

saying, before the rabble hordes of Europe with their complexities and their sophistications invaded the Western Continent, the people of the United States were uniquely good. With the possible exception of a few rakes who became Virginians, they were not exactly bad, when as Englishmen they had crossed the sea. Their dread ministers took care that the flock should not deteriorate, and the enforced righteousness of the famous New England Colonies became a habit which in time spread down the Atlantic coast, and filtering across prairies and mountains, was not quite lost even in the California mining camps of the middle of the 19th. Century.

During many of those fortunate years, fiction was manufactured and practically monopolised by a group of ladies no less tedious than estimable. They are convicted of impeccable virtue, by their ingenuous misrepresentations of the wicked, and a public that bought and read with gratification *Rutledge*, *Queechy*, *St. Elmo*, and scores of other works of similarly harmless character, and defective composition could hardly have emerged from a state of virginal innocence. The ladies affected delineation of villains who were generally of foreign birth, scions of the British aristocracy being preferred. An observant and patriotic man, Mr. E. P. Roe, fearing that concentration of interest on a dissolute nobility might undermine republican principles, set himself valorously to provide an antidote in large quantities. He celebrated simple, honest, ungrammatical compatriots and successfully drove the ladies into obscurity. No American with the dimmest feeling for the meaning and uses of literature ever thought to gratify it by shutting himself up with the *Chestnut Burr*, or *A Leap in the Dark*, or *The Missing Bride*. When he heard foreigners speaking as if he should and must, worse still, as if he actually did, he turned his face to the wall and wept for his country. At that time, such Americans were few in number and almost always lived in Boston.

The serpent took advantage of the Civil War to slide into Eden. He worked his evil will in many directions with customary swiftness and sureness. The generation that was coming