

Poe," and the gratifying result of the enquiry is that the ignorance of neither is illumined while the prejudices of both are perfectly confirmed.

It is known to the wise that general impressions are generally wrong; none could be further from right than that there are no American novels. Every state has its loyal legion of novelists and every hamlet, village, and town, has its local favourite laurel-crowned. There is much affectation in the Englishman's position. International relations need not be strained, should a knowledge of the existence of American fiction in abundance be admitted, coupled with a plaint of utter inability to read it. The onus of the predicament might be thrown on subject, style, even language, without creating a diplomatic incident. The case of the Frenchman is different. The French are a literary people,—their heads are packed with ideas and with literary conventions, which are to them sacred things, just as the domestic hearth is to the Englishman, or the Star-Spangled Banner to the American. Books in which these conventions are ruthlessly violated are incomprehensible to them, futile and sacreligious. Any Frenchman, after reading only one American novel, accidentally chosen, can isolate a whole nation psychologically, with perfect lucidity and a clear conscience. Another accident of choice might make this operation more difficult; for, however outside the pale of his intellectual interests or the range of his sympathy the substance might be, he would recognise the presence of several of his cherished conventions, and an approximation externally to his own performance. A certain similarity of form has already been appreciated by French critics, but it is regarded rather as a closely imitative exceptional effort than as an expression of a national impulse towards perfection. At the bottom of the Englishman's grumble and the Frenchman's bewilderment lies their habit of associating the novel with imaginative literature. Though they arrive at their knowledge from different points of view and hold some irreconcilable opinions, being strongly sentient animals, they know literature of power as distinguished from