LITERARY CRITICISM IN THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW, 1815-1835

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Before a satisfactory history of American literary criticism can be written, an immense amount of spade-work and inventorying will have to be done, especially in the magazines. As a beginning in this direction, the present paper seeks to provide an chronological bibliography of critical essays which appeared in the North American Review (the major critical journal of the period) from its founding in 1815 to 1836, the eve of Transcendentalism which was then ushered in by Emerson's Nature. Fairly full summaries have been provided, the key phrases being quoted with page-references, and the essays have been numbered for convenient reference below.

On the whole, it is hoped that a study of the material presented will justify a revision of the generally accepted opinion of the North American Review, which may be illustrated in the words of George E. DeMille: "In spite, however, of their admiration for Byron, Scott, and Wordsworth, the fathers of the review were by no means Romantic in their literary doctrines. They are indeed a clear illustration of the late survival of the Eighteenth Century in America."¹ A careful study of all the evidence shows, however, that, granting a reactionary element, the Review embodied a rather surprising number of articles setting forth romantic ideas. The personality of Emerson and the beauty with which he expressed his ideas, together with the absence of any one comparable personality in New England during the 1815-36 period seems to have led most readers to look upon his ideas as sharply original and very different from those to be found in the North American Review of the decade preceding. It may seem startling, but the evidence now presented warrants the view that, although Emerson surely had many other sources, he could have found practically all his early

¹ Literary Criticism in America, New York, 1931, P. 23.
Transcendental and romantic ideas in the very pages of the Review he is supposed to have so sharply departed from. Indeed, it may well be that the reception accorded Emerson is partly accounted for by the fact that many New Yorkers had been gradually but steadily moving in his direction, and that the Review had done much to acquaint its readers with the ideas to which he was to give the prestige of his impressive personality. In 1819 he liked the Review so much that he urged his brother to subscribe for it; in 1822 he said it "grows better and travels further"; in 1823 he wrote, "The last N. A. Review . . . is full of wit and literature of which the Idol (Edward Everett) wrote six articles." Indeed, it is not strange that he should have admired it, for two of the leading editors were his old Harvard teachers for whom he had profound respect—Edward T. Channing (who taught Emerson rhetoric and to whom many of his ideas about style and literature [see No. 14 following] may be traced) and Edward Everett, his "Idol" who taught him Greek and inspired him with his eloquence. Transcendental ideas appear in the discussion of Gerando's work on Plato (No. 106 following), in essays on Madame de Staël and her introduction of German thinkers (Nos. 66, 84, 43, 200), in a panegyric on Cousin (No. 193; see also 55), in numerous essays on German thinkers (especially Nos. 114, 19, 117), in essays on Coleridge (Nos. 218, 224; see also 36, 229 and 47), on Wordsworth (No. 109; see also No. 47), and on Carlyle (No. 231; see also No. 229).

Another issue which was vigorously debated in the Review was the question whether American literature ought to be distinctively "national" or "universal" in appeal and without conscious departure from European standards. For nationalism see Nos. 1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 14, 29, 39, 42, 45, 46, 53, 64, 74, 75, 76, 91, 92, 108, 114, 119, 120, 121, 127, 146, 159, 166, 175, 183, 186, 189, 192, 194, 223, 226. For aspects of the counter-argument for universalism and respect for European traditionalism, see Nos. 17, 33, 34, 41, 48, 51, 57, 61, 67, 70, 80, 107, 112, 128, 134, 140, 144, 150, 151, 155, 165, 166, 171, 174, 205. Faith in progress is expressed in Nos. 141, 160, 168, 184, 222; it is questioned in Nos. 140, 158, 188, 221.

2 Emerson followed the North American Review closely, even to ascertaining the authorship of many of the anonymous articles. See his Letters, edited by Rusk, I, 27, 41, 81, 110, 113, 123, 131, 142, 149, 168, 219, 287, 291, 292, 345, 419, 433.
For aspects of the romantic point of view, consult Nos. 10, 12, 14, 23, 27, 29, 36, 38, 43, 45, 47, 50, 52, 56, 57, 66, 69, 75, 97, 102, 109, 118, 122, 152, 160, 184, 194, 198, 207, 213, 219, 224, 225. It is possible that the general notion that the Review was primarily hostile to romanticism and transcendentalism, primarily the advocate of a reactionary neo-classicism, has been suggested (among the moderns who have read it at all) by the extreme truculency of the Peabody brothers/W.B.O., and O.W.B., —see Nos. 174, 158, 190, etc.

The editors of the Review were as follows: William Tudor, 1815-17; Jared Sparks, 1817-18; E. T. Channing, 1818-19; Edward Everett, 1820-23; Jared Sparks, 1824-30; A. H. Everett, 1830-35. Contemporary judgment of the quality of the Review may be found in the rival Knickerbocker Magazine, (V, 465, May, 1835):

"In every respect the North American Review is an honor to the country. In politics it is liberal and impartial. We hail it as the sole exponent, in its peculiar sphere, of our national mind, character, and progress; and are proud to see it sent abroad . . . as an evidence of indigenous talent, high moral worth, and republican feeling."

SUMMARIES

1815


A review of a pamphlet entitled, "The United States and England, being a reply to the criticism on Inchiquin's Letters, contained in the Quarterly Review for January, 1814." Maintains that English reviews and writers have a "disposition to think themselves infallible" and give a "vehement misrepresentation" of our character (62-3). Denies the reliability of such writers on America as Weld, Parkinson, Moore, and Cobbet. Quotes at length from the pamphlet reviewed to show the deficiency of American literature is mainly due to the constant demand here for an active life in fighting Indians, the struggle for existence, the Revolution, and the turmoil of the French Revolution (83-7). Ends with a plea for better relations between the two countries; "there is nothing essentially conflicting in the permanent interests of the two nations" (83). Suggests we "exchange a few individuals annually" as a means of disseminating knowledge of "the true state of things in the countries of each other" (89). (For orientation see Jane L. Moseck, The English Traveller in America, 1785-1835. New York, 1922.)

A favorable review of Moral Pieces in Prose and Verse by Miss Huntley (Mrs. Sigourney), in which Tudor reveals himself as a transitional figure, veering from a liking for neo-classical “freedom and facility” of style, “correctness and harmony” of matter, and freedom from “false taste” (119-120), to a liking for the “exquisitely beautiful and pathetic” and “sublime” of early romanticism and melancholy. Tudor is also a nationalist; the American scene is an unopened “rich and various” (120) source for literature, consisting of the frontier and the French and Indian Wars, the Indians themselves, a great variety of people, and finally a great “magnificence of the scenery” (121).


A review favorable to Scott in which Tudor expresses his “reverence for the old school of poetry” and the “versification of Dryden and Pope,” but believes Scott will live by “the freshness, energy, relief and transparency of his description” and “the vigour and enthusiasm of some of his sentiments” (275).


Channing is an extreme nationalist. He gives two reasons for America’s backwardness in literature: (a) the possession of the same “language with a nation, totally unlike it in almost every relation”; and (b) America’s reliance on English literature rather than on “a laborious independent exertion of its own intellectual powers” (307-8). He discusses the first statement at length here and the second in a later article (see no. 8 below). The English language is fitted to the climatic, social, political, literary, and religious conditions of England. These conditions are utterly different in America, and the English language therefore is not a fit vehicle for an American literature based on these conditions. Ends with an expression of the noble savage ideal: the only original literature in America is the “oral literature of the aborigines”; it uses languages fitted to American conditions (313).


Tudor is a purist, attacking the idea of an American language. He advocates instead “sound respect for the great standard authors of the language” and for English critics who point out American peculiarities. He is a nationalist nevertheless; our language is to be an improved “second edition” (387) of the language which has begun to decay in England.


Takes the position of Scott for granted, and merely summarizes the plot for his readers. Dislikes the use of dialect and Scott’s invention of new words.

Summarizes the materials from which a national literature can be created. These are: the Revolution, the events prior to 1750 (which constitute our antiquity), the French and Indian Wars, the natural scenery including native animals, and, above all, the Indians. In this respect the Five Nations are comparable to the Greeks "in the heroic ages" and the epic materials of Homer (19).


Our literary delinquency is due to the habit of depending on English literature in the period of our political infancy (see the companion article No. 4 above). The remedy is "a vigorous assertion of our own minds" to discover our character, by a national history stressing American peculiarities and perhaps a history of our poetry.


Approaches a psychological study of the phenomenon, but seems to be within the sentimental traditional of the later 18th century, rather than the great tradition of Aristotle. The "cultivated and benevolent take delight in the emotions excited by the well wrought scenes of distress" invented by the "muse of Tragedy, or the genius of Romance" (60). Particularly affecting are "the disinterested sentiments of afflicted virtue" (67).


Hogg has "the delicacy, purity, and feeling" attributed to shepherds by the ancient poets (104). Dislikes the resurrection of "obsolete, unintelligible, and barbarous terms" by Hogg and other Scotch writers. Ends praising "romantick tales and ballads founded on local superstitions" which lend themselves to "fancy and originality" (109).


Cicero can be "safely entrusted to youth and innocence" because he contains "no wild metaphysics" to pervert the mind nor "licentious sentiments" to corrupt the morals. Moreover he is an advocate of "freedom and republican government" (130).

1816


Defines the nature of criticism. Exalts historical criticism in the place of criticism based on rules and standards. "In matters of taste, every man’s opinion must be right in respect to himself;” it is folly to try "to reason men into pleasure or disgust. To judge rightly of others,” therefore, we must "transfuse ourselves into, and become identified with them" (235). Doesn’t agree with Cowper’s ideas, but
he is “animated by the glow of benevolence” and is a poet of second rank.


The fine arts are highly developed in America, but due to the youthfulness of our country and the lack of public taste many artists go to Europe. The only solution is to establish an academy of fine arts for the double purpose of instructing our artists and improving public taste (197).


In many ways Channing foreshadows Emerson, who was actually his pupil at Harvard. He quotes Wordsworth and upholds the romantic doctrine of genius and originality. To set up rules and models “comes in the way of nature, and reduces all her irregularities, ... her endless change, into straightness, smoothness, and harmony” (203). Learning and especially the study of the “classicks” (206) result in an “ acquiescing and unproductive” mind (205). Makes a strong plea for a native literature. “Its charm is its native-ness” in spite of its rudeness (207). When a nation through luxury comes into its Augustan age, its only hope is to turn back to its Elizabethan age. (See Channing’s Lectures (On Rhetoric) Read Before the Seniors of Harvard College. Boston, 1856.)


States his preference for the realistic novel of manners, based on daily “occurrences and observations”, to the Gothic novel based on “superhuman characters and preternatural incidents” (217). The former shows more maturity, “requires greater progress in the arts,” demands “greater skill” from the artist, and shows “improved susceptibility and taste” in the public (217).


Tudor is here strongly neo-classical; taste and judgment are based on certain fixed standards (273). There are three schools of poetry in our language: Chaucer to Milton, Dryden to Johnson, and the contemporary age. The latter is a chaos of undisciplined and unchastened inspiration.


The American man of letters is too ignorant of the world. He must study all history, including philosophy, oratory and poetry, as well as the history of New England (293). Gives three reasons for the deficiency of America: freedom of opportunity draws talent into other fields; the Indians, the Revolution, and the Constitution exacted all our best efforts; and our language brings in English competition. Concludes that America cannot equal Europe without first undergoing a long strenuous period of study.

A purist view of language. American writers must make a diligent study of the English language to "avoid improprieties and barbarisms" (356). Mentions Dryden as a pure writer. Native American words should be admitted only "with caution" (357).

1817


A summary with translated excerpts of Goethe's autobiography; its purpose is to increase American interest in the great German (261). Everett attacks Goldsmith's View of Wakefield as a too realistic picture of life (249) and says Goldsmith himself proves "the original inspiration of Genius" (260). Yet Everett says that "the elements of poetry" are drawn from the conflict of the spirit of man with the "inexorable conditions of destiny" (261). A notable review, introducing Goethe to America. (See No. 109 following.)


Main object is to acquaint Americans with Italian literature which has not "attracted the attention it deserves" (315). Takes the position that the "progress of literature" was the cause of the Reformation, and shows some intimacy with and adherence to neo-classical literary principles.


Byron is one of the "most signal instances of the perversity of genius, that the world has ever known." Accuses Byron and Sterne of exploiting sentiment for the vulgar.

22. Franklin Dexter, "Airs of Palestine; a Poem; by John Pierpont, Esq.," IV, 408-420 (March, 1817).

Justifies our lack of a literature; our "increasing population, peculiar form of government, and the republican doctrine of rotation in office" demand all our talent (408). Dexter is a neo-classicist; he regrets that the heroic couplet, used in this poem, has gone out of fashion in the present age of "ballad-mongers and song-wrights" (411).


