

respect there is an opportunity afforded for mutual combination and protection. Trade is not always legitimate, and an agreement might well be entered into, that whenever a foreign government seeks to injure an industry carried on in a country attached to the British crown, by means of bounties, or premiums, or some similar method involving the expenditure of public money, means will be taken to check the import, except under conditions that will render the competition equitable. The continental bounties on sugar are an instance in point, but there is no guarantee that the system will not be extended. The principal export of Australia, for instance, is wool. For several years there was a deficiency of this staple, and prices rose to a level satisfactory to producers in all parts of the world. But supply once more overtook the demand; prices fell to an extent that produced a serious crisis. The Argentine Republic has been making great strides in its production of wool, and its fiscal system is an extravagant one. It is quite conceivable that the day may come, when, to insure markets for its flock masters,

the government may decree an export bounty on wool. Is it likely that Australia will submit to be displaced on such terms in the English market? The surest way to prevent anything of the sort is to establish the general principle that every part of the empire will, by fiscal legislation, repel any such attack on a section of it.

Painting the lily and gilding refined gold are occupations universally regarded as superfluous. Wherever absolute freedom to follow its own inclinations and work out its own destinies has been accorded to a British colony, it has grown strong and become prosperous. To meddle with so beneficent a system, to crib and confine it by written constitutions and acts of Parliament, is to invite disaster. As long as Englishmen love the political freedom they have won and so thoroughly enjoy, they will do well, in whatever part of the world they live and exercise their rights, to resist every attempt to restrain perfect liberty of action in all matters pertaining to government, and in their commercial relationships with the world at large.

J. W. Root.

THREE CENTURIES OF AMERICAN LITERATURE.

THE tendency to consider centuries as natural periods in the history of culture, and their termini as milestones, indicates a mental habit that is far from logical, but it is one that men do not easily resist. A philosophically planned outline of any development of civilization, whether in politics, sociology, or art, will doubtless make use of more rational divisions than are afforded by the arbitrary lines that mark the centuries from one another; but it is not always convenient to be philosophical, and convenience must be taken into account in all our efforts to inculcate the

teachings of history upon the overburdened modern mind. If the adoption of an artificial scheme proves an aid to retention, or if it effects an economy of energy, no further plea need be made for it, in an age like our own, when the accumulated results of scholarship are so great and so varied that no individual can hope to possess himself of them in more than the broadest outline. Even science, which is nothing if not logical, does not scorn to use artificial classifications, where they seem likely to prove helpful; and there is surely no reason why history should not avail itself of

analogous devices, if they give promise of practical usefulness. It sometimes happens, moreover, that a century really does stand for a natural period in the history of civilization; that it has a broadly distinctive character of its own, and thus satisfies the demands both of logic and of practical convenience.

Turning from these general reflections to the special subject offered for investigation by our own country, we may note the fact that America has had a share in the history of civilization for four full centuries, and that for three of them the history of North America has been primarily a part of the history of English civilization. Now that the accounts have been closed for the last of these centuries, the work done by them invites examination, and the American contribution to the arts of civilization may fittingly be set forth. But that contribution, in most of its aspects, received such ample consideration a few years ago, when the fourth centennial of the discovery of America plunged us all into the retrospective mood, that a renewal of the discussion is hardly called for at the present time. It is to the special subject of American literature that attention is at present directed, and the provocation is supplied by the recent appearance of two highly important works upon this subject: Professor Barrett Wendell's *Literary History of America*¹ and Mr. Edmund Clarence Stedman's *American Anthology*.² The publication of these two volumes, just at the time when we should be naturally inclined to take a survey of our literary past, gives us an excuse more than sufficient for saying a few words about American literature. It will appear, moreover, that in this case the century is something more than an arbitrarily determined space of time, and that the three centuries of our literary

history constitute logical as well as chronological periods.

It is a rather surprising fact that Mr. Wendell has had but one predecessor in dealing with the whole of American literature upon a somewhat generous scale. Histories of textbook dimensions have been prepared by many hands, and some of these books are deserving of high praise; studies of special periods or phases of our literature have not been lacking, and some of them are noteworthy examples of criticism; but the history of American literature in its entirety — from the True Relation of the most famous of John Smiths down to the much truer relations given us by the novels of Mr. Howells — has thus far been told at any length only in the admirable work of Professor Charles F. Richardson, and in the present equally admirable work of Professor Wendell. There is, happily, no need of praising one of these works at the expense of the other, since they embody methods so different that there is no question of rivalry. Mr. Richardson isolates his subject, and deals with it in the manner of the conventional historian of literature. Mr. Wendell takes our literature to be a part of the literature of the English-speaking race, and keeps always in mind the interrelations of English and American thought. The very aim of the series for which his book was written, moreover, constrains him to take the standpoint of the historian of culture rather than that of the critic of literature alone. To write the history of a people, and in so doing "to shift the point of view from politics to literature," — this is a view of the purpose of history by no means unreasonable, although it may at first sight seem a startling novelty.

