

> life rich in character and adventure. In these days when reverence and revival are unnaturally confounded, and imitation assumes the honors of invention--efforts like these made by Mr. Simms are too healthy, too manly, too sensible, and too poetical, (in the largest sense of the word), not to merit praise--even though the execution fall short of the intention. [1]

Emerson, the next essayist and probably the only real one discussed thus far, has been called "the enraptured Yankee;" and also a seer and a mystic. This chief proponent of the transcendental philosophy receives more comment from the British periodicals than any other, and possibly one-third as much as all the authors in this chapter. The Spectator says that Emerson's genius is tinged with peculiarities of manner and ideas. It continues on his Essays, Second Series:

> This forms part of a speculation called the'Catholic Series'--a title singularly inapplicable to the writings of Mr. Emerson; whose genius, however considerable, is remarkably tinged with those peculiarities of manner and idea which, as much as any doctrinal opinion, essentially constitute the sectarian. Even when true, the thoughts of Emerson are rather distinguished for a quaint shrewdness, and a limitation to a part or section of his subject, than for that justness, breadth, and universality, which in criticism is the counterpart of catholicity in the church. Often, however, his ideas are questionable--their truth is limited, disputable, as much matter of question as the views of a confined body of opinionists. Still oftener they have that sounding vagueness which generally obtains, we think, more among coteries of men who are without established standards of authority or of state . . . .
>
> As regards the particular volume of Emerson before us, we think it an improvement upon the first series of Essays. The subjects are better chosen. They

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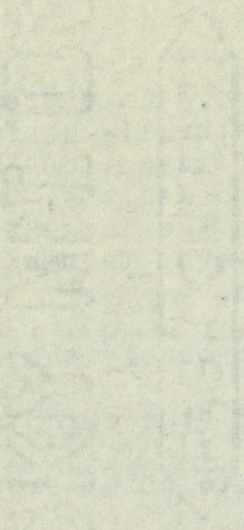
[1] Ibid., X (Sept. 5, 1846), 451. Athenaeum.



come more home to the experience of the mass of mankind, and are consequently more interesting. Their treatment also indicates an artistic improvement in the composition. There is still quite enough of the iterative outpouring, where one general thought is partitioned into succession of phrases, as if matter could be better impressed by much speaking; or mere opinions are dressed up to look like oracular truths; or the writer aims at making the common or the particular great by puffing it up. But the sentences are shorter and neater; and each, considered by itself, is more pithy in expression. The thoughts also appear more deep or general; but this may be owing to their subject.

The desultory character of the essay, which by usage admits of almost any digression, and the peculiar nature of Emerson's mind, render the title, as we formerly observed, but slender suggester of the matter that will be found in each paper. The same digressive habit passing from one branch of a subject to another having no very direct connection, renders it difficult to convey any general idea of the matter of his Essays. These, however, are the avowed titles. "The Poet," "Experience," "Character," "Manners"--the last two subjects admirably handled at starting, and in a catholic style, but soon lost sight of in the author's mannerism; "Gift" is short, and means presents, not natural gifts; "Nature", "Politics"--deriving its chief value from passages in American affairs; and "Nominalists and Realist" complete the essays; but a lecture, addressed to the society called New England reformers, though differing little from the essays, is added, and may be said to form an eighth. [Parts of"Character" and"Manners" are quoted]. 1

The Examiner follows similar lines in discussing Essays, Second Series. Mr. Emerson is not a common man and everything he writes is suggestive matter of much thought and earnestness, states the editor and continues:

He thinks nothing of any value in books excepting the

1Littell's, IV (Jan. 18, 1844), 139. Spectator.

> transcendental and extraordinary; and writes his books on that principle. We are sorry for it, because if he would make his purpose clearer, and condescend somewhat more to the realities of earth, there is no voice in either continent of more musical and manly tone. The volume . . . contains eight new essays, and a lecture. It has also a page of notice from Mr. Carlyle, in which he gives welcome to the writer; intimates that his brave Emerson has brought us here new fire from the Empyrean; and leaves him to speak with his old admirers and to make new. [1]

The Blackwood's Magazine says that the genius of America seems disposed to manifest itself in works of reason and reflection rather than in poetic fervor which is usually considered nascent in literature. The Magazine points out the works of Emerson as the first efforts of original genius in America, and continues:

> The Americans are frequently heard to lament the absence of nationality in their literature . . . . We are quite sure that no French or German critic could read the speculations of Emerson, without tracing in them the spirit of the nation to which this writer belongs. Self-reliance, and the determination to see in the man today, in his own, and in his neighbor's mind, the elements of all greatness. Whatever the most exalted characters of history, whatever the most opulent of literatures, has displayed or revealed, of action or of thought--the germ of all lies within yourself. This is his frequent text. In a still higher strain he writes, 'There is one mind common to all individual men.'
>
> We say that an air blowing from prairie and forest, and the New Western World, is felt in the tone and spirit of Emerson's writings. Mr. Emerson regards the world from a peculiar point of view, that of an idealistic philosophy. Moreover, he is one of those wilful, capricious, though powerful, thinkers,

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[1] Littell's, IV (Jan. 25, 1845), 244. Examiner.

whose opinions it would not be very easy to anticipate, who balk all prediction, who defy augury. A French critic has designated Emerson the American Montaigne. Like Sir Thomas (Browne, author of Religio Medici), he sometimes startles us by a curiosity of reflection, fitted to suggest and kindle thought, although to a dry logician it may seem a mere futility, or idle play of imagination. But Emerson is too original a mind to be either a Montaigne or a Sir Thomas Browne. He lives, too, in quite another age, and moves in a higher region of philosophy than either of them. The utmost that can be said is, that he is of the same class of independent, original thinkers, somewhat wayward and fitful, who present no system, or none that is distinctly and logically set forth, but cast before us many isolated truths expressed in vivid, spontaneous eloquence.

We take up such a book as these Essays of Emerson. We are charmed with many delightful passages of racy eloquence, of original thought, of profound or of naive reflection. What if there are barren pages? What if sometimes there is a thick entangled underwood through which there is no penetrating. There is excellence enough to occupy one's utmost attention; there is beauty to be carried away, and truth to be appropriated. A more independent and original thinker can nowhere in this age be found. His style often rises into a vivid, terse, and graphic eloquence, agreeably tinged at times with a poetic coloring; and although he occasionally adopts certain inversions which are not customary in modern prose, he never lays himself open to the charge of being difficult or unintelligible. But there is an obscurity of thought--in the very matter of his writings--produced first by a vein of mysticism which runs throughout his works, and, secondly, by a manner he sometimes has of sweeping together into one paragraph a number of unsorted ideas, but scantily related to each other--bringing up his drag-net with all manner of fish in it, and depositing them then and there before us. For example, we turn to the first essay in the series, that on "History." It is, perhaps, the most striking of the whole, and one which has a more distinct aim and purport than most of them, and yet the reader is fairly bewildered at times by the incongruous assemblage of thoughts presented to him. There is an essay on "Love" which has highly pleased us; the romance and enthusiasm of the passion is here quite freshly and vividly

portrayed. There is both poetry and philosophy in the essay. On the beauty of nature he is always eloquent; he is evidently one who intensely feels it. [An extract is given from "Essays on Nature."] [1]

Comments by other British reviews bring forth a discussion from the English Review on Emerson entitled "The Emerson Mania."

> The reputation enjoyed by that 'transatlantic thinker', whose name we have set forth in the heading to these remarks, suggests matter for grave reflection. When we find an essayist of this description, who seems to be 'a setter forth of new gods', belauded alike by tory and radical organs, by Blackwood and the Westminster, by the friends of order and disorder--when we find his works reproduced in every possible form, and at the most tempting prices, proving the wide circulation they must enjoy amongst the English public generally--we feel that we too should not have them disregarded, that we should bestow something more than the mere incidental notice on them, which we have hitherto found occasion to indite. We are credibly certain that these essays find many readers and admirers amongst the youth of our universities. Here is a special 'moving cause' for our examination into this theme--the'rationale' of what we may well call the Emerson mania.
>
> True it is that when a man throws forth thoughts at random, as Emerson does, without the smallest regard to self-consistency or reality, he cannot fail, here and there, to light on a quarter, or half truth, or perhaps even on a whole one. There is a certain order of wealth that is near akin to poverty. Nevertheless, despite this vagueness and seeming boundlessness of thought, we soon learn that the philosophy of Mr. Emerson (if we may call it) is restricted within a system of narrow limits, as well as that of his neighbors; there is no logic in his form of utterance, certainly, but by and by we begin to perceive that he is trading on a small stock of positive ideas,

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[1] Littell's, XVI (Jan. 15, 1848), 97-105. Blackwood's Magazine.

though he casts them into so many incongruous shapes, and is at so little pains to reconcile one with the other. We find that this essayist has a science, a morality, a religion of his own, and that, with all his pretensions to indefinite catholicity, he tests all things (as from the infirmity of man's nature he must do) by this special standard. The one cardinal error of Emerson is to take the unit for the mass, the individual for the universal, the ego for the Deity. He confounds relative with absolute existence.

Nevertheless, let it not be supposed that the errors of Mr. Emerson are those of Carlyle; that the former is only an imitator and disciple of the latter. Emerson, though less brilliant, and perhaps less genial, certainly endowed with less descriptive or dramatic power, is the better thinker of the twain. First, then, our author discourses on "History", in which discourse his aim is to set forth his one great principle, that each man must assume his superiority to present, past, and future, subject these to his own nature, and receive or reject them without the slightest regard for authority, or apparently any external testimony whatever. The essay on "Self-Reliance" meets us next, and this is bolder still. 'To believe your own thoughts, to believe that what is true for you in your private heart is true of all men--that is Genius.'

Next he treats of "Compensation"; his reprobation of a certain clergyman and his congregation is highly comic. The doctrine complained of is, the belief of mankind that another world is needed to set right the inequalities of this. In this essay there are, however, some striking ideas, some few happy images, some self-evident, indeed, and very harmless truths, which are, nevertheless, utterances of the honest human understanding. Next, "Spiritual Laws" comes on the tapis, and are discussed in the former strain; we find less and less of novel matter or treatment to record. Next comes a paper on "Love", which we rather like. The essay on "Friendship" is far more objectionable--inflated in language, and misty in sentiment. ["Heroism", "Circles", and "Intellect" are discussed along the same line.] [1]

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[1] Littell's, XXII (Nov. 24, 1849), 344-8. English Review.

The Spectator, in discussing Emerson's Representative Men, says that the followers of Thomas Carlyle among whom is Emerson do not possess coherence, and that in regards close and pointed expression the present book is an improvement over his former writings. The editor states that the fault indicated may be nothing more than mere error of opinion, and continues:

> Representative Men, therefore, may be described as a series of what are called 'characters', generally prefaced by an essay on the idea which the character is assumed to represent, and containing plenty of singular or paradoxical opinions clearly expressed; some of which are not very remarkable either in thought or diction, and others possess great force and justness. [1]

British Quarterly Review comments on Representative Men--Seven Lectures, and says that Emerson is too remarkable a man to be forgotten, or remembered without interest, and that he did not attain the kind of celebrity he enjoys without labor.

> We may say of these lectures, they are worthy of the author--that is, they are as good as anything he has written, better in some respects, though less elaborate and less brilliant. Here are seven lectures-- on the uses of Great Men; Plato, or the Philosopher; Swedenborg, or the Mystic; Montaigne, or the Sceptic; Shakespeare, or the Poet; Napoleon, or the Man of the World; Goethe, or the Writer. The title, the names selected, and a certain tone, both of thought and phraseology, remind one of the Hero-Worship of Carlyle. This optimism is one of the favorite dogmas of Mr. Emerson. It pervades all his

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[1] Littell's, XXV (Apr. 6, 1850), 37. Spectator.

writings. No! The doctrine which Mr. Emerson, and many men like-minded, are compassing sea and land to propagate, is not true; the cultivated intellect, the imagination, the conscience, the heart, unite in the disclaimer. There is a deeper philosophy than this, a nobler poetry, a manlier morality, a stronger stimulant, a sweeter solace. [1]

The Critic, in an article on "Emerson", says that his ambition is to say very striking things, partly with melodious sweetness, and partly with epigrammatic pith.

He first gives you a little honey and then stings you. He is a writer not of books, but sentences. No style can be so painfully artificial. As a philosopher he seldom gets beyond the small Wordsworthian region. Incessantly dogmatizing, he has yet unquestionably been of some use in breaking down dogmatism. This is his chief service. If he has not taught any wider, loftier truths, he has prepared the way for such truths. He is not the most potent, but he is one of the most brilliant and dexterous pioneers. A student, self-absorbed, and self-worshiping, with some very temperate prophetic throbbings--an artist, seeking more from care and time and patience than from inspiration--he will help those to write well who prefer to inspiration patience and time and care. [2]

The Literary Record prints R. Waldo Emerson on Reading--Hints to Students, and gives a short comment on it.

One of the best lectures delivered by Ralph Waldo Emerson when he visited this country about twelve years since was on Reading, but it so happens that this lecture, good as it was, attracted less attention than several others from the same source. We think that our readers will not be unthankful if we give them the substance of the great American's thoughts, experience, and comments on this subject

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[1] Littell's, XXVI (July 6, 1850), 1. British Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., LX (Jan. 1, 1859), 63. Critic.

> in our first number. To students, in particular, the following observations are invaluable. They are taken from a report which appeared in the Nottingham Review of the time. [Lecture given.] 1

Lowell has been discussed somewhat at length as a poet, for in poetry he was one of the favorites, but his prose works are reviewed very little. However, there is a short write-up in the Athenaeum on his Conversation on Some of the Old Poets. The Athenaeum first comments on the literature of America after this fashion. It still follows the footsteps of that of England, and what Lamb and others did for the popular mind in England the essayists of the United States are seeking to do for the growing intellect of that country. The essayists desire to indoctrinate it with a taste for old poets, old dramatists, and sterling writers of the Old World. The editor goes on to say:

> Mr. Lowell has earned by his own poems the right to converse on poetry, and we therefore willingly listen to his opinions on Chaucer and Chapman, Marlowe, Shakspeare and Ford, and all others whom he may, as he does, collaterally introduce, whether ancient or moderns. We like his corollaries for the sake of the main proposition, and also for their own. Keats and Tennyson, Wordsworth and Shelley, are among his idols; but Byron he repudiates. What 'spirit he is of' is accordingly so manifest as to need no illustration and no remark . . . . We cannot quote from the work, for the ground it traverses is, in this country, so preoccupied, that, notwithstanding its obvious merits, there is much in it as 'tedious as a thrice-told tale.' The writer's chief fault is over-refinement and subtlety in his thoughts

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[1] Ibid., LXIII (Oct., 1859), 72. Literary Record.

and mode of expounding them.[1]

Rufus Wilmot Griswold receives some little criticism on his The Prose Writers of America; with a Survey of the Intellectual History, Condition, and Prospects of the Country. The London Morning Chronicle, in an article called "An Englishman on American Literature", of which Littell's says that the tone of it is far superior to that of ordinary newspaper 'criticisers', praises Griswold.

> A volume such as this is a treasure to all who watch with eager hopefulness, and hail with joyful gratulation the daily extending triumphs of our English language. Apart from its excellence as a collection of miscellanies, and the intrinsic beauty of the many noble specimens of eloquence it contains, it will possess, for a considerable section of our reading public, all the interest of literary news. Mr. Griswold has taken great poems, in a well written dissertation, to vindicate the social development of America from these and similar imputations; (that the Americans cannot be literary because they are practical); but he may rest assured that, in this country at least, they were never deemed worthy a moment's attention by anybody who possessed the means of forming an opinion. [2]

The Westminster Review, in an article on the "Literature of the United States" signed by R. L., speaks highly of Griswold's The Prose Writers of America.

> Mr. Griswold, we may premise, is not one of those Americans who displeases their readers, and forfeit their credit at the outset by indiscriminate and unbounded laudation of every product of their country. His tone is calm and temperate, and he has not shrunk from pointing out the blemishes and failings of that

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[1] Ibid., VII (Oct. 18, 1845) 106. Athenaeum

[2] Ibid., XVI (Jan. 1, 1848), 28. London Morning Chronicle

which is the subject of his eulogy. He lays his finger, though tenderly, upon the sores which a less honest advocate would have hidden out of sight. [1]

The Spectator compliments Griswold on being just and discriminating in reviewing The Female Poets of America.

> When, indeed, quality rather than form is regarded, the very number (Griswold has nearly one hundred) of versifiers must throw doubt upon the verse; and in such pieces as we have examined we cannot trace much poetry. Still, it is extraordinary how good the imitative article is. Except the assumption of there being more real poetry than there is, Mr. Griswold, however, will be found just and discriminating in his biographical and critical notices prefixed to the specimens from each writer. His handsome volume will be ornamental to the drawing-room table, agreeable for its contents, and curious for its indications of the character of female position and pursuit in America. [2]

The New Monthly Magazine speaks well of George William Curtis in an article on "American Authorship" and continues with the Nile Notes:

> It made us acquainted with a writer sometimes labored and whimsical, but, on the whole, rich in fancy, and lavish of his riches--master of style glowing with the brilliancy of the region he depicts, and attuned to memnonian resonance and the 'strange voices' of Nilus. Albeit a humorist and a 'quiz', with the sharp speech at times of a man of the world, and a dash of the cynic in his compositions, he is no stranger to that vacant and pensive mood when past impressions, greater and deeper than he knew, 'flash upon that inward eye which is the bliss of solitude.' Sarcasm and rhapsody are so interfused in Nilus Notes, that one division of readers admires or abhors just those particular chapters or pages

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[1] Littell's, XVII (Aug. 19, 1848) 361. Westminster Review

[2] Ibid., XXI (May 12, 1849), 278. Spectator.

which another division abhors or admires.

What an open eye, nevertheless, our tourist has for the sublime and beautiful in Egyptian life, or life in death, may be seen in every section of his sketch-book. He loves to repeat. Who overhear not, amid his fantasies, a still sad music of humanity, an earnestness, a sober sadness, a yearning sympathy with Richter's trinity, the Good, the Beautiful, and the True. His characteristic enthusiasm, scepticism, sentiment, and satire, might be illustrated from many passages. The Howadji of the Nile Notes appeared next, and in continuation, as the Wanderer in Syria, Lotus-Eating: A Summer Book is, in fact, a record of Mr. Curtis' tour among the hills and lakes of his native land. Not that the prevailing tone, however, is ironical. On the contrary, his own poetical habit of thought and feeling colors and warms every page, and sustains its predominance by frequent citations from his favorite minstrels. The author's style is far more subdued and prosaic than when he was the exponent of a Howadji; yet of brilliant and rhapsodical passages there is no lack. [1]

The New Monthly Magazine discusses Donald G. Mitchell, in an article on "American Authorship" and comments on several of his past works.

Ik Marvel enjoys a comfortable income of reputation as the author of Lorgnette, Dream-Life, and the Reveries of a Bachelor. Ik Marvel's book of Reveries consist, mainly, in his own words, of 'just such whimsies and reflections as a great many brother bachelors are apt to indulge in, but which they are too cautious or too prudent to lay before the world. The Reveries he translates into trivial fond records, are four in number. Badinage and banter--never ill-natured in the least, nor in any degree harsh and grating--are freely employed. Ik Marvel's "Dream-Life" passes successively in review the dreams of fond boyhood. His purpose is, to catch up here and there the 'shreds of feeling which the brambles and

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[1] Littell's, XXXVIII (Sept. 24, 1853), 801-5. New Monthly Magazine.

roughness of the world have left tangling' on his heart, and weave them into shapely and humorous tissue. The chapter on "College Romance" is pitched in the same key; that on "First Look of the World" is an excellent example of Ik Marvel's composite manner--the alliance of sagacious raillery and pathetic sentiment. Perhaps his forte lies chiefly in the delineation of domestic sorrow, wherein his power and reality are even painfully felt; but is he not too apt to protract and intensify such delineation, line upon line--and indeed to dally with ideal affliction? Under the "Autumn" division there is some fine healthy writing, always tender, and generally true, on manly hope and manly love--with wholesome sarcasm. Last is "Winter" when the old man passes quietly away. [1]

The Spectator comments on Henry Ward Beecher's Star Papers: or Experiences of Art and Nature favorably.

Mr. Beecher's collection of papers descriptive of his impressions during a month's visit to Europe, and of oldfashioned habits and natural features in remoter parts of the New-England States, is a pleasanter volume than America often furnishes. The volume, however, is pervaded by a fresh and genuine love of nature, imparting a pastoral feeling to many portions. Of art Mr. Beecher has no acquired knowledge, and he dwells too much upon his own impressions; but his taste is sound and his perceptions are shrewd. The pictures of American rustic life are often overlaid by words, but they give a good idea of rustic manners in places removed from the bustle and speculation of Young America. They also indicate the external aspects of nature, and the changes the seasons continually bring. In Europe, everything appears to Mr. Beecher and his reader in rose-color. The French tour may be said to be confined to collections of art, and London is almost limited to London Gallery. Personal commentary rather than criticism is the characteristic of the remarks; but there are observations displaying acumen, of which this on the statues of Venus is one. [2]

The Literary Gazette, in talking of Plain and Pleasant

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[1] Ibid., XL (Feb. 11, 1854) 319 New Monthly Magazine

[2] Ibid., XLVI (Aug. 11, 1855), 358. Spectator.