Romantic in temper, Channing has only praise for Cowper. He brings the "humblest reader to visit nature with his heart" (58), and has become a popular poet "without sparing a single fault" or departing "from a pure native taste" (54).

Phillips is a romanticist and a thoughtful critic. Refuses to judge Byron by the rules (by which “little minds fancy they can comprehend great things”). Poetry is most “easily and accurately estimated by its effects” and, of all the arts, it “can least endure the fetters of a system, as its vital principles are novelty and invention” (107). He attacks the “monotonous cadences of Pope” but thinks Byron’s verse could be improved (108).


The poem's chief merit is that it keeps up the practice of the art in America. It indicates no “bold strokes of genius” (226) but some “talents”, and might better, since it is mostly descriptive, have been done “in plain prose” (225).

26. Franklin Dexter, “Sancho, or the Proverbialist,” V, 239-244 (July, 1817).

A conservative and neo-classicist, Dexter deplores the extensive diffusion of literature and learning; books must now be gauged “to the taste of the lowest capacity” which is that of “sentimental chambermaids or romantick cooks” (240). A few “gentlemen authors” remain, but the demands of philanthropy are greater than those of literature.


Defends the novel on the grounds that it: (1) is a good vehicle of morality; (2) gives a “more vivid impression of reality” (259) than history; (3) suits the general level of capacities and should be used by “men of abilities” instead of by sentimentalists and libertines; and (4) is an instrument of culture destined to do much to determine the “character of the age” (260). One of the glories of our age is the transfer of romance of a high order from the castle to the “cottage and workshop”, (261) and the leading light of this movement is Scott.


Gilman, who made the translation of the satires of Boileau which appeared in the various numbers of the Review at this time, leans toward neo-classic literary principles. The Elizabethan age is the result of three streams, the classics of antiquity, the romances of the Middle Ages, and the translation of the Scriptures, which contributed respectively, reason, fancy, and elevated morality. “Taste” was embarrassed by the union, but “genius”, “ loftier passions”, and the “expression of god-like sentiments” were richer fruits. Lauds Spenser and laments the decline of allegory.


Gives three reasons for our slowness in literature: dependence on England makes us forget “what is well done here” and leads
us to distrust "our own judgment and taste"; and finally our materialism is creating a contempt for intellectual endeavor (366). A disciple of Coleridge, Dana hails the romantic movement as the return to "true taste." Poetry is now freed from "its narrow views of material nature" (368) and, on a much larger scale, from narrow views "on the human level." This "enlarged philosophy" brings the common within the domain of poetical. Praises Allston as a romantic.


Unsympathetic to Moore but not to romanticism (an "age of firm and healthy poetry"). There is a "natural alliance between genius and purity" which makes Moore's transgressions inconsistent. His ingenious fancy is artificial and ornamental; it is not a "poetical embodying of thought" (5).

1818


A favorable review praising the author's realism (she "discriminates between the real and the seeming") (154) and her "moral wholesomeness." Attacks the novel of the past; on the one hand, the "sentimental deliriums of romance" and, on the other, "false views of life" in Fielding, Smollett, and Madame de Staël. Especially vicious are those which represent "chance as the arbiter of the world" at the expense of virtue and prudence (155). Miss Edgeworth has reformed "the novel-sick mind" of all this (156).


In this "efeminate period" with its "restless . . . novelty-seeking" "a fair perusal of Mather's Magnalia is an achievement not to be slighted" (255-6). In general defends Mather; his "faults were those of his age" (257); and though it is inaccurate his history is the best on the "state of society and manners" of the time (272).


Frisbie believes there are great advantages to be derived from the "study of the classics", especially for "our rising literature" (324). They help "discipline" the mind, enable us to acquire "copiousness of expression," and give a knowledge of life in ancient times which is at least as valuable as that of geography and natural science.

34. Willard Phillips, "Letters from the South" (Paulding), VI, 368-382 (March, 1818).

A very sane review, unfavorable to Paulding, who thought that we could develop a superior literature by relying on a race of original geniuses and by substituting the study of belle-lettres for mathematics in our colleges. Phillip's reply is that of the universalist; we must read and study "night and day the most distinguished
authors in literature and science, both in the ancient and modern languages” (873). Says the insistence on complete independence from Europe by men like him has led America into useless “novelties”; we should learn to imitate “judiciously” as all great nations have done.


An attack on the theories of beauty which Jeffrey expressed in the Encyclopedia Britannica. Denies Jeffrey’s contention that there are general laws of beauty based on the “theory of associations” (22); or upon the rules of the critics. The standard of beauty of a work of art is “its effect on us, as individuals” (28). To avoid eccentric decisions, however, we should conform ourselves to the universal which is “the material and intelligent universe” (“the beauties and moral influences of nature” and the “pleasing or grand or impressive in her scenery”) (24).


A sane critical attack on a book of poetry for children based on neo-classical literary principles. The Edgeworths want to make of children “little matter-of-fact men and unbreached philosophers”, and by their passion for clarifying, the strong passions are cut off and the children “are scarcely allowed to feel” (72). It would be better for children to be left to “the workings of nature”; they must “first have imagination, a poetical sense, and the unnumbered and defineless connexions and feelings, which make up that wonder of creation, ... a poet, before they can understand his character and works” (76). Poetry is as necessary to society as “well ordered industry”; Coleridge is “the most tasteful and acute of critics”.


An impartial, clear-minded review. Godwin abounds in “absurdities, and distortions and misconceptions” but he probably has not “done much absolute mischief to mankind” (95). These “agitations” are “greatly salutary” in themselves unless they cause a fundamental subversion. Admits Godwin’s capacity for knowledge and reflection, but notes that this is nullified by a tendency to pursue an “eccentick course with more energy, the further it carries him from nature” (97). His novels are philosophical “dissertations” the actors of which are “certain principles and opinions and passions” (104).


Great admiration for Scott by a romantic critic. Stresses the naturalness and reality of the novels on Scotch life and the “singular intimacy with men in the practical, common pursuits” (155). Scott conveys truth “without the formality and limitations of history” (150). He teaches by a “large philosophy” based on “the union between life and poetry” “established by nature” herself (155).


A just and rational estimate of Solyman Brown’s extreme literary nationalism. Our literature has suffered equally from “un-
merited contumely" abroad and "pompous pretensions" at home. We must teach the prospective poet that "only the productions of genius, taste, and diligence" are acceptable at the "bar of criticism" (199). Condemns our early poets for imitating 18th century diction, versification, and lack of imagination (266).


A dull review of a dull subject. Gilman is a neo-classicist and uses the review to admire this foreigner's grasp of the English language and to notice instances of "violated syntax" and "un-English phrases" (259).


Supports the thesis that universalism is the only way to a true nationalism. Wants to set up one or more large universities like those of Europe devoted to the study of all that "is worth knowing." This will create "a literary profession" which in turn will formulate the diverse elements of our life into a true "national spirit" (276).


A review of Franklin's memoirs and letters, somewhat deprecatory. Norton thinks "very differently" from those who hold up Franklin's character as a model for imitation (302). He was a man of this world distinguished by "his zeal and talents for being useful" (318), but his "mind was defective in the higher class of conceptions and feelings" (320). Acknowledges his fame in literature and science. Norton is a nationalist. "We are in advance of the rest of the civilized world" (312). Our greatest need is for a literature growing out of and perpetuating American life and ideals. "There is but one thing wanting—ENCOURAGEMENT" (322).


Ritchie opposes the ideals of the Revolution, but attributes its cause to the corruptions of the Old Regime. He leans toward romanticism; Madame de Staël is "the finest genius in France" (43). Her style is one of "very rare energy and beauty" (57); her chief fault is an "aspiring desire to be always original, brilliant, discriminating" (59). Notes her distinction between genius and talent, but disagrees with her denial of genius to Mirabeau (60).

44. Willard Phillips, "Women; or, Pour et Contre" (By Maturin), VIII, 118-134 (Dec., 1818).

A very favorable review by a romantic critic. Maturin's chief merit is the "fertility, splendour, and terrible grandeur of his imaginations" (133). He should not rely on the "common and obvious" for his material, as in this novel, but should rely on his own "imagination" (134).

Channing is a romantic critic, but is fully aware of the falsity of Neal’s romanticism. His defects are fancifulness, unreality, indefinite topics, unwillingness to call things by their right names, poverty of expression, and uniformity of tone. Attacks Neal’s elevated diction in describing American scenery; our poets will never do it justice till they “paint it as it is” and not in “general terms” and “grand and swelling phrases” (144). The chief business of the critic is to save our poetry from being “a bad imitation of popular authors abroad”, and the way is to insist on “originality” (156).


A mine of material for a national poetry lies unopened in our early history. Such a literature based on traditions and fables, fabulous as well as authentic, is more permanent than one based on imagination alone. Stresses the Revolution, the frontier, and especially the Indians and external nature, as sources of literature (175). Americans are “inspired with some peculiar moral graces, by their grand and lovely landscapes” (174).

1819

47. R. H. Dana, Sr., “Hazlitt’s English Poets,” VIII, 276-322 (March, 1819).

A review by a romantic critic, attacking Hazlitt as desultory and biased. Agrees with Hazlitt’s admiration for the early English poets; next to “studying nature itself’’ the poetic ideal can best be found by studying their works (256). Disagrees with Hazlitt’s praise of Pope and the neo-classic poets; they wrote rather for well-dressed “ladies and gentlemen, than for the man of sentiment and genius alone in his study” (297). Defends the romantic poets against Hazlitt, and gives high praise to Wordsworth. “He brings right thoughts and pure wishes into our minds and hearts, clears our dim imaginations, and the poetry of our being becomes its truth” (319). Dana underrates Hazlitt as a critic, but correctly diagnoses his weakness as being too “full of himself to have a sincere love and interest for what is abstractly good and great” (321). “Mr. Coleridge’s critique upon Mr. Wordsworth contains more of philosophy, subtle analysis, and good taste, than does any other criticism upon him, or, indeed, upon any other man whom we can call to mind. In fact, our better criticism owes its birth to that.”


Gray is a classicist and a universalist who believes that Dante is too little known outside Italy. Thinks the “union of sententiousness, majesty and liveliness” of Dante can be be represented by English “heroic rhyme” (325). Dante has the “first and highest merit of a poet, originality” (334). Says that Dante’s “extraordinary share of classical learning” is a great aid to the man of genius (340). Dante most resembles Shakespeare as “the poet of nature”; Milton is the poet “of the invisible world”, and Cowper “that of Christian morality” (342).

Disagrees with Smith’s theory. His theory for the solution of the moral problem, like those who “resolve all virtue into self-love, or benevolence, or regard to utility, or the sense of justice,” seems to be right only because it sometimes coincides with the internal laws of rectitude implanted in the heart of man by “the great Author of all.” Rectitude, therefore, is “not founded exclusively in sympathy, or self-love, or benevolence; but is that principle which controls and directs them all. It is in the moral, what attraction is in the natural world; it regulates and guides the whole system of our affections and powers, preserves each in its proper sphere and due subordination to the rest, and conducts man to the proper end of his being” (396).


A favorable, sympathetic review. Discusses at length the relative importance of genius and education in literary creation and decides that poetry “is eminently the work of genius” (4). Yet training is almost equally necessary; for that reason we cannot expect the “highest efforts” from men like Hogg (5). Considers also the problem of the personality as a poetic factor: “No matter what be the subject, poetry is an appeal from heart to heart, and we cannot but answer it with our sympathy” (6).

51. W. Loring, “Milman’s Samor,” IX, 26-35 (June, 1819).

Unfavorable. Considers the problem of genius versus learning and decides that there may be either “work of genius, self-dependent,” with other factors as auxiliaries, or of “taste and learning, using them as principals” (26-7). Milman must not intrude in “the province of genius.” Loring is a universalist and attacks nationalism (34).


Favorable to Brown. Analyzes the difference between realistic and romantic fiction. The former makes “the fable subservient to the developing of national character, or of the manners, usages, prejudices and condition of particular classes” (65). But America is not ready for realistic fiction because the social classes are not yet well defined and established (66). Brown was wise to write romantic fiction; he uses American settings but our chief interest is not “dependent upon the conviction that we ever saw the place or the man” (69).


Favors the development of a distinct national literature. The “great interests both of philosophy and of taste are much promoted by the distinct cultivation of each nation’s peculiar literature” (78).


Strongly advocates the study of both classical poetry and prose.

