AS WE LIST: AND YE LIST.

Religion, politics and literature, these three, and the greatest of these is literature, inasmuch as it includes the other two. The religion and politics of a people reveal what they are thinking and doing, and thoughts and actions form the subject matter of literature The truest index of a nation is found in those productions which, as distinguished from scientific and historical writings, are purely artistic. It is impossible for men to misrepresent themselves in literature, and their nearest approach to falsehood lies in their tendency to display themselves at best, at worst, or indifferent.

We can instance no literature which portrays the highest and most ideal qualities of a nation more purely and persistently than that of the American people. From the "Bay Psalm Book," compiled by those stern old ministers of Massachusetts bay, versed in Scripture and ignorant of art, to the last outpouring of Walt Whitman, we can hardly find a story or a poem that does not in strong or feeble manner reflect that fine desire of freedom and righteousness and love which makes life glorious and man a son of God.

Truly is it said that America has produced no Shakespeare, no Milton, no Dante, no Gœthe, no Scott; but she has her own names, and they are great and distinctive and imperishable. No Anglo-Saxon on the eastern side of the Atlantic could have been a Hawthorne, an Emerson, a Whittier. These, and kindred writers, are her peculiar pride, her first-born, who differ, and she thinks happily, from all the other children of the world, and who, when they have become men, shall prove themselves masters not to be excelled.

To assert that this high standard has already been reached, and to pretend to see in Whitman, as some of his more rabid admirers do, the companion of Shakespeare and Æschylus is to be as absurd as untrue. No one who had studied that volume which forms his life work, "Leaves of Grass," with any calmness of judgment could give him that rank. To *rank* him at all seems impossible. The ordinary reader, if we may interpret such an one, approaches Whitman with a preconceived scorn. Upon entering him he is impressed by a disorderly vastness; he feels as if he were standing on the shore, with the sea stretching far to the right and the land spreading far to the left—with the air full of the sound of the waves, and the chirpings of birds, and the voices of men, and the perfume of flowers, all mingled together, all audible and perceived, none articulate or distinct. He passes from one thing to another, through songs of woods and wars, and trees and waters, and cities and farms, and loves and sorrows, and men with their friends, wives, children, flesh and bones; he catches in the poet, here a note of blatant democracy, there a flare of American boastfulness; he is dashed from beauty to impropriety, from the sublime to the verge of the ridiculous, from a rhapsody on the "eternal hills" to a dissertation on the *femur*; and, notwithstanding, he emerges with a glow in his vein, a wholesome enthusiasm, a desire for life, and, most remarkable of all, a liking for, and an admiration of, Whitman. This we suggest to be the experience of the ordinary reader. We will take no responsibility by saying anything of the extraordinary reader.

Walt Whitman has made use of that rhymeless, metreless, but not unrhythmical verse which is employed in the authorized version of the translations of Hebrew poetry and also in the poems of Ossian. His lines sometimes read like prose, but on the whole they are musical, and occasionally carry us away, as in those powerful songs of Lincoln, "When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed," and "O Captain, my Captain!" One of the strains which Whitman pours fourth ceaselessly, and not always wisely, is that in celebration of human association—friendship. And yet we often feel in him a delicate perception of the need and longing of man, such as he expresses in the few lines of the poem "I Saw in Louisiana a Live-Oak Growing," that arouses in us intense sympathy.

To attempt to rank Whitman among his own countrymen or among foreigners is, at present, hazardous. He himself declared that his admirers injured him much more seriously than his decriers, and asked the world to postpone its judgment of him for a hundred years. We had no intention either of judging him or of remarking upon him, and, to prove our innocence, we honestly assure you that we commenced these observations in the firm belief that we were going to discuss Thomas Bailey Aldrich and Edgar Allen Poe. We can give no reason for not having done so, except that we seldom do what we were going to.

THE SECOND PART OF FAUST.

The second edition of the Faust "Fragment," published in 1808, contained the Prologue in Heaven, the Dedication and the Prologue in the Theatre. It is in the first of these, however, that most interest lies, for it embodies the fundamental idea of the new poem. Faust is to be saved, and this is seen in the words of the Lord to Mephistopheles:

> Him, canst though seize, thy power exist
> And lead him on thy downward course,
> Then stand abashed, when thou perforce must own
> A good man in the direful grasp of ill
> His consciousness of right retaineth still.

The Mephistopheles in the Prologue in Heaven is again different from him who, as a servant to Faust, fulfills the commission of the Earth Spirit. The latter is egotistical, and is indeed sceptical of the aspirations of the human soul, while the former is doomed to defeat because he cannot properly comprehend mankind.

The second part of Faust was finished in 1831. Some parts had been written as early as the period of his arrival at Weimar, and the rest at various intervals between that time and its publication. The allegory and mysticism of this part of the play have rendered it more difficult than the poetical symbolism of Part I. It is, however, perfectly in harmony with the second edition of the first part, and the two must be taken together. Faust has seen in the former part, only the little world, but now he is to see the great world, and upon a broader and more elevated scale. This part is a history of humanity rather than the history of a human being.

When the misery of Gretchen and the awful consciousness of sin have fallen unheeded upon Faust he gradually becomes callous to all sensual desires. By degrees there arises in him the feeling for something higher, nobler and more enduring, and this culminates in his wish to live for the welfare of others. The first four acts are devoted to his strivings for himself, but in the last act all his endeavors are altruistic. Recognizing at length that by his exertions homes have been made happy and hearts more glad, Faust exclaims!

> Thus here, by dangers girt, shall glide away,
> Of childhood, manhood, age, the vigorous day:
> And such a throng I fain would see—
> Stand on free soil among a people free!
> Then dared I hail the moment fleeing:
> "*Ah, still delay—thou art so fair!*"
> The traces cannot, of mine earthly being,
> In æons perish,—they are there:—
> In proud fore-feeling of such lofty bliss
> I now enjoy the highest moment—this!

Thus there is a distinction between the contrast of the legend and that of Goethe's play. In the legend the allotted time has been decided upon, and until that time arrives Faust is free. In the poem of Goethe, however, the period is not fixed, and Faust's doom appears uncertain to the last, although the words of the Lord in the Prologue lead us to conclude that Faust will never subjugate his higher nature to his lower.

As this was the last lecture of the series, there was a large attendance, and Prof. Vander Smissen was listened to with great interest.