

to warm relations with France. The American republicans took as models the young courtiers of Louis XVI., who, in their turn, sighed for the sylvan freedom of the Wild West and brought the seeds of revolution to France, along with a literary impulse that reached its highest development in Chateaubriand. Thos. Jefferson, who, if not the wisest, was the most influential of early American statesmen, was a warm admirer of the French, and his personal influence gave a rhetorical tone to university instruction in the United States that it has to-day. It was to be expected, therefore, that when a literature began to spring up in the young republic it should have the French feeling for form, with something of the Celtic humour, and a keen desire for the picturesque in language.

All these characteristics may be found in Washington Irving. He represents, therefore, the national character. His most permanent quality, that of humour, comes to him perhaps more directly as the descendant of an Orkney fisherman.

What has been said of the influence of the Queen Anne style upon the young republic is also true in a special sense of Irving. He was a devotee of Addison and Steele, of Bolingbroke and Swift. His style was probably modelled more nearly on that of Goldsmith, which the *flat* of Dr. Johnson — *nihil tetigit quod non ornavit* — had done much to exalt in all men's esteem.

If we look to Irving's works and consider the influence they had upon American literature we shall be amazed at how far-reaching it has been. His "Knickerbocker" has not only created a new province in the *orbis literatis notus*, it has given a shibboleth to the four hundred of the American Babylon. His single genius has added a romantic interest to the Hudson valley, quite equal to

that which centuries of folk lore have gathered round the Rhine. His "Grenada" was the forerunner of that brilliant series of Spanish histories which has immortalized the names of Prescott, Motley and Ticknor. Irving's books of travel set a fashion of another kind, and we have here a long list of followers: N. P. Willis' "Pencilings by the Way"; Bayard Taylor's "Views Afoot"; J. Ross Browne's "Californian in Iceland"; Curtis' "The Howadj in Egypt"; John Hay's "Castilian Days"; Story's "Roba di Roma," all these might, in one sense, be considered descendants from the "Sketchbook."

But, after all, it is Irving's humour which has been most fruitful in its effects on later writers. Very different indeed is the humour of "Knickerbocker" from that of the "Jumping Frog" or of "Roughing It." The delicate aroma of Irving's humorous sketches has been said to defy analysis, but everyone can feel how it pervades the following passage. See Warner's "Irving," p. 219-20. The following quotation shows us that he deliberately set out to attain such a style: "I wish in everything I do to write in such a manner that my productions may have something more than mere interest of narrative to recommend them which is very evanescent; something, if I dare use the phrase, of classic merit depending upon style which gives a production some chance for duration beyond the mere whim and fashion of a day."

Thus we see that Irving's style resulted from deliberative effort and was not, like that of Bunyan or Goldsmith, wholly the natural outcome of the man's personality. Yet, on the other hand, it was not the result of college training, as Milton's and Johnson's may be said to be. Irving went into business when still a youth, and never even matriculated. Perhaps