The first few pages, a review of Cousin's works, attack Cousin's New Platonism as a "repulsive system" attempting to identify the Supreme Mind with the material universe "and thus deny its personal and separate existence" (71). The bulk of the article completes Everett's survey of the History of Philosophy begun in an earlier article (see XVIII, 234-66). Everett is a thorough Lockeian: he pays tribute to Newton and Locke for stating clearly for the first time all the knowledge that had been discovered since Bacon and Descartes rediscovered the inductive method of Aristotle (78-9). The "Essay on the Human Understanding" is "the textbook of the noblest branch of human learning" (79). He attacks Berkeley, the Scotch school, and German transcendentalism as modern departures from the true way of Locke (51). He denies any notion of innate ideas (92). Says the material world is susceptible of "perfectly rigorous demonstration" (93). With the exception of Kant, all idealists have been "persons in whose minds imagination seemed to predominate over the other faculties" (108). Concludes that "idealism, historically viewed, presents itself as an unsubstantial dream, which charms the infantile period of intellectual philosophy" (109): gives a point by point analysis of the weaknesses of idealism. (For orientation of Everett's position, see Merle Curti, "The great Mr. Locke: America's Philosopher, 1733-1861," The Huntington Library Bulletin, No. 11, April, 1937, pp. 107-152; and for further analysis and praise of Cousin's as "the only possible philosophy" see Mrs. Minot's article, "Cousin's Philosophy," NAR, XXXV, 19-36, July, 1832.)

Edward T. Channing, "Greenland and Other Poems, By James Montgomery," IX, 276-288 (Sept., 1819).

Montgomery has little talent. Speaking of criticism, Channing says it is not possible to kill a writer or make him live; all that criticism can do about poor writers and bad taste in the reader is to "put them both to school" (279). Believes in romantic principles; a poet has something more to do than secure an approving public; (281) his first object is "to awaken the imagination, to make men feel, to breathe the spirit of poetry into them" (281).


Very good critical article, favorable to Irving. Begins with a general criticism of nationalism in American literature. His own policy is to notice any American book of merit, but he examines it "without any home feelings" (323). America is too young to equal Europe; our universal talent for action is inconsistent with "an abstract, ideal, reflective cast of mind" (324). Denies the decay of learning in Europe; all society has gone forward, but "great minds have always reasoned and felt very much as they do now" (325). Outlines a two-fold plan for America: development of American schools and scholarship and the formation of a professional class of men of genius. Labels as faults Irving's neo-classical characteristics, but predicts that "he will always be a standard author amongst us" (356).

The refusal of the neo-classical writers to allow such substitutions causes a "frequent sacrifice of beauty of expression, and variety and vivacity of numbers." The principle is "not incompatible with the principles of English versification, nor displeasing to an unperturbed taste"; it is not entirely an innovation but our "ancient birthright" found in Shakespeare and Milton. It ought to be reclaimed. (A brief but important essay paving the way for the more liberal and flexible prosodic practise of Romanticism.)

1820


First pages devoted to pointing out the necessity of scholarship in America. Our civil and political freedom gives us no immunities from "intellectual laws." We must labor and study and not hope to take "a single step by force of genius, which has been taken in the old world by the dint of labor" (2).


Says he ridicules this attempt to make poetry out of a prose subject because of the number of like performances "of late gaining upon us". Poetry has a "beautiful secret of unity" and every word sets an "image before you"; prose cannot do this.

61. T. Parsons, "Comparative merits of the earlier and later English Writers," X, 19-33 (Jan., 1820).

An excellent essay by a romantic critic who believes in universal literary values. Prefers the "vigor and originality" of 17th century prose to the "excessive refinement" of 18th century prose (21). The two essentials of good writing are "strength and refinement" (25). Says the Edinburgh Review is shaking the hold which the prose of Addison and Steele had on England and is awakening "the slumbering intellect of Great Britain" (27). Looks for the development of a national literature in America. The most effectual means of attaining this object is "study of the classics, in the first place, and next, of the English writers of the middle of the 17th century" (30).


Thinks more room should be given to the study of the classics (120) and less to science (126). We need professional schools for advanced study on the model of the continental European schools (125). Laments that the "government of America is the only government in the civilized world, that has never founded a literary institution" (137).

A review of Geoffroy's collection of articles on French drama. Defends the thesis that the theater is not harmful to public morals. Discusses at length French drama in order to increase American interest and gives high praise to Voltaire.


Contains a section in defense of the English language in America against "the hostilities of the British reviews" (362).


Everett is a true classicist. Art was at a low ebb in the middle of the 18th century, but Winckelmann's interest in antiquity purified "public taste of the absurd notions that had corrupted it" (372). The new English school of sculpture enjoins the closest possible imitation of nature and adherence to historical truth, but these are not just principles of art. "Nature is to be imitated, only in her noble, select, and pleasing parts, and historical truth adhered to no farther than it adds to the beauty, grandeur, and charm of the work; provided that the deviation be not such as to shock our judgments" (385-6).

66. T. Parsons, "Life and Writings of Madame de Staël," XI, 124-140 (July, 1820).

Madame de Staël is "the greatest female that has ever written" (139). Yet Corinne is a bad novel and the best of her books is that on the French Revolution. Advocates the cultural freedom of women (125). The doctrine of perfectibility put forth in her work is "directly opposed to all right reason and tolerably fair argument" (130).


Regrets that in the midst of our success in science, "comparatively few among us have pursued the track which leads to distinction in classical learning" (209). Greek should be studied before Latin. The road to eminence in literature "lies through Greek alone" (214).


A great progress of taste has been made in the novel, which has now "grown into a vehicle of history, poetry, ethics, and eloquence" (272). This novel is not of the "highest order". Defines the position of the critic: he is absolutely free and executes his charge "as seemeth him good". His function is to spread the reputation of good books and check the circulation of bad ones (277).

Tragedy is the most difficult of all “poetical composition” (385), yet he expresses the romantic notion that “tragedy is a noble province of poetry” and “proud would be the triumph of him who, at this day, should overcome its difficulties” (386). Attacks the diction of tragedies for the last hundred years as “too florid and stately, and too far removed from the common idiom of our tongue.” Such a language is “not the dialect of feeling” (392).


An article of first importance by a classicist. Recommends the study of the classics in conjunction with “the finest English writers.”

The chief reason for the study of the classics is “to correct the bad taste, which, more than any thing else, has checked the growth of American literature” (414). Shakespeare and Franklin are brought forward as proofs that the classics are not necessary. A “thorough knowledge of the classics could never have encumbered” the genius of Shakespeare and might have prevented his faults (418). Franklin accepted as a pattern “the classic Addison.” Thinks society has gained little “from studious astronomers” (419). Cites the devotion of the New England forefathers to the classics; they “saw the connexion between one kind of useful knowledge and another” (423).

1821


No voluminous writer has ever written in proportion “to the extent of his works less that will finally be overlooked and forgotten than Voltaire” (51). His tragedies are his best work because he had been “tempered in the fiery furnace of adversity” (52). Candide is the “sharpest satire that ever was composed” (59).


Distrusts the supernaturalism of Swedenborg; he gave “too ready admission to impressions” (90). His doctrines do not “develop a single point of morals before unknown, or make any disputable questions in morality more clear” (93).


Dislikes the architecture of St. Peter’s as the source of the “superficial theatrical character” of modern taste (184). Next to the Grecian, the old Gothic is “the most pure and noble” architecture (185). Our great insensibility to the beauty of Greek architecture, along with the want of insight into the whole ancient character, constitute the great defect “in our education in this country” (187).

Attacks the noble savage ideal of Rousseau (250). Montesquieu’s Spirit of Laws is “deficient in perspicuity” (252). Attacks the religious theories of Helvetius, Diderot, and Holbach (256). American booksellers and printers are to blame for the backwardness of our literature because they republish foreign books.

75. J. G. Palfrey, “Yamoyden, a tale of the wars of King Philip, in six cantos. By the late Rev. James W., Eastburn, A. M. and his friend” XII, 466-488 (April, 1821).

Praises this Gothic romance for “the very happy use which the writers have made of their reading in the antiquities of the Indians” (477). Glad to see that somebody has found out “the unequalled fitness of our early history for the purposes” of fiction; no country or age has “such capacities in this view as New England in its early day”; there is no “element of the sublime, the wonderful, the picturesque and the pathetic, which is not to be found here” (480). Stresses especially the “powerful action” developed by the stern puritans “coming into conflict with the relentless wilderness”. Defends puritan character against the charge of being a “lifeless, unpoeitical monotony” (481). Practically predicts Hawthorne when he concludes that the first first-rate writer of fiction in this country “will lay his scene here” (484).


Answer to an essay in the New London Monthly Magazine sneering at American complaints against the English press. The English public is “a too willing patron of abuse of America” (22). Americans are not super-patriots in literature; Barlow’s Columbiad has always been regarded “as a total failure” (29). Defends the English language in America; it is better “spoken here than in England” (30). We are firmly anchored “to the rock of English literature” (32) and are not starting a new language.


Objects to certain romantic excesses. Byron’s hero is too old for such violent passions; the style is too harsh; the romantic poets have gone too far in reacting from Pope’s regularity (240). The historical drama of Shakespeare is superior to the French in method; Byron is wrong in following the latter (230). Strongly objects to basing a play wholly on love; the best acting cannot keep a love scene from degenerating into disgust (243). The drama should have a wider range of themes; America happily has no fixed associations in this regard.


Recognizes Bryant as a true poet. Praises the “strain of pure and high sentiment”, the “subtle and ever varying beauties of nature”; and the natural diction.

Hopes that the best genius of the age will not go into novel-writing, but fears that it will. Following Kenilworth, imitators are springing up everywhere (393).


A discussion by a semi-romantic critic of neo-classicism and romanticism by means of an analysis of Pope and Byron. Decides that images drawn from nature are more poetical than those drawn from art (451). Dislikes “the puling affectations” of the Cockney School (which may have a bad effect on America) and the “mysticism” and “unmeaning strain of sentiment” in the Lake poets; regrets that these have discredited “the perspicuous, direct, and manly flow of thought and expression” of Pope (467-8). Disagrees with Byron’s high opinion of Pope; he lacks the “power of awakening the most sublime and tender emotions so requisite to the perfection of poetry” (469); his versification has the “great and obvious defect” of faultlessness (471).


Refutes the idea that writing in the English language is a great disadvantage to the development of American literature. (a) In the English classics we possess “numerous striking and chaste models of style” (481). (b) We have the benefit of English criticism (482). Yet we should not be too deferent towards English critics; the greatest progress will be made when we ourselves develop “a spirit of enlightened and liberal yet exact and fearless criticism” (483). (c) Our writers have an “unequalled sphere of celebrity and usefulness” opened to them (484).

1822


Insists on high standards; “Pretty good poetry is no poetry at all” (3). A critic must have a sixth sense to distinguish the premature good poet from the mediocre. Denies that adverse criticism harms a poet of merit; it matures him. Sees no cause why the American critic should encourage the “multitude of indifferent poetical essays which are made among us” (6). Percival has some “genuine poetical talent” (7).


Fairfax, an Elizabethan translator, is at last being given his merited place. Strictly literal translations are usually not “faithful”. Tasso excels by the “majestic brevity” (89) of his style and the sustained interest of his story.

Her great merit is "poetical coloring of the language" (104). She lacked the power of invention and was not a poet. "Philosophy, and not poetry, was her proper department . . ." (108).


Defends Socrates against the calumnies of Aristophanes in The Clouds. Condemns the latter's vulgarity. Praises German scholarship but says it is too prone to develop wild theories.


Attempts an impartial analysis of all English prose styles. 17th century prose had "unprecedented vigor of original genius", but lacked good taste which only comes with "long cultivation" (323-4). With the Restoration a simple, conversational, and idiomatic style developed and is due to the influence of France, the rise of the study of criticism, and chiefly the peculiar character of the Queen Anne intellect, especially Addison (326). By Johnson's Rambler in 1750 English prose had been carried "to a point which it cannot hope to surpass in the gracefulness of Melmoth, and the Attic simplicity of Hume" (327). The imposing style of Johnson and the simple style of Addison represent the two extremes of English prose beyond which it cannot go without bombast on one side and feebleness on the other (328). Thinks the last half of the century is "the Augustan age of English fine writing." Present-day English prose is in some danger of degeneracy from the ornamented and highly artificial style of Stewart, the mystical, indefinite phraseology of Coleridge, and the corrupt taste for notoriety in the Cockney School (381). The two styles today are those of the Edinburgh and Quarterly Reviews, with the purpose of instructing, and The Sketch Book with the purpose of pleasing (333). American prose will be highly developed by liberal institutions, but we must set the example of a "pure, perspicuous, classical composition" without "extravagance or affectation" (350).


Favors a more active and more closely organized literary society than the one he writes about.


Refutes the claim that all literary men are morbid (9). Rousseau's philosophical opinions are gaining ground with the raise of the liberal spirit of the world, but his politics will not bear examination (21).


