

LITERARY NOTES AND NOTICES.

————— I'll shew my mind
According to my shallow simple skill.

—Two Gentlemen of Verona.

7—A recent issue of the "New England Magazine" contains a paper by S. A. Link which imparts much information concerning the literature produced in the Southern States in general, and touching the leading pioneer writers of that locality in particular. We are reminded by the writer at the beginning that the press teems to-day with books and articles from Southern pens, and every month produces its new Southern author. Indeed, such is the fact. Our essayist does not say so, but it really seems as if the South has conquered the North in every department of literary invention. Nor is the victory surprising if we but recollect that the Northern intellect is becoming as arid and sterile as the New England farms whence the people are flying in hundreds. The movement which has led to the intellectual supremacy of the South dates subsequent to the great war of the Southern Rebellion, which, with the best blood of America, erased from the proud escutcheon of the South the foul blot of slavery. Before that event, the South produced statesman and soldiers whose genius it were impossible to overlook. Some good things in a small way were written also, but generally literature had to give way to politics and the pursuits of active life. *Florence Vane*, by Philip Pendleton Cooke, and *My Love is Like a Summer Rose*, are respectable minor poems. *Georgia Scenes*, by Judge Longstreet, was the precursor of the dialectic writing of our day, and as he was the originator of a method of expression in which the editor of those Notes has found little to admire and less to commend, the good judge may be dismissed with the wish that he had either not meddled with literature at all, even though we were to lose all he has produced, or made his personages use correct grammar and polite language. But Judge Longstreet, very probably, did not foresee that the few pebbles which he

flung would cause the Great Geyser of American authorship to cast up a mixed stream of vulgarity, bad grammar and outlandish orthography.

The war brought out many good singers. *Maryland! My Maryland!* by Randall; Henry Timrod's *A Cry to Arms*; Ticknor's *The Virginians of The Valley*, are examples which most will recall, and Father Ryan sung the woes of the people, and his *Conquered Banner* swept like a wail over the Southern land. Our magazinist might have added that Father Ryan was endowed with more of the "sacred flame" than any other writer of verse produced by America; Longfellow, Whittier and Lowell not excepted.

Just after the war, J. W. Davidson called the roll of Southern writers, and 241 answered; of these 112 were poets. Wars produce poets in a ratio apparently corresponding with the extinction of other luminaries. How much of this Southern writing was purely ephemeral is best ascertained by comparing Mr. Davidson's list with the annals of a current history of American literature.

But while many persons published books, and some of these, like the works of Caroline Lee Hentz, circulated widely, the number of persons who took literature pure and simple as a life work could be counted on the fingers of one hand; which abstention indicates, if it does not prove, that literature was not then a paying occupation. The novel was at that period only becoming the mouthpiece of the English-speaking, world-wide race. The new novel now is sought more eagerly and devoured more greedily than the New Testament. Of dead Southern writers who lived by and for literature, when we have named Edgar Allen Poe, William Gilmore Simms, John Esten Cooke, Poul Hamilton Hayne, and Sidney Lanier we must stop—and some of these, at times, turned aside to profaner things.