Talks about Fruits, Flowers, and Farming by Henry Ward Beecher, calls the book appropriate.

> No book could be more appropriate than the 'plain and pleasant' one of the brother of Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Written in the spirit of a sincere love of the productive art. There are some hundred and fifty articles reprinted in Mr. Ward's book. Mr. Ward Beecher's is not so much a practical, however, as theoretical work, and yet it is in this respect an anomaly, being no less practical in many points than it is theoretical. [1]

The Economist says of Lectures on English Literature, from Chaucer to Tennyson by Henry Reed that it is a work of pure literature.

> This book has many claims to attention. In the first place, it is a work of pure literature. Secondly, it is a book on English literature by an American. Thirdly, these lectures derive a peculiar interest from the fact their being the posthumous publication of one who met his death in the terrible shipwreck of the Arctic which is fresh in all our memories; and lastly, the best and most incontestible claim of all is that the book is a good book, that it contains the reflections of a wise and amiable man on the most interesting of all subjects, which reflections are sometimes original, often striking, always sensible and manly. These lectures, delivered at the University of Pennsylvania, were collected, edited, and published by his brother. The English is classical, the style is clear, the criticisms are acute; there pervades the whole book a tone of liberality free from the cant of liberalism, . . . and there is an utter absence of every symptom of bigotry or sectarianism. Mr. Reed's first three lectures are introductory, on literary principles, and on the English language. Fair and candid as Mr. Reed's judgments mostly are, they are not so little human as to be untinged by his personal tastes and circumstances. As a piece

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[1] Ibid. LXIII (Oct. 29, 1859) 295 The Literary Gazette

of criticism we think his lecture on Byron the best in the book. [1]

The Athenaeum gives a short discussion of Northern Travel--Summer and Winter Sketches of Sweden, Lapland, and Norway by Bayard Taylor.

> With an artist's instinct, he speedily found an opening for his imagination, which has a Saracenic sympathy with color, and espying, in some dim, white gleams, the headlands of Sweden, began to understand and relish the precincts of the Poles. Mr. Bayard Taylor, indeed, has a genuine appetite for travel, an eye for landscapes, a genial heart for simple customs and a stout one for dangers and so long as there are pictures to see and paint, the enjoyment of his mind is supreme. This happy spirit pervades his narrative of adventures. The forests seemed to him vast columnar wildernesses of bronze, frosted with silver, the twigs of the birch glistened like efflorescences of crystal. This extract, an example of his exuberant yet not meretricious style, will assure the reader that Mr. Bayard Taylor is of the right mold for a traveller,--keen, enthusiastic, and capable of describing what he has seen. [2]

Oliver Wendell Holmes is known today generally as the writer of light verse, a few 'medicated' novels, and those brilliant bits of causerie, the Breakfast-Table series, and it is for the latter that he has been placed among the essayists. The Literary Gazette gives Holmes a favorable discussion on The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table: Every Man his own Boswell.

Mr. Holmes says a great many clever and ingenious

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[1] Ibid., XLVI (September 1, 1855), 559. Economist.

[2] Ibid., LVI (February 6, 1858), 375. Athenaeum.

things, and some true and deep ones. His is generally lively and amusing, and there is a pleasant vein of meditative sentiment in him. He is fond of fantastic conceits, which evidently cost him some trouble in the preparation. His humor is rather a polite smirk than a kindly genial smile. His book may be read, in small proportions at a time, both with pleasure and profit. There are thought and fancy in it, wit occasionally, and now and then a sympathetic, half-melancholy tone of moralizing on homan life and its chances. Mr. Holmes has interspersed among his prose many graceful verses. [1]

The Economist discusses The Autocrat of the Breakfast-Table, etc., and calls it a genuine book.

We predict for Mr. Holmes a large share of the favor from readers on this side of the Atlantic. His thoughts have depth and breadth enough to recommend themselves to cultivated men, whether of the Old or New World. Mr. Holmes, moreover, has some qualities of a poet, as is proved not only by racy and original verses, scattered here and there among these pages, but very vivid yet choice descriptive writing. There is a real sublimity in much that Mr. Holmes writes. What we do not like least in Mr. Holmes' 'talk' is, that it is not at all that of the professional author, but that of the thoughtful man of the world, and that it is very often characterized by a far-seeing and tolerant spirit. The following passages will give an idea of Mr. Holmes' moral tone. [An extract is given from the Autocrat of the Breakfast Table.] Here is a specimen of his observation and power of painting in words. [2]

John Bull reviews the same work calling Holmes a bold and original thinker.

Mr. Holmes, we believe, is well known among his American compatriots as a great master of the art of conversation. Consequently he has in this book

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[1] Ibid., LX (February 5, 1859), 384. Literary Gazette.

[2] Ibid., LX (March 5, 1859), 630. The Economist.

> put himself in his right place. He is a bold and original thinker, and states his views with humor and acuteness. Mr. Holmes has a keen perception of the foibles of his countrymen, and speaks his mind out. There is, it seems to us, a vein of this satirical humor forming itself in American society which will be a great institution for the Republic. There is lively and homely wisdom for all times and all countries; and there is that too which will touch the feeling of all, as in the portrait of the schoolmistress, a delicate and graceful delineation of this excellence in woman. [1]

There is a mere mention made of Theodore Parker in the Christian Observer which will serve to close this chapter. The Observer, in an article entitled "Theodore Parker and the Oxford Essayist", which was occasioned by The Experience as a Minister, gives merely one sentence. "Theodore Parker was, in a peculiar sense and in an unusual degree, what his friend Emerson calls 'a representative man.'" [2]

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[1] Ibid., LI (May 21, 1859), 501. John Bull.

[2] Ibid., LVI (August 18, 1860), 401. Christian Observer.

CHAPTER VI

THE EARLIER FICTION WRITERS

The fiction writers drew more comments from the British critics than any other class of men of letters who were responsible for what the English called the "meager bit" of American literature. Excepting history, and that probably because there was no outstanding English historical writer of this time, the fiction drew the most favorable comments. Although the limit of this thesis is the period 1844 to 1860, this is by no means the boundary of the critical opinion, for many works of the late eighteenth and of the early nineteenth century were reviewed and received a variety of comments. It seems when a particular work came to the attention of the British public it either drew a comment on many of the author's works, or perhaps it drew a review of many other works of similar order. The Spectator sums up the whole situation as follows:

> Our men of science frequently received valuable contributions to their respective departments from their fellow-laborers in the Union. Cooper, Sedgwick, Bryant, Paulding, Brown, and a host of others, were acceptable to our literary circles. It was clear that there was much of what was good and pleasant in the United States . . . . This traditionary faith in the practical workings of the American constitution was confirmed by our occasional glimpses of the republic's progress in arts, science, and literature.

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[1] Littell's, IX (April 25, 1846) 198. Spectator.

Although Irving was first to win recognition abroad, the comments on Brown will be taken up first, because he started writing before Irving. He had completed his career as a fiction writer before 1844, but he receives some comment in Littell's Living Age; therefore, the first short study will be devoted to Brown. The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review, in commenting on the "American Works of Fiction", gives Brown a rather important rank, in his own day and time, in American literature.

> We will now, as well as we are able, glance over the list of American writers of fiction of yesterday and today. The first to present himself, is Charles Brockden Brown. In three words, a coarse Godwin: who had power, nevertheless, to make himself heard across the Atlantic in his life-time, and to give his name a hold on posterity. Two of his favorite romances, moreover, Arthur Mervyn, and Edgar Huntley, may justly claim the merit of nationality. The turning point of the one is the great pestilence in Philadelphia, and the interest of the other is enhanced to wilder horror by the introduction of the savage human and brute figures, which prowled about the new settlements in the wilderness. On perusing these tales a second time--if there be still romance readers in England fond enough for such folly--the want of distinctive character makes itself felt more strongly than the imitation we have above intimated. The author could manage suspense, terror and wonder, nearly as skilfully as his prototype [Godwin]; but his power over the marvellous was of the second order . . . . In Mr. Brown's thrilling Edgar Huntley, we can never forget that it is an outrageous melodrama which is holding us breathless; a little ashamed of the impatient interest conjured up by spell so unrefined. Thus, too, while Arthur Mervyn's strangely complicated adventures put curiosity on the rack with a power little less torturing than the secret of Falkland, or Caleb Williams, the masterly strokes of character, the deep philosophical insight into the workings of

> a noble and perverted spirit, which leave on the mind of the reader who closes the English novel, a shadow, a power, and a material for question and self-examination--are nowhere evidenced in the American tale. But Mr. Brockden Brown's tales, however, possess the merit of unity of purpose and earnestness of manner, combined, in no common degree. The master idea of each story is worked out in every possible device, and set off by every most advantageous accessory, no matter how boldly procured. . . . . Lastly, the style of these novels is impressive--not unworthy of the selected models. The written language of our transatlantic friends might be, then, stiff and cumbrous, and chargeable with prosiness, but, at least, it was English. Possibly, the majority of their authors will now consider it as a merit, that they have put themselves out of this praise. [1]

The second author of fiction to be discussed was the first American to be recognized in England as a writer of pure literature. Irving, himself, had been mentioned in England before the Sketch Book. A London reprint of Salmagundi had appeared in 1811, and had been made the subject of a long article in the Monthly Review. Scott had praised the Knickerbocker's History in 1813, though so far as was known it was not received by any British journal until after the advent of the Sketch Book. The New Monthly Magazine, in a discussion of "American Authorship", gives Irving the most distinguished place in American literature, and claims for him world-renown.

Few, it may be reasonably affirmed, will demur to

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[1] Littell's, II (October 19, 1844), 648. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

> the judgment which assigns to Mr. Washington Irving the most distinguished place in American literature. Meaning thereby, not the distinction of incomparable genius in general nor of preeminent superiority in any special department of authorship; but--without present reference to his personal or intrinsic claims, however great--the distinction of extrinsic, popular renown, the external evidence of long-established and world-wide recognition. He may yield in picturesque reality to Fenimore Cooper--in dramatic animation to Brockden Brown--in meditative calmness to Cullen Bryant--to Longfellow in philosophic aspiration--to Holmes in epigrammatic ease--to Emerson in independent thought--to Melville in graphic intensity--to Edgar Poe in witching fancy--to Mayo in lively eccentricity--to Prescott in accurate erudition--to Hawthorne in subtle insight--to Mitchell in tender sentiment. He may, or he may not, do all this, or part of it. But, notwithstanding, his position remains, either way, at the top of the tree. Mrs. Stowe is of course infinitely more popular for the nonce, or indeed, 'It may be for years, and it may be forever.' [1]

The editor continues with a very worthwhile commendation of his style, and reviews several of Irving's works.

> His sweet, smooth, translucent style makes him worthy to be known, and pleasant to be read, of all men. His style is indeed charming, so far as it goes. For it is not a style to compass profound or impassioned subjects, or to entone the thrilling notes which 'sigh upward from the Delphic caves of human life.' It is not a perfect style. But in its proper track it is eminently delightful, and flows on, not in serpentine, meandering curves, but straightforward, 'unhasting, yet unresting,' with musical ripple as of some soft inland murmur. Quiet humor, gentle pathos, sober judgment, healthy morality, amiable sentiment, and exemplary professional industry have done the rest. [2]

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[1] Littell's, XXXVII (June 11, 1853) 646 New Monthly Magazine.

[2] Ibid., 645.

The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review, in a discussion of "American Works of Fiction", gives a fair discussion of Irving, and practically claims him for England.

> But the novels of Mr. Brown have worn, to the extent of being included in a Library of Standard English Fiction--they are far from having made the same sensation in their day, as was excited by the writings of his successor, Washington Irving.
>
> Never was any writer less Puritanical or exclusive in his cast of mind; he sympathizes with, while he smiles at, Fray Antonia Agapida; his whole heart and soul go forth with the Caballero, Columbus, on his voyage of discovery: though he loves the old house of Manhattan well, the obscurest nook of the Alhambra or the Albycin is dearer to him than could be a wilderness of palaces at home. Yet was never one more chastely reserved in thought and word than Mr. Irving. He laughs loud, the jest might be sifted for the pastime of Una herself. He is as delicate in his mirth as in his pathos--'as modest as a maid', while he can use broad-sword and quarter-staff like any lusty bachelor. Was it the purity of his mind and the harmony of his language, then, which told on our public, and not the wonder at the source whence such good gifts sprung? Be that as it may, it was his English and European sketches, The Broken Heart, and the Stout Gentleman, and The Bold Dragoon, and Anette Delarbe, Lady Lillycraft with her dogs, and Master Simon with his village choir, which won Irving his thousands of readers. We are now inclined to apportion all these a place in the distance, compared with his capital Dutch American legends. In these he is unequalled. Nothing so good of their kind as Rip Van Winkle, and Ichabod Crane, and Dolph Heylinger, had been given to the world since the days of Primroses and the Flamboroughs and Bean Tibbs--and the former worthies had the advantage of being set in a framework of manners at once richly homely, quaintly elaborate, but curiously in harmony with our sympathies. It is grevious that their author should so soon have become wearied of telling them. These few stories, separated from their companions, lay a capital basis for an American Eulenspiegal, or Gammer Grettrel. Even at this distance, of time, now that he has become an historian and grave diplomat, we cannot resist crying out like children for 'more'![1]

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[1] Littell's, II (Oct. 19, 1844) 648. Foreign and Colonial Review.

The Cornhill Magazine, in an article entitled Nil Nisi Bonum Irving and Thackeray, comments rather touchingly and tenderly on the death of Irving.

> Two men, famous, admired, beloved, have just left us, the Goldsmith and the Gibbon of our time. But the good Irving, the peaceful, the friendly, had no place for bitterness in his heart, and no scheme but kindness. Received in England with extraordinary tenderness and friendship (Scott, Southey, Byron, and hundreds of others have borne witness of their liking for him), he was messenger of good-will and peace between his country and ours. In America the love and regard for Irving was a national sentiment. In his family gentle, generous, good-humored, affectionate, self-denying; in society, a delightful example of complete gentlemanhood, quite unspoiled by prosperity; never obsequious to the great (or worse still, to the base and mean, as some public men are forced to be in his and other countries): eager to acknowledge every contemporary's merit; always kind and affable with the young members of his callings, in his professional bargains and mercantile dealings delicately honest and grateful; one of the most charming masters of our lighter language; the constant friend to us and our nation; to men of letters doubly dear, not for his wit and genius merely, but as an exemplar of goodness, probity, and pure life. [1]

Thus fittingly, the above remarks should close the discussion on Washington Irving, considered by many as the Father of American literature, and surely the great forerunner of the great and vast and multiple modern short story.

The second American writer of fiction to attract particular attention in England was James Fenimore Cooper.

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[1] Littell's LXIV. (March 10, 1860), 636. Cornhill Magazine.

In many critical journals he occupies even a more prominent place than does Irving--partly because he was a more prolific writer, and partly because his works, at least his frontier stories, were more unusual, and to the popular mind better representative of America. Cooper's novel Precaution was first published in America in 1820. It was the first of his writings, great or small, to be given to the press; and at that time he was more than thirty years old, and wholly unversed in the ways of authorship. The Spy was next and here Cooper began his long list of novels with American settings.

The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review, in a discussion of "American Works of Fiction" styles Cooper as one of the foremost novelists of America, and gives a rather interesting comment on his style and works.

> From Mr. Irving, as the first and most graceful specimen of the travelled American novelist, we must pass to one whose coming, perhaps, thrust his finer graces and sweeter temper into the shade: inasmuch as a loud voice, and a bold step, and a manly presence, will always clear a ring, and for the moment attract the millions. And in right of number as well as of merit--the personal qualities of the author forgotten--Mr. Cooper must be styled foremost, if not first in point of time, among the novelists of America. His, however, has been the singular and most unsatisfactory fortune, of living to see a brilliant reputation dwindle, and of losing the sympathy of his countrymen, without gaining the compensating hold of esteem among foreign nations. [1]

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[1] Littell's, II (October 19, 1844) 649, Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

The writer continues with a discussion of Cooper's style, his novels in general, and compares him favorably with some of the English novelists.

> The first were novels of high promise, and brilliant merit, rather than striking originality: in which an attempt to apply Scott's dramatic and pictorial manner of description to the scenes and characters of the New World, was successfully carried through. Let us observe, however, that, on his own showing, Mr. Cooper was urged to essay this style by pique . . . here was distinctly manifest the want of that geniality without which no tale-teller will long retain his listeners . . . Nevertheless, there was sufficient animation of grouping and depth of color in Mr. Cooper's first essays to conceal this defect--while in his third he hit upon his one creation--it may be added, one of the two real characters added to the world's stock of Figaros and Baillie Jarvies, by transatlantic writers:--we mean, of course, Leatherstocking the Hunter. The manner in which the feats of this noticeable man' are displayed in Mr. Cooper's novels, is calculated to impress the reader as strongly as his individualities of speech, costume, and action. [1]

The author says that tales of adventure exhibit an admirable mixture of direct earnestness and minute prolixity. Cooper narrates an escape through the woods, a siege in a block-house, or a chase at sea, with the deliberate and fascinating clearness of Richardson when he detailed the progress of passion, the conflict of opposing principles, in the female heart. He continues:

He has an Iachimo's minutely noted knowledge of

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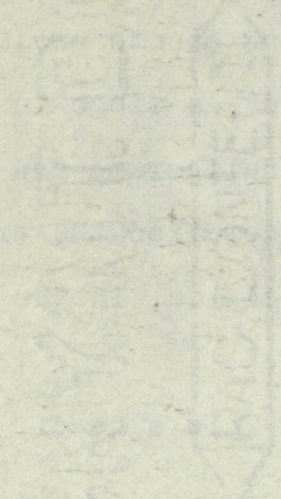
[1] Littell's, II (October 19, 1844), 649-50. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.



the sails and ropes of a ship, of the rocks and mosses and herbage of the forest and the wilderness, and with this he can work up a spell as potent as the Ancient Mariner exercised upon the wedding guest, who must needs be held still till the tale be told out! The Borders, The Prairie, The Last of the Mohicans, The Red Rover, will all bear witness, if consulted, to the justice of our assertion; each of them is more or less built on one main incident, the conclusion of which is artfully suspended. Nothing can be more favorable to the exhibition of a single character than this singleness of purpose; the exercise, however becomes difficult . . . . Mr. Cooper had hardly struck the right chord, in the introduction of the Topper to his public, when, with the ingenuity of genius, he hastened to exhibit his one other variety as a novelist, by resorting to the sea for interest. The Pilot raised his fame to its culminating point . . . . For we do not imagine that any novel-reader now looks on Long Tom Coffin as one of the genuine sailor-brood. His terms may be of the sea; but in his nature he essentially differs little from Mr. Cooper's favorite forest heroes. Our remark will apply to the sea-novels which follow The Pilot. In The Red Rover, it is the Dolphin and the Bristol Trader which are the characters, and neither commanders, crew, nor passengers--so likewise in The Waterwitch, The Tent-Toilet, and even the awkward English tale, The Two Admirals, the craft of the stories and their manoeuvres absorb us, and the 'live stock' is put up with as part of the bargain: It is not so with the novels of Smollett, nor even with the more farcial and slighter productions of Marryat: While neither the old nor the new English author can compete with the American in arrangement of a scene, or description of an incident. It is remarkable, indeed, in Mr. Cooper's novels--and must be pointed out as one of the many causes of their declining popularity--that the female characters are always forced and unreal. Content Heathcote, in The Borderers, is beautiful and placid as a creation: and the reader's feelings are strongly appealed to more than once, on behalf of the Indian woman, especially in that scene where the wife of one of the chiefs, who has been forsaken for a white beauty, meekly submits herself to the latter, without anger or remonstrance, sorrowfully craving her protection. [1]

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[1] Littell's, II (Oct. 19, 1844) 649-50. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

In England, the popularity of Cooper's works was at this time in the ascendancy. The Eclectic Review, an English publication whose sympathies are naturally strongest with English writers, comments thus on "Cooper's Novels":

> We accord to Cooper an equal degree of talent and power with that ascribed to Scott, and would place the originality of the American author at a higher point. There is certainly in Cooper more power of concentration, a more epigrammatic style, and greater terseness of expression . . . . No one can peruse the works of Cooper without being convinced of the innate beauty of his mind. The gentleness of his own mind, its lofty appreciation of everything that was good, its innate poetry, breathed forth in his graphic descriptions of nature, in the love with which he regards the forests, the broad prairies, and the sun-lighted valleys. It is rarely so many qualities are combined in one writer. His name is endeared to his country, and his productions will hand it down to posterity with undiminished lustre. Cooper's novels will be standard works as long as fiction continues to excite any interest in the admirere of literature. 1

Westminster Review gives a rather outstanding view of Cooper.