A very important critical essay by a disciple of Coleridge, devoted to a defense of the Middle Ages and the subjective spirit of
modern poetry. Condemns adherence to rules and slavish imitation of the ancients. Thinks that the principles for each specific art form was developed by the Greeks from the “unchangeable laws of the human mind”, and are thus permanent (105-4). But the spirit, which constitutes the elements of literature, has changed. It is seen in the principle of unity. The unsophisticated Greek derived the principle from the form and character of the external world. The modern mind, turned from the living world inward upon the soul, sees unity as a “predominating spirit or sentiment” (105-7). This great change from ancient to modern times is the result of one main and two minor factors; the main cause is the introspection and spirituality of the “Christian religion” (109); the minor causes are the “profoundly supernatural” religious and introspective character of the inhabitants of northern Europe (116-7) and the Middle Ages which were a union of the other two factors in specific cultural and religious forms (118). Thinks the Middle Ages are undervalued today (124-5).


This is another attempt to “make grave truths attractive, by the form in which they are delivered”; such a form is very ancient and hence acceptable. The merit of this novel is its antiquarianism. But the author should study Scott to discover the “wonderful chemistry” by which “a strong human interest of character and incident” is breathed into “the manners of ages past” (166).

91. Edward Everett, “Bracebridge Hall, or the Humorists,” XV, 204-224 (July, 1822).

Americans are much better informed of the state of literature in England than the English are about American literature. This “inexcusable ignorance is no ground for the diligent abuse, which has been heaped on our press” (208). Condemns Irving for not revealing his work “as an American production” rather than trying to engraft himself on “the English stock” (214). Irving’s book is equal to anything “the present age of English literature has produced in this department” (209).


Attacks the position of E. T. Channing (see no. 52 above) that the novel is unsuited to the classless society of America. We have the same classes as England with a “greater variety of character”, Disapproves of the Gothic romance as a genre foreign to our soil, but asserts that no nation has “more abundant matter of romantic interest than ours” (254). Cites as fruitful the times just succeeding the first settlement, the era of Indian wars, and the Revolution (255). Cooper has inventiveness, the chief characteristic of genius, and is the first “distinguished American novel writer” (281).


Tells anecdotes from the lives of various French writers with the purpose of exciting American interest.

Confirms Dryden’s theory of translation and says that Pope’s Homer is superior to Cowper’s. Glad to see the classics made available to the American public, but thinks Ovid’s Tristia not worth translation.

1823


American literature is held back by the number of bad English and American books produced. Thinks true scholarship should appear before the public more often. Classical education is best fitted to the “essential condition of our natures” and at the same time deals directly “with the finest intellectual processes” (52-3).

96. S. Gilman, “Clio... by James G. Percival,” XVI, 102-123 (Jan., 1823).

Judges Percival and the romantic poets by strict neo-classical principles. Their unpopularity is due to their “abstracted and un-social” poetry. Writers like Southey are failures because of their “inability” to write according to “the natural inclinations and principles of taste implanted in the general mind” (106).


As a romanticist Prescott favors English drama. The great defect of the French is a great passion for rules and hence a “want of deep and genuine sensibility” (125). It is due, not to Greek models, but to two elements of their national character, a desire for outward perfection of art and a keen perception of the ridiculous. English drama, under happier influences, developed directly from popular character, and its underlying principle was veracity (130). French drama leaves the heart unsatisfied; it shows that “faultlessness is one thing and perfection another”; it is “the triumph of art and not of nature” (141). In the present century English poetry is “breaking through the chilling atmosphere of French criticism” back to the “old English feeling and freedom” of the national ballad. The “animating principle” of “egotism” in the poets and the high spirit of speculation in the age prevent the development of the drama today; if it should have any, it will be from “Scott, exhibiting the drama of real life” (147).


Laments the meagerness of contemporary English drama, but says that the Germans “are destined to produce most finished specimens of dramatic poetry” (285). They have studied both Shakespeare and the Greeks, and their “rich, powerful language has a flexibility” fitted to the most “delicate” and “difficult achievements” (285).

"Baconian philosophy has become synonymous with true philosophy." Defends the character of Bacon; he was "a mild, moderate, conscientious man, estimated by all parties, but unwilling to sell himself to either," and therefore hated by both (310).

100. T. Parsons, "Moore's Loves of the Angels," XVI, 353-365 (April, 1823).

Parsons is here mildly romantic and praises the intuitive element in literature, but thinks that Moore's genius is "cramped and polluted" by his "depraved, licentious tastes" (354).


Genius and taste are only different operations of the same agents and demand the "union of experience and sensibility" (400). Schiller relied on "the abundance of his own wealth," which is the "true sign of real genius" (401). Attacks the attempt to represent the "most contradictory moral qualities as existing together" in the same individual (402). Inadequately understands "romantic" as meaning "fictitious" in contrast to "historical and natural" (421). Hence claims that Schiller's work is more like English tragedy of the 18th century than Shakespeare (408).


As a romanticist Bancroft praises Schiller highly. He is "distinguished for his genius," "the purity of his taste," "the perfection of his style" (268), his constant "fever of imagination," his optimistic view of human nature, his reverence for religion and the domestic relations (269), his veneration for the classics, his personification of nature, and love for the antique.


In reaction against the licentiousness of Fielding and Smollett, Fanny Burney invented the "safe reading" type of novel which Miss Edgeworth writes. Thinks the public is tiring of Scott. Miss Edgeworth is inferior to Scott but "inferior to him alone" (385).

1824


Possesses a "strain of original and philosophical thinking" but often sinks into an "obscur sort of metaphysical and mystical prosing, and becomes very formally dull and dry" (92).


Strongly recommends the study of the Greek classics, especially Homer, Herodotus, and Plutarch. Homer's works present a mirror of "the purest qualities of our nature" (105).

A review of that part of Gerando's work on classical philosophy up to Cicero. Discusses particularly the theory of knowledge. "Plato and Aristotle are the two first names in the intellectual science of all time" (246). Asserts that Locke sprang from Aristotle, and Kant from Plato (252) — the "distinction taken by Kant between purely rational and empirical (experimental) notions" resembles that of Plato (253). Gerando exalts Plato, but Everett says that it would not be difficult to prove "the author's preference is unjust" (247). The chief error of Plato was the notion that "ideas are innate and have an existence in our minds, independently of perception, a proposition, which, in its obvious and literal sense, is quite absurd" (252). Gives an accurate exposition of the various types of philosophy. Praises Cicero's concreteness and, like a neo-classicist, sees the Middle Ages as a "gulf of ignorance and barbarism" (265). (Although Everett takes an unfavorable view, this exposition of Gerando's Platonism, with its Kantian analogies, may have led Emerson [Journals, II, 283, Letters, I, 291] to Gerando, to whom he was considerably indebted.)


A strong plea for universality in American literature. We should search through "the literary stores of all nations," and select whatever will impart the most knowledge or best fit our need (283). There is but "one republic of letters, and that republic should pursue but one policy, the advancement of truth and science, of free and familiar intellectual intercourse of all parts of the world with each other, a commerce of minds, limited by no restricting prejudices, and checked by no unworthy jealousies or partialities" (284).


Our literature like our territory is still mostly "uncultivated and wild," and Cooper has done a yeoman's task in trying to subdue it (314). In choosing American actors, incidents, and frequent historical allusions, Cooper has "made the story strike deep into the feelings of American readers" (328).


An appreciative but judicious critical essay of very high excellence. Gives three reasons for Wordsworth's unpopularity in America: (a) incapacity of the mass to appreciate his most refined beauties; (b) defects of his own such as, pushing his theory of humble life "too far" and following the train of his thought to the point of vagueness; and (c) the unfair notices in the Edinburgh Review on which "nineteen out of twenty" formed their opinion. Wordsworth's beauties are: (a) the great principles that "nothing is beneath a poet's regard, which has to do with the mind and heart of man"; (b) a diction taken from "nature and life" as the vehicle for real passion; and (c) the glory of his "intimate converse . . . with Nature," resulting in a closer union between the "universe and the heart of man" (366).

Praises Pickering's poems as an indication of the rise of a truly American literature. Thinks his inverted and diffuse style, imitated from Thomson's Seasons, is a defect, as is the "elaborate magnificence" of the diction. Advocates careful revision before coming before the public. Disapproves of the use of weak syllables or unaccented words and the addition of extra syllables in blank verse.


Commends Boccaccio's prose style, his classicism, his elevation of the street tale into a new literary type, and panorama of life displayed. Excuses his licentiousness on the basis of contemporary taste.


Lists the reasons why classical literature should be studied in America: (a) Classical remains cover the continent of Europe but we can know Greek and Roman genius only through their literature. (b) They favor free institutions. (c) It is the "common property of mankind". (d) They exert a strong influence for a high national character. (e)Because in a free country there should be no limits on free inquiry. (f) Classical is "the best." The Greeks remain in the gloom of the ages "stars of changeless and unequalled brilliancy" (132).


Most people have the mistaken idea that the "Americanism of an American novel" is a facsimile of American peculiarities. Actually the typical American novel, like the present one, is an imaginary tale parading under American names with an Indian or two, and passes for American "simply because it is not English" (210).


Says we should approach the literature of a great nation "with respect." "The literature of each nation is national," and the true critic must see it from that point of view. Goethe's genius can no longer be disputed. Holds the romantic doctrine that where the critic and the multitude are at variance in judgments, the multitude is right and the critic wrong (306). Stresses the importance of explaining Goethe's works by the conditioning factors in his life. Americans dislike his morbid imagination and his disregard for social conventions. Asserts the superiority of Greek sanity to the morbidity of the romantics. (On Goethe see also no. 19)


Discusses the influence of the Italians on the Elizabethan and Romantic periods in contrast to the distrust of the Neo-classicists.
Stresses the broadening of intellectual activity in the present age (340). Says that the transplanting of romantic fiction from Normandy and England to Italy at the end of the 16th century caused the rise of Italian narrative poetry (342). Attributes the differences between Italian and English literature to differences of climate (345). Italian literature is devoted too "exclusively to purposes of mere amusement" (385), due to the Italian peculiarity of being "sensible to beauty, independent of every other quality" (387). English literature is far superior by its moral and philosophical gravity. Writes special critiques on Politian, Pulci, Boiardo, Berni, Ariosto, Tasso, Tassoni, and Fortiguerra.

1825


Byron has genius of the highest order; he "rose far above any English poet who has lived since the time of Pope." He has two great defects: "an occasional extravagance of thought and language as respects substance, and a want of care and finish in versification." Everett looks at Byron from the eyes of a confirmed neo-classicist. He looks on the age of "Pope as the point of perfection" in poetry and on the present as the "declining age" (14). Condemns the immorality of Byron; in the manner of Plato, he says his works should be given the merit of art, then removed "forever from the public view" (43).


Herder seems to be Bancroft's ideal of the man of taste. Praises his detachment; he could well "estimate the excellence of others" and could enter upon "the study of a foreign work, as if he had been of the country" (138-9). He possessed a "delicate perception of the beautiful" and a true "love of learning." His knowledge was wide, and in matters of taste he never reasoned coldly, but "communicated his ideas and sentiments with all that warmth, in which they existed in his mind" (141). Eleven years before Emerson's first book, Bancroft says Kant "as a metaphysician, has had perhaps no rival among his countrymen but Fichte" (141). "The influence of Herder on his age was wide, and entirely beneficial to the best interests of our race; he has been extensively read and admired, and always with results beneficial to morals and sentiments of philanthropy... (He) was a blessing and an honor to his age" (144). (For orientation see O. W. Long, Literary Pioneers, Cambridge, 1933).


Denies that the Indian theme is a good one for literature. Sparks, as a historian, saw that the Indian had been grossly misrepresented (210). Actually there is "little of the romantic and of the truly poetical in the native Indian character" (211). There are no shades of character beyond "generosity, contempt of danger, patience under suffering, revenge, and cruelty." Predicts however that the exploits of the Iroquois and the Mohawk will be soon "committed to the numbers of ever enduring song" (212).
119. W. C. Bryant, "Redwood, a Tale" (Mrs. Sedgwick), XX, 245-272 (April, 1825).

Maintains that there “is a strong love of romance inherent in the human mind” which the writer can rely on to fill “up the outline he gives with bright colors and deep shades of its own.” Stresses the “fertility of our country, and its history, in the materials of romance.” Great variety of character (which is the basis of fiction) has developed from our equalitarian institutions, from the variety of our religious denominations, from our geographical situation, and from the immigration of foreign peoples who bring their old world culture and combine it in various ways with the new.

120. Jared Sparks, “Professor Everett’s Orations,” XX, 417-440 (April, 1825).

The thesis involved is the relation of free government to the development of the arts and sciences; the two men differ on several points. Sparks says that freedom is requisite to development and laughs at the dire predictions about America’s future in the Edinburgh Review (425). Everett held that our new form of civil society would be a strong motive to political action only. Sparks thinks it will cause a healthy intellectual rivalry like that of the ancient Grecian states (425). Everett argued that free institutions did not withdraw talented men from the field of literature; Sparks, that there is “great consumption, and even waste of talents” (427). Everett held our novel political organization affects our literature, Sparks, that literature flourishes as well under one form of government as another (432). Everett thought our common language aided our rising literature, but Sparks again disagrees: literature grows out of a nation’s “peculiarities” and must have “modes of expression and forms of language equally varied and peculiar” (437).

