

England and France in the New World—a theme this, which has more interest for Americans north of the 42nd parallel than for those south of it—in every case the literary is not inferior to the scientific side of the work—indeed, we are so lost in admiration of the artist that we are apt to over-look the enormous labour of the workman.

To the question whether America has produced a national literature we answer then, yes. And now comes another question. How has this literature been developed and what are its special characteristics? Has it any peculiar marks by which we may know it from English literature written in England or Scotland or Ireland? Now this, you will perceive, is really attacking the same position from another side. For if American literature have no such ear marks as these then where is it? A mere geographical distinction, if it be nothing more, is valueless.

The most marked characteristic of American literature is a certain quality of the picturesque, a strong infusion of rhetoric that is seen in the careful attention paid to style, no less by essayists and travel writers than by historians and philosophers. This is often seen in combination with the other predominant characteristic of American literature, humour. The easiest way to make this intelligible is to take a few examples from the best authors. Read Hawthorne, "House of Seven Gables," p. 123; Holmes, "Autocrat," p. 76; Thoreau, "Walden," p. 224.

Such are the salient features of the American style—can we in any way account for their appearance? In seeking an answer to such a question the first appeal must be to history. History tells us in this case of the character of the early settlers—a mixed people drawn from all parts of the mother country—the best stock

decidedly being that of New England—the Puritan brand. On this stock there was an Hibernian grafting, so that we have the Celtic element which Matthew Arnold thought so necessary to give the sense for humour. What more does history tell us? She shows this band of colonists forced to struggle long and hard against the powers of nature, the ambush of the savages, the assaults of the French and finally against the tyrannical oppression of the mother country.

We have growing up here in course of time a double source and power of tradition—that of the old home, ever dear to the far colonist, and that of the early fights with the Indians, an element which adds so much of the picturesque to American literature. I confess that, like Andrew Lang, "I love books about red Indians." In the case of New York, we have actually a third source of tradition—the old Dutch times—and what has been made of this, one must have lived on the Hudson to know. There is a glamour of romance about early Spanish conquest in America that casts a halo over the histories of Helps and Bancroft and Prescott and Parkman. To these historical reasons others equally historical must be added. The natural tendency of a colony is to lag behind the mother country in literary taste as in other things. This was much more the case a century ago than now. It is indeed almost impossible for us to understand the altered state of things since the Atlantic cable was laid. One result of this was a sort of survival of the grandiose in the time of Queen Anne down to the time of Geo. III. Thackeray's "Henry Esmond" illustrates this style, and his "Virginians" shows how it came to affect American society and literature. The Revolution, which for the time cut off intercourse with England, led