> Of Cooper's earlier works we have a grateful remembrance, which a maturer judgment strives against in vain. Mr. Cooper has in a high degree, we think, two of the chief excellencies of Sir Walter Scott; his writings affect the imagination like pictures, and he has the rare art of carrying the reader's attention forward with a lively and vigorous movement; while on the other hand, his judgment is the

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[1] Littell's, XLIX (June, 1856), 734. Eclectic Review.

> slave of prejudice, his moralizing very common-place, and we read without growing the better or wiser. [1]

The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review rather grudgingly awards Cooper, and American novelists in general, the praise of well describing nature, and of bringing unfamiliar scenes before the eye. In an article on "American Works of Fiction" the Review states:

> We cannot commend the transatlantic novelists for as much spirit and discrimination in delineating their figures, as the wild and waste place in which they latter are presented--the praise of well describing nature, so as to bring unfamiliar scenes before the eye, must be cordially awarded to them . . . We will not consent to believe in the monotony of character, superficially ascribed to the Americans by Mr. Dickens. What chance would a Cooper have had, during a six months' sojourn in England of finding a Sam Weller, or a Baillie Jarvie? [2]

The Dublin University Magazine, in an article on "A Trio of American Sailor-Authors", speaks rather flatteringly of Cooper's ability to write sea-novels.

> America has produced three authors, who, having acquired their knowledge of sea-life in a practical manner, have written either nautical novels or narratives of the highest degree of excellence. We allude to Fenimore Cooper, R. H. Dana, Jr., and Herman Melville, each of whom has written at least one book, which is, in our estimation, decidedly A-1 . . . . America worthily rivels us in this department of literature. Taking Cooper, for instance, all in all, we question greatly whether any English author excels him as a sea novelist . . . . The Pilot, the best and most popular of all his nautical fiction.

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[1] Littell's, XVIII (August 19, 1848) 367. Westminster Review.

[2] Ibid. II (Oct. 19, 1844) 643-47 Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

> The genius of Cooper, both as a sea-novelist and an unrivalled writer of romances descriptive of life in the woods and prairies of America, did not, like rich old wine, improve and ripen with age. After he had written less than a dozen works, there was a manifest falling off both in conception and execution of his stories . . . . Yet we are bold to say that even the poorest of Cooper's works possesses considerable merit in itself, and had it appeared as a production of a new or an anonymous writer, might have been better received than as the acknowledged work of an author of illustrious reputation . . . .
>
> The first striking quality of Cooper is the admirable clearness and accuracy of his descriptions of the manoeuvres, &c., of ships . . . . Secondly, Cooper possessed an absolutely unparallelled faculty of imparting to his ships a species of living interest. He, indeed, makes a vessel 'walk the waters like a thing of life'; and the reader gradually feels an absorbing interest in her motions and her fate as an individual craft. We refer to the 'Ariel' in the Pilot or to the rover's ship and 'Royal Carolina' (in Red Rover) as wonderful instances of this peculiar talent. Thirdly--He is unsurpassed in the power he possesses to invest the ocean itself with attributes of awe-striking sublimity and mystery. His mind, in a word, was intensely poetical, and in his earlier works especially, he revels in fine poetic imagery. [1]

A selection from Red Rover in which the Dolphin chases the Royal Carolina is quoted and the writer follows it with this comment:

> Now, is not the above a piece of splendid descriptive writing? Fourthly--Cooper's leading characters among the seamen are, in many instances, highly-finished portraits, drawn by the hand of a great master; and the reader instinctively feels that they are not mere conventional mariners of the melodramatic school, but genuine blue-water salts, who exhibit special individual idiosyncracies in addition to the general characteristics of their class. The two finest and

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[1] Littell's, XLVIII, (March 1, 1856), 560-61. Dublin University Magazine.

> most elaborate portraits in the entire Cooper sea-gallery are Long Tom Coffin in the Pilot and Dick Fid in the Red Rover . . . . They never yet have been equalled in naval fiction, nor do we think they ever will be surpassed. Cooper's sea-novels have several distinguishing peculiarities besides those we have already pointed out. It is worth observing, that they rarely exhibit anything like an artistic plot--and we like them none the worse for that--but in nearly every instance their interest is concentrated on a long chase . . . and the incidents naturally arise out of this single leading feature, which may be termed Cooper's forte, and which he also exhibits in most of his Indian stories. In one work, however, The Two Admirals, Cooper attempts to 'deal with the profession on a large scale' . . . . Ablo as are some of the scenes, we think the experiment a decided failure on the whole, and do not marvel at this, for obvious reasons. [1]

Let us turn now to a fourth writer of fiction, who draws a more varied comment in Littell's, of course, than any author discussed thus far in this thesis. It was not because he was more popular in his day; for both Irving and Cooper won by far more renown, but it is, perhaps, that Hawthorne belongs more properly to the period under discussion, 1844-1860. The publication of Fanshawe, 1828, was a failure; the series of his Twice-Told Tales was published in 1837 and was reviewed by Longfellow in the North American Review. In 1841 he published The Whole History of Grandfather's Chair, and in 1842 his second series of Twice-Told Tales. His other publications follow 1845. Thus, it can readily be seen that he is more representative of the period under discussion than the

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[1] Ibid., 561.

preceding authors.

The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review, in discussing "American Works of Fiction", accord Hawthorne rather outstanding literary characteristics, and comments favorably on his works.

> We have now, though rapidly, glanced at some of the most important divisions of American Fiction. One remains to be noticed, more unpretending in form than the above (novel) and its artists, perhaps less famous--yet, we are inclined to think, containing more characteristic excellence than will be found in the library of accredited novels . . . we recommend. . . . a whole volume of collected miscellanies of great excellence is here before us. We mean Mr. Hawthorne's Twice-Told Tales, which will one day or other be naturalized into our library of Romance, if truth, fancy, pathos, and originality have any longer power to diffuse a reputation. He caught the true fantastic spirit which somewhere or other exists in every society, be it ever so utilitarian and practical, linking the seen to the unseen, the matter-of-fact to the imaginative. To such a mind the commonest things become suggestive; the oldest truths appear clad in a garb of 'grace and pleasure.' The pump in the middle of a little town, recalls the days when the spring welled brightly out in the wilderness, and 'the Indian sagamore drank of it'; a walk with a child through the range of shop-window sights, enables the thoughtful man to draw aside the veils which hide our deepest association and our saddest thoughts; the figure of a sleeping wayfarer under a tuft of maples by the wayside, invites him to consider the number of events which all but happen to every mortal; and this aid of a vein of temperate and poetical elegance of imagery, the like of which is possessed by none of our writers of prose--Mr. Southey, perhaps, excepted. [1]

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[1] Littell's II, (October 19, 1844), 654. Foreign and Colonial

As a recounter of mere legends, Mr. Hawthorne claims high praise. He reminds the editor of Tieck, in spite of the vast difference in materials used by the two artists. The author continues:

> Whether he revive the tradition of the Gray Champion--that supernatural hero who has existed in every country since the days of Ogier the Dane, to come forth and deliver, when the emergency presses hardest--or tell how the Maypole of Merry Mount was felled by the stern axe of Endicott, the Puritan governor--or describe the meeting of the pilgrims in quest of that fabulous jewel, The Great Carbuncle, or relate the result of Dr. Heidegger's experiment with Water of Youth--he does his spiriting 'gently', in the romantic sense of the word, exercising his craft with a quiet power which is rare, the time and the place considered. We cannot too heartily commend this book, as the best addition to what may be called our Faery Library, which has been made for years; hoping, moreover, that the author is capable of producing more than the one slim volume which has made its way to England. [1]

The Athenaeum, in discussing American Fiction, in which is included a discussion of Twice-Told Tales, Vol. II, praises Hawthorne with some reservations for censure because his second volume was not extensively different from the first.

> And now, a word of friendly welcome to Mr. Hawthorne. We have already so often expressed our pleasure, in his gem-like tales (being the first, we believe, to recommend them to the notice of the English tale-readers)--that none, we apprehend, will mistake for covert censure the

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[1] Littell's, II (Oct. 19, 1844), 654. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

> recommendation we must now give him on the appearance of this second volume--to beware of monotony. We do not say this because he chiefly loves the bygone times of New England--nor, because of his manifest propensity toward the spiritual and supernatural (few since Sir Walter Scott telling 'a ghost-story' so gravely well as Mr. Hawthorne); and we love the dreamy vein of speculation in which he indulges, when it is natural; not entered dramatically and 'of set purpose' by those who think that 'mobled queen is good', and fantasy and taking device to entertain and engage an audience. But we conceive our author to be a retired and timid man, who only plays on his two strings because he lacks courage or energy to master a third. We have thus given him the support of his friendly counsel, and have only to observe that his second volume of Twice-Told Tales would be equal to his first, were it not too closely like it. [1]

The New Monthly Magazine, in commenting on Hawthorne, places him on the same pedestal as Cooper and Irving, reviews two of his books and closes the article with the statement that he possesses the gift of story telling in no common degree.

> Although an author of some year's standing, and of considerable repute in his own country, Mr. Hawthorne has been, until quite recently, all but unknown among ourselves. He is now fairly seated on the same eminence with Cooper and Washington Irving. He steers clear of the irony of scepticism, and narrates his traditions with a grave simplicity and cordial interest. He is one of the subtlest of psychologists. There can be little question that the most powerful--if also the least pleasing--of Mr. Hawthorne's fictions, is The Scarlet Letter, a work remarkable for pathos in the tale, and art in the telling. How powerful is depicted the mental strife; so tumultuous and incessant in its agitation, of the young clergyman, Arthur Dimmesdale. The injured husband, again,

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[1] Ibid., VII, (October 18, 1845), III. Athenaeum.

> is presented with memorable intensity of coloring. (Roger Chillingworth). Masterly is his delineation of Hester (Prynne) in her life of penance. A mystic shadow of suspicion attaches itself to her little lonesome dwelling. It is highly characteristic of our author to make little Pearl a source of wild foreboding to her remorseful mother. Nor may we forget to notice how skilfully the background is filled in. The patriarchal era of New England life has found no such vivid and graphic a painter as Nathaniel Hawthorne. Less powerful and pathetic, but at the same time less open to objection on grounds already stated, The House of Seven Gables is a vigorous, highly-finished performance, of sterling value for its originality, its shrewd perception of character, its description, its humor, and its plot. Assuredly the gift (telling tales) in question is no every-day one, and this gift Mr. Hawthorne possesses in no common degree. [1]

The same New Monthly Magazine but over a year later in an article entitled "American Authorship No. III--Nathaniel Hawthorne", claims that his powers are increasing and goes on to say:

> His reputation has advanced, is increasing, and ought still to be more progressive. There is an individual charm about his writings. He is charged with a fondness for the delineation of abnormal character; and it is a true bill. With special ability to depict exceptional modes of human nature is conjoined special temptation to linger amid what is morbid, and to court intimacy with whatever deviates from the dull standard of conventionalism, and to give to distortion and oddity the preference over 'harmonic union.' The impression he leaves on the mind is usually one of despondency and sadness; a depressing, enervating presence not to be put by. He puts on paper, in palpable letters, which the dejected, doubting heart, in moody moments, knows too well how to spell into 'words that burn' into its own core. The art with which he can lend a superstitious awe to his stories, and subtilize their grosser common-places into ghostly

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[1] Ibid., XXXIII (Apr. 3, 1852) 17-19. New Monthly Magazine.

> significance, will indeed always secure him a good company of readers.
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> [Twice-Told Tales] are all prizes, no blanks. The pages are studded, haud longis intervallis, with passages that pay their way . . . . The Blithesdale Romance we esteem, in spite of its coming last, the highest and best of Mr. Hawthorne's work. The tale is narrated with more ingenuity and ease; the characters are at least equal to their predecessors, and the style is at once richer and more robust--more mellowed, and yet more pointed and distinct. A true artist has planned and has filled up the plot, ordering each conjunction of incidents, and interweaving the cross-threads of design and destiny with masterly tact; skilled in the by-play of suggestion, hint and pregnant passing intimation--in the harmonious development of once scattered and seemingly unrelated forces. His humor is fresher in quality, and his tragic power is exercised with almost oppressive effect--at times making the boldest, oldest romance-readers
>
> Hold his breath
> for awhile;
>
> at others, making all but him lose the dimmed line in blinding tears. There are scenes which rivet themselves on the memory, such as Coverdale's interview with Westervelt in the woodland solitude . . . and the dramatic recital of Zenobia's Legend, and the rendezvous at Eliot's Pulpit. The Wonder-Book, like most true books for children, has a charm for their grave and reverend seniors. The old-world myths . . . are related with the poetical simplicity and good faith which is their due. [1]

The North British Review, in an article "American Novels", mentions nine works, three of which are Hawthorne's, saying that the American novel was very popular in Britain, but remarks that America has not yet produced one poet whose name has a chance of surviving the trial of a hundred years.

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[1] Littell's XXXVIII (July 16, 1853) 154-9. New Monthly Magazine.

The editor continues:

> Nathaniel Hawthorne, a name that must be familiar to most of our readers, has distinguished himself in England chiefly by three very remarkable tales--The House with [sic] the Seven Gables, The Scarlet Letter, and The Blithedale Romance. These works are the most forcible in the imaginative line that America has yet produced. Nothing in her poetry is half so poetical, and yet they are not more so than imaginative prose has the right to be. The most striking features in these tales are the extraordinary skill and masterly care which are displayed in their composition. The House with [sic] the Seven Gables may be charged with a little redundance of description; but in the other stories named it would be difficult to pick out a page that could be omitted without loss to the development of the narrative and the idea, which are always mutually illustrative to a degree not often attained in any species of modern art. With all this rigid adherence to his point there is, however, no sense of hardness, difficulty, and confinement in his style. His language, though for an American extraordinarily accurate, is always light and free; his illustrations and incidents, though often startlingly odd, and, for the moment, apparently unrelated, have never the air of being far-fetched, but seem rather to be the best possible for the occasion: and the narrative, though curiously elaborated, is so well-contrasted and proportioned in its several parts, that it makes, when we have finished, an impression full of simplicity and totality. His tales always deserve a double reading, one for the story and one for the art. Notwithstanding all this artistic excellence there are certain very serious defects in Mr. Hawthorne's tales. We notice the two faults which chiefly strike us, one mainly artistic, the other mainly moral. The artistic fault is the continual, and certainly the very effective, though faulty, use of the supernatural.
>
> The next fault in question is that of making the moral subserve the art, instead of the art the moral; and furthermore, of even distorting moral truth, in order to obtain effect. In Mr. Hawthorne's hands, the Christian faith is strangely mixed up with a nightmare feeling of fatality, a combination which certainly produces a very strong artistic effect, but which, as it is formed at the expense

of Christian reality, we do not hesitate to condemn. [1]

An extract of the Scarlet Letter is given and the writer continues:

> The foregoing extract will enable the reader to form a tolerably just estimation of Mr. Hawthorne's remarkable powers of description. We know nothing equal to it, in its way, in the whole circle of English literature. Mr. Hawthorne's chef-d'oeuvre is, however, his last work, The Blithedale Romance. In this tale, the writer, with an irony of withering calmness, exposes the vanity of selfishness which underlie the seemingly worthy and benevolent purposes of the various dramatis personae, who engage themselves in one of the many schemes of politico-moral reformation which moderns have invented as substitutes for the reformation of themselves. This character (Zenobia), like all the rest, is powerfully given, and in the true way, that is, by glimpses, as we see character in nature, and not by the way of elaborate portraiture. The irony with which the writer exposes this character in the very praises of Miles Coverdale is surprisingly effective, from its delicacy and moderation. It is in the exquisite perception of moral and social phenomena of this last sort that Mr. Hawthorne excels every other modern writer we are acquainted with. We conclude our extracts from this, the best novel in America, and one of the best of the present age. He is altogether the most remarkable prose writer produced by America. His writings are highly condensed. [2]

The Saturday Review accords Hawthorne a very high place in English literature. In discussing Transformation; or the Romance of Monte Beni, by N. Hawthorne, the editor

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[1] Littell's, XL (January 7, 1854), 51-56. North British Review.

[2] Ibid., XL (January 7, 1854), 56-59. North British Review.

speaks well of Hawthorne's style.

> Genius is, to some extent, its own defence. No one but a man of genius could have written this novel. In Transformation he introduces two principal characters who, like the hero and heroine of the Scarlet Letter, are bound together by the bonds of a common crime, dark and mysterious, and yet so conceived that the indulgence both of the author and the reader is bespoken beforehand. However faulty the story may be as a story, it does undoubtedly produce the impression of mysterious horror that is so dear to Mr. Hawthorne. We may add, that the style is singularly beautiful, the writing most careful, and the justness and felicity of the epithets used to convey the effect of scenery usually great. The Americans may be proud that they have produced a writer who, in his own special walk of English, has few rivals or equals in the mother country. [1]

The Universal Review says that American literature is always an interesting subject, that literature is one of the elements in the solution of world-problems--especially the influence of a democratic government, and that the United States is one of the mightiest nations on earth in the process of formation. The author ranks Hawthorne as one of the outstanding writers of his day, and reviews seven of his works.

> Mr. Hawthorne is, we are inclined to think, the most national writer, of a serious kind, whom the country has yet produced in the department of fiction. He seems to us to reflect many of the characteristics of the American mind more exactly than any of his predecessors. He has evidently a warm as well as an enlightened love for his country. He likes to

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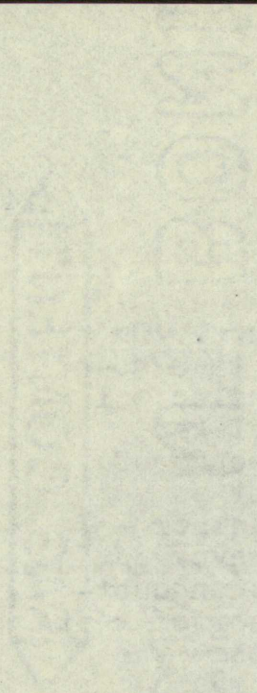
[1] Ibid., LXV (May 1, 1860), 323-24. The Saturday Review.



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[1] Ibid., LXV (May 1, 1920), 1.

Review.

> dwell on the picturesque part of its early struggles . . ... Mr. Hawthorne has written upwards of sixty stories and sketches, and four novels, all of various kinds and degrees of merit.
>
> It will for our present purpose, be most convenient to divide them into three classes: I. Studies of Historic Events, or of Everyday Characters. II. Scenes and Stories purely imaginative and fantastic. III. Allegories and Moral Sketches or Narratives. The first of these classes, as far as the shorter pieces are concerned, is not that in which Mr. Hawthorne's originality is most apparent. Except for the delicacy of observation which distinguished all he writes, there is little about them to separate them from such sketches as those of Washington Irving. Under the head of "Imaginative and Fantastic" sketches we should include all he has written which does not, on the one hand, represent any actual fact, external circumstance, or character, and, on the other, involves no distinct moral lesson. In stories of this kind we are as far as possible from anything realistic. There is nothing about them which bears any relation to life as we habitually know it. [1]

The editor states that it is in these stories that Mr. Hawthorne bears the greatest resemblance to Poe, because it is in these that he is least moral, though always far more so than that singular writer. In the New Adam and Eve, for instance, the editor observes a similar power of taking some odd idea and working out the suggested hypothesis into all possible consequence. He continues:

> (In David Swan) though the thought is a solemn one, and forcibly put, it gives us nothing more to carry away. In "The Prophetic Pictures"--is illustrated the idea--which is a favorite one with our author--that an artist has the power of calling on to the

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[1] Littell's, LXV (June 23, 1860), 707-19. The Universal Review.

> canvas the latent capacities, for good or evil, of his sitter, and fixing him with the expression which he will wear when those capacities have developed themselves. The effect of the tale is wild and ghastly in the author's way of telling it. "The Ambitious Guest--"owes its telling character to a similar feeling--that of the irresistibleness of our destiny. The most ghastly of all the stories in this class, however, is "The Hollow of the Three Hills." "The Hall of Fantasy", and "P's Correspondence" are sketches of a lighter character. They are marked by ingenuity, cleverness, and Mr. Hawthorne's grace of style and sentiment, but many of them are air-drawn shapes, which leave but little impression when we have closed the book.
>
> We pass on to the third class, which comprehends the author's most impressive and important productions. They almost all represent one or the other of two ideas, which appear in the author's mind. Mr. Hawthorne, in about half of the tales we should include under our third section, teaches either a similar lesson, or its corollary, viz., that, seeing we cannot pass the bounds which encircle this human system, we should make the best of it as it is. "The Birthmark", "Rappacini's Daughter", "Earth's Holocaust", "Dr. Heidegger's Experiment", "Peter Coldthwaite's Treasure", and "The Threefold Destiny" (are examplesof this). "Mrs. Bullfrog" is a comic sketch (not our author's happiest vein), symbolizing the philosophy which teaches us to 'make the best of it', in the case of matrimonial as well as other disappointments. All these stories have great variety in treatment. [1]

The other leading notion to which the editor refers as pervading a great number, and among them the most important, of Mr. Hawthorne's moral tales, is the idea of secret guilt. "The Haunted Mind" is a study of miscellaneous fancies which occur to us on waking in the middle of the night, and "Young

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[1] Ibid., LXV (June 23, 1860), 707-19. The Universal Review.