121. Jared Sparks, “Recent American Novels,” XXI, 78-104 (July, 1825).

Says a new school of American fiction, imitating Scott, has arisen and is gaining “favor with the graver part of the community” to such an extent that the old restrictions are being taken off (79). The critic must exercise “strict surveillance” over the new novels in order to counteract their “pernicious influences” and give direction to their force (83). The Waverley type of novel being written has three characteristics: the use of historical material, real scenery, and dialogue to carry the incident (81). Praises Scott but fears that his imitators will copy such weaknesses as careless composition and the use of obsolete or foreign words and idioms.


Da Ponte, an Italian, objected to Prescott’s criticisms of Italian literature (see no. 115 above). This is Prescott’s reply. Denies that Marini influenced Donne (194). Says French style précieux came from Italy and the English metaphysical school of Cowley came from the French. But the metaphysical conceits can be traced back to early English literature (306). Denies that the Waverley novels were vulgar and deficient in thought; the novel may convey “solid instruction, in its details of life, of human character, and of passion” (208). Condemns neo-classical literary criticism and says
the new "science of general literary criticism and history" recognizes the "wants of different nations and ages"; a few general principles of beauty are deduced from "local beauties peculiar to each", but a difference of taste "is now admired as a beautiful variety in the order of nature" (215).


Sparks attacks the extremes of romantic poetry. Its besetting sins are "eccentricity and haste, a vehement desire to think and talk as nobody ever thought or talked before, and to make the largest drafts on the bounty of the Muse in the shortest space of time." Poets are not satisfied to write as Virgil, Milton, and Pope have written.


A strong attack on Byron. As a satirist Byron was inferior to Pope; he lacked truth and "just principles of taste and moral judgment" (314). His poetry has not "much tendency to raise and improve mankind, much moral beauty, or much that could be agreeable to our higher and purer feelings" (327). The most striking aspects of his poetry belongs to the age. Admits the "false taste" of 18th century poetry, but thinks the romantic reaction has gone too far—"the unalterable principles of taste, founded in the nature of man, and the eternal truths of morality and religion, have, likewise, been neglected or outraged, as antiquated prejudices" (349). Even Wordsworth, in his dislike for artificial poetry, has "caricatured the simplicity of nature" (350).


Commends successful imitation. "Genius catches the thought and spirit of kindred genius, and gives them a fair and well proporcioned body of its own." Pinckney successfully imitated a poem of Goethe. Dislikes his obscurity and his imitation of Byron—"we have already had too much of Byron" (376).


Shows a keen interest in and a wide knowledge of classical antiquity. His purpose is to awaken American interest.

1826


Though a romanticist (see no. 109 above), Greenwood here shows his neo-classical roots, by praising Hillhouse for observing "all the proprieties of place, time, and character" (25) and his "habit of correctness" (26). Defends his own literary nationalism. Says that he is not "blind to the miserable stuff" constantly "thrown off by the presses of our country," that he hails "with infinitely more delight, a good work which is produced by native genius, than one of equal quality" from abroad, and that when he thinks a work is good he will "be sure to say so" (27).

Thinks that no works could be read “to more advantage by the rising orators of our country, than those of Demosthenes.” They would do “much to correct the two most prominent faults of American oratory” “excessive prolixity” and “fondness for unnatural and meretricious ornament” which lead to offenses against classical simplicity (48). This fault “infests in some degree every branch of our literature” and is due to our lack of “assiduous culture” (49). Nothing will correct our false impressions like “the frequent contemplation of the severe beauty of Attic eloquence” (49).


Our writers make two errors. They attempt “to render each passage equally brilliant in execution, whatever is the character of the sentiment expressed”. They suppose that originality is to be acquired by study and “make the absurd attempt to say in a manner no one else would have said, what no one else whold have thought” (211).


Attacks Percival’s romantic idea that since “certain Forms” (Platonic ideas) are diffused through nature the mind knows spontaneously, without search for truth. There is no “instantaneous consent to the true principles of taste” and it “might easily be shown, that the sublime and the beautiful, both in nature and art, require time and cultivation” (319). Denies also the true poet does not receive due recognition (325). Attacks Percival’s “excessive diffuseness” and “superabundance of images” (327). Ends with an attack on the disregard for the laws of metrical composition in Percival and other American poets. Ridicule of “sing song” verse has led many to “think that prosaic lines are beautiful, and that a breach of established rules is better than the observance” (332).


Recognizes that the discovery of this document will lead to a more complete understanding of Milton.


Praises this sentimental novel highly but objects to its profusion of incidents, its want of method, and faulty characterization.

134. A. Lamson, “Miscellaneous Poems selected from the U. S. Literary Gazette,” XXII, 482-443 (April, 1826).

Lamson is a universalist; unmerited praise of American works will “be injurious to the cause of letters among us”; our writers should “aspire to rival the richest strains” of England (432). Lamson is also a romanticist and praises spirit of the age as one of “deep, earnest thought” but attacks current style as rapid, hasty, abrupt, and unfinished (433). Praises Bryant highly as a poet of “rare gifts” and recognizes Longfellow (now nineteen) as having the “poetic feeling and imagery” of a true poet (438-9).

The editor of the poems laments that the modernization of Scottish society and the untimely decay of superstition will ruin Scottish poetry. Prescott denies this antiquarian theory. The principal difference between a rude and a civilized age, as regards “poetical fiction, is, that the latter requires more skill and plausibility in working up the matériel than the former”. Thinks also that there are very few today “who have not enough of superstitious feeling lurking in their bosoms for all the purposes of poetical interest” (137).

136. George Bancroft, “Classical Learning and (Prof.) Wolf,” XXIII, 142-150 (July, 1826).

Defends the thesis that the classics will give an opportunity for the mental and contemplative life of America to unfold, since the active life is already highly developed.


A review of The Last of the Mohicans and The Pioneers, chiefly the former; see also his review of The Spy, no. 92 above. Very high praise for Cooper; he has “great powers of invention” (151) and has the “same sort of magical authority over the spirit of romance, which belongs in common to Scott, Radcliffe, Walpole, and ... Brown”. His great excellence is the vividness of his action, the rapidity of his incidents, and the invention of machinery to take the place of mythical divinities of the ancient epic. His great weakness is the delineation of female character (163). Glad to see that Cooper has discovered the possibility of the Indian in romance; the visionary character of his Indians is due to his following Heckewelder, “whose work is a mere eulogium” of virtues (166). Thinks Natty Bumppo “deserves to be ranked in the first class of the creations of genius” (172), but Cooper overdoes the supernatural and surprise-escape element (191).


Welcomes this new American edition of Vergil and praises its accuracy—the first American book to be free of errors. The time has “come when we must rely on our own presses to supply the demand for such books” and we have “many scholars among us qualified” for editing such works (223).


Thinks the rise of women writers has aided in “rescuing fiction from the service of corruption and profligacy, and converting it into a powerful agent in correcting the moral judgments” (369). Rejects extreme romanticism with its “wild fervor and extravagance.” We are in no danger of “famishing over a scanty, cold, and superficial literature, but of being disgusted or surfeited with mawkishness of feeling, wordy insipidity, and the rant of ‘maudlin eloquence’” (373). Says Mrs. Barbauld has taken one of the best of models—Addison.
1827


Mason is a universalist and comes out for dependence on tradition when discussing the ancient-modern controversy. He "froward spirit" which led Americans to the Revolution "carried them on to still greater extravagancies, and they began to pretend that they were as wise as their ancestors" (38). They at last openly "assert, that there was no science, art, invention, or discovery of any consequence which had not originated, within the last fifty years" (39). praises Paulding for satirizing three fields of modern achievement, the woman machine, common law, and phrenology. Mason adds a fourth, "the novel science of inversion or transposition"; in education this has taken the place of the classics and what was previously applied to the head is now applied to the heels (55). Shows his indebtedness to the satire of Swift. The discovery of Milton's essay and other ancient works makes us doubt "whether the great march of mind in our day, may not, after all, have been in a circle" (55).


A review of orations by Justice Joseph Story and James A. Hillhouse; discusses several controversial critical doctrines from the viewpoint of tradition and universality. (a) Ancients vs. moderns: It is well to "consider the evils, which are incident to the growth and diffusion of great improvements" (129); in spite of brilliant improvements, inventions, and discoveries, there is no "vast difference" between the moral and social character of modern and ancient men (130). Thinks that "the superior activity of the social principle" (the oral expression of literature to large audiences) in ancient life was destroyed by the invention of printing and that this was a great loss (130). (b) Advocates forming a literary society to remedy the division between spoken and written literature in modern life (132). (c) Study of the classics: no other study or system of studies has been suggested which serves a better purpose than the study of languages (137). (d) Classicism and romanticism: says the clear distinction made between the two by continental critics has never been wholly accepted in England and America and is still open to question (137). (e) Problem of imitation: it is well for the epic writer to cast about to choose the best school and then all its laws, but "the poet of epic genius is a school to himself" (140). There is but one school which genius must adhere to; it is "the school of Nature" and in this "Shakespeare is most uniformly the master."

142. George Bancroft, "Greek Lexicography," XXIV, 142-156 (Jan., 1827).

A review of Pickering's Greek Lexicon. Praises highly the editions of the classics being put out by the University Press at Cambridge (146). If a man has but time to learn one language, thinks he should learn Greek. Attacks those "who are governed by an undiscriminating and impotent hatred of classical learning" (155).

Discusses the supremacy of genius in literature. A tale such as these admits of but two possible treatments: it must be told in its pure Doric simplicity or it must “be transfigured, by some Shake-spearian power, beyond the reach of any common genius” (191). In this case, “nature herself is outdone by the genius of her great lord, selecting, combining, and ennobling her most lovely features” (192).


Deals at length with the problem of morality in literature. The country has made great moral progress in late years; it is seen in the more general diffusion of intelligence and the higher standard of learning, the spirit of healthy action in all classes, diminished crime, the general security of property, the increase of Sabbath schools, the philanthropy, and the “active and compassionate benevolence, which does not allow itself to consider any class so vicious ... as to have forfeited its claim to humane attention” (443). America has no advocates for the theory which regards beauty as “something independent of moral effect” (444); cites Shakespeare as proof. An immoral literature is “the greatest evil, with which a nation can be cursed”; it is worse than “national poverty” (446). Says it is ultimately a question of the universal vs. the transitory. Says his morality is based on intercourse “with the great minds that light up the gloom of the ages, and share in the best impulses of human nature.” Rejects “a too delicate sensibility” to nature and “sullen misanthropy” of solitude; the external world provides not the “sublimest themes”, it is “mind, and mind only, which can exhibit the highest beauty” (447-8). Ends with the contention the loss of religion would put “an end to the magic of poetry” (460).


Praises Milton as a social reformer of great value to Americans. His prose works are “fit manuals for a free people” (73). They bring us into intimate contact with the man and his life; in this he is superior to Shakespeare about whom we know nothing (74). Until we know Milton’s prose, we cannot know “the whole power of our mother tongue” (75).


The novel is peculiarly suited to English genius for two reasons: the most ample materials are found in a country whose political institutions “allow an entire freedom of social intercourse, and consequently a perfect display of character”; and in expressing his own sentiments the author is restricted by no “other power than public opinion” (187). Spain is unsuited for the novel because it has but two great classes, and Italy because foreign despotism and love of pleasure has kept them from the scientific analysis “of the moral phenomena of our nature” which is the basis of English fiction (188). The French are deficient in the novel because of conventional forms of good breeding, narrow principles of criticism, deficiency of humor, and unfavorable regulation of intercourse between the sexes (190).
Characterization is the great talent of English writers from the time of Chaucer. The novel is the successor to the drama of Shakespeare; and Scott, who worked a revolution in American as in English fiction, is the logical successor of Shakespeare (193).


A review of two works on the subject by two Spanish priests, having mostly a technical interest. Their excessive patriotism seems ridiculous until we recall “the somewhat excessive movements of indignation into which we have been occasionally betrayed” by the remarks of “meddling foreigners” on the weaknesses of our character (279).


Shows the broadening range of American literary interests. Bowring had published anthologies of Russian, Polish, Batavian, Ancient Spanish, and Finnish literature.

1828


The purpose of the review is to create American interest in Hindu literature.


Looks to literature to create a spirit of internationalism in the world. Both commerce and science have failed to create this spirit as had been expected. But when a land is “lighted up by the universal fire of poetic imagination in all its valleys and hills, it is no longer foreign, nor its people strangers to any other. We know and share their sentiments and feelings, and cannot feel at enmity with them” (147). That is the purpose of Bowring’s translations.