It is only by adhering to such a method as this that the true significance of

¹ *A Literary History of America.* By BARRETT WENDELL. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1900.

² *An American Anthology.* 1787-1900. Edited by EDMUND CLARENCE STEDMAN. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1900.

American literature is made apparent. A great deal of zealous patriotism has been wasted in the endeavor to claim absolute distinction for American writers whose value has been almost wholly relative to the needs of their own countrymen. The proper response to the Englishman's scornful query, "Who reads an American book?" should have taken the form of neither recrimination nor vaunting,—as it so frequently did,—but should rather have stated, with unruffled temper, that American books were read by Americans, because they ministered to the spiritual cravings of the American mind, and were the truthful expression of its insistent idealism. The Englishman no longer asks that question, although he is still at times unconsciously irritating, if not offensive. He is probably the latter when he classifies our poets as mocking birds and cornercrakes; and he is certainly the former when he assures us, with calm superiority of wisdom, that we do not know our own poets when we hear them. He is merely amusing when, as in a recent critique of American poetry, he bewails the "sad and strange" fact "that the wind of those free prairies and vastly splendid mountains cannot fan to greatness the flame which feeds on the souls of all great nations, from Palestine to England, from Italy to Persia and the Himalayas!" With Mr. Wendell's book the sober-minded critic, whether on this side of the Atlantic or the other, can find little fault. It frankly emphasizes the binding tie of a language used in common by the two countries, and as frankly recognizes the fact that a broad view of our literature must consider it as an offshoot from the literature of the motherland. It makes no undue claims for the merits of American writers, and is sensible of their shortcomings when tested by absolute æsthetic standards; but at the same time it insists upon their significance for our national development, and, by constantly bringing them into

relation with our national life, in the larger meaning of the term, it enforces the lesson that the importance of a literary product is not solely a matter of verbal or metrical felicity, or even of its universality of appeal.

Without some such saving principle as this for his inspiration, the historian of American literature would find, for at least the first two of our three centuries, that the story he had to tell would be like that of the needy knife-grinder. The writings of Cotton Mather, Edwards, and Franklin certainly do not loom very large in the consciousness of the modern reader. He has heard of them, but the chances are that he has not read them; or, if he have been thus greatly daring, it has been with other than literary intent. Yet these are the greatest names of our literature antecedent to the present century. The question is a fair one, whether it is worth while to delve into the literary annals of two centuries that have nothing better to offer than this, and the answer depends upon our point of view in dealing with the history of literature. We shall find scant entertainment in this hostelry, and the provender will prove hard of digestion. But if we are looking for something different from entertainment; if our interest have an admixture of the philosophical; if our aim be not merely to know what the years have brought forth, but rather to discover "the law lying under the years," then we shall find it profitable to read even the *Magnalia Christi* and *The Day of Doom*. And in a very human sense, it is well worth while to get an insight into the mental processes of so typical an exponent of the Puritan theocracy as Cotton Mather, or of so successful an author as Michael Wigglesworth. The one was altogether the biggest American of his time, and the other wrote a book—and a poem at that—which had a commercial success that, to be paralleled in our own age, would require the sale of some

new novel to the extent of more than two million copies within the first year of its publication. These men were famous worthies in their day; and if their day has completely passed away, it has left a record that may still prove profitable for the perusal of posterity.

The earlier chapters of Mr. Wendell's book help us to get from that record something more than the ordinary analistic treatment will yield; they reveal to us something of the inner life of the period, something also of its philosophical significance for the whole of our English literature. They remind us that Cotton Mather, with all his crotchets and pedantries, could, upon occasion, coin so noble a phrase as that wherein the "daily Conversation" of the first minister of Cambridge is characterized as "a Trembling Walk with God;" they remind us that the soul of Jonathan Edwards, immured within the grim fortress of Calvinism, was not without its glimpses of the stars, and that the gloom of his theology was relieved by the vision of that "unfailing and eternal peace" which is the portion of the Christian elect. But such matters as these are merely incidental. Mr. Wendell's book is essentially the defense of a thesis and the application of a formula.

