

A NEW LITERARY POWER.

May I call you sense of learning,
Instinct pure, or heavenly art ?

—JOHN KEBLE.



AMERICA has been given a new writer, who is rapidly adding great and lasting distinction to her literature. This notable person stands in the very fore-front of the very small group of those literary path-finders who, contrary to an over-riden dictum of one Solomon, actually find something new under the sun, or, what is practically the same thing, new ways of preparing, finishing, and presenting ancient raw materials, and who, therefore, may justly be regarded as discoverers of what is novel, and called genuine originators.

I set a value upon praise. For the practice of indiscriminate and, consequently, insincere commendation, which is, perhaps, too common with a certain class of Catholic critics while dealing with the writings of Catholic authors, I have but one feeling—unbounded contempt. I loathe sap-mouthing. He who praises everybody, praises nobody. On the other hand, just praise, discreetly worded in modest language, is a distinct and honorable debt, which should be paid to the last particle by all beneficiaries of the person or thing praised. This remark applies with special force to men of letters. Merit is exalted, strengthened and encouraged by the judicious praise of the public which it benefits. Whether more mischief is done by the sin of malicious speaking and backbiting or by the iniquitous practice of speaking well of everybody, is with me, an open question. That parasitical humbug, the praise-monger, is compounded of about equal parts of cowardice and insincerity, both alike worthless, or positively malevolent, according to the circumstances under which they happen to be employed. But praise honestly accorded to desert, is like mercy, as described by our great poet, and never fails to benefit him who gives and him who receives.

The highest praise of literary genius is the attributing to it of original invention. This praise, I believe, is highly deserved by the new luminary of whom these paragraphs treat, who is what