151. Franklin Dexter, “Academies of Arts; a Discourse delivered on Thursday, May 3, 1827, ... before the National Academy of Design on its First Anniversary. By Samuel F. B. Morse,” XXVI, 207-224 (Jan., 1828).

Morse defended three theses: the practice of buying old masters neglects living American artists; only professional artists and not critics should belong to American academies; and the American artist after studying abroad finds his own country so far behind him in taste that he starves from neglected merit. Dexter denies all three. Our taste in art is not “of national origin. We have hitherto learned, and must long be content to learn, from older countries” (209). Restricting the academies to professed artists only will lead to a school formed on principles other than those of nature, and “there is but one nature, and there can be but one true way of painting” (211). Artists cannot live independent of the critics and should seek to use the academies to diffuse good taste in America (212). Neither
are the old masters a hindrance to American art; to patronize second rate American art because it is art "would improve neither the taste of the public, nor the skill of the artists" (214). Does not want "to see the American system . . . extended to literature or the arts"; a taste for art cannot "grow without care and cultivation" (216). Not hopeful of the future of American literature and art; ours is an age of utility and reason; and in "this cultivation of the reason, the imagination loses its power" (218). Modern artists are most deficient in substance; what they need most is "cultivation of the mind"; there is a difference "between poetry, and mere musical verse" (221).


Dana is "a man of genius, who possesses the essential qualities of a poet." Bryant praises the romantic qualities of literature; men of genius are free to "exert their powers in their own way"; sadness is "oftentimes as wholesome as mirth" (241); Dana's poetry is "simple and severe in its style, and free from that perpetual desire to be glittering and imaginative" (242).


Praises the genre as being that of Goldsmith's Citizen of the World. Maintains that the language and literature of Spain is peculiarly interesting to America because of "our connexion with Spanish America" (257).

154. F. W. P. Greenwood, "Hope Leslie" (Catherine M. Sedgwick), XXVI, 403-420 (April, 1828).

Hails the influence of women in literature as "almost sure to be powerful and good." The most deadly poison is the "poison of passion" communicated through books of amusement, and in this woman is "largely administering the healing potion" (410). Many have asserted the richness of the American scene, but only a "few attempts were made, and one or two of them were not entire failures" (412). Mrs. Sedgwick's novels are among the successes.


Attacks the idea that the American scene provides a rich field for American writers; our novelists "have made their works too purely of the soil" (140). (a) There is not enough in the "character and life" of the Indians "to furnish the staple of a novel" (141). (b) The taste of the age has changed; romanticism has been replaced by realism, the demand for "real life" and "allegiance to common sense"; and thus the Indian theme no longer suits. (c) Early American society has no sects, classes, and no love to satisfy popular taste (143). Americans, however, do not have to rely on the American scene; we belong to the "English school of civilization" and what belongs to England "belongs as well to us" (143).


The German universities rightly regard their critical and historical knowledge of the classics as the "basis of all solid improve-
ment" and its absence would be severely felt and would "produce a violent change in the literary world" (333).


Notes the excellence of the French in "narrative, ever since the times of the fabliaux and the old Norman romances." It is due partly to the fitness of the language for prose and partly to the intellectual character of the writers (373). Defends Molière from the attacks of Schlegel (whose theory however reasonable in its first principles led him into an exaggerated "admiration of the Romantic models"), and compares him to Shakespeare. Each man attained complete success in his own way. Prescott shows real critical breadth and knowledge.

1829


A review of L. Hunt's Lord Byron and his Contemporaries. Thinks the whole intellectual life of the Western world including poetry is declining. Lists the causes: (a) modern practicality; (b) rise of humanitarianism; (c) poets have looked backward to old glories instead of forward to new improvements; (d) the false esthetic principles of modern poets who have departed from the good old way of Milton, Dryden, and Pope into general chaos; (e) the want of high and pure morality in modern poets; (f) romantic love for rough versification and "affected vagueness and obscurity"; (g) modern poetry is adapted to youthful taste and is "founded on the excessive passions of youth, or romantic sentiments." Peabody is a complete neo-classicist. Thinks little of Byron "is likely to endure" (13). Entirely disagrees with Wordsworth's theory of poetry being found in the heart of the common man and with his theory of diction (15). In general the age "has afforded all sorts of extravagance" (14); its great fault is "affected originality" and in the end Pope will be "found nearer to truth and nature than his opposers" (18).


Notes the movement in European countries toward "cultivation of their own native literature, language, and history." Exclusive devotion to classical models, especially those of French literature, "have ceased to be the order of the day" (18).


Our progress in "polite literature and poetry" has not until recently kept pace with our progress in science, metaphysics, and government; the cause was the urgent demand "for talent in the various walks of active life" (105). Finally after rapid material progress, the preparation of the public for literature, and the galling sneers of foreign critics, Irving appeared and established American literature (109-110). Testifies to the great importance of literature in life; "the literature of one age determines in a great degree the history of the next" (112). Makes the romantic distinction that
rhyme and rhythm are not the peculiar features of verse and that Irving's prose is sometimes poetical (114). Makes also the transcendent distinction between reason and Imagination: Irving "con-fines himself to plain matter of fact." But "the universe is not less worthy of being studied as an expression of the pure and glorious ideas or images that dwell eternally in the Supreme mind, than when viewed merely as a pleasing and varied panorama; ... it even acquires, in the former case, a sublimity and beauty, of which it is not susceptible in the latter" (115).


A review of Two Reports by the Faculty of Amherst proposing to change the curriculum to fit popular demands. Notes the great controversy over the practical vs. the cultural; the "zeal for reform is not tempered with sufficient caution and discrimination" (299). The reforms made in Europe cannot be made here because we have nothing to correspond with the European university (299). The great complaint is the classics. Says he has "no overweening veneration for ancient usage" but that a classical education "is in the highest degree important" to high success in literature or the professions (304).


A review of Gibbon's History. Dislikes Gibbon's hostility to Christianity, but his work is "among the great classics of our language" (313). Discusses the nature of taste: "we judge of beauty by a certain sympathetic intelligence, whether implanted in our bosoms by nature or introduced there by Education," and "when refined by cultivation, it constitutes correct and exquisite taste" (314). Lists the causes of beauty in the classics: (a) the mechanism of the classic languages; (b) the limited means of publication strangled mediocrity; (c) the subserviency of our taste to the ancients—it was theirs "to invent, to conceive, to utter the first coinage of the fancy, undimmed, bright, fresh from the mint of inspiration; ours to imitate, embellish, arrange, and reproduce the images and ideas"; and (d) the taste, fashions, and feelings of the people, and the nature of their public institutions comes nearest "to accounting for the superiority of the Greeks and Romans" (317-8). Thinks science may repress the "spirit and exuberance of fancy" but will compensate "by the bestowment of still greater benefits, having peculiar influence upon the certainty of history" (322).


Praises Milton but attacks Byron, particularly the Byronic hero. Thinks "these heroes are fast ceasing to be favorites in the fashionable world; and Byron himself begins to be judged by the qualities of his heart, as they are displayed in his works" (349).


Reaffirms the need for the study of the classics. The "very treasures of knowledge" transmitted by Greeks and Romans "con-
stitute a considerable portion of our education; and these we must study, if for no other reason than because those nations produced men of genius, and happened to live before us on this globe” (491).


Asserts the need of a knowledge of foreign literature, which has “but of late years ... been diffused among us.” Though the “rapid increase of wealth” and the “general advance of cultivation” has made knowledge of foreign languages no longer a rarity, we are still conversant with but a small “part of them” (123). But it is an evil “that time will correct, and which it is even now rapidly correcting” (124).


Review of two obscure women poets. The review is a re-assertion of the old Puritan poetic ideal—very largely the ideal which underlies the poetry of the New England renaissance. Poetry is made up of two main elements: it must have the power of “enchanting us away from the present and the real, into an ideal world” and it must deal “with man’s higher and better nature” (221). The poet cannot paint perfection nor set forth everything as abstract truth, but he must “advance men towards perfection” (222) and loosen the mind “from its vassalage to sense” (223). Poetry springs from the “inmost and holiest sanctuary of truth,” from the soul of the poet; therefore the poet must have genius; “It is no common man, but one more loftily endowed and dwelling apart,—a prophet of the living God alone” (225). Defines the qualifications of the poet after the manner of Milton: “he must strive earnestly to purify his imagination; to fill his mind with noble desires and motives; to shut out every debasing influence; to divest himself of every selfish, local, or party prejudice; to become, in truth and in deed a citizen of the world” (226). Comes out for the kind of nationalism which depends on self-reliance. Poetry must spring “from the writer’s own heart” (227-8); therefore, the great imitation and “too great admiration of the English writers of the present day” is the great “deadening influence upon our poetry” (230-1). Thinks also that the “concentrating power of the imagination” cannot exist in connection with imitation. But imitation of the Bacons, Miltons, Taylors, and Shakespeares is helpful.


Outlines a system of education for the lower classes of the type being established in England by the utilitarian reformers like Brougham (who was attacked by Newman).


Discusses at length the history of historical writings. The classical histories sought “less to instruct than to amuse”; they were written in the comparative infancy of the world and possessed a “finer sense of beauty than the moderns.” We live in the prime of civilization; the imagination has been blunted, but the reason has matured; the modern mind has been schooled successively by the
classics and Christian doctrine and "a new standard of moral excellence was formed." Thus practicality and the intellectual and physical sciences were given new values; poetry lost much but philosophy gained more (296-7). Analyzes the contributions of Voltaire, Montesquieu, and Gibbon to the writing of history. Irving was wise not to write philosophical history (306).


Presents the evidence. Notes how keen and effective his satire was in the political field; also the advantage of his anonymity.


The article has no critical value except to show a wide range of interest.


Condemns the extreme nationalism of Kettell’s anthology which was founded on the principle that everything published among us has value. But would like to see an anthology containing only those writers who "give an idea of the dignity, grace, purity, and sublimity, which may be found among our authors, . . . a collection uncontaminated by the bad taste, the dullness, or the bombast, displayed by too many who are called writers of poetry" (492).

1830


Praises Dana’s "excellence of truth, of purity, of moral elevation and moral purpose" (277). Laments that America has no long poems of worth; we want some of our poets to show us that their genius is "vigorous and broad enough for a sustained flight" (279).


Advocates practical and scientific education as the best type of knowledge for America.


Ridicules literary nationalism; we have established the principle that "praise was due to well-meant exertion". Our denial of genius is reaching absurd lengths. The result of denying the need for training in creative writers is that our writers "fall into direct and servile imitation, and that not of the best models" (315). A great proportion of our poetry is of an imitative kind; due to the fact that no one adopts poetry as a serious pursuit. He is confident, however, "that the way of Milton and Pope, by which we mean the way of thoughtfulness, care, and labor, will triumph at last." Genius "is as
much a matter of cultivation as of nature”; a “taste for the beauty and grandeur of the visible world is formed by meditation”, and “acquaintance with the heart is not intuitive” and is “not to be acquired in an hour” (316).


A point by point refutation of an article entitled “American Literature” (in Edinburgh Review, no. 99), attacking American writers and literature. The “influence of national pride and jealousy” is the cause of the attack of the English periodicals on America. The English writer said that Irving, Brown, Cooper, and Channing were the only ones ever heard of in England; Everett adds several others. The English writer charged that even these four lacked originality and got their material from England. Everett denies this; Irving’s best works are those in which he drew “his inspiration wholly from American sources.” Thinks this maliciousness is bad criticism.


Defends the position of the critic against the author. Says that Villemain held the qualifications of a critic to be “perfect impartiality”, “earnest wishes to promote the success of others”, “a union of correct principles with exalted sentiments”, and “delicate and unperverted taste” (96). Defends Pope against Villemain; it is “his unquestioned praise, that he carried the sustained harmony and sweetness of English versification to a degree of excellence unknown before.” Neither Chaucer, Sidney, Dr. Donne, nor “even the good genius of Shakespeare” can equal him in this (109).


Thinks it was needless to bring Byron again before the public; his position had already been decided; he was given “a place among the great” but no one “claimed for him a place among the good” (167-8). Refutes Moore’s charge that Byron was killed by public opinion (172). Also denies Moore’s claim that misery is the parent of poetry. “Poetry is the work, not of circumstances, but of mind; of disciplined and powerful mind; which so far from being the sport of circumstances, makes them bend to its power” (181).


Seems to prophesy Whitman when he says that the “English language seems to be the best adapted of all modern tongues” for translating the parallelistic structure of the sacred poets (362).


Notes again the decline of poetry in his own day. Maintains that the “spirit of poetry is still present with him who meditates at eventide; with the worshipper of nature in her solitary places; with the contemplative” (443). The great cause of the decline is “the influence of perverted taste” which hourly welcomes “inferior classes
of romances, tales, and novels" (444). Gives a review of English literature: Dismisses Chaucer; praises Spenser; Shakespeare "looked upon man and nature without looking beyond them to the God of all"; Donne and his group are the Malvolios of English literature”; dislikes the Restoration but likes Milton very much; gives special praise to the age of Pope.