Goodman Brown" is another. In "The Procession of Life", which is a sort of classification of mankind according to their real, not their conventional value, by their intellectual gifts, their virtue, or their vice, the same idea is pursued. He continues:

> In "Egotism", we are reminded, in a slightly different form, of the freemasonry which exists between one guilty being and another. "The Intelligence Office" is one of those fantastic sketches in which the allegory is made more quaint by being conveyed through a common and familiar channel. By far the most powerful of Mr. Hawthorne's shorter works in this class, however, is the one entitled "Roger Malvin's Burial"--both for the picturesque power of the coloring and the ghastly vividness with which the central idea is presented.

The author very forcibly pictures Hawthorne's longer works as follows:

> The Scarlet Letter is, probably, the best known of Mr. Hawthorne's works. The torturing hypocrisy and remorse of this young clergyman in the midst of his fame as a preacher and a Christian are described with a subtle power, and a depth of psychological insight which has nowhere been equalled in its own line.
>
> The House of the Seven Gables is a story of contemporary life, and though we scarcely feel that we are in the everyday world, the people are such as might be met with there while preserving the romantic cast of the narrative in all that pertains to its essentials. Nothing can surpass the art with which the familiar figures of the street and the shop are embroidered, as it were, on this dusky background, which seems to throw them into more prominent relief. The basis of this story, too, is the

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[1] Littell's, LXV (June 23, 1860), 707-19. The Universal Review.

idea of secret guilt.

> In The Blithedale Romance there is a want of point and unity in the story. We are sensible of the power of particular scenes, such as the night search by the river for the missing heroine, and the force and delicacy with which her character, and that of her stern and rugged friend, are drawn. Of the latest work--Transformation--it is full of graceful and beautiful thoughts, and its finish and ease of style are greater than any former writing of the author. But it is largely deficient in the vigor which has held us spell-bound over many of his other pages. One might fancy that the Italian atmosphere which has lent color and brilliancy to the book, had also imparted something of the enervating softness, which makes the book a compromise between an art novel and a psychological study, without the attractiveness of narrative, structure, and pointed interest, which have distinguished the two best of the novels above described. [1]

The next author, Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, is not generally thought of as a prose fiction writer. He did publish at least two prose tales, and receives some comment from the British critics on these, although some discuss both Hyperion and Kavanagh as poetry. The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review states: "The Hyperion of Mr. Longfellow, a tale of greater extent, occurs to us, as the one specimen which is distinctly referable to continental models.[2]

The North British Magazine, in an article on the American Novels, does not accord Longfellow a very high place as

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[1] Littell's, LXV (June 23, 1860), 707-19. The Universal Review.

[2] Ibid., II (October 19, 1844), 643. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

a prose writer.

> To Mr. Longfellow's Hyperion and Kavanagh, we regret that we cannot award the unqualified praise which many of his admirers think they deserve. The fault which we lately exposed in this writer's verse are equally visible in his prose. In neither does the author seem sincere in dealing with nature. He cares rather to say 'fine things' than true ones. Of course we do not mean that he is consciously insincere; but this desire to be 'effective' and 'striking', obscures his eyes for the truth. He has a subtle power of observation, a very graceful fancy, and considerable general information, and these qualities, when the author by happy chance forgets himself, and lives in his subject, combine to produce some very pleasant light reading, though at best, there is an air of flippancy and sentimentality, which seems to be inseparable from his style. The only extract we shall make from Mr. Longfellow's prose is one which we select for the merit of shrewdness, and for its bearing closely upon the subject of American literature in general. It is from the pleasing little novel called Kavanagh. [An extract of the work is given.] 1

Tait's Magazine, in an article by George Gilfillan, which is probably from or in defense of an article written in the Gallery of Literary Portraits; has this to say:

> Hyperion, again, is a prose poem, (such as, longo intervallo, we hope ourselves one day to execute), containing the history of the progress of an ardent soul, moving, 'Hyperion-like, on high.' It is written with infinite grace and beauty, a play of fancy which is wonderful, and in a style which--lingering, pausing, rushing, sleeping, or sounding on--can be likened to nothing save a river or a breeze. 2

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[1] Littell's, XL (January 7, 1854), 63. North British Magazine.

[2] Ibid., XVII (April 15, 1848), 101. Tait's Magazine.

The New Monthly Magazine calls Longfellow's two prose works novels, but does not praise them too highly.

> Hyperion: a Romance, and Kavanagh--With all its beauty, Hyperion reads like a disorderly series of anatects from the professor's common-place book. Everything smacks of second-hand--the sentiment, the story, the philosophy, the criticism, the style. Glimpses of German life and manners we find scattered here and there, not with their attraction. Kavanagh is a tale more delicately and artistically wrought--containing passages of beautiful and earnest thoughts, together with interesting studies of character minutely-finished pictures of life. The latter is bookish and has the impress of the man of letters rather than the man conversant with life. We miss in each portraiture the vivifying touch of creative art. But nothing can be more delightful of its kind than the pervading style of this fiction; nothing more happily expressed than the apothegms and aphorisms with which it abounds; nor were it easy to excel in affecting beauty the scenes between Cecilia and Alice, or in strange effectiveness that of the camp-meeting by night. [1]

The National Review states, in criticizing Longfellow's prose, that neither prose or fiction is Mr. Longfellow's strongest forte.

> Of Mr. Longfellow's prose works, the best known, Hyperion, has little continuous interest; its slender thread of a love story being altogether lost amid the profuse and gaudy descriptions and sentimental and high-flown musings. Kavanagh is decidedly better; there is more real story, and the characters (sic . . .) are drawn with a quiet humor one would scarcely expect from Mr. Longfellow. Kavanagh is altogether a very pleasant and freshly-colored tale of American village-life, with its primitive conditions, its transparent and amusing affectations, its homely joys and sorrows. But prose fiction, or indeed prose or fiction of any kind, is not Mr.

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[1] Ibid., XXXIX (November 12, 1853), 421. New Monthly Magazine.

Longfellow's forte.[1]

Chamber's did not think much of Longfellow as a prose writer.

> Longfellow has written two prose works--Hyperion and Kavanagh. The former he calls a romance; but it possesses none of the elements of the ordinary novel. As a story, it is incomplete, for it closes with tantalizing abruptness. The book is a charming one, if we regard it as a kind of prose poem; or rather as a series of poetic pictures of thought and sentiment, a collection of quaint, delicious fancies, of legends, and criticism, and beautiful memories; in short, as a reflex of the many-colored lights that flash across a poet's mind, like the strange, rich, dreamy splendors that stream through the painted windows of a church. No comment is made on Kavanagh. [2]

The next American writer of fiction, N. P. Willis, probably received more comment than he rightly deserves, but it is not always high praise. The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review claims that Willis has no individual style but is a jumble of many styles.

> Here, apropos of personality, though not following strict order in point of time, we naturally come to the name of Mr. Willis in the list of American imaginative writers; and this, not merely because the stir made some years ago by his relations attracted some attention to his tales, but because the latter, in themselves, have too much power and cleverness to be passed over. Nothing, to be sure, can be more extravagant than their incidents;--the style is an _alla_ made up from many of the stories of Moore, D'Israeli the younger, and Charles Lamb, and Christopher North--with all its faults, nevertheless, having sufficient

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[1] Ibid., LX (Feb. 12, 1859), 405. National Review.

[2] Ibid., XLIII (Dec. 16, 1854), 324-25. Chamber's.

> vivacity and sparkle to carry the reader along with it. In short, for better definition, Willis may be called the Janin of American light literature, often offending against good taste--often pouring out words when no thought will come--unscrupulous, fearless, fantastic--sometimes striking out a new conceit of elegance or humor, and never coarse. His attempts at delineating the superficial peculiarities of our London men of letters (to digress for a moment) are among the happiest things of their kind in modern literature. As regards the right or the wrong of the disclosures contained in his Pen cillings by the Way--the virtuous indignation thereby appears indeed ridiculous. The American sketches of London society, for the amusement of his countrymen, could hardly have been so indignantly resented had we recollected the popularity of Peter's Letters to His Kinsfolk, in which the wits and worthies of Edinburgh were minutely, if less gaily pencilled. [1]

The Athenaeum, in an article called "American Annuals" has a short comment on Willis.

> Mr. N. P. Willis also contributes a clever tale, The Power of an Injured Book; and there are several translations from the German, done with the usual ability. [2]

The Athenaeum, at a later date, commenting on his Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil, says that Willis does not belong to first-class American literature.

> No offence, then to the pleasant, dashing style of Mr. Willis--no disparagement of his sketches for what they profess to be, if we say they belong not to our first-class American literature. His dialogue is brilliant, his description careful and clever. But he is wrong (for England at least) in choosing for his scenery the ball-rooms of Mayfair, the green grass of the Chiswick Gardens, and the starry firmaments of the Opera House . . . . If his tales are

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[1] Ibid., II (Oct. 19, 1844) 652. Foreign Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., III (Dec. 7, 1844), 562. Athenaeum.

all of susceptible Romeos or selfish Bertrams, and of ladies 'who kissed through the lattice'; 'the tender passion' gets so ill-treated in these careful days of ours, that we must not cavil at the artist skilled in its windings, if, enamored of his subject, he treats it too frequently. Brown's day with the Mimpsons is the story of a citizen's genteel wife, entertaining unawares 'an angel' of an American, who can command tickets for Almack's. Miss Jones' Son is the farce played off by a London diner-out at Stratford-upon-Avon. Earnest Clay, a bundle of lost leaves from the life of a Don Juan. Then there are one or two Chinese tales--but it is not till we come near to the close of the second volume that we have a glimpse of the new country. Some Passages from a Correspondence (probably contributed to one of the American periodicals) contain a few tangible hits, and intelligible hints. [Part extracted is a contrast between Boston and New York]. [1]

Edinburgh Review, in discussing Dashes at Life with a Free Pencil, claims genius for Willis.

Whatever doubt or surprise the details and extracts with which we are about to amuse our readers, may seem to attach to the fact, we beg to assure those of them who do not already know it, that Mr. Willis has actually written some rather clever books, occasionally marked by traits of genius. But, with respect to the present publication, we confess we have been frequently at a loss to judge whether his narratives were intended to be taken as serious, or only jocular--as what he himself believed to be truths, or intended only as amusing fancies . . . . We may state that it was Mr. Willis' intention to work up some of these sketches into substantive novels, but for the unsatisfactory state of market for that commodity, and there can be no sort of doubt that the genius which conceived might have enlarged the Dashes to any size. In the first half of these volumes, there are some twenty tales illustrative of English, and Continental life--true copies, Mr. Willis states, of what he had seen there; and most of them of so strange and diverting a nature, that a man of

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[1] Ibid., VII (October 18, 1845), 110. Athenaeum.

genius might have made many scores of volumes out of the adventures recorded in only a few hundreds of these duodecimo pages. The Americans, by their piratical system, have robbed themselves of that pleasure; and the Union might have had a novelist as prolific as M. Dumas or Mr. James, had it possessed the common generosity to pay him. [1]

In an article on "American Authorship", the New Monthly Magazine calls Willis a clever writer.

> That eminent N. P. Willis. Eminently the poet of good society, says Griswold. Eminently amusing, whatever he may write about, says Thackeray. Eminently the Representative Man of American cockneyism, says his compatriot Lowell. No, Mr. Willis is a clever writer, and can produce really smart sayings, and even tasteful fancies, almost a discretion. But in reading him you never lose sight, for a couple of pages together, of the writer's intense self-consciousness--of his precautions against being merged in his subject--of his resolve to haunt you with the scent of his perfumed kerchiefs, and the glitter of his jewelled attire . . . . But it is to his prose that N. P. Willis owes, after all, the epigraph of eminent. That 'famous and clever N. P. Willis', as Mr. Titmarsh calls him, 'whose reminiscences have delighted so many of us, and in whose company one is always sure to find amusement of some sort or other. Sometimes it is amusement at the writer's wit and smartness, his brilliant descriptions, and wondrous flow and rattle of spirit, sometimes it is wicked amusement, and, it must be confessed, at Willis' own expense--amusement at the immensity of N. P.'s blunders--amusement at the prodigousness of his self-esteem.' A liberal public has been found to patronize his lucubrations; and so he has gone on writing, and re-writing . . . and entertaining easy souls with a rapid succession of People I have Met, Hurry-graphs, Summer Excursions in the Mediterranean, Life Here and There, A Health Trip to the Tropics, and many another Excursus.

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[1] Littell's, VII (December 6, 1845), 455. Edinburgh Review.

> Seneca is a great deal too heavy for Mr. Willis, but Plautus not a whit too light. He is effervescent with animal spirit, and dashes you off a gay, buoyant aphorism with the bon hommie of Harold Skimpole himself. But the Pencillar is not prosy, and has the art ever to keep the attention simmering. Never hum-drumming himself, he never lets you snore. The style he can command when at his best--which, probably, is when he is least ambitious of effect--is a capital vehicle for the chatty coxcombries it hurries along. [1]

Poe, the next American author of fiction, began publication in 1827, but sprang into popular fame in 1845 with the first official appearance of The Raven. He was, probably, during the period covered by this thesis, the most discussed man of American letters. The Athenaeum awards Poe the palm of literary merit for The Purloined and accords him high literary talent.

> But to the story of The Purloined Letter, by Edgar A. Poe, we must award the palm of literary merit. We think that in substance we have previously read the incident on which it was founded; but there is a philosophy, acumen and an artistical taste in working out this tale, which indicates a high degree of talent. It is in the style of Marmontel, and shows how much may be made of the simplest material. [2]

Chamber's Journal leaves out several regular contributions to publish an abridgment of the same story. Chamber's says:

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[1] Littell's, XL (January 7, 1854) 89-91. New Monthly Magazine.

[2] Ibid., III (December 7, 1844), 361-2. Athenaeum.

> "The Gift" is an American annual of great typographical elegance, and embellished with many beautiful engravings. It contains an article, that for several reasons appears to us so remarkable that we leave aside several effusions of our ordinary contributors in order to make room for an abridgment of it. The writer, Mr. Edgar A. Poe, is evidently an acute observer of mental phenomena; and we have to thank him for one of the aptest illustraitons which could well be conceived, of that curious play of two minds, in which one person, let us call him A, guesses what another, B, will do, judging that B will adopt a particular line of policy to circumvent A. 1

The Critic, in a review of Tales of Poe, claims disappointment in Poe's tales, but says that he could not send forth a book without some marks of his genius, and mixed with the dross is found much sterling ore.

> We have in this volume a number of tales, many of which show the ingenuity, rather than the capacity, of the author's mind. Mr. Poe is familiar to us as a poet of considerable power. We remember the fine conception and musical execution of some of his stanzas, and, with these fresh in our mind, we confess ourselves disappointed by the present volume of Tales. The first story, "The Gold Bug", is only interesting from its strangeness. It tells of the discovery of some hidden treasure, by the solving of certain enigmatical figures. Viewed with the moral, the tale may be useful, as showing what a patient, earnest mind may accomplish. This is barely probable, and the tale will add no more to the stock of choice literature than the thousand and one stories that yearly fill the penny novelists. Of a piece with "The Gold Bug" are the "Mystery of Marie Roget", and the "Murders of the Rue Morgue." The author seems to have amused himself by following the plan of those philosophers who trace a series of references between every minute act, and so upward to the making and dethroning of kings. Mr. Poe has been as assiduous in this scheme as an Indian who follows the trail of a foe.

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[1] Littell's, IV (January 18, 1844), 135. Chamber's Journal.

> He has learnt from the dwellers in the American woods a marked acuteness, which he has dealed out again to his readers in the Tales before us. Another tale of this class is the"Purloined Letter." If we were called upon to recommend this story to any particular party, it would be the Bow-street officers. Such functionaries would be sure to appreciate it, as it exhibits atquick intellect, which from a few surmises arrives at a chain of conclusive evidence. [1]

The author states that perhaps of even less utility is Poe's tale, the"Black Cat." The Black Cat would have been a proper inmate for the Castle of Otronto, and a most valuable counter-part to the mysterious plume and helmet. The beauty of Walpole's inexplicable riddle would have been much enhanced by the introduction of such a sooty monster. He goes on as follows:

> But it may be argued that the Black Cat is a figurative personification of the dark-brooding thoughts of a murderer, murder being the climax of the story. It may be so urged, we repeat, but, at present, our little perception cannot perceive it, and we have not faith to believe that the generality of readers will discover what we cannot. We object, for the most part, to the tales we have instanced, because they uncurtain horrors and cruelties. It is enough, and perhaps too much, for public benefit, that minute details of murders and other horrors find their way into newspapers. They form no part of the glories of literature. The literature of the past, in a great measure, is not pure enough for the gaze of the future because of its antagonistic character. Mr. Poe's Tales are out of place. They are things of the past, but the past has retired from them. They do not anticipate the wants of the future, and the future will take no cognizance of them. But why has Mr. Poe given us so much of the scraps and the worn-out thoughts of yesterday? Mr. Poe could

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[1] Littell's, VII (November 15, 1845) 343. Critic.

> not possibly send forth a book without some marks of his genius, and mixed up with the dross we find much sterling ore. [1]

The Literary Gazette, in comments on American Romance-Tales, censures Poe's tales with light and wholesome criticisms, and justifies the criticism by saying that it is necessary to qualify the coming praise.

> His work has come to our shores recommended by success upon its own; and that such success is no more than it deserves we will undertake to demonstrate to our readers . . . . we must qualify our coming praises, by a light and wholesome touch of censure. This, in a general way, and without descending into a specification of instances, must be held to apply to such a tale as the "Black Cat", which is impossible and revolting; to such an argument as "Mesmeric Revelation", which far too daringly attempts a solution of that deepest of riddles, the nature of the Deity; to such a dialogue as "Lionizing", simply foolish; and to such juvenile production as the "Fall of the House of Usher."
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> These, though not without their own flashes of genius, might have been omitted to great advantage; and the remainder of the volume, acute, interesting, and graphic, would then have stood consistent with itself--totus, teres, atque rotundus. Induction, and microscopic power of analysis, seem to be the pervading characteristics of the mind of Edgar Poe. . . . . He has all his wits about him ready for use, and could calmly investigate the bursting of a bomb-shell. "The Gold Bug", a strange tale of treasure-seeking, forcibly demonstrates how able an ally Dr. Young and M. Champollion would have had in Edgar Poe, whilst engaged in deciphering Egyptian hieroglyphics. [2]

The Gazette gives Poe credit for analytical reason and predicts fame for him.

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[1] Littell's, VII (Nov. 15, 1845), 343. Critic.

[2] Ibid., IX (May 23, 1846), 381-84. Literary Gazette.

> Take, again, the marvellous train of analytical reasoning whereby he arrives at truth in the "Rue Morgue Murders"; a tale whereby the horrors of the incidents is overborne by the acuteness of the arguments; and is introduced by a specimen of mind-reading which Dr. Elliotson's Adolphe or Okey might vainly attempt to equal. "The Mystery of Marie Roget" is similar in keenness; and to us at least the only mystery in the matter now is--why was not the 'dark sailor' apprehended? Additional interest is given to these twin tales of terror from their historic truth; and from the strange fact that the guesser's sagacity has anticipated in the last case the murderer's confession.
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> Let us now turn to other pages equally brightened by genius, while they are untarnished with the dread details of crime. "A Descent into the Maelstrom" has but one fault; it is too deliberate; there is too little in it of the rushing havoc, the awful eddying of the northern sea's black throat. Still there is magnificent writing in the tale; and a touch is given below of our author's peculiar presence of mind, which would stand him in good stead on a barrel of ignited gunpowder. "The Conversation between Eiros and Charmion" is full of terror and instruction; true to philosophy and to holy writ, it details the probable mode of the final conflagration. [An extract is given.] If the Vestiges of Creation have obtained so much celebrity from attempting to show and explain to mankind the beginning of things, we may surely anticipate fame for the author who has thus, in a like philosophizing excursus, depicted to their ending.

Tait's Magazine discusses Poe's tales under the title Tales of Mystery, Imagination, and Humor, and thinks the facts related to Poe's life and works based on Rev. R. Griswold's memoirs show that Poe's life was a sad and melancholy one.