Let us first consider Mr. Wendell's thesis. We find it stated in the following terms, at the close of his survey of the seventeenth century: "Though the phrase seems paradoxical, it is surely true that our national life, in its beginnings, was something hardly paralleled in other history, — a century of untrammelled national inexperience." Reviewing the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries together, he reaches a similar conclusion: "As we have seen, the history of England during these two centuries was that of a steadily developing and increasing national experience. In comparison, the history of America reveals national inexperience." This is a hard saying, unless we place all the emphasis

upon the word "national," in which case the saying becomes a truism. What the author means is that the seventeenth century in America offered nothing that corresponds with the Civil War, and the Commonwealth, and the Restoration; that the eighteenth century of our American history was not stirred by the menace of Jacobite risings and French invasions. Such excitements of the national consciousness were no doubt lacking in the colonies, for the obvious reason that until after 1760 the colonies did not dream of such a thing as the creation of an American nation. Yet it might be urged with some force that the wars, the political upheavals, and the social developments of the mother country were all reflected in our colonial history, and that, being an integral part of the English people, — and a population of picked men at that, — the American colonists might have been expected to make a notable contribution to the common literature of the two countries. That they failed to make such a contribution is clear, but it seems hardly fair to say that the failure was due to their lack of experience. Besides having a share in the experience of their kinsmen oversea, they had abundant experiences of their own. It was no stagnant life that was led by these pioneers of our civilization. It was rather a life of activities so varied and so strenuous that little energy could be spared for the arts; for, as Mr. Stedman remarks, "their epic passion was absorbed in the clearing of forests, the bridging of rivers, the conquest of savage and beast, the creation of a free government." In trying to account for the American failure to produce good literature during the two centuries in question, we do not need this ingenious theory of national inexperience; it is quite sufficient to observe that the process of transplanting always results in a setback to growth, whether the stock be of trees or of men. In this case, moreover, the stocks transplanted

were not of the sort from which literature might be expected. Neither the Puritan nor the Cavalier strain in our colonial life came from an environment stimulating to literary productivity; neither the one nor the other brought with it the ideals of a society in which literature has come to its own. The fox hunter and the preacher have at least this in common: that they look upon every form of art with indifference, if not with scorn.

As a concomitant of the transplanting process, we nearly always find the manifestation of a conservative tendency both as to language and as to literary manner. We all know how certain locutions, lost to modern English speech, have survived in our own country, and have even come to be dubbed Americanisms by the incautious English critic. This conservative tendency, as far as its influence upon literary manner is concerned, is strikingly illustrated in the history of American literature, and Mr. Wendell has taken it for a guiding principle in his exposition of our literary history. This leads us to the formula of which mention has already been made, — a formula which is certainly fruitful, although possibly strained in its application, and reiterated with a persistency that suggests the use which Matthew Arnold made of some of his pet phrases. Mr. Wendell first calls our attention to the fact that practically all the men who played a conspicuous part in the early history of the American colonies were Elizabethans born and bred, and that the New World, in its formative period, was thus infused with the Elizabethan spirit and made to partake of its temper. Now, the Elizabethan spirit was everywhere characterized by the three qualities of "spontaneity, enthusiasm, and versatility;" and these are the qualities that we find in the literary history of America, persistently exhibited for a period of some two hundred years after they have ceased to characterize the literary

history of England. They are strikingly exemplified by Cotton Mather, who is our typical man of letters in the seventeenth century; and even at the middle of the eighteenth century they are again brought to the surface by the Great Awakening that followed upon the preaching of Whitefield, and became dominant during the years of the Revolutionary agitation. There is an important truth in the following paragraph: "In many superficial aspects, no doubt, particularly if of the prosperous class, the native Americans of 1776 appeared to be men of the eighteenth century. In personal temper, however, Thomas Hutchinson and Samuel Adams were far more like John Winthrop and Roger Williams than Chatham and Burke were like Bacon and Burleigh. One inference seems clear: the Americans of the Revolutionary period retained to an incalculable degree qualities which had faded from ancestral England with the days of Queen Elizabeth."

