

knowing its own interest, has a right to exclude him from its fellowship; not only to prevent and punish his evil actions, but to suppress him in some effectual way, and above all prevent his leaving a posterity as wicked as himself." This is frank, not to say ruthless, and it seems to us to assume four things; first, that Mr. Morison has some transcendental criterion enabling him to pronounce that of two characters which, according to his showing, are equally natural, that of the tiger and that of the lamb, one is good, the other evil; secondly, that there exists somewhere an authority capable of deciding to which class each individual belongs; thirdly, that there resides in "society" a power of self-modification by selection which it is difficult to conceive in the absence of anything corresponding to the idea of free-will; and, fourthly, that the wicked, when you proceed to "suppress" them, will not fight. Stormy as may be the prospect opened by the over-productive agency of the steam-engine, it is far less stormy, we should think, than that which is opened by the proposal for the improved cultivation of the human species. Mr. Morison's sincere benevolence and desire to serve his kind can be no more doubted than can the intellectual power displayed in his book; but we are glad, for his sake and ours, that he is not called upon to superintend a regeneration which, we suspect, can only be brought about by the guillotine.

A NEW MANUAL OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

MR. CHARLES F. RICHARDSON'S "History of American Literature" (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons) divides the subject between two volumes. One, which is now before us, contains all the departments except poetry and fiction; the other, containing poetry and fiction, is to appear next year. The work, so far as it has gone, may be safely commended as a well-digested, compendious, and judicious survey. It is entirely free from what has been called "the nauseous grandiloquence of the American panegyric historians." Since, by their victory over the South, the Americans have demonstrated their power and become assured of their rank among the nations, the tone of their later writers, at all events, has gained in calmness and dignity. There has been less of irritable self-assertion and less of that perpetual nagging at England, which used, like the taste of onions in the butter, to offend the palate in almost every American production. Mr. Richardson even warns his literary countrymen against the overpraise which England has bestowed on some of their work. He has good reason, and we are afraid that this exaggerated homage is partly diplomatic, and arises not out of sincere, though misplaced, admiration, but out of a nervous and somewhat slavish desire to propitiate the American nation. If there is any department in which Mr. Richardson's own estimates seem to us somewhat high, it is that of history, in which we can hardly think that America has yet achieved greatness. Washington Irving only played with history, nor had he in him the making of a historian. Bancroft is considerable in his way, and deserves much of the commendation which Mr. Richardson bestows upon him; but he wrote at a time when the perspective was all wrong, and he falls too much under the category of panegyric. Hildreth is sensible, trustworthy and deserving of all praise for his courageous honesty; but he is totally wanting in literary genius. Prescott is a very pleasing writer; more can hardly be said of him, and he is now almost as much behind the march of recent research as Robertson, whom in his gifts he somewhat resembles. Motley, however high his value, is an American historian much in the same sense as a sculptor born in America, but who has passed his life at Rome and formed himself in Roman galleries, is an American sculptor. He distinctly imitates Carlyle; and though he pays homage, and sometimes rather unseasonable homage, to democratic sentiment, we cannot help thinking that in the Life of Oliver Barnevelt we trace the influence of a social connection with the House of Orange. Parkman seems to us the highest and most genuine instance of American success. No praise can be too high for him in his sphere; but the sphere is lowly compared with that of Tacitus or Gibbon. Hitherto the minds of Americans have been so filled with their own Revolution and the birth of their own Republic that they have seen everything else in a false light. It may be also that for the production of first-class history, as well as of first-class poetry, there is required not only an intellectual faculty, but a certain depth of character which comes to nations, as to men, only with experience of life. The only other point of importance on which we might differ from Mr. Richardson is his estimate of Emerson, and in this we must own that he is orthodox, while our views, if we dared to express them, would be heresy. We should like to try the experiment of cutting up one of Emerson's lectures into sentences, shaking the sentences in a bag, reading them in the order in which they chanced to come out to a worshipper of Emerson, and seeing whether he would be struck by any loss of clearness of thought or consecutiveness of reasoning. It seems to us that a man must be born an Emersonian.

SAUNTERINGS.