> Edgar Poe, an American celebrity, is not altogether unknown in England, nor is the present the first occasion on which any of his productions have been laid before the English public . . . . The writings of Edgar Poe, whether poems or tales, are quite as remarkable and incongruous as his character. They

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[1] Littell's, IX (May 23, 1846), 381-84. Literary Gazette.

> evidence an imagination the most fervid and daring; and in most of his tales this imagination is brought to bear on abstruse phenomena in nature and science, with results which are rendered more astounding to the reader by the apparently strict adherence to fact and scientific detail. To be able to produce such an effect is proof of great power; to use the power in a manner so outre is at first sight proof of a diseased mind, or, to a cant expression, of a naturally 'morbid imagination.' An imagination of the boldest character was here naturally united to unusual powers of analysis and practical observation; some of the best of Poe's tales depend entirely upon this latter quality. These are undoubtedly the elements of genius. [1]

"The Effect of Mesmerism on a Dying Man" is merely mentioned as one of his tales.

According to the Critic, Poe's writings were pure, and he was a man of great genius.

> His writings may be morbid, but they are pure. But if genius means a compound of imagination and inventiveness, original thought, heated passion, and accompanied by power of fancy, Poe was a man of great genius. Poe is distinguished by many styles and manners. He is the author of fictions, as matter-of-fact in their construction and language as the stories of Defoe, and of tales as weird and wonderful as those of Hoffman--of amatory strains trembling, if not with heart, with passion, and suffused with the purple glow of love . . . the leading qualities of his mind are obvious. These consist of a strong imagination--an imagination, however, more fertile in incidents, forms, and characters, than in images; keen power of analysis, rather than synthetic genius; immense inventiveness; hot passions, cooled down by the presence of art, till they resemble sculptured flame; and an unlimited command of words, phrases, musical combinations of sound, and all the other materials of an intellectual workman. Poe was led by

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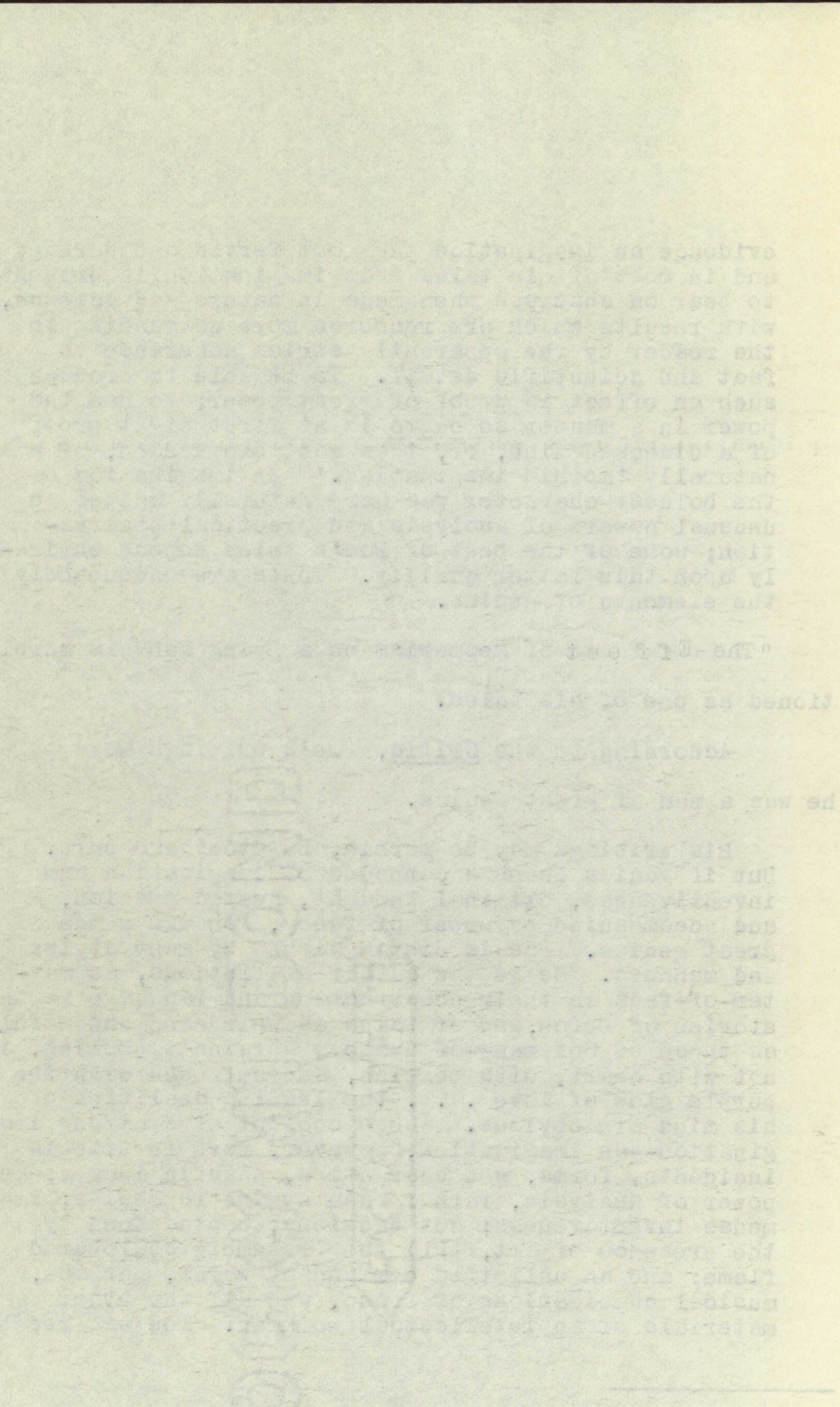
[1] Ibid., XXXIII (May 29, 1852) 422-24. Tait's Magazine.



a singular attraction to all dark, dreadful, and disgusting objects and thoughts. [1]

The Critic says that Poe's power may perhaps be said to be divisible into two parts--first, that of adding an air of circumstantial verity to incredibilities; and secondly, that of throwing a weird lustre upon commonplace events. He tells fiction so minutely and with such apparent simplicity and sincerity, that you almost believe it true; and he so combines and so recounts such incidents as you meet with every day in the newspapers that you feel truth to be stranger far than fiction. The author states further:

> Look, as a specimen of the first, to his "Descent into the Maelstrom", and to his "Hans Pfaal's Journey to the Moon." Both are impossible; the former as much as the latter; but he tells them with such Dante-like directness, and such Defoe-like minuteness, holding his watch and marking, as it were, every second in the progress of each stupendous lie--that you rub your eyes at the close, and ask the question, might not all this actually have occurred? And then turn to the "Murders in the Rue St. Morgue", or to the "Mystery of Marie Roget", and see how, by disposition of the drapery, he throws over little or ordinary incidents, connected, indeed, with an extraordinary catastrophe. Once only does Poe approach the brink of the purely preternatural--it is in the dreary tale, the "Fall of the House of Usher", and yet nothing so discovers the mastery of the writer as the manner in which he avoids, while nearing the gulf. But Poe so arranges and adjusts the singular circumstances to each other, and weaves around them such artful mist, that they produce an unearthly effect. We have already alluded to the singular power of analysis possessed by this strange being. This is chiefly conspicuous in those tales of his

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[1] Ibid., XLI (Apr. 22, 1854), 169-70. Critic.

> which turn upon circumstantial evidence. No lawyer or judge has ever equalled Poe in the power he manifests of sifting evidence--of balancing probabilities--of finding the multum of a large legal case in parvum of some minute and well-nigh invisible point--and in constructing the real story out of a hundred dubious and conflicting incidents. [1]

Fraser's Magazine, in speaking of The Works of the late Edgar Poe, says that he is a true poet although he wrote little poetry and the more successful pieces in verse produced an impression akin to that of his prose. The author states that Arthur Gordon Pym was Poe's only attempt at a narrative of any length. A perusal of his critical essays leads the editor to the belief that his ability did not at all lie in that way, but that Poe's great power lay in writing tales, which rank in a class by themselves, and have their characteristic strongly defined.

> Their sole end is to interest and excite; and this end is aimed at for the most part by the use of all the appliances of horror. They are sometimes extremely coarse in taste, though never impure in morality. They are often calculated to jar on all human feeling; and when read they leave an indescribably eerie and strange impression upon the mind. Yet they possess such interest as spell-binds the reader. There are some humorous tales, which were generally very successful; though the effect of the serious is often heightened by the infusion of a grotesque and maniac mirth. His imagination was so vivid that he appears to have seen all the horrors he describes, and he sets them before his reader with such terrible graphic power and at all times the language in which the description or narrative is carried on is almost unparalleled for its exquisite clearness, precision,

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[1] Ibid., XLI (Apr. 22, 1854), 169-70. Critic.

and nerve. We have already alluded to a piece entitled "The Facts in the Case of M. Valdemar", as one which excited great interest when it was published, and which was translated into almost all the languages of Europe. One of Poe's most striking tales is entitled "A Descent into the Maelstrom." It is told, like the most of his stories, in the first person. ["Legeia"] It is one of several which stands distinguished from his other tales by a peculiar character in it, as in all of his more powerful writings, the effect left on the mind is a feeling of awe and horror; but this feeling is in "Ligeia" produced by metaphysical means. [Other tales that are listed are "The Masque of the Red Death", etc., but no comment is made. The article is signed K. P. I.] [1]

The Edinburgh Review, in an article on The Works of the late Edgar Allan Poe, says that Poe was given every advantage that life could offer, but that he defied his good genius.

> Nature was bountiful to him; bestowing upon him a pleasing person and excellent talents. Fortune favored him; education and society expanded and polished his intellect, and improved his manner into an insinuating and almost irresistible address. But he defied his good Genius. Considered apart from his poetry, Poe's fictions seem to resolve themselves for the most part into two classes:--one like those to which we have already adverted, where a series of facts woven mysteriously out of some unknown premises are brought apparently to a logical result; the other, where the author deals strictly with a single event, where there is little or no preliminary matter, but the reader is hurried at once into a species of catastrophes, or conclusion of the most exciting character. He ascends into the cloudiest regions of metaphysics, of speculation--of conjecture--of dreams. There is surely, something very morbid in all these fancies and prolusions of the intellect. There can be no question but that Edgar Poe possessed much subtlety of thought; an acute reasoning faculty, imagination of

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[1] Ibid., LIV (July 18, 1857),159-60. Fraser's Magazine.

> a gloomy character, and a remarkable power of analysis. His imagination appears to have been absolutely embarrassed by a profusion of visionary alarms and horrors. Edgar Poe had no humor, properly so called. His laugh was feeble, or it was a laugh of ill-temper, exhibiting little beyond the turbulence of his own mind. He was carping and sarcastic, and threw out occasionally a shower of sharp words upon the demérits of his contemporaries.
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> Of the tales in which the analytical power of the author is more obviously exerted, the least unpleasant are "The Purloined Letter" and "The Gold Bug." "The Murders in the Rue Morgue" and "The Mystery of Marie Roget" are, like too many of his other fictions, saturated with blood. His essays on "Criticism" were, we imagine, written on the spur of the moment, without much consideration. Some of his essays are very slight and brief; some flippant; some distinguishable for that remarkable power of analysis which he carried into all his productions. His review of Barnby Rudge, in the third volume, is an extraordinary instance of his subtle and discriminating research into the very elements of fiction. It is impossible to trace out with greater nicety the very germ of a plot, and the finest artifices of invention. [1]

The New Monthly, in an article on "American Authorship", devotes a short discussion to Richard Henry Dana's prose.

> For his prose as well as his verse, a permanent place is assured to him in America. As a prose writer (though malicious detractors may affect to see nothing but prose in him) he is almost wholly unknown in England. His Paul Telton and Tom Thornton have been heard of, voila tout. Yet his doings in romance, politics and criticism, have been considerable, though far from successful in a pecuniary sense; his son's graphic narrative of Two Years Before the Mast has had a run to which he is quite a stranger. In a periodical of his own, called the Idle Man, he published his novel Tom Thornton, which an able reviewer

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[1] Ibid., LVII (June 12, 1858), 803-15. Edinburgh Review.

has pronounced 'interesting', and written in a style of earnestness which holds truth paramount even to taste, and refuses to adorn vice with a veil of beauty. [1]

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[1] Ibid., XXXVII (June 18, 1852), 762-66. New Monthly Magazine.

CHAPTER VII

THE LATER FICTION WRITERS

The first mention made of Richard Henry Dana, Junior, is in the New Monthly Magazine, in an article on "American Authorship", in connection with his father, Richard Henry Dana. "His son's graphic narrative of Two Years before the Mast has had a run to which he is quite a stranger." [1]

The Dublin University Magazine, in an article on "A Trio of American Sailor Authors," says that three American authors who have acquired their knowledge at sea and have written nautical novels of the highest degree of excellence. "Turn to Dana, and where is the English author, living or dead, who has written a book descriptive of real foremast life worthy to be compared with Two Years Before the Mast?" [2] The editor continues further on in the article:

> The second of our trio is Dana, the author of Two Years before the Mast--a book which alone has made him renowned throughout the world. Well can we recall the intense, the absorbing interest with which we read this work on its first appearance . . .Dana's book is truly sui generis--no 'Voice from the Forecastle', no 'Sailor's Life at Sea', worthy of the theme, had previously appeared, and none has been published subsequently. The work is, therefore, literally unique. It were hard to say whether landsmen or seamen read this extraordinary production with greater avidity. We remember that in Liverpool alone, when the first English reprint--Moxon's

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[1] Ibid., XXVII (June 18, 1853) 763 New Monthly Magazine

[2] Ibid., XLVIII (Mar. 1, 1856) 560 Dublin Univ. Magazine.

> edition, we believe--appeared, two thousand copies were sold in a single day, nearly all of which, as we understood, were purchased by seamen . . . . The book is really what its title indicates; and from the sensible, modest, manly preface, to the grave and highly suggestive concluding chapter (A general and exceedingly valuable essay on the condition of seamen, and the mode in which their hard lot may be ameliorated) there is not a single page which does not contain excellent matter. The style of writing is very good in a mere literary sense, and well adapted to the subject. No one can read half-a-dozen pages without feeling that the narrative is perfectly trustworthy and matter-of-fact. The author, indeed, occasionally dwells rather tediously and verbosely on some details of sea-life--that is, he does so in the estimation of practical seamen, as we can personally vouch--but perhaps these very passages are read with as much or even greater interest than any others by landsmen; for we cordially and entirely agree with Dana's own remark in the preface, that plain matter-of-fact in relation to customs and habits of life new to us, and descriptions of life under new aspects act upon the inexperienced through imagination, so that we are hardly aware of our want of technical knowledge. [1]

The writer with still more enthusiasm turns to Red Rover thus:

> Thousands read the escape of the American frigate through the British Channel, and the chase and wreck of the Bristol trader in the Red Rover, and follow the minute nautical manoeuvres with breathless interest, who do not know the name of a rope in the ship, and, perhaps, with none the less admiration and enthusiasm for their want of acquaintance with professional detail. Our experience amply bears out this opinion of Dana. With little, indeed, that can hardly be overpraised in many respects, for it is a superlatively good one, abounding with deeply interesting and highly instructive information, interspersed with remarks and reflections at once acute, original, suggestive, and intrinsically valuable. It is a book

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[1] Ibid., XLVIII (Mar. 1, 1856), 562-63. Dublin University Magazine.

> which any man living might, indeed, have been proud to have written. We could willingly say more concerning it, but so enormously has it been circulated, that we presume nearly all our readers must be thoroughly familiar with its animated pages. We would therefore merely make one remark, and that is, we do not think any writer excels Dana in graphic ability to describe nautical scenes with technical accuracy and surprising clearness of minute yet spirited detail; and in reading any of his vivid pictures of life before the mast, our interest is materially heightened by the knowledge that all is real--all is truly descriptive of what happened. As Dana says in his preface, his design was 'to present the life of a common sailor at sea as it really is--the light and dark together.' We have already said that no work of the same kind or equal merit has yet appeared, and we can safely assert that none ever will appear until another young man, who has been well educated, and possesses as much literary talent as Dana, serves before the mast, and favors the world with a vigorous, faithful, and modest narrative of his experience of forecastle life. We shall gladly hail the advent of Dana the Second! [1]

Another author, Herman Melville, who is sometimes considered with Cooper and Dana, in connection with sea tales, appears on the horizon of American fiction. In a discussion of Redburn; his First Voyage--Being the Sailor-Boy Confessions and Reminiscence of the Son of a Gentleman in the Merchant Service, in which several of Melville's other works are discussed, the Spectator claims that Melville's works are remarkable.

> Mr. Melville's present work is even more remarkable than his stories 'founded on fact' descriptive of

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[1] Ibid., XLVIII (Mar. 1, 1856) 562-63. Dublin University Magazine.

native scenery and life in the islands of the Pacific. In Typee and Omoo there was novelty and interest of subject. Everything was fresh and vigorous in the manners of the people, the character of the country and its vegetation; there were rapidity, variety, and adventure in the story, with enough of nautical character to introduce the element of contrast. In Redburn, his First Voyage, there are none of these sources of attraction; yet, with the exception of some chapters descriptive of common-place things, the book is very readable and attractive. It has not the reality, or more properly the veracity, of Dana's Two Years Before the Mast, nor the comprehensiveness and truthfulness of delineation which distinguishes some of Cooper's novels that only aim at a simple exhibition of a sea life, strange adventures or exciting dangers. Redburn, though merely the narrative of a voyage from New York to Liverpool and back, with a description of the characters of officers and crew, is, however, a book both of information and interest. The plan of the book is well designed to bring out its matter effectively; though the position and reputed character of Redburn as 'the son of a gentleman', contrived apparently for the sake of contrast and display of a quiet humor, is not always consistently maintained . . .the story has the effect of originality. [1]

The New Monthly, in commenting on "American Authorship," calls Melville the graphic narrator.

Of the prose-poetry of Herman Melville's sea romances--Ocean breezes blow from his tales of Atlantic and Pacific cruises. Instead of the landsman's gray goose quill, he seems to have plucked a quill from the skimming curlew, or to have snatched it, a fearful joy, from hovering albatross, if not from the wings of wind itself. The superstition of life on the waves has no abler interpreter than this graphic narrator. But we do recognize in him and his narratives (the earlier ones, at least) a 'capital' fund of even untold 'interest', and so richly veined a nugget of the ben trovato as to take the shine out of 'many a golden vero. Omoo, the Rover, keeps up the spirit of Typee in a new form. Nothing can be livelier than the

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[1] Ibid., XXII (December 29, 1849),580. Spectator.

sketches of ship and ship's company. In tone and taste Redburn was an improvement upon Madri but was deficient as the latter was overfraught with romance and adventure. The crew, again, are sketched by a true draughtsman--though one misses the breadth and finish of his corresponding description in Omoo. Next came White Jacket, or, the World in a Man-of-War. The adventures of the adventurous proprietor of this encyclopaedic toga, this cheap magazine of a coat, are detailed with that eager vivacity, and sometimes that unlicensed extravagance, which are characteristic of the scribe. Some of the sea-pictures are worthy of his highest mood--when a fine imagination over-rides and represses the chaos of wanton fancy. For so successful a trader in 'Marine stores' as Mr. Melville, The Whale seemed a speculation every way big with promise. His three volumes entitled The Whale undoubtedly contain much vigorous description, much wild power, many striking details. But the effect is distressingly marred throughout by an extravagant treatment of the subject. The style is maniacal--mad as a March hare--mowing, gibbering, screaming, like an incurable Bedlamite, reckless of keeper or straight-waist. When he pleases, Mr. Melville can be so lucid, straightforward, hearty, and unaffected, and displays so unmistakable a shrewdness, and satirical sense of the ridiculous, that it is hard to suppose that he can have indited the rhodomontade to which we allude. His Yankeeisms are plentiful as blackberries. O author of Typee and Omoo, we admire so cordially the proven capacity of your pen, that we entreat you to doff the 'nonnatural sense' of your late lucubrations--to put off your worser self--and to do your better, real self, that justice which its 'potentiality' deserves. [1]

The Dublin University in commenting on a "Trio of American Sailor-Authors", in which the works of first Cooper, and second Dana are discussed, and then it says of Melville, that he is original in style rather than subject matter, but that he is a genius in every sense of the word.

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[1] Ibid., XXXIII (Aug. 20, 1853),481-85. New Monthly.

