

liberty, kept up by a gallant few in the rude fastnesses of the mountain land; the strife for freedom, "bequeathed from bleeding sire to son," found fitting chroniclers in the fervid harps of the wandering minstrels, who sent down the thrilling legends from bard to bard, till a more advanced age reduced the crude narrative to writing, and printing ultimately insured it against destruction.

For a time, a nation may attempt to forget its old traditions, and take to itself a false and spurious literature, foreign to the genius both of its language and its own character; but nature will, after a space, re-assert her right, and bring back the diverted stream to its legitimate channels. We have a striking illustration of the truth of this position in the history of English poetry. In the early part of the last century, the taste or prejudices of the age had almost completely discarded the genuine English lyric, and in its stead had adopted either the cold and foreign tinsel of the ancient classic, tricked out in a modern stage dress, or a false and stilted sentimentality equally unmanly and unreal. But the age that could tolerate Garrick's *Macbeth*, arrayed in the full-bottomed wig and broad flaps of George II., could easily endure the destruction of its own vigorous minstrelsy. Dr. Percy at last published his "*Reliques of Ancient Poetry*," and though exposed at first to the polished raillery of the Addisonian critics, and the elephantine sarcasm of the clumsy Johnson, ultimately succeeded in hurling from their throne the twin usurpers, classicity, and affected-sentiment, and rescuing from darkness and chains the enslaved genius of his country's genuine poetry.

Every one conversant with the annals of the last century, is aware of the effect of thus bringing back the taste of the age to the "pure well of English undefiled," and of seeking for models of imitation in the simple but true and hearty reliques of ancient poetry, steeped as it ever is in the genuine feelings of the people among whom it had its birth, and of whose existence it might be said to have formed a part. The lyrics of Spain all breathe of the strifes and achievements of its ancient history,—of the gallant bearing of a nation beneath the overwhelming weight of invasion. The Swiss and the Tyrolese delight in the free strains that sing of Tell and Hofer. The Scot has his Wallace and Bruce; the Irishman his Brian and O'Neill; but the American is destitute of all

these. The inhabitant of this Continent has little, if any, early recollections to be entwined with the local characteristics of the land he inhabits; he has to cast his eyes beyond an ocean, should he ask for legends or memories of the past to awaken the inspiration of the present.

An attempt has been made by American authors, to form poetic materials in the stirring history of their Revolution, but the subject possessed no poetic charm or lyrical association, and the attempt though still repeated, was, is, and ever will be a failure.

The characteristic of transatlantic mind, is an almost universal want of imagination. All the perceptive and reasoning faculties may be strong and active, but this faculty is unquestionably the rarest in the intellectual endowment of a native of this Continent. His education, his habits, his predilections, all militate against his success in the paths of fancy, or the flowery walks of poetic creation. History is a pursuit naturally foreign to his habit of thinking, for his own country, the youngest born of nations, has but little of her own, and no local enthusiasm, that essential of the highest order of annalist, can prompt him, should he take the past occurrences of other lands for his theme. The language in which he speaks and thinks, is but a borrowed medium, a language in which have excelled the greatest masters that have ever ennobled an earthly tongue, and who must, in the rich excess of their brightness, outdazzle and outshine the highest efforts of a nation of imitators. Hence the American writer cannot but feel, that how far soever he may outstrip all rivals that strive with him on his own shore, a hopeless contest still awaits him with the almost invincible giant of English literature, who requires from his transatlantic children unreserved homage and fealty, in return for his extending to them the rich boon of his glorious language, and the priceless treasures of his departed votaries, as models to guide their taste,—beacons to light them on their path to intellectual celebrity, should they have courage to attempt its perilous ascent. In small communities, distinct in habit and peculiar in language, an author of moderate ability may rise to distinction, and be known to the world as the first poet, novelist, or historian of his country, though in the general assembly of literary talent, his place might be far from foremost. An American, however,