No feature of our degenerate times is more severely or generally taken to task than the tendency unblushingly displayed by the modern stage. Condemnation of it runs glibly off the editorial pen; it is a favourite pessimism of the moral Old Probs who lifts up his voice in all ages upon any provocation; and it forms an admirable theme for invective in the hands of the many who think the best correction for an evil disposition lies in be-shrewing it. It is a matter that touches the general public in its pleasure, a spot easily affected and exciting great concern. Considering this, and the opportunity it affords the scrutineer of his times in newspaper or magazine, it is not surprising that we hear so much about it. And there is, in all this printed protest, a rustling of old play-bills, a hint of old perfumes, the stage whisper and strut of worthies who have been amusing audiences of the great majority for a century past, a glare of foot-lights that burned out long ago; for it is invariably based on former things theatrical that have passed away. It is improving as well as amusing reading, and there is little doubt that as a result of it we shall sooner or later mend our ways.

It is, of course, the purpose of the present paper to revile the average theatrical representation of to-day. Otherwise informed, it could hardly hope for admission to the columns of any journal that reflects the sentiment of the time; and, indeed, it is in many respects the only justifiable intent with which the subject may be approached. But the favourite avenue of such approach is by comparison, and we will all agree that comparison of circumstances present, and somewhat offensively alive, with circumstances dead and gone, is not apt to result favourably to the former. For instance, I see by a "Theatrical Register" of "Mr. Colman's Theatre, Haymarket, by the Covent Garden Company," for May, 1809—taking the date at random—that there were no less than ten representations of Shakespeare, more than we get in Toronto during a whole season. The public of our grandfathers' time, then, had better taste than ours? Perhaps, but provision was made for the uncertainty. For the curtain dropped on "Hamlet," says my "Register," to rise immediately upon "Harlequin and Mother Goose." "Othello" was followed the same evening by "Tom Thumb," and "The Merchant of Venice" by "Love à la Mode." It is not only the manager of to-day that has taken the existence of vulgar predilections for granted; and we may say of him, at all events, that he keeps a severe eye upon incongruities.

Something may be said, moreover, however timorously, in favour of modern comedy. As the comedy of Sheridan reflected the outside characteristics of his age—the false standards of gentility, the elaboration of sentiment, the mince and affectation of all social intercourse—so does the comedy of to-day reflect the follies and weaknesses of ours. The reflection is less vivid, for the literary ability that would have been a playwright's a century ago is now a novelist's; but the success of the piece depends upon its truth now as then. And the reflection is doubtless of more vulgar foibles; but this is a time when vulgar claims, even to caricature, are strong. Stage humour, too, even of the commonest kind, must be conceded to have improved since the time when it all grew out of a broken head or a black eye; while we have comedy writers of the politer order whose skill in light satire relaxes the risibles of society much more creditably to society than any of their predecessors did.

Much, too, has been said of the tendency to unnecessary gorgeousness in *mise en scene*, of the subordination of acting to apparel, of the writing of a whole play for the production of one supreme mechanical wonder in stage transformation, of pandering to the eyes of the multitude at the expense of its ears. And, in so far as legitimate art suffers from this tendency, it cannot be too severely criticised. But it should not be forgotten that where it is not so obvious as to excite our condemnation, it contributes greatly to our pleasure. Consistency and care in detail, the lack of which we have come to regard as vastly detrimental to our enjoyment of any play, arise from this tendency, and may be said to have progressed with it. Reflection upon all we owe to these features of the drama, as it is presented to-day, should moderate somewhat the wrath with which we regard the popular exaggeration of them.

HAVING said all we can in its defence, however, we must acknowledge that a general view of the modern stage finds it indefensible. Nor is its arraignment necessary. We all know the intellectual and moral pass in which it finds itself, and is found, alas! by such large and profitable audiences. Though one avoided the very appearance of evil that is so flagrantly advertised, and stayed at home in the society of the evening paper and one's own righteousness, our villainously placarded walls and fences advise us of it in every possible combination of the chromatic scale. And the matter is on the lips of all intelligent people, who live anywhere on the route of the road manager and his "combination." Of the many