> Herman Melville completes our Trio. A friend has informed us that 'Herman Melville' is merely a *nom de plume*, and if so, it is only a piece with the mystification which this remarkable author dearly loves to indulge in from the first page to the last of his works. We think it highly probable that the majority of our readers are only familiar with his earliest books; but, as we have read them all carefully (excepting his last production, *Israel Potter*, which is said to be mediocre), we shall briefly refer to their subjects seratin, ere we consider the general characteristic of his style. His first books were *Omoo* and *Typee*, which quite startled and puzzled the reading world. The ablest critics were for some time unable to decide whether the first of these vivid pictures of life in the South Sea Island was to be regarded as a mere dextrous fiction, or as a narrative of real adventures described in glowing, picturesque, and romantic language; but when the second work appeared, there could no longer exist any doubt that although the author was intimately acquainted with the Marquesas and other islands, and might introduce real incidents and real characters, yet that fiction so largely entered into the composition of the books, that they could not be regarded as matter-of-fact narrative. Both these works contain a few opening chapters, descriptive of foremast-life in whaling-ships, which are exceedingly interesting and striking. [1]

The writer gives as Melville's next work *Redburn*, and professes it to be the autobiographical description of a sailor-boy's first voyage across the Atlantic. He continues:

> It contains some clever chapters, but very much of the matter, especially that portion relative to the adventures of the young sailor in Liverpool, London, &c., is outrageously improbable, and cannot be read either with pleasure or profit.

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[1] *Ibid.*, XLVIII (Mar. 1, 1856), 563-68. *Dublin University Magazine*.

> This abortive work--which neither obtained nor deserved much success--was followed by Madri; and a Voyage Thither. Here we are once more introduced to the lovely and mysterious isles of the Pacific, and their half-civilized, or, in some cases, yet heathen and barbarous, aborigines. The reader who takes up the book, and reads the first half of volume one, will be delighted and enthralled by the original and exceedingly powerful pictures of sea-life, of a novel and exciting nature, but woful will be his disappointment as he reads on . . . . Moreover, the language is throughout gorgeously poetical, full of energy, replete with the most beautiful metaphors, and crowded with most brilliant fancies, and majestic and melodiously sonorous sentences. . . . It is, in our estimation, one of the saddest, most melancholy, most deplorable and humiliating perversions of genius of a high order in the English language. [1]

The editor says that the next work in order--if he recollects rightly as the date of publication--is White Jacket; or the World in a Man-of-War. This is, in his opinion, Melville's very best work. White Jacket is the best picture of life before the mast in a ship of war ever yet given to the world. He comments further:

> The style is most excellent--occasionally very eccentric and startling, of course, or it would not be Herman Melville's, but invariably energetic, manly, and attractive, and not unfrequently noble, eloquent, and deeply impressive . . . . White Jacket is an astonishing production, and contains much writing of highest order. The last work we have noticed is a large one, entitled The Whale, and it is quite as eccentric and monstrously extravagant in many of its incidents as even Mardi; but it is nevertheless, a very valuable book, on account of the unparalleled mass of information it contains on the subject of the history and capture of the great

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[1] Ibid., XLVII (Mar. 1, 1856), 563-66. Dublin University Magazine.

and terrible cachalot, or sperm-whale . . . . Yet the great, undeniable merits of Melville's book are obscured and almost neutralized by the astounding quantity of wild, mad passages and entire chapters with which it is interlarded . . . . Nevertheless, the work is throughout splendidly written, in a literary sense; and some of the early chapters contain what we know to be most truthful and superlatively--excellent sketches of out-of-the-way life and characters in connection with the American whaling trade. To give a fair idea of Herman Melville's powerful and striking style, when he condescends to restrain his exuberant imagination, and to write in what we may call his natural mood, we request the reader's attention to a short extract or two which we select from "White Jacket. [An extract is given where the frigate is overtaken by a gale off the 'pitch' of Cape Horn and is in grave danger.] He is a man of genius--and we intend this word to be understood in its fullest literal sense--one of rare qualifications, too; and we do not think there is any living author who rivals him in his peculiar powers of describing scenes at sea and sea-life in a manner at once poetical, forcible, accurate, and, above all, original. But it is his style that is original rather than his matter. He has read prodigiously on all nautical subjects--naval history, narratives of voyages and shipwrecks, fiction, &c.,--and he never scruples to deftly avail himself of these stores of information. He undoubtedly is an original thinker, and boldly and unreservedly expresses his opinions, often in a way that startles and enchains the interest of the reader. He possesses amazing powers of expression--he can be terse, copious, eloquent, brilliant, imaginative, poetical, at will. He is never stupid, never dull; but alas! he is often mystical and unintelligible--not from any inability to express himself, for his writing is pure, manly English, and a child can understand what he says, but the ablest critic cannot always tell what he really means. Such is Herman Melville! a man of whom America has reason to be proud, with all his faults; and if he does not eventually rank as one of her greatest giants of literature, it will be owing not to any lack of innate genius, but solely to his own incorrigible perversion of his rare and lofty gift. [1]

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[1] Ibid., XLVIII (Mar. 1, 1856), 563-66. Dublin University Magazine

The next fiction writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe, owes her fame, that is, the recognition she won in her own day, to one publication--Uncle Tom's Cabin. She also published other works, which were received and reviewed by British critics. Chamber's Journal gives her a sort of delicate article on "The Tea-Rose" from a publication entitled The Mayflower.

> The following is taken from an American publication entitled The Mayflower--a series of sketches by Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe. Mrs. Stowe's scenes and characters are of a domestic nature, each exhibiting some feature in every-day life which we are apt to regard as of little or no importance. That which we extract very simply but happily inculcates the duty of cherishing a sense of the beautiful among our lowlier neighbors--that fine feeling which rusts out and dies because they are too hard pressed to procure it any gratification. [Extract of Tale is given.]

The Times, in reviewing Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly, very firmly assures the public that Mrs. Stowe has great skill in delineation of character.

> Twenty thousand copies of this book, according to its title-page, are circulating among the American people, but three times as many thousands more have probably issued from the American press since the title-page was written. The book is a decided hit. For striking and meritorious it undoubtedly is. The lady has great skill in the delineation of character; her hand is vigorous and firm, her mastery over human feeling is unquestionable, and her humorous effects are unimpeachable. We know of no book in which the negro character finds such successful interpretation, and appears so life-like and so fresh. But even as an artist Mrs. Stowe is not faultless. She exhibits but ordinary ability in the construction of her story. Her

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[1]Ibid., (July 6, 1844) 451. Chamber's Journal.

narrative is rather a succession of detached scenes than a compact, well-jointed whole; and many of the scenes are tedious from their similarity and repetition. [1]

The Examiner says that Uncle Tom's Cabin is a work of the very highest literary merit.

As a work of imagination it is to be welcomed as the best that has been hitherto contributed to what may hereafter form a large part of the reading world--the literature of America. It is thoroughly genuine. Marvelous is the skill with which the authoress kneads into all her facts the leaven of a deeply interesting story. Defects of management there are in the tale, but never one that relaxes the attention or the interest. Regarded purely as a novel, Uncle Tom's Cabin is a work of the very highest literary merit. It is easy to find fault, and there are many faults which lie upon the surface here, for the most part, perhaps, too obvious to be worth naming. The story divides itself too freely into scenes and sketches, while its main current is left to turn in two parallel lines issuing from the same source, and not again uniting except in the aims and truths enforced. [2]

The North British Review, after sounding off its praises, points out one great fault, the remarkable vulgarity of language, in Uncle Tom's Cabin.

The great merits of Uncle Tom's Cabin, which of themselves, and apart from the ever new excitement of the subject of slavery, have ensured a vast popularity, are so well appreciated that we need not speak of them at all, unless it be to declare, in a word, that we heartily subscribe to the popular verdict in their favor. We are reduced therefore to making the most of the one fault which strikes us in the perusal of this extraordinary book. We mean the style of its phraseology, which offers the happily

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[1] Ibid., XXXV (Oct. 16, 1852), 97. Times.

[2] Ibid., XXXV (October 16, 1852), 101-2. Examiner.

> most rare phenomenon of remarkable vulgarity of language in combination with remarkable purity and simplicity of thought. We should be sorry, however, to think that false English is true American. The interest of this work is so absorbing, that after few pages, even a well trained ear is apt to forget the constant recurrence of the sin in question. [1]

The Quarterly Review, in an article on Dred--A Tale of the Great Dismal Swamps, lauds Mrs. Stowe to the sky.

> If Mrs. Stowe write for fame only, she would have been satisfied with the success of Uncle Tom, and would not have risked her popularity by another negro-slave story. We believe that we owe Dred to a better motive, and that the highest literary reputation, or even the ovation which greeted Mrs. Stowe on her visit to England, would all have been frankly risked for the great cause to which she devotes herself. Dred, if it cannot add to the author's fame, is yet another and a striking picture of the evils of negro slavery, with this difference, that, while Uncle Tom represents the horrors suffered by the slave, Dred, delineates the moral degradation, that bad feeling, the state of alarm and of civil conflict, the poverty and misery of the master. Mrs. Stowe is fond of contrast, and in Nina she has used, until she has almost abused, this powerful instrument. Mrs. Stowe, with consummate judgment, has cast a veil over all that is horrible and exhibits only scenes that are not too powerful for sympathy.

Miss Catherine Maria Sdegwick, the next writer, is called the first authoress of the New World by the Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

> Her lot has been easy, her life prosperous, her position high; and the fruits of her leisure claim notice among American works of art. In some respects, indeed, the novel of this ingenious and amiable lady may be cited as the most thoroughly national productions we have yet mentioned . . . . She owns a heart awake to the impressions of poetry, and an eye for the beauties of antiquity . . . . To Miss Sedgwick, then

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[1] Ibid., XL (Jan. 7, 1854), 59. North British Review.

[2] Ibid., LIII (June 20, 1857) 705-8. Quarterly Review.

we are indebted for the heartiest picture of transatlantic life and manner with which we are acquainted. She has not Mr. Cooper's power,--her stories fail lamentably, in point of construction--being rarely clear of a strain of sentimental incident as flagrantly lac-a-daisical as if it had issued from the Minerva Press--but she has the finer observation of her sex and her sketches, though faint, are full of character. To instance a little,--Redwood, the earliest of her novels before us, possesses almost every defect as a story; there is a young lady--an outrageous caricature of Julia Mannering--whose coquetry and hardness of heart are not to be believed unless the genus take form in America with which we are unfamiliar; there is a family riddle thrown down with wonderful adroitness, in the midst of a knot of people most heterogeneously brought together, who are still (such is life!) the precise half dozen whom alone the puzzle concerns--there is a captain bold and a free-thinking father, one degree more inexplicable than the parent of Miss Hawkin's Rosanna. In spite, however, of the dead weight of absurdity, there is life and buoyancy, enough in the novel to keep it afloat . . . . Hope Leslie, too, is far better constructed than Redwood, the old times of the pilgrims were marked by contrast and romantic incident . . . . As often, however, as scenes of high emotion are approached, she alternately rants and falters, and we have to fix a firm eye upon her intentions, to enable us to excuse mistakes in detail, and short-comings as to finish, which are provokingly frequent . . . . We have said enough to indicate the peculiar merits and demerits of Miss Sedgwick's novels without even pausing over The Lindwoods,--the last, the most evenly executed, and the least characteristic of the series.

We have read [sic] Mrs. Sedgwick's Allen Prescott, if once, a score of times, wondering the while that it has not become more extensively known among the young people of England. Yet it is merely a narrative of steps by which a New England peasant caters for himself education, wealth, position, and the prettiest of American wives--for we recollect nothing feminine in transatlantic fiction so attractive as Love Heywood, with his stiff notions of consistency; and Lindy Doble, the colored woman, with her lazy, thriftless habits, her goodness of heart, and want of

> principle. But for a certain pedagogic air in the narration, Allen Prescott would, of its kind, be perfect. [1]

According to the same Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review our next authoress, Mrs. Kirkland, is improving.

> There is one set of these books, however, which the most sensitive contemner of the familiar will not be ashamed to read; those in which 'getting' implies the clearing and wilderness. The amusing tales and sketches, by Mrs. Kirkland, better known in England as Mrs. Mary Clavers, are already known and popular among us, and this in spite of obvious affectation of style . . . . We have need of all the good heart, and ready humor, and picturesque selection of incident, belonging to Mrs. Clavers, to make us forgive her second-hand graces. There is improvement in this respect. Forest Life is far less objectionable as to style than the lady's first publication, A New Home. [2]

The Athenaeum mentions a work by the same author with very little comment on the work.

> Mrs. Kirkland's tale of The Schoolmaster's Progress lets us into the secret of the manner in which these things are managed in the United States. There, as elsewhere, the educator enters upon his duties before he is himself educated; nevertheless a show is got up of testing his previous qualifications. Examinations are, it seems, prescribed by law, which, however, has forgotten to provide for the competency of the examiners; and there are few better farces, as we gather from this tale, than the course of question and answer on these occasions. [3]

The Spectator, in discussing Western Clearings, says that Mrs. Kirkland portrays very distinctly Western American

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[1] Ibid., II (Oct. 19, 1844) 681-2. Foreign Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., 683.

[3] Ibid., VII (Oct. 18, 1845) 361. Athenaeum.

character.

> The lady has changed her name since the appearance of her first work: whether 'Clavers' was but assumed, we cannot say. Western Clearings may want some of the freshness which distinguishes her New Home, but in most other features the work is an improvement. . . . . In spite, however, of tales whose structure rather reminds one of annual literature, and of a style which has but slight congruity with the subject matter, Western Clearings sustains the interest of the reader, from the obvious truth and reality of the description. . . . Western American character is distinctly portrayed, as different from British, Irish, Canadian, or genuine Yankee . . . . But it will be found a very agreeable book; the literature good enough to have imparted attractions to commoner matters, and the matter novel enough to have interested even with less cleverness in its exhibitions. [1]

The Athenaeum, in an article on "American Fiction", rates Mrs. Kirkland rather high.

> "One Ballad of Cassandra Southwick is, in our estimation, worth a library of imitations of Moore and copies of Mrs. Hemans; one Legend of Sleepy Hollow outweighs all its teller's treasury of graceful recollections of Brereton Hall, or the Alhambra; one scrap of Mistress Mary Clavers' Rough and Ready Life in the Backwoods, more precious than whole albums full of London and Paris fashions or fancies. [2]

Chambers Journal, in commenting on Western Clearings, apportions to Mrs. Kirkland an acute female mind, and much literary dexterity.

> Mrs. Kirkland is the same lady who, a few years ago, under the name of Clavers, presented a lively, descriptive volume on the far-west, wherein, it

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[1] Ibid., VIII (Mar. 14, 1845), 506. Spectator.

[2] Ibid., VII (October 18, 1845), 110. Athenaeum.

> appears, she is a settler. A new volume, called Western Clearings consisting of a series of brief tales and sketches, is another gathering from the same field. In the present case, we have it (life in back states) handled by one of the acuter class of female minds, one with much literary dexterity, and an unusually keen eye for the ludicrous, so that the Western Clearings is really a very presentable treatise. [1]

Another female writer of fiction, Elizabeth Wetherell, seems to have been fairly popular in her day. The North British Review, in discussing certain works by Elizabeth Wetherell (Pseud. i.e., Miss E. Warner) praises her and has this to say:

> The above remarks have been suggested partly by the appearance and surprising popularity in Britain of certain American novels, especially those of Mrs. Beecher Stowe and of Elizabeth Wetherell, which exhibits gratifying contrast to the general run of modern novels. [2]

The editor, later on in the same article, discusses the style of Miss Wetherell.

> Elizabeth Wetherell, like Mrs. Stowe, is sincerely and powerfully christian in her writings; but, unlike Mrs. Stowe, and like almost all other female writers of religious novels, the cause of Christianity often suffers, in her hands, from ill-judged and untimely displays of it. The heartiness and sincerity with which she dwells upon and describes, in its minutest details, the farm-life in America are very delightful, and quite new in their way, which is wholly unsentimental and truly national. This clear-sightedness, and the power of expressing it so as to impress others, is a very remarkable and unspeakably

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[1] Ibid., IX (June 13, 1846),528. Chambers Journal.

[2] Ibid., XL (Jan. 7, 1854),51. North British Review.

valuable quality of the American mind. [1]

The same writer, after discussing Stowe, and saying that the interest in her work is so absorbing that, after the first few pages, the reader is apt to forget the vulgarity of the language, continues:

> It is much the same with the immensely popular Wide Wide World, and Queechy of Elizabeth Wetherell. This is a serious thing; for integrity of thought and feeling are far more closely connected with purity of language than is commonly supposed. [Extract given to show this fault.] But the language of Mrs. Stowe seems quite refined if we compare it with that of Elizabeth Wetherell. The very considerable merits of this lady's writings render the peculiarities of her diction extremely to be regretted; and we are sorry to say that want of refinement is not confined to the language of her dramatic persons. Queechy is indeed, a book without a parallel, except in the Wide Wide World; and it is very high praise to say of it, as we can, that the natural refinement and beauty of some of the characters render the book readable in spite of the surprising vulgarity of most of them. The country people, in the remarkable novel called Queechy, are true and forcible--coarse, but never vulgar; and had the characters been made of such persons, the work would have been unexceptionable. But when the author attempts, as with the greatest confidence she does, to describe the best society of New York, Paris, and London, her failure is too great to be absurd; it is melancholy to behold the working of such a ruinous mistake. [Extracts are given to show defect.] [2]

The last female writer of fiction, Alice Cary, is discussed by the Literary Gazette, in commenting on a book called Pictures of Country Life.

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[1] Littell's, XL (January 7, 1854), 63. North British Review.

[2] Ibid., 61.

> The only lamentable thing about this book is its prodigality of material. Subject matter enough for half-a-dozen full grown novels is compressed into tiny magazine tales of not many more pages. This is nowise a condemnation of the book: on the contrary, it is a confession of the exceeding wealth of material garnered within its pages. The stories are very sweet and charming, and the personages stand out with all the intensity of American portraiture; there is not the faintest dash of melodrama throughout; and a pure and beautiful spirit pervades every page. One of the prettiest of the tales is that of Hasty Words and their Apology. The House with Two Front Doors is another pretty tale. An Old Maid's Story, too, is a sweet and gentle idyl, dealing with the hidden feelings of life rather than with noisy, patent, overbearing facts, and contriving to make an exquisite little poem of these, without incident or excitement to help author or reader. It is great that Alice Cary shows. Every tale in this book might be selected as evidence of some new beauty or unhackneyed grace. There is nothing feeble, nothing vulgar, and above all, nothing unnatural or melodramatic. [1]

There are a few lesser lights to be mentioned, whose works were reviewed and criticised in British periodicals. The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review has a fair criticism of these authors.

> It would serve little good purpose, were we to descant upon the productions of second-rate American novelists. The name of Dr. Bird [Robert Montgomery Bird], however, must be mentioned, because his Calavar, and a subsequent Mexican romance, The Infidel, excited a certain sensation among his countrymen on their appearance. Nothing was ever much more tawdry and less life-like than these tales, except it were a tragedy by their author, The Gladiator, in which Mr. Forrest, it will be recollected, commenced his

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[1] Ibid., LXIII (October 1, 1859), 23-4. Literary Gazette.

short career upon the English stage. A third story, The Hawks of Hawk Hollow, rises, perhaps, to the level of Mr. Ainsworth's average romances, and is at once the most readable and the most powerful of the three, because it treats of the incidents and passions of our own time. [1]

The writer continues as follows:

A few words are also due to some tales of a more ancient epoch, by Mr. Ware [William Ware] of which the Letters from Palymara was the first and best. We have found in this novel a fine sense for the beauties of antiquity, as well as that ripeness and composure of style, which can but result from thorough familiarity with the subject; the incidents carefully arranged, the characters judiciously sustained; every grace and merit, in short, save the breath of life. In spite of its superior propriety, and classic grace, we cannot recollect a single passage which takes hold of the memory, like certain of the scenes in Mr. Lockhart's Valerius; or even in the objectionably gorgeous Salathiel of Dr. Croly. Nor, to compensate for this quietism, so fatal to the belief which a tale-teller's earnestness ought to inspire, have any of those exquisite and delicate turns of thought and sentiment, which make us take more intimate interest in the Personages of Mr. Landor's imaginary correspondence, Pericles and Aspoesia, than in all the heroes and heroines of classical fiction we can call to mind--from the Cyrus downwards? [2]

But one of the latest American fictions which has made its way hither, written in direct imitation of these books, is warrant for the severest reprobation we could bestow upon the application of the tinsel of style of the Old World, to the ruder scenes and characters of the New [World]. This is A New Purchase, by Mr. Carlton [Robert Carlton], a book in which every trick of language that has been hunted out of every country's magazines, finds a place among the stick chimneys, and mud walls, and cotton-sheets partitions of the wilderness--with

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[1] Littell's, II (October 19, 1844), 652. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., 652.

what result need not be told. Surely upon no one does conceit sit so ill as upon the republican. [1]

On like grounds of complaint, with all their rough truth and humor, we cannot praise novels by Paulding and Neal, and other writers which may be placed in this class. The fun seems to be forced--the eye of the writer to be anxiously set upon his audience, the while he writes in agonies to extort a laugh by his comicality. We have been more amused by the sincere and grave prolixity of Timothy Flint, when writing about the Mississippi Valley and its settlers, by the quaint but earnest trifling of Mr. Greenwood, when describing the rise and progress of a Village Choir--not trained on the Wilhelm method--than the antics of these melancholy Mr. Merrymen; at a distance appearing so full of spontaneous activity and enjoyment, but with the hardest of hard labor at their hearts! [2]

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[1] Littell's, II (October 19, 1844), 653. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., 653.