1831


Mrs. Sedgwick's chief merit is a "high and pure tone of moral and religious feeling, without which genius is a fatal curse" (77). Objects to the novel as "unnatural and improbable"; it is too much like some of "Mrs. Radcliffe's wild creations" (85). Thinks the "web of life in our Western world is too coarse to bear the embroidery of romance" (94).


Chiefly a discussion of philological matters, but has some critical dicta. Notes the "great influence that poetry exerts over a language, and the great tendency it has to soften and enrich it" (301). Progress in a language does not mean changes in orthography but "its approximation to a perfect medium of thought" (307). The merits of French are "ease, vivacity, perspicuity and directness." It is particularly suited to colloquial elegance, genteel comedy, conversational ease, the antithesis of epigram, the spirited ease in songs, and the simple pathos of the ballad. But in the "higher walks of tragic and epic poetry it but feebly second the high-aspiring mind" (316).


Says some regret that Scott gained so great a reputation merely by amusing the world; replies that, like the parables of Scripture, the novel is "only an extended figure, which illustrates the truth and deepens its impression" (388). Examines the various criticisms of Scott: (a) Some object to the connection "between fact and fable" in the historical form, but history gives an air of truth which pure fiction can never have. (b) Many object to his lack of plot, but history cannot be subjected to the critical demand for unity. (c) His heroes are called inefficient and uninteresting, but when we appeal "from criticisms to nature" Scott is nearer to common men, though far from the traditional hero. (d) Many object to the sameness of his characters, but he drew from nature and there is "sameness in nature". (e) Others say that historical romances decrease the interest in history, but the opposite is true. Lists Scott's qualifications: good sense, his education, the circumstances of the time augmented his particular tastes, and the habits of his early life. Predicts that Scott's type of novel will decline, but that the novel as a literary form will "embrace all that man ever did" (403). Scott, Maria Edgeworth, and Richardson surpass Fielding.

Defends Cooper from the charge of being an imitator of Scott. The qualifications of a novelist are power of description and the ability to portray character. Cooper has the first in a high degree but lacks “knowledge of human nature”; his characters do not have a proper degree of distinctness, individuality, and variety. Gives high praise to Cooper’s “description of American scenery, and of a variety of incidents and circumstances, which could be found in no other country” (521).


Compares Dante and Milton; both are sublime to the highest degree, but “Milton is an ideal poet and delights in generalization, while Dante is the most literal of artists” (33). It was fortunate that the Divine Comedy was a subject which enabled Dante “to exhibit the peculiar genius of Christianity, and of modern institutions, and to demonstrate their immense superiority for poetical purposes over those of antiquity.” It showed that at last barbarism had receded from the earth (34). Contends that the difference in society from age to age requires new and peculiar forms of expression; hence moderns cannot write by ancient rules. Notes the change of meaning in religion, love, honor; love of country was once the pervading feeling, but now the individual comes first (46). Maintains that the freedom of the political and social institutions of England and America have encouraged expansion of intellect and peculiarities of temper and have made them the best theatre of all time for the study of character (59). The drama and the novel are the staples for this “scientific dissection of character” (75). Prescott had a very wide knowledge of Italian literature itself.


The Harvard library should be enlarged so it will attract men of ability and fondness for intellectual research. This is one of the “chief hindrances at present to the rapid progress of American literature, the want of a point of union, a common arena, where accomplished minds are jostled in close proximity” (223).


A review of G. B. Cheever’s American Common-Place Book of Poetry. Praises the anthology because it was made “with great taste” and “a strict regard to the higher moral considerations” (397). Thinks the present generation of English poets are no greater than the present generation of American poets. Denies that the spirit of poetry is disappearing from the earth; it is one of the essentials of our nature and will live as “long as man preserves his present constitution” (298). Poetry arises whenever the other aspects of life are reinvigorated: poetry is the “instinctive spontaneous expression of feelings awakened by the real action and passion of life” and great periods of poetical activity coincide with great activity in other fields (299). Cheever ranked Dana as the foremost American poet; Everett disagrees and gives the place to Bryant.
Dana imitated “the worst efforts of the worst of all models, Wordsworth” (302).


The English was greatly enriched by Norman, French, and Latin, but “its sturdiest roots are to be looked for and found in the Anglo-Saxon” (325). Hence Anglo-Saxon is “essential to a complete knowledge of modern English” (326).


Laments the encroachments of physical science on moral science. The glory of the modern world “lies in the cultivation of physical science, and its application to the useful arts.” Moral science has not kept pace and to this might be traced some of “the practical defects in the social and political condition of the nations of Christendom” (530).

1832


This is Longfellow’s defence of poetry. The “spirit of the age is clamorous for utility”; we glory in the extent of our territory and the magnificence of our nature but “the true glory of a nation is moral and intellectual preeminence” (59). Then asserts (five years before Emerson’s American Scholar) the intellectual independence of America. In forming our new literature “we should make it as original, characteristic, and national as possible” (69).


Peabody greatly admires the neo-classical writers. Johnson had a mind “of the very first order” (100). Praises Johnson’s ideal of style—“to think clearly and then to express the thought in the most direct and natural manner” (102). Condemns the “obscure and shadowy style” of such works as Bulwer’s Pelham (102).


A survey of the evidence and a review of five American books on the subject.


Hails Bryant’s first volume as the “best volume of American poetry that has yet appeared” (512). “Bryant is not a first-rate poet; but he has great power, and is original in his way”. Likes his powers of observation and vividness; his simplicity and naturalness; and the fact that he is “never carried out of sight of common sense by his imagination” (505). The publication of this volume is an important event for American literature. There has been “too
much looking abroad for examples and models"; we have had "no standard of excellence of our own"; we hardly dare "judge favorably of an American work"; but Bryant has taken the only proper "way to answer the sneers of foreigners" (512). Stresses the need for careful preparation and learning before America can have a literature. This has been the "pernicious error" of American literature and sets at naught our "boundless profusion" of material (513). Ends urging treatment of American materials.


A review favorable to Cousin, voicing many of the main transcendental ideas which Emerson was to begin to express six years later. Makes the distinction between two kinds of reason: (transcendental) "Reason is absolute, universal, divine; human reason is imperfect, because it is enveloped in a finite nature" (25). Defines the "finite" as the "something not ourselves" (25). The foundation of all things lies in three ideas—"unity, multiplicity, and cause" (26). "The world of ideas is hid in the world of facts"; it is the mission of the philosopher to distinguish these ideas and to connect each particular fact "with some general law" (30). History, the compendium not only of human nature but of the universe, is "the result of the necessary operation of wise and beneficent laws, ordained by an infinitely perfect Being" and is not only beautiful "but highly moral" (23-30). Asserts also the doctrine that "great men bear the stamp, and afford the truest specimen of their age" (32). Praises Cousin's eclecticism highly: it "is not only the best, the true, but the only possible philosophy" (33). Ends with a plea which predicts Emerson. The "evils of a speculative and visionary mind" are not those which the present day needs to guard against. The calculation of interest and the division of labor are everywhere chaining down men's minds to a point" and speculative philosophy should be welcomed as the call which "may rouse us to a sense of the grand features and broad principles of humanity" (36). (For orientation consult William Girard, "Du Transcendantalisme considéré essentiellement dans sa définition et ses origines françaises," University of California Publications in Modern Philosophy, IV, Oct. 18, 1916; W. L. Leighton, French Philosophers and N.E. Transcendentalism, Charlottesville, Va., 1908; H. M. Jones, America and French Culture, Chapel Hill, N. C., 1927, pp. 464-67 and passim.)


Prescott's most important essay. Refuses to discuss whether Pope was a poet or not; his poetry was that "of philosophy, criticism, and satire" (167). Dislikes Dr. Johnson as "equally destitute of imagination and taste" (170). The 18th century was a time of "sluggish calm in which the minds of men seemed to repose"; the American and French Revolutions were tempests "which are occasionally sent to clear the moral atmosphere, and renovate the face of society" (170-1). Cowper is "the morning star of our modern poetry" but the three great modern poets are Scott, Wordsworth, and Byron; Scott is the poet of the long-neglected English minstrelsy; Wordsworth, the poet who attempts to "reconcile man with himself and his destiny" (thinks Wordsworth's muse was shipwrecked by his theory of low and rustic life); and Byron, the poet of the pas-
sions (178). Modern criticism: criticism can almost be “reckoned an invention” like creative literature; critical journals have replaced the old periodical essays, but the two great English journals follow rather than guide “public opinion” (183). Thinks criticism has had a salutary effect in America (184). Notes that the novel has replaced the drama: the “novel of character is only a development of the drama in a more expanded form,” and is better suited to the “practical, business-like spirit of the times,” the need for “accurate and philosophic analysis of character,” and the “habits of reading” acquired by the public (186). Prefers Scott to Fielding and Smollett, but the “utility” of Miss Edgeworth’s novels is most “characteristic . . . of the present age” (187-8). Literary prospects of America: competition with England has stimulated us and foreign importations have raised our capacity for literature. But ends with an assertion of our literary independence: American literature must “spring from native seed” and the poet “must study the volume which nature herself has unrolled before him” (194-5).


Praises Irving’s style but thinks that “high and deep things, whether of philosophy or feeling, are in a great measure foreign to him” (276). Welcomes the fact that Irving expects in the future to live in America; “the time is not very distant” when the value of domestic will greatly exceed that of foreign readers.


 Discusses at great length the rise of Italian literature and the leading characteristics of contemporary Italian dialects. Thinks “the study of languages, philosophically pursued, to be one of the most important which can occupy the human mind.” The elements of language lie deep among the elements of thought and each follows the changes in the other closely; therefore, “the language of a nation is the external symbol of its character and its mind” (283). Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio were giants who fixed “the uncertain foundations of their national language and literature.” It is always the “high prerogative of genius to give transcendent value to whatever it touches” (295).

1833


Byron “was entirely destitute of what is called character,—that is, of all fixed principles of thought and action.” One of the wonders of his poetical power is that it “could sustain itself in its flights upon its light and inconstant wing” (153).


Scott is free of the “moral disease, which very frequently be- sets superior genius”; “excessive sensibility” was never designed for the soul. Scott is the great reformer in poetry and romance. The clarity of his mind set forth everything in the broad light of
truth. "Men saw, that he had led them back to Nature" (292-3), from the paralysis of the 18th century (302). Scott’s novels supplied what those of Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett lacked (307). Scott is far above all contemporary writers; in the “whole literature of England” Shakespeare is the only one to whom he can be compared (312).


A companion essay to his studies on the Italian and French languages (see nos. 196 and 181 above). Mainly philology.


“Time is the touchstone of genius”; the “public voice never fails to become correct in its judgments” when freed from prejudice and adulation (2). Compares the Germans to the French of Madame de Staël’s time; “while the French materialized mind, they spiritualized matter.” Thus, while “one of these schools of philosophy renders us unworthy of heaven, the other unfit us for earth. But the German philosophy at least is the faithful ally of religion” (14). Likes Madame de Staël’s distinction between religion and enthusiasm, but there is no longer any need to fear enthusiasm. “The day of romance has long since gone by. That of machinery has succeeded” (17).


She has written the best and most useful books (138). Says he is a stern unbeliever “in Indian tales. We are tired of them” (139). Favors the education of women as giving the life of “man its moral tone” (144). Favors literature with a moral purpose from which morals can be as easily “deduced, as laid down” (163). High hope for the future of American literature; “Genius is not slumbering in our land” (163).


We see in Homer the “true test of transcendent genius.” Hails the classical editions of the American press “as indicating the commencement of a new era in the classical literature of our country” (374).


Says the 17th century prose writers are “rare models of that direct and forcible style which has its origin in direct and forcible thinking” (375). Praises the “land of old romance” (378). Fiction vs. truth: “Men do not love truth less, in seeming to love fiction more”; they love fiction because it “resembles truth” (380). It satisfies the desire for “intellectual excitement” (381).


A defense of American character against an unjust attack. Says that the Americans are more English than the English themselves.
Americans display the same qualities of the common stock "in a fuller state of development"; and the main one is "a bold and lofty spirit of independence" (508).


Attacks romantic melancholy, primitivism, and misanthropy. Only he who gives kind representations and inspires kind feelings can be called a "philosophical historian of the universal human heart" (470).


Looks unfavorably on the Middle Ages; it was an age of "barbarism, wilder and more ferocious than that of the earliest ages of Greece." No period "could be less favorable to genius" (507). Dante arose in spite of the time. His example shows that misfortune "is the best school for genius" (511). Science is injurious to art: "In proportion as knowledge is more generally diffused, the imagination becomes less susceptible, and it would seem that as science advances art recedes" (538). (Compare Macaulay's development of the same thesis in his essay on Milton, 1825).

