

than distinguished any earlier development. Very few of the names registered in this Supplement without any reference to a mention of them in the original work are among the most eminent in the departments to which they respectively belong. Still smaller, of course, is the number of living writers who hold such a position. The chronicler whose duty it has been to register the deaths that have thinned the front ranks of the cohort, leaving gaps which might not be filled from the denser throng behind, could not but have an ominous apprehension that the end of his task would indicate no mere arbitrary stopping-place, but would rather be found hereafter to coincide with the termination of an era some of whose latest glories had been watched by the older among us in their dawn. Nor can it be said that the conditions and prevailing spirit of the time give any forecast of a new period of original and vigorous production. No one would undertake to formulate the precise influences under which literary genius is awakened and fostered; but the inspiration and impulse must have an innate origin, and cannot spring from mere extraneous inducements or be stimulated by the march of material progress. Perhaps it may be safe to say that there are periods when the highest intellect is chiefly concerned with the improvement of man's nature, and others when it is chiefly concerned with the improvement of his condition. Literature and art emanate from the former tendency, science and its varied applications from the latter. But no doubt each of these tendencies reacts upon the other, thus bringing about a due alternation.

It must also be acknowledged that, while the literature of the present day is more remarkable for its quantity than for its quality, yet the general level in this latter respect has been steadily rising. In purely imaginative productions skilful construction, artistic finish, adherence to nature, all the results and evidences of culture, are far more common than they were in the eighteenth century or in the earlier part of the nineteenth. In works designed to convey instruction and information the improvement is perhaps still greater and more general. History and biography have ceased to be pompous and ponderous; science seeks to captivate not only by the marvel of its revelations but also by the form in which they are presented; books of travel out-rival works of fiction in the narration of exciting adventure, while ministering to the general curiosity and desire for knowledge; and philosophers and essayists address a greater mass of readers and are at the same time tried by more exacting standards than of yore. In short, literature, like the social system, but to a far greater extent, has lost the old class distinctions and become democratic. The scholar no longer writes solely for scholars; the dilettante who appealed only to a fastidious or artificial taste is well-nigh extinct. The erudite few do not wait to have their discoveries or speculations filtered through minor channels before being spread abroad, but communicate directly with a larger public. One obvious result of these changes has been the rise of a number of periodicals far exceeding in variety of topics and general ability of treatment any earlier publications of the kind; but a considerable proportion of what is first given to the world through this medium is soon reproduced in a more convenient and permanent form.

It follows from all this that the literature of the present is more broadly and completely representative than any other, showing "the very age and body of the time his form and pressure." Every phase of actual life is delineated, every fact and incident chronicled, every spring and movement analyzed. Practical pursuits and undertakings are described and explained by those who are personally engaged in them. Not a theory or notion is conceived without claiming public attention. The multitude of books, mostly, of course, ephemeral, that issue year after year in greater numbers from the press testifies to the communicative spirit of the age, to a desire for