CHAPTER VIII

HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL WORKS

Ordinarily a person does not think of studying history in connection with American literature. The British critics seemed to think that it was one of the outstanding parts of the literature of the Young Republic, and never hesitated, when the chance presented itself, of praising it to the sky. In fact, if there are any adverse comments, they are few and far between. Witness what the Morning Chronicle has to say of American history:

> The Americans may take pride in their historical laurels, for in no department of literary exertion has their success been more signal. [1]

The Westminster Review agrees with the opinion of the Chronicle, but throws in a few reasons why America has not achieved the ultimate in this line of writing:

> However, when this [that America is young, cut off by the ocean from interest in movements and destinies of Europe, civilization has not yet come to maturity, etc.] is taken into account, it must be acknowledged that the historical literature of America is very creditable. [2]

Since Washington Irving was the first American author to be recognized in England, and since he actually

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[1] Littell's XVI, (Jan. 1, 1848), 28. Morning Chronicle.

[2] Ibid., XVIII (Aug. 19, 1848), 365. Westminster Review.

does come first in the time element, with regard to the other historical writers in this chapter, in American literature it will be well to consider him first in this discussion. The Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review says that there is more imagination in one page of Washington Irving's Chronicle of Granada than in all of Cooper's fancied scenes, and the Review continues:

> We do not put ourselves out of the way to enter into the dry local humor of Knickerbocker's History--we could not, in the light and graceful sketches by which Geoffry Crayon won his spurs, the chronicler of Columbus, and Granada, and Astoria. . . . . His whole heart and soul go forth with the Caballero, Columbus.

The New Monthly Magazine in an article on "American Authorship" discusses Irving's style, which has been given in connection with his fiction, at length, and continues:

> That Mr. Irving was endowed with the mythopoeic faculty--the art of myth-making--was delightfully evident in the production of Knickerbocker's History of New York. It argues a significant talent for ironical composition, and easy badinage in Mr. Irving, that he has sustained to the last, in this perhaps over-long history, the quaint tone of subdued comedy and simple gravity which marks its opening. It abounds in pungent reflections profitable for later years.

The New Monthly, after discussing "Salmagundi" and The Sketch Book continues with Christopher Columbus:

> Verily, a fascinating narrative--a strange , saddening, yet inspiring tale of the great Genoese

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[1] Ibid., II (October 19, 1844) 648. Foreign and Colonial Quarterly Review.

> sea-king, and of his great fight of afflictions. In narrating the story of this hero, Mr. Irving has endeavored to place him in a clear and familiar point of view. In this endeavor he has succeeded. Few biographers surpass in sustained interest this memoir. Mr. Irving is less ornate than usual in the present instance. However, apart from the intrinsic charm of the recital, there is so much of the author's wonted fluency and unaffected grace of style and clearness of method in working it out. [1]

The editor also has a short comment on the History of Conquest of Granada:

> In the History of the Conquest of Granada--wherein he has fully availed himself, says Mr. Prescott, of all the picturesque and animating movement of the romantic era of Fernando and Isabella, the hand of the master is seen in the delineation of character.

Of Irving's Oliver Goldsmith and The Life of Mahomet, the New Monthly says that neither seems to add anything to the subject that has not already been written.

The Athenaeum reviews Irving's Life of George Washington in a very favorable light. The editor says:

> Mr. Irving's fourth volume contains a tragedy, an idyl, and a poem--the story of Andre's fate and Arnold's treachery, the picture of Washington's retirement among honeysuckles and balsam-trees, and his triumph as First President amidst the cheers and prayers of a new nation. What a contrast in that New Jersey progress to the New Jersey campaign, between the illumination of war and peace, the salute of cheering guns and the deadly duel between the British and American batteries. There is more excitement,

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[1] Ibid., 649.

[2] Ibid., 650.

> more tumult, more dramatic brilliance, in the history of the war, but that which will forever fascinate mankind is the spectacle of Washington supreme in the American Republic--a statesman and a warrior reverenced from ocean to ocean, a phenomenon to Europe, an idol of the multitude, yet not once deserting his genial and simple virtues, or yearning for the crown or mantle to purchase which others had sacrificed their souls, but which were freely offered him. The character of Lafayette is largely developed in this volume--his egotistic, but general zeal; his fondness for showy soldiers, with trim uniforms, leathern helmets, and crests of horsehairs; his eagerness to effect brilliant strokes; his admiration of Washington's horsemanship. [1]

The Athenaeum reviews the History of Oregon and California by Robert Greenhow[2] and speaks well of it from the standpoint of a manual on the Northwest Coast of America. The editor says:

> Mr. Greenhow writes with the caution and decorum of a diplomatic character; like one conscious of filling a public office, and having been employed to publish a state memorial. He is as candid as a government advocate can be--more candid, we are bound in fairness to state, than such writers generally are, ... His knowledge is book knowledge, and mostly derived from European sources . . . . Mr. Greenhow presents us with an elaborate synopsis of all that has been published relative to Oregon territory previously to his publication. So far from seeking to misquote, he evidently labors against a

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[1] Littell's, LV (October 17, 1857) 177-80. Athenaeum.

[2] Mr. Greenhow was Translator and Librarian of a Department of the United States Government, and author of a Memoir, Historical and Political, on the Northwest Coast of North America, published 1840, by direction of the Senate of the United States. (Murry.)

> half-conscious bias to adapt this narrative to the views he entertains in common with his country-men. Mr. Greenhow's is a useful manual for those who would investigate the contending titles of the rival claimants of the Oregon territory. [1]

The Athenaeum gives a short discussion of Mexico as It Was and as It Is, by Brantz Mayer,[2] but says that the sketches add little information that has not previously been published. The editor says:

> Most travelers have dwelt with rapture on the first aspect of the Valley of Mexico from the ridge of the Sierra Nevada . . . . Even now, there are few who could gaze on such a panorama as Mr. Mayer has described without lively emotions . . . . Mr. Mayer's antiquarian sketches add little to the information previously communicated by Humbolt, Stephens, and others: he intimates, however, that there is yet a vast quantity of Mexican romances never yet opened by Europeans; and we agree with him that much additional research will be requisite before we shall be in a situation to come to any satisfactory conclusion on the various questions raised respecting the ancient monarchy of the Aztecs. [3]

The Spectator comments on Kendall's Santa Fe[4] Expedition, saying that it will be a valuable addition to the literature of books of travel. The editor continues:

> Apart from any intrinsic interest, this narrative of the piratical expedition of the Texans in New Mexico is curious for its indication of American character and Southern morality . . . . This narrative is not without interest, though its interest is diminished by diffuseness, and a sameness of

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[1] Ibid., II (Aug. 24, 1844), 154. Athenaeum.

[2] Brantz Mayer was Secretary of the U. S. Legation to Mexico, 1841-2.

[3] Littell's, I, (July 13, 1844), 533. Athenaeum.

[4] Mr. Wilkins Kendall was editor of the New Orleans Picayune.

> detail--arising perhaps from the sameness of the subject-matter . . . . Mr. Kendall's narrative may be received as an addition to the literature of books of travel. [1]

The Spectator discusses the Rev. D. P. Kidder's Brazil in the following terms:

> The knowledge acquired during his residence in Brazil, [as an assistant missionary to Mr. Spaulding,][2] Mr. Kidder has presented to the world in the volumes before us: which embrace an outline of its history, a narrative of the author's journeyings, with general observations upon the country, and its social, political, and religious conditions. Mr. Kidder's work may therefore be welcomed to our library, though his sketches are scarcely equal to his time and opportunity . . . . Some of his matter was needless: and his arrangement is certainly not of the best . . . . He cannot be considered a powerful or graphic describer. [3]

The Critic, in commenting on the same work, gives more criticism of Kidder's style of writing than does the Spectator. Comments from the Critic follow:

> He writes in an agreeable strain, possesses considerable powers of description, and not unfrequently rises to eloquence when excited by a congenial theme. His fault is an occasional ambitious endeavor at fine writing, an error too common to be the subject of a peculiar censure in Mr. Kidder . . . . Mr. Kidder has combined with reminiscenses of his

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[1] Ibid., I (June 22, 1844) 346. Spectator.

[2] Note: Mr. Kidder is an American clergyman, who spent some years in Brazil, as an assistant missionary to Mr. Spaulding.

[3] Littell's, VII (November 1, 1845) 245. Spectator.

> residence and travels in Brazil, historical and geographical sketches of the country. His attention was primarily directed to the subjects of morality, education, and religion. He pleads a needless apology, that in the collection of his materials he met with many embarrassments arising from the unsettled state of the people. [1]

A short quotation from the London Morning Chronicle, and another from the Westminster Review will serve as an introduction to the next two historical writers, Bancroft, and Prescott. These two with Ticknor and Parkman complete the list of the historical authors that receive comments from the British critics in Littell's. The Chronicle states: "Historians like Bancroft, Prescott, and Sparks [Jared], are names which in their mere mention carry their own ovation."[2] The Review says: "The names of Prescott, and Bancroft redeem their country from the reproach of barrenness in this field."[3] [The field of American historical literature.]

The first of this group, George Bancroft, became very highly recognized in England. Observe what the above mentioned Chronicle has to say of Bancroft:

> We cannot forget that the distinguished man who now represents the United States in this country has preeminent claims to be regarded as the representative man of letters. Mr. Bancroft's historical

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[1] Littell's VII (November 1, 1845), 320. Critic.

[2] Ibid., XVI (January 1, 1848), 28. London Morning Chronicle.

[3] Ibid., XVII (Aug. 19, 1848), 365. Westminster Review.

> style is marked by a severe simplicity and grandeur which might be imitated with advantage by some of our writers, as will be perceived from the following fine passage, descriptive of the youth of Washington. [Extract given from Washington's early life.] 1

The Edinburgh Review lists from Bancroft the following two titles: History of the United States, from Discovery of the American Continent, and History of the Colonization of the United States, gives an extract, and goes on as follows:

> We cannot take leave of this work without again enforcing upon the mind of the English reader, the necessity of pursuing it with a catholic spirit. All that is of chief importance in it, is entitled to his esteem. The real liberality--the general fairness--the labor and conscientious research it evinces--deserve, and we are assured will receive, his warmest approbation. There are some peculiarities, however, of style--some modes of expression--some habits of thought which are novel; and many, perhaps, may not prove entirely grateful to our cis-atlantic taste. But Mr. Bancroft's is an American not an English production, and must be judged by a reference to American feelings. The present high position of Mr. Bancroft, bestowed as it has been in consequence of his historic labors, is not only an honor to himself, but to his country, by whom it was confirmed. 2

The Athenaeum gives the same work as: History of the United States from Discovery of the American Continent, extracts the eloquent account of the blockade--"Boston Blockade", and gives an extract from the "Battles of Lexington and

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[1] Littell's, XVI (January 1, 1848), 28. London Morning Chronicle.

[2] Ibid., XII (March 20, 1847), 545. Edinburgh Review.

Concord", saying that it was a sweet April when the first American citizen fell, and the hue of the battle is prettily given. The writer continues:

> The opinion which we have more than once expressed upon the style of Mr. Bancroft's History, applies with full force to the volume before us. It is exceedingly picturesque and bright and processional--yet scarcely equal to the vigor of debate, or the storm of revolutionary battle. We have only glimpses of the men of the Revolution, and are left to a good deal of surmise as to the secrets of the time. We miss the authoritative notes that light up the text of the earlier volumes, and cannot but, on the whole, express our regret that the author has not such complete access to papers as would have given fullness and certainty to this without doubt, the only American National History. [1]

The next historical writer, William H. Prescott, receives more comment from the British periodicals than any other writer in this group, and like Emerson in the group of essayists, he receives at least one-third of the total amount of comment. He was admired, not only for his historical writings, but also for his courage to keep on working after he was almost blind. A short comment from the Westminster Review will serve as an appropriate introduction to Prescott. The Review says:

> Mr. Prescott has been so recently before the public, that it would be superfluous here to do more than simply to express our sense of his merit, as a spirited and dramatic narrator, a perspicuous and elegant writer, who has enriched the scantily-furnished shelf of histories in the English tongue with

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[1] Littell's, LVIII (July 24, 1858), 289-93. Athenaeum.

two or three volumes that posterity will not willingly let die. [1]

The Quarterly Review in discussing the History of the Conquest of Mexico, with a Preliminary View of Ancient Mexican Civilization, and Life of the Conqueror Hernando Cortes accords Prescott a place of high renown among the historical writers of the world. The writer states:

> Mr. Prescott possesses high qualifications, and some peculiar advantages for the execution of such work. He has a high sense of the obligation of an historian to explore every source of information relating to his subject; to spare neither industry nor, we may add, expense, in the collection of materials; and his extensive acquaintance with Spanish literature, and the name which he has already established in connexion with Spanish history, have, perhaps, enabled him to command sources of knowledge unattainable by an unknown author. In his disquisitions on the political state and civilisation of the Aztec kingdoms, he is full and copious, without being prolix and wearisome, his narrative is flowing and spirited, sometimes very picturesque; his style has dropped the few Americanisms which still jarred on our fastidious ear in his former work, and is in general pure and sound English. Above all, his judgments are unaffectedly candid and impartial . . . . We conclude with expressing our satisfaction that Mr. Prescott has given us an opportunity at this time of showing our deep sympathy, the sympathy of kindred and of blood, with Americans who, like himself, do honor to our common literature. Mr. Prescott may take his place among the really good English writers of history in modern times; and will be received, we are persuaded, into that small community, with every feeling of friendly and fraternal respect. [2]

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[1] Littell's, XVIII (August 19, 1848), 365. Westminster Review.

[2] Ibid., I (May 11, 1844), 10. Quarterly Review.

In treating of the Biographical and Critical Miscellanies the Spectator compares Prescott with Jeffrey, the editor of the Edinburgh Review, and claims an edge for the editor. The remark follows:

> These reviews strike us as being rather effusions than studies. It is not to be inferred from this remark that they are crude or careless, in despite of the author's intimation that he so esteems them; but that he has not thrown himself into them with all his heart and all his strength, which are exhibited to most advantage in another direction . . . . In the general characteristic of the notice, Mr. Prescott has more in common with Jeffrey; but there is not the refined and critical acumen with the delicate sarcasm, which distinguished the editor of the Edinburgh, neither are the subjects always so interesting, at least they are not treated so largely or so broadly. [1]

The History of the Conquest of Peru draws a discussion from several of the stellar British periodicals. The Spectator says of it:

> In some respects Pizarro's discovery of Peru and subversion of the empire of the Incas had not the interest that attaches to the Conquest of Mexico by Cortez. It wants, as Mr. Prescott observes, the unity of the latter; where the conquest is as much an "action" as the subject of an epic. [2]

The Examiner says of the same work by Prescott:

> It is very ably executed; though the materials are less brilliant than those of the struggle and adventure of Cortez, we derive from the present work a higher impression. The style is less forced. The subject is as thoroughly grasped, with an easier

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[1] Ibid., VII (Oct. 4, 1845), 18. Spectator. (Aug. 20).

[2] Littell's, XIV (July 17, 1847), 180. Spectator.

> treatment. Mr. Prescott avows himself a disciple of the Barante school of history. He would place his reader amid the vivid realities of the scenes and times of which he writes; but with the means of critical judgment as well as of clear perception. And for the most part he succeeds in this. Excellent are his descriptions of events, and in the discrimination of results he is generally just and fair. [1]

In speaking of the same work the Blackwood's Magazine states the following:

> The world's history contains no chapter more striking and attractive than that comprising the narrative of Spanish conquest in the Americas. Teeming with interest to the historian and philosopher, to the loving of daring enterprise and marvellous adventure it is full of fascination. [2]

The Quarterly Review comments more fully on the same work, and discusses Prescott's style at length. The Review states:

> Nor is it the least curious fact relating to these works, that the most laborious and dispassionate inquire, instead of chilling down the history into cold and unstirring chronicle, actually kindles it into a stronger romance. Mr. Prescott's style and manner of composition are adapted with singular felicity to his half-poetic history. His strong imaginative faculty, heightened by the peculiarity of his situation (almost blind--one eye lost) delights in rich and marvelous, both in nature and human action; he has acquired a skill of arrangement, and grouping of characters and events, which attests long and patient study of the highest models; while the calmer moral and christian tone of his judgments by no means deadens his sympathies of ancient days. His narrative presents in

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[1] Ibid., XIV (July 24, 1847), 176, Examiner.

[2] Ibid., XIV (August 14, 1847) 289. Blackwood's Magazine.

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[1] Ibid., VII (Oct. 4, 1845), 18. Spectator. (Aug. 20).

[2] Littell's, XIV (July 17, 1847), 130. Spectator.

general, though not without some exceptions, a happy combination of modern historic philosophy with something of the life and picturesqueness of an ancient chronicle. [1]

In an article on "American Authorship, No. XI", the New Monthly Magazine reviews several of Prescott's works and discusses quite fully his style. For Prescott the editor claims the following:

> The style he adopts is fluent and compact, but noways vigorous or sinewy in structure; indeed, it sometimes palls a little on the taste from its almost languid monotony of "good writing." Nor do the thoughts breathe any more than words burn, with strong vital heat. There is uniformly a patient and lucid narrative of events, there is a diligent summary of generals from particulars, there is an able digest of the original crudities of matter; but deep philosophic reflection there is not, nor "energetic reason", nor enthusiasm of conscious power. He never fires up--never soars--nor quits the safe and serene haunts of comme il faut. He is clear of any charge of nationality in his authorship.
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> If Mr. Prescott has a rich theme in what we believe to be the present subject of his labors, the era of Philip the Second--he was perhaps still more fortunate in the choice of his first essay in historical composition--that of Ferdinand and Isabella. The art is rather an engraver-smooth, finished, correct, but cold. Yet is the work a most attractive one in points of extrinsic as well as intrinsic charm. In the selection of his second historical work--the story of the Conquest of Mexico--Mr. Prescott is again happy in a subject of surpassing interest. With attractive narrative ease he records the embarcation of Corte . Mr. Prescott takes, on the whole, an indulgent view of the character of Corte .
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> The story of the conquest of Mexico told, and

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[1] Littell's, XV (December 11, 1847), 495. Quarterly Review.

> applauded, its teller next told that of Peru, and with equal success. The volume of essays entitled Biographical and Critical Miscellanies, comprises Mr. Prescott's best contributions to the North American Review. They are pleasantly and fluently written, and are pervadingly marked by an air of intelligence and an equable sobriety of style, though without any claim to critical originality, depth or acumen. As criticism they evidence care, scholarship and mental refinement, but at the same time lack power, subtlety and muscle. With good sense and calm judgment they abound. [1]

The Athenaeum in speaking of the History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain, says that it has a substantial value as a contribution to the political, religious, and social annuals of Europe, and that it derives some of its most admirable qualities from the peculiar genius of its author. The editor continues:

> In a warmly colored style--clear, flexible, and full of variety--Mr. Prescott narrates the incidents of Philip's reign. His story moves swiftly, but is nowhere incomplete. The personages are well grouped--the order of circumstances and the order of time are well reconciled, the events are neither confused nor isolated. The book is at once pictoral and sober, critical and dramatic. [2]

The British Quarterly Review continues the discussion of the same work in about the same vein of thought, as follows:

> We are gratified to find that Mr. Prescott has

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[1] Littell's, XL (March 11, 1854), 522-5. New Monthly Magazine.

[2] Ibid., XLVIII (January 5, 1856), 27. Athenaeum.

undertaken this important history. No one can be better qualified for the task than himself, both from previous knowledge of the history of Spain, and his command of hitherto unemployed materials, but, more than all, his skill and judgment in using them.

The Athenaeum again speaking on the History of the Reign of Philip the Second, King of Spain, states:

> The revolt of the Moors, the battle of Lepanto, and the building of the Escurial, mainly occupy this third volume of Mr. Prescott's narrative. In no previous comparison has he exhibited, we think, so much sustained, varied, and concentrated power. His fifth book, to borrow a phrase of foreign criticism, marches like a cavalry squadron; it is swift, animated, glittering; it is radiant, pictorial, and flushed, as though the writer were exulting in his amplitude of materials and perfect mastery of details. Taken alone, it would appreciably enhance the literary reputation of Mr. Prescott. The style throughout runs on a high level, but is free from all artificial pomp and rhetorical redundance. It is at once simple, firm and dignified.

Littell's introduces an article on "William Hickling Prescott", from the Encyclopedia Brittanica, which calls him the famous American historian, and [illegible] most of his works. The writer in the Britannica states:

> After ten years of toil, however, the History was completed. (Ferdinand and Isabella). It appeared toward the end of 1837 both in Boston and London. On both sides of the Atlantic it was a great success. An article in the Edinburgh Review by Don Pascual de Gayangos, than whom no man was better qualified to judge of its merits, and whose English is no less elegant than his Castilian, pronounced it "one of the most successful historical productions of our time." In the Quarterly Review Mr. Ford also expressed his

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[1] Littell's, XLVIII (Feb. 23, 1856), British Quarterly Review.