1834


Favorable to Cowper; points to "the healthy action of his powerful intellect and the daily beauty of his unclouded life" (19). His change "in the style of English versification, though it seemed wild and lawless at the time, was a great improvement... on the artificial elegance in the measure of Pope" (27). Praises the humanitarianism of The Task; it opened the eyes of thousands to "traditional abuses" (29). There is no danger, as many claim, that poetry is in danger of disappearing; we merely live in an age following "a period of great intellectual excitement." We want someone with "the spirit and power of Cowper" to speak in a voice which "shall compel the world to listen" and in a voice, too, that "religion and virtue, as well as literary taste, can hear with applause". We are "confident that such an one will appear" (32).


Literature is the expression of the social and political condition of a nation itself, but it is still an open matter whether learning and the arts flourish better under liberal or despotic governments (159). Thinks Italian literature is first in value and that England, France, and Germany rival her only in history and moral philosophy (165). Dislikes the allegory of Spencer; "in the Faerie Queene... the observations of the author upon actual life (for to this, after all, the substance of poetry reduces itself) became unintelligible, and lose their effect in consequence of the precise circumstance by which he probably intended to heighten it, of their being wrapped up in a cloud of allegory" (171). This accounts for the superiority of Shakespeare and Scott (171-2). Everett is a romanticist; the influ-
ence of French poetry on English poetry “gave it, for at least a
century, a new and false direction” (176). With the romantic move-
ment “the slumbering genius of the country” awoke and “having
taken in the main a right direction, promises to pursue a long and
successful career on both sides of the Atlantic” (176).

209. Alexander H. Everett, “Men and Manners in America by
T. Hamilton,” XXXVIII, 210-270 (Jan., 1834).

A refutation of an unjust and indiscriminate attack on America.
One section is in defense of New England. Everett claims that “in-
tellectual eminence” accompanied by “high moral qualities” operates
to the highest good of a community (241).

210. E. Wrigglesworth, “Navarrete’s Life of Cervantes,”
XXXVIII, 277-307 (April, 1834).

A summary with translated excerpts from the untranslated life
by Navarrete.

211. Alexander H. Everett, “Early Literature of France,”
XXXVIII, 358-381 (April, 1834).

A review of M. Vilmain’s Cours de Littérature Française
(1828), discussing general characteristics of the period. No “artifi-
cial encouragement can ever create genius,” but thinks the patron-
age of Louis XIV “had a considerable effect in producing the French
school of literature” (381).

212. Francis Parkman, Sr., “Memoir of John Cotton, by John
Norton,” XXXVIII, 486-501 (April, 1834).

Expresses the kind of sympathy for the early Puritans that was
soon to be expressed by Emerson, Thoreau, Lowell, and others.
Cotton was one of “eminent men of his time” (492). Praises his
political liberalism; thinks the mingling of the politician with the
pastor was entirely in harmony with the spirit of the time and the
needs of the people (496-7). High praise for the “sound learning”
of the ministry and for “the martyr-like spirit” of the Pilgrim
Fathers. “Their history is one of continually fresh, as it is of ex-
haustless interest” (500).

213. G. H. Calvert, “Life of Schiller,” XXXIX, 1-30 (July,
1834).

Though romantic in theory, Calvert refuses to recognize any
transcendental element in poetry. Kant is a “metaphysical illusion”
(18); it is a mistake “to regard genius and common sense as incom-
patible.” Genius is only the “original intensity of power in a mental
faculty” and intuition is only the extra-efficiency of common sense
(1-2). Poetical genius is “intense susceptibility to the beautiful”;
all men possess it but “the degree in which it is possessed distin-
guishes the poet” (2). Besides this poetical superiority the poet
must “perceive more vividly and feel more acutely than common
men. Then will his mind spontaneously pour out its materials” (3).
He also must be rich in knowledge and skilled in the uses of it by
action; or, in other words, “to give life and substance to his poetry,
the poet must be and do as other men: the man is the basis of the
poet” (4).

Hails the “daily extending progress of sound classical information.” The study of Roman literature not only leads to good taste (for it has models of “all that is elegant in expression and lofty in sentiment”), but also to the “practical exercise of the moral powers” (58-9). The latter will result from their “sublime and disinterested tone of national character” (60) and their “severe adherence to the strictest rules of discipline and personal restraint” (61). The effects of these will lead to “the ascending progress of masculine literary refinement” (62).


Takes the middle of the road in regard to Crabbe’s realism: “Life is a sphere, of which the pastoral poets saw only the brilliant side, while Crabbe... was familiar only with the dark one.... We doubt whether either can produce a happy moral influence” (147). However, he praises Crabbe as a moralist and reformer, and especially for accurately “copying from nature” and drawing his themes from common life. There is much that is unpoetical in common life, but the materials of poetry are “more abundant in a lowly, than in an elevated sphere; for feeling is there unfettered by those conventional restraints, which operate like a law on natural freedom” (154).


An excessively favorable review. The high moral character of this writer and Scott “is indeed a blessing to the world” (167). Delivers a violent attack on the immorality of Disraeli’s Vivian Grey (168).


 Attacks modern literature for separating “the useful from the beautiful.” The art of the Greeks on the other hand was “employed with a moral and political view” (330). Praises Greek drama very highly; quotes the German critic, Schlegel. The point of the essay seems to be that Italian drama has the opportunity to become the logical successor of Greek drama.


Highly favorable. The characteristics of Coleridge’s poetry are versatility, inimitable mastery of language, condensation, originality, picturesqueness, graphic delineation, and distinct and vivid description. His poetry draws not mere pictures, but embodies also the indwelling life; it is filled with universal benevolence and a deep religious spirit (441-2). The first law of the mind is to conceive, to form images, to create. The second great law is association (452). Love is the great principle of the moral universe: God is love; the mind of man is a portion of the universe; and love is the connecting link between (452). Coleridge saved mindkind from materialism.
His works are "universal" and belong "to all men of all ages". [One of the best critical essays on poetry to date in the Review.]

1835

   A good essay favorable to Petrarch; analyzes the poems and translates illustrative excerpts. Greene is a romanticist; it is "useless to scan the poetry of passion with the cold eye of unimpassioned reason. Our moments of truest poetic feeling are those of deepest excitement"; an excitement which "speaks in low tones to the softer senses of our nature, and stirs with a gentle touch the deep sources of passion." And the language of this excitement "flows naturally and freely from the depths of the soul" (17).

   A favorable review. Laments the blindness and insensibility of men to contemporary genius.

   A favorable review showing a wide knowledge of 18th century writers. High praise for her religious and reforming zeal. Attacks the 18th century idea that education is "cultivation of the intellect alone"; the same idea exists today in the idea that "knowledge of a few sciences" will raise society (164). Tone is however favorable to the 18th century.

   Everett is defending the character of Jefferson. The writer of the work reviewed claimed that the French Revolution was a retrogression in the general movement of reform in Western Europe and that Jefferson's support of it was likewise an indication of essential evil. Everett disagrees; the genius of Reform "in his progress over Europe and America, took three giant steps before he fixed his foot at the fourth upon the firm foundation whence he was to shake the world. These three steps were the Reformation and the British and American revolutions. The French revolution was the fourth and last" (189).

223. O. W. B. Peabody, "Calavar: or the Knight of the Conquest; a Romance of Mexico," XL, 232-259 (Jan., 1835).
   The novel shows that "this hemisphere abounds in materials for romance" (232). Thinks the greatest reward for ambition in America lies in "doing, for our own hemisphere and our own country, what the mighty minstrel and novelist of Scotland has accomplished for his own" (259). Likens artistic creation to a "chemical process" by which the historical novelist gives "fulness of reality and truth" to his work (255).

   A review of The Friend and one of the best essays in the North American Review. Cheever is a thorough transcendentalist. De-
fends the nobility of Coleridge's character; it was ever his delight to discover and "acknowledge ability and excellence in others" (301). The Biographia "will remain a master-piece of philosophical criticism, coeval with the English language" (307). Says that "ours is an age of sense, in opposition to an age of spirit; an age of common sense, in which all things and knowledges are sensualized to all. The speculative reason is forgotten in the enthronement of the practical understanding of man" (311). Coleridge rescues us from this by directing all things "towards general principles" (310). Says that "many of the ripest and most practical scholars, that ever lived, have been Platonists" (321). Thus maintains that essentially "Coleridge's principles are clear" (322). True philosophy will simplify all knowledge by submitting all to "one comprehensive idea" (328). Coleridge's philosophy does that; it asserts "the evil of permitting the mere understanding to usurp the dominion of the pure reason" (329). It is "the office of reason to behold absolute principles; and spiritual intuitions are its world of action, especially if it be at one with faith. It is the office of the understanding to behold those principles acting in sense, and to follow them thus developed. The face of reason is turned towards God and the spiritual world; the face of the understanding points to the senses, and the world of material existence" (333). And thus the system of Locke and other mechanical systems based only on understanding are erroneous (336). Ends with high praise for Coleridge's poetry "as a luminous commentary on his philosophy" (345). "To Wordsworth and Coleridge, the latter the greatest philosopher and highest poetical genius, the other the most philosophic poet of modern times, the age is indebted in obligations, which it is difficult adequately measure or acknowledge. If to exert an almost magic power over minds of the noblest structure, and brightest promise; if to turn the hearts of the young with keen and animated gaze to the unveiled countenance of truth; if to awaken and call forth their best energies of intellect; if to form them to habits of thought and meditation if to rescue them from the baneful influence of that materialism, which has lain with a weight like death upon universal science ... if to direct and reprove the usurpations of the understanding; if to lead them to the contemplation of law in nature, and to the insight of principles in their own being, and to a reverential acknowledgement of the universal presence of the dread ground of all being;—if all this can constitute a claim to admiration and love, surely these venerable men may demand it."

(Note that this keen recognition of the merits of Transcendentalism appeared a year before Emerson's Nature).


Favorable to Bulwer. Says there is "something in the idea of antiquity which fastens deeply upon human sympathies" (447). Thinks that authors should be "careful to set the mark upon every exhibition of erroneous and ill regulated feeling of guileful and specious reasoning", for "vice will double its evil effects, by losing all its grossness" (454-5). Says it is the fashion to underrate the moderns writers by comparing them to the Queen Anne writers. Does not believe the moderns are "inferior"; it is merely that a great change has come in the last fifty years. "Thought is now become introspective and inculcates common truths, more through the tastes
and passions and sentiments, than in moral points and antithetic dogmas” (457).


The review gives Everett the opportunity to assert the intellectual independence of America. Irving is “the best living writer of English” (1); says he desires to “make a national matter of our countryman’s merit” (2). Everett maintains the power of literary creation comes entirely “from within” (12); hence all surroundings “equally serve the purpose of the man of genius” (13). Thus he comes to the assertion that he hopes “for nothing so ardently, as that the literature of the country should be the indigenous growth of the soil; indigenous in its topics, associations and spirit.—not for patriotic reasons merely, but on principles of art and taste” (14).


At one point discusses the present “state of American art” (169) We have many earnest devotees, some artists of exalted genius, several academies and frequent exhibitions, and an admiring public. “But it must be confessed, that a large proportion of the works of our artists, like a majority of our literary productions, are of an ephemeral character.” Our artists are not willing enough to make “a laborious study of the principles which lie at the foundation of all art... by careful literary culture” (169-70).


Maintains that the study of mythology is very important. It is “the key to ancient art”, particularly to “the spirit of ancient art” (340-1). Of more importance is “the connexion of the mythology with classic literature” (341); it explains much of the difference between ancient and modern tragedy. But chiefly it helps make “known to us our own nature” (346).


Says that the works of Irving and Channing are the proper answer to Sydney Smith’s question, “who reads an American book?” (366). They are “not excelled in their respective departments by any living English or American writers” (370). Says Coleridge is hailed, “especially on this side of the Atlantic,” as the greatest man of the age; thinks he has very slender claims to such distinction. The corner-stone of his system is a “supposed distinction between Reason and Understanding... which we consider as wholly imaginary” (371); he got all his ideas from Germany and Kant and is not original. Carlyle is “the most profound and original of the living English philosophical writers” (372).


A ministerial eulogy of what female writers are doing for the morality and virtue of the human race.

A favorable review summarizing Sartor Resartus in its first English periodical form. The book "contains, under a quaint and singular form, a great deal of deep thought, sound principle, and fine writing" (481). It will be recalled that Emerson was to see an edition of Sartor (the first edition in book form) through the Boston press in 1836, reading proof sheets while at work on his own Nature. For an acute study of Emerson's debt to Carlyle see F. T. Thompson's Emerson and Carlyle," Studies in Philology, XXIV, 488-53 (July, 1927.)

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