



Mr. Brander Matthews, in *The Cosmopolitan* for February, asserts that British books of reference, though improving, "are still spoiled for Americans by a fatal defect. The 'poor islanders' (a phrase of Mr. Howell's, and a favourite of Mr. Matthews, who actually comments on its omission in "Bartlett's Familiar Quotations!") are of necessity insular, and in their books of reference they are content to survey only a British horizon." I am not going to discuss the question whether British books of reference have this fault to a greater degree than those of other nations. An empire with a footing on every continent, and holding the keys of "the gates of the earth," certainly *should* not be especially addicted to unduly magnifying near objects and interests; yet it may be. But surely Mr. Matthews's patriotism must blind him when he states that "American books of reference, it is a pleasure to say, are free from the corresponding defect, for obvious reasons: the American compiler is never forgetful of the claims of the other half of the English-speaking race, and in any American cyclopædia or dictionary you will find full credit and due proportion given to the British." Among the American publications which he mentions with deserved approval is Mr. John Foster Kirk's "Supplement to Allibone's Dictionary," which he thinks an improvement upon the useful but inaccurate work of Allibone. The Supplement, he finds, even pays undue deference to British authors and, in a few specified instances, gives them more space than Americans of equal merit. This book, however, can hardly be quoted as evidence of the impartiality of United States compilers, for it is the supplement to what purports to be an exhaustive "Dictionary of English Literature and of British and American Authors, Living and Deceased;" and, besides, its compiler happens to be a Canadian, born in New

Brunswick and educated in Nova Scotia. On reading Mr. Matthews's tribute to the "cosmopolitan completeness" of American books of general reference, I opened one, and only one, "Rand & McNally's Indexed Atlas of the World," Chicago, 1885. It may not be a representative work of its class, but as to the relative space assigned to the United States and the rest of the world, I think it is not a peculiar specimen. Of its 918 pages, the first 35 are devoted to common statistics; pages 36 to 239 exhaust the world outside of America; pages 240 to 319 are allotted to America outside of the United States; while the United States monopolize the remaining 599 pages. To Ireland, which has furnished so many millions to the population of the States, and whose merits and wrongs assume such imposing proportions in election years, just five pages (53 to 57) are assigned. I remember seeing a few years ago a nicely got-up American book entitled "Living Leaders of the World," and feeling rather crushed by the strange coincidence that, while an immense majority of the "men of light and leading" were citizens of the United States, only one of them, I think, belonged to the neighbouring Dominion of Canada.

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It has been the experience of several educated Irishmen travelling in the United States to be called Englishmen, and to have their attempted correction of the mistake treated as a joke. Travelled Americans of course understand that there are Irishmen and Irishmen; but it is a sad fact that, owing to the comparatively small number of cultivated people who emigrate from the Green Isle to the States, the popular idea of an Hibernian among our neighbours is not an exalted one. To some he is merely a hewer of wood and a drawer of water. An acquaintance of mine, having bought an