[2] Ibid., LX (Feb. 5, 1859), 377. Athenaeum.

high admiration of a work on which no Englishman was better fitted to pass judgment than himself, and bade Mr. Prescott welcome to the high place which he had once achieved in English letters. He characterized the work as "by much the first historical work which America has yet produced, and one that need not fear comparison with any that has issued from the European press since this century began."

Six years later, in 1843, The Conquest of Mexico and in four years more, in 1847, The Conquest of Peru, proved that the industry of Mr. Prescott was stimulated by success and that his skill was considerably heightened by practice and experience. In 1854, two volumes of Philip II were ready for the press, which appeared in 1855. Towards the end of the year (1858) the third volume of Philip II appeared, and was received both in England and America with the applause to which the author had now long been accustomed. (In 1834 he also wrote, for Sparks American Biography, a pleasing life of Charles Brockden Brown, which likewise appears amongst his Critical and Historical Essays.) As a critic and essayist, Mr. Prescott would have attained great eminence had he pursued that path of letters. His essays on Cervantes, Moliere, Scott, and Italian narrative poetry are written with much taste, and with a just appreciation of their subjects. His reviews are none of them examples of the slashing style of criticism. [1]

The next writer, George Ticknor, draws some very favorable comments by his History of Spanish Literature[2] and is ranked in the class with Bancroft, Prescott, and Washington Irving. The Spectator comments on American literature in general, saying that American soil has not produced an outstanding and original writer in any other field of literary

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[1] Ibid., LXV (Apr. 21, 1860) 165-72. Encyclopedia Brittanica.

[2] Three volumes, Published: Murry, London, 1849.

effort. The editor continues:

> But it is in the literature of history that the Americans are most distinguished. Besides historical biographies, and historical collections, that equal those of any other people when the short period of their national existence is born in mind, as well as several histories of a respectable character, they have Bancroft, Prescott, and Washington Irving, who, if not original in their class, are eminent of their class, combining extensive research with high literary excellence.
>
> To this trio Mr. George Ticknor must now be added. With the qualities we have just mentioned he combines greater novelty of subject and consequently supplies a more useful book than the Life of Columbus, the Conquest of Mexico and Peru, or even the History of the United States; since these stories are already accessible, which is more than could be said of the history of Spanish literature. Mr. Ticknor's history is as well executed as we are entitled to expect such a work to be. His critical taste and acumen are good, with a leaning to the favorable side. In the important matter of scale he is more judicious than many other writers, giving a sufficient account of the author or the book without drawing out to an undue length. The plan is well digested, and well arranged, both to facilitate the reader's inquiry and to classify the materials. The distinguishing characteris-
> the author's style are clearness, precision, and propriety. There is no redundancy of words, no possibility of mistaking his meaning; the reader is never delayed by involved or encumbered sentences; and the diction varies sufficiently with its subject to avoid monotony. If Mr. Ticknor does not rise to high eloquence, he is equal to his theme, and he rarely or never falls into that rather stilted rhetoric from which few of his countrymen are altogether free, especially when dealing with chivalrous subjects. [1]

The Times, in discussing the History of Spanish Literature,[2] says that to the names of Irving and Prescott,

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[1] Littell's XXV (Apr. 6, 1850), 12. Spectator.

[2] This article, from the Times, is more interesting than criticism in Quarterly Review. (Littell's Note.)

as deservedly European, that of Ticknor must be added, and continues:

> In the excellent work before us he has pretty well exhausted the literature of Spain, and has completed in one comprehensive whole the large subject which his pioneers, Bouterwek, Lampillas, Leano, Sismondi, Ludwig, Clarus, had only treated in portions and imperfectly. Our author is full of his subject to overflowing. The style of Mr. Ticknor suits the professor; it is clear, precise, and unaffected. Without being lively or poetical, he interests in his descriptions, and is impartial and unprejudiced in his criticisms; here and there the fastidious ear of the Old Country will trace a tone of constraint, which Americans writing this high class of English can scarcely quite escape. Taken as a whole, the work is the best that has ever appeared on the subject, and certainly will insure Mr. Ticknor a lasting and honorable reputation on both sides of the Atlantic. [1]

The Westminster Review continues the discussion of the same work, but praises Ticknor more highly. The Review states

> To those who feel but little interest in the mere annals of warfare abroad and persecution at home, and care only for the history of the human soul under adverse circumstances, Mr. Ticknor's three volumes will supply more interest and information than a hundred regular histories. We have here a faithful record of the history of the human mind in Spain; thirty years of literary labor have not been spent in vain. In all that goes to make a readable book Mr. Ticknor is superior to either Bouterwek or Sismondi; in all that goes to make a valuable one he leaves them far behind. In every part of his work he is completely at home. That which in a mere compiler is wearisome has all the charm of originality. [2]

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[1] Ibid., XXVII (November 30, 1850), 427-9. Times.

[2] Ibid., XXX (August 30, 1851), 406. Westminster Review.

In an article entitled "English Notices of Parkman's Pontiac", Littell's brings together the reviews of several British newspapers and periodicals on The History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac. The Court Journal says of this work:

> In the arrangement of his work Mr. Parkman has evidenced great skill and perseverance, as he must have found it necessary to read innumerable manuscripts, dispatches, and documents, both of a public and private nature, to supply him with the facts which he describes with great power. The incidents are of the most thrilling kind, and it would be impossible to impart to them a more lively interest than has been done by Mr. Parkman. [2]

From the Brittania comes nothing but praise:

> This work, which embraces in its compass the most important period of the History of North American colonization previous to the independence of the United States, is written in a most attractive style. The romantic adventures, the hair-breadth escapes, the harrowing scenes of Indian treachery, and Indian massacres, are all described in the flowing language, in the vivid colors, and with the life-like reality which evince a thorough acquaintance with the fearful details of an Indian war. The author has thoroughly mastered the subject matter of his work, and has cleverly analyzed, in the spirit of an impartial historian, the causes and consequences of the different mode of treatment of the aboriginal Indians by the English and French settlers. The peculiarities of Indian character, their political and domestic regulations, their courage and their cunning, are accurately described by one who has closely studied them in their native forests. [3]

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[1] Note: 2 vols. by Richard Bentley, London.

[2] Littell's, XXXII (January 17, 1852), 143. Court Journal.

[3] Ibid.,

The Weekly News and Chronicle continue the praise, and say that the style is perhaps too elevated for the treatment of forest warfare and Indian council. The comment follows:

> His introductory chapters contain a most masterly, complete, and yet compendious account of the Indian tribes of the north and north-eastern portions of America. His style is animated, eloquent, high-colored--occasionally, perhaps, a little too elevated for the subject of which he treats, lavishing the brilliant antithesis of Macaulay on the fluctuations of forest warfare and the deliberations of Indian council. His study of the sources and authorities from which his narrative is derived, is, after the laudable fashion of the American school of historical writing, scrupulous, conscientious, and profound. In fact, nothing seems wanting but a subject more worthy of his powers, to place Mr. Parkman high among those eminent historians who have earned for transatlantic literature so lofty a position in the great republic of learning . . . . . .
> . . . . . .
> When Mr. Parkman passes on to the narrative of the wars and councils, the night attacks, the forest marches, the hairbreadth 'scapes and fearful massacres, which form the more immediate subject of his history--his pen loses none of its graphic power. It is impossible to rise from the perusal of these two volumes without the highest respect for the literary attainments and workmanlike spirit in which their author has accomplished his task. The book is a scholar-like, complete, and elegant contribution to the historical library of the nineteenth century. [1]

The Athenaeum, in speaking of Parkman's The History of the Conspiracy of Pontiac, says that this is one of the best written histories that has been produced by the recent literary talent of America, and continues:

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[1] Ibid., Weekly News and Chronicle.

> Here we have, in the form of authentic and detailed record, exactly such incidents as make the materials in the most delightful of Cooper's novels. The only fault we have to find with the author is, that his style is often too grandiose for his subject. The balanced cadence and verbal ornateness of some of his sentences seem out of keeping with the rough set of beings whose forest life he is describing. If Mr. Parkman should enter on higher and more civilized fields of historic research, this quality will doubtless contribute to the value of his composition. [1]

The Daily News says that Parkman's Pontiac on the whole is to be regarded as one of the most useful and best written books published during a year not very fertile in literary novelists. The editor goes on to say:

> It unites a good deal of the absorbing interest which characterizes Cooper's novels with a conscientious research and scrupulous accuracy which entitle the author to rank among the most promising historians of the day. Bating now and then a slight excuse in point of rhetoric, we have met with few American books more free from the faults both of style and sentiment to which transatlantic writers appear peculiarly liable. [2]

The London Literary Gazette, in speaking of the same work, says that the character and habits of the Indians, of the hunters and trappers, savage and civilized, of the fur-traders, of the garrisons, of the forts, and other scattered inhabitants of the vast territory, are described with much life-like effect. The editor continues:

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[1] Littell's, XXXII (January 17, 1852), 143. Athenaeum.

[2] Ibid., 143. Daily News.

> Apart from this local value, Mr. Parkman's volumes deserve our notice, at once from the interesting matter which they contain, and in justice to the usual labor with which they have been prepared. A book on such a subject, written after such careful preparation, by an author of intelligence and zeal, is worthy of being regarded as a valuable contribution to our historical records. The events being of stirring interest and narrated in graphic style. [1]

Closing the discussion of Parkman's Pontiac, closing the reviews on historical writers, and closing the comments of British critics in this thesis the London Spectator has a short comment as follows:

> Nor is Mr. Parkman ill qualified for the task. He is familiar with the scenes where the events occurred; he has a practical knowledge of the Indian character and manners; he has been most industrious and persevering in his researches, and he has a picturesque and animated style.

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[1] Ibid., 144, London Literary Gazette.

[2] Ibid., XXII (January 17, 1852), 144. London Spectator

CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY

To get to the base, or rather the origin, of what shaped the national opinion of the British nation toward the literary life of the United States in the period from 1844 to 1860, one would have to go back to the first account that was carried back to England after the discovery of America, and one would have to take into consideration every account in the interim. After the American Revolution, and the winning of her independence, up to the War of 1812, the United States was looked upon as a naughty off-spring, who had become rebellious, and when the time became with a little chastisement, would again be brought back into the fold. The War of 1812 changed this point of view. The young republic had grown up, right under the eyes of the mother country, without much awareness from the parent. The War of 1812 was, using the immortal words of Abraham Lincoln uttered afterwards on another momentous occasion, the "testing wh ther that nation . . . might endure." The United States emerged victorious; then the British realized that the young offspring was lost forever; the result was a sort of vindictive spirit of cool restraint in most opinions expressed.

The War of 1812 might be used for a starting point in the English views concerning America in this discourse, because it really gave a turn to the British public opinion

which, of course, is partly responsible for the feeling in the criticism expressed throughout this thesis, and because it is also responsible for the closer unity of national feeling in America which gave rise to a national literature. Again, Littell's Living Age, printed reviews from British periodicals of works that were published or republished during th time, which had originally been written if not before the war at least soon after it. The works of Charles Brockden Brown, and the Sketch Book which was published in May, 1819, are examples to show this point. The War of 1812, like any crisis of war, created waves of prejudice in both countries. This was strongly felt in the years following the war, and is shown to a certain extent in the literary criticism of the earlier works discussed in this thesis.

To answer the question outright, "How did they feel toward us over there?" without a few preliminary facts, would involve an encyclopedia, and require a master of phraseology. It depends largely upon what the "they" mean--the scholar, the business man, the statesman, the politician, the factory-worker, the butcher, the baker, or the candle-stick maker? And also what does the "us" mean--the American tourist, the student in England, the individual here on the streets, the writer of poetry, fiction, or what not, or the scholar in the class-room? After all, every utterance and every person of

both countries would enter into the shaping of public opinion of one country regarding another, which, of course, is reflected mostly in the writings of the day, and that is the only source of this thesis. The feeling of a whole nation toward another is very complex, more so than one person entertains toward another individual. An intelligent person will find much he admires, and much of national traits of which he disapproves. The criticism of one individual is not representative of a whole nation--he is either drawn to or repelled by an individual of another country; when this may not be true of his own countryman. To most people, and this is true of the Englishman, the world centers in his own country, and the contempt felt for the American or others seems to be a slight inherent patriotism. To the intellect of the reasonable this contempt is rejected as unfair and absurd.

The conflict of intellectual judgment and patriotic emotion in England continued long after the war. Literary judgment also influenced more or less by religious, political, economic, and social prejudice and this is true of the time under discussion. Each literary organ was usually a party organ and consequently warped by its views. England was also in a literary turmoil; there were conflicting schools of thought, groups of writers, and literary theories. The literary partisanship was often more intense than either

that of politics or religion.

General comments in British periodicals on America ranged from the extremes of panegyric to the most bigoted condemnation. In some cases the periodicals were obligingly condescending in their praise, but mostly whatever tone or judgment that was expressed was according to whatever political, religious, or literary group it belonged. The fact is that until the appearance of Irving's Sketch Book America was doing very little in literature to engage the attention of the English critic. America was regarded as a wayward offspring who had hardly established herself among the nations of the world. Not often the British critic stultified himself by unreasoning haste toward American writings. Nevertheless, the majority tried to be fair, and those who were the most carping in comments played the game according to recognized rules of party warfare. Most critics intended to be fair, but were also very eager to welcome American writings--based partly on the curiosity of what would come out of the wilderness; and partly on a higher motive.

This eagerness to receive anything American resulted in a situation that was not wholly fortunate for the American writers--the double standard--the practice of treating American writings with more leniency than the British. It also, led, in most instances, to too much emphasis on a distinctive characteristic in American literature. The

British critic did not let the American writer, for long, forget that he had been a British subject, and all inherited culture was British. He also illogically insisted that the new republic produce at once a novel literature--a literature peculiar to America. He almost insisted that America develop a new language, and if not a new language, a new dialect at least. This insistence that the American develop a new American literature led to excessive praise of works which pictured modes of life peculiar to America or developed eccentricities of manner. The result was that such tales and poems like those of Neal and Willis were overpraised, and the American writer who followed the tradition of English literature and treated subjects that were abstract or common to both nations, were aping their style and manners, and were disparaged.

The persistence in this attitude was very unfortunate to the literary understanding between England and America. No one spirit could be named which would characterize the British approach of American writers of this time. To digest and summarize the mass of divergent and conflicting opinion quoted in the foregoing thesis would be like condensing the waters of the mighty Pacific. The number and variety of British comments on American writings indicates the general intent of the critic as seemingly fair, but frustrated by insular prejudice, party feeling, religious beliefs; and

what is more important, to the painfully but still perceptible slow development of better understanding between men of letters of the two English speaking countries.

American literature was no longer a curiosity, for the novelty of the works of Irving, Cooper, and other contemporaries had been lost, and American literature had to stand on its own merits. It had not wholly won recognition, although Irving and Cooper were recognized in England. Bryant, being acclaimed the peer of either at home, was hardly recognized in Great Britain. According to the British critics, it was in the field of poetry that America suffered most. They were eagerly looking for a poet who would be entirely of the spirit of the new republic; for a new language; some poetry that was original and odd in subject matter and eccentric in style and form. The critic claimed that no great poem had yet come from across the Atlantic, and that he was hopefully waiting for something entirely American in every aspect. Strange to say that, according to the British critic, America had not yet produced any poetry other than imitation of that of the English, and still she had some outstanding poets. Bryant was called an original genius; Emerson, a seer and a philosopher; Whittier the earnest anti-slavery poet; Longfellow, loved in England as well as he was in America, a name on every tongue, and the writer of the only two, in style and subject matter, of American poems,

Evangeline and Hiawatha; Poe who was an eccentric but most original genius and whose poetry was like some strange unearthly echoes of spiritual music; Lowell who possessed the attributes essential to a great poet; and Holmes who was recognized as on a par with Hood for his light verse and philosophical humor and wit.

In fiction the American writers seemed to hold a broader place in the literary sun. The fiction writer was recognized of a creative mind, and of original American genius. Although influenced by the English, the names of Stowe, Cooper, Longfellow, and Hawthorne rival those of Dickens, Marryat, Bulwer, and Currer Bell. The works of Poe, Wetherell and Sedgwick were welcomed in England. American literature was an interesting subject not only because but because it was the literature of one of the mightiest nations on earth, and the moral and intellectual influence of the democratic government was great. The individual writers were praised, with, of course, some reservations. According to the British critics Brown was a coarse Godwin who had power, nevertheless, to make himself heard across the Atlantic, in his life, and gave his name a hold on posterity. Irving was referred to as the man who dearly loved Stratford-upon-Avon and Falstaff's London haunts, and he was assigned the most distinguished place in American literature, and accorded world-wide renown. Cooper was described as the

original genius of the traveled American, and said to have outstanding power of description but his judgment was slave to prejudice. His popularity declined greatly during this period. Hawthorne was said to be a writer of independence and originality who could take the ordinary things of life and dress them up in a vivid and picturesque style, but his great fault was that he made too much use of the supernatural. Longfellow was distinctly a poet and fiction was not his forte. Poe was an acute observer of mental phenomena; in his tales he evidences an imagination of the most fervid and daring type, but he made too much use of the morbid, and tarnished his works with too much bloodshed. Dana's power of description of sealife before the foremast is unequalled. Melville was said to be original in style rather than subject matter, but a genius in every sense of the word. Stowe was said to have great skill in delineation of character and great imagination, but she is derided because of her vulgarity of language.

The comments from British periodicals on essays centers around Emerson. The essayists receive more praise than either the fiction writers or the poets. The genius of America, according to the critic, seems hitherto disposed to manifest itself rather in works of reason and reflection than those displays of poetic fervor which are usually

looked for in a nascent literature. What Lamb and others have done for popular mind in England the essayists of the United States were seeking to do for the growing intellect of the new world. Emerson, "the enraptured Yankee" was a seer and mystic and displayed the philosophy of genius. Lowell has earned the right to converse on poets, but his chief fault is over-refinement and subtlety in his thoughts and mode of expounding them. Griswold has a calm and temperate tone and is frank in his expositions. Holmes is generally lively and amusing and is a bold and original thinker.

In historical and biographical writings the American fares far better than any other type of literature at the hands of the British critic. According to the critic it holds first place in the literature of America and he concedes an outstanding place for it among the literatures of the world. The outstanding historical writers were Irving, Bancroft, Prescott, and Parkman. Irving is a universal genius. Historians like Bancroft, Prescott, and Sparks are names which in their mere mention carry their own ovation.

In conclusion, general comments in British periodicals ranged from the extremes of panegyric to the most bigoted condemnation. Nevertheless, the majority tried to be fair. One periodical might condemn one work of a certain author and praise another; and again some authors are

praised by certain magazines and slighted, or condemned by others. All in all, the general British opinion of America might be said to be rather favorable.

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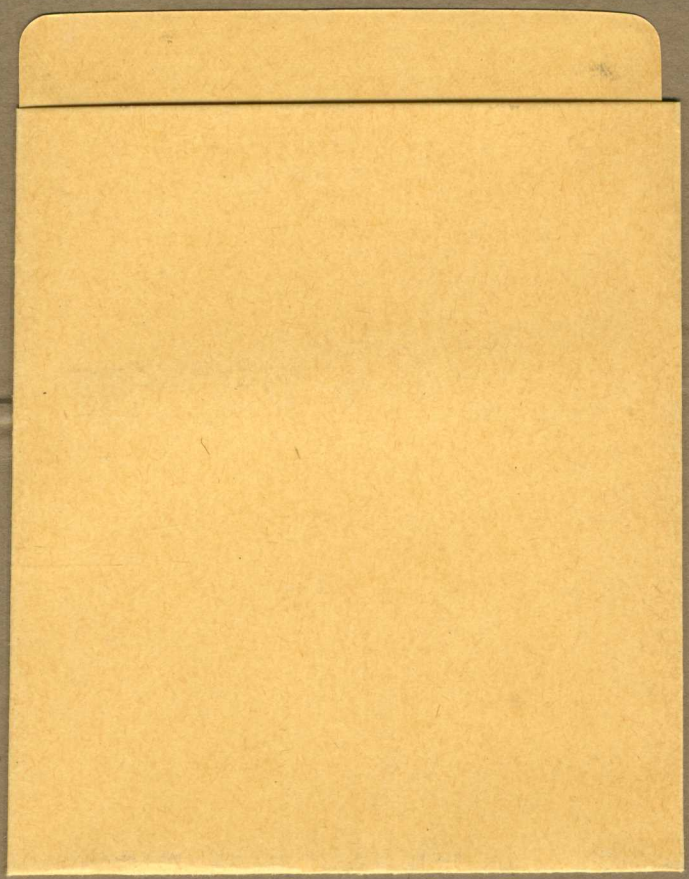

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