Translated into the terms of literary history, Mr. Wendell's formula means simply that American literature (such as it was) down to a hundred years ago lagged far behind the literature of the mother country. Just as American politicians never came to realize, even during the eighteenth century, how profoundly the English Constitution had been modified by the Revolution of 1688, so American writers never felt the full influence of those profound transformations of the literary ideal which brought forth as the successors of Marlowe and Shakespeare such men as Bunyan and Milton, and as the successors of these such men as Dryden and Pope, and again of these such men as Goldsmith and Johnson. As far as it is possible to trace corresponding phases in the history of American literature, they seem to be anywhere from a generation to a century belated. This has all been said before, and in its generalized form the proposition has become almost a com-

monplace; it has remained for Mr. Wendell to recognize the full significance of the proposition, to support it by the most cogent reasoning, and to adduce illustrative examples from nearly every period of our literary history. He calls our attention to the fact that our only serious literature in the seventeenth century "was a phase of that half-historical, half-theological sort of work which had been a minor part of English literature generations before;" he reminds us that Dwight's satire is written, "as any one can see, in the traditional manner of the early eighteenth century;" he emphasizes the likeness between McFingal and Hudibras; and he notes the startling fact that Barlow was contemporary with Burns. Even more significant, perhaps, is the pamphleteering of Revolutionary America, as indicating "in our country a kind of intellectual activity which in England had displayed itself most characteristically a hundred years earlier." Such reversions as these may also be found in our nineteenth-century literature. Irving wrote in the manner of Goldsmith, and the underlying impulse of Bryant's verse was of eighteenth-century derivation. The literary ideals of our historians — Prescott and Parkman — have had much in common with those of Gibbon. Holmes has more than once been styled the last survival of the eighteenth century, and his manner is much more that of Pope than of his nineteenth-century contemporaries. And in some respects Hawthorne is the most remarkable of all these reversions; for in his work we have the fine flower of the Puritan spirit, the perfect expression of those moods to which our earlier writers vainly struggled to give utterance. A writer of Hawthorne's temper would have been simply unimaginable in Victorian England, but he appears as a perfectly natural product of the New England of the same period.

Mr. Wendell's treatment of our liter-

ature during the century just ended offers many interesting points for consideration, but we may not discuss them here. The hero worshiper and the enthusiast will find small encouragement in this history, for the author's sense of perspective is too just to permit him to abet their extravagances. The champions of Poe and Whitman and Webster will doubtless feel aggrieved at the way in which these men are handled, and those to whom the writings of Emerson possess something of the sanctity attaching to the ark of the covenant will not altogether relish Mr. Wendell's critical examination of the philosopher of Concord. But readers of temperate judgment will applaud the good sense and the acute intelligence which are conspicuous in almost every chapter of this book, nor will they be offended by the breeziness of its style or the happy-go-lucky character of its commentary. This random critical firing is apt to excite a certain momentary apprehension, but it nearly always hits the mark before a particular target is done with. There is only one thing in Mr. Wendell's philosophy to which we take serious exception, and that is his high-sounding but rather meaningless talk about "imperial democracy." We cannot share the complacency with which he regards the most recent happenings in our history, and do not believe that our late sinister departure from the consecrated traditions that have made this nation great and praiseworthy is to be glossed over by empty phrases about world politics and manifest destiny. "After three centuries of separation, England and America are once more side by side," we are told; but the circumstances which have brought about this *rapprochement* are no cause for congratulation to either nation. Mr. Wendell strikes a far deeper note when he dwells upon the tie that binds us to England, not for a single hour of political emergency, but for all time, — the tie of a common speech, a common liter-

ature, and a common devotion to "the two ideals most deeply inherent in our native language, — those of the Bible and the Common Law." The phrase just quoted may perhaps be called Mr. Wendell's *Leitmotiv*, so frequent and so effective is its appearance in the discussion.

From exposition to illustration is a natural step; and while Mr. Wendell has been doing the one service for our American literature, Mr. Stedman has been engaged in the performance of the other, — at least for the last century of our literature, still further restricting his field to that of our poetry alone. Mr. Stedman's qualifications for this task are too eminent to need setting forth. Himself one of the foremost of our writers of verse, — certainly unsurpassed in poetical achievement by any other now living, — his rank as a critic of poetry is equally beyond dispute; for his three published volumes in this department of literature constitute the most important body of systematic and serious criticism thus far produced by any American writer. The publication of his American Anthology now completes the labors of a quarter of a century devoted to the English and American poets of the last hundred years. In the production of the series of four volumes in which these labors are embodied he has combined industry with enthusiasm, and the nicest discrimination with the most generous appreciation. There may be individuals who think that they might have made a better anthology of American song than Mr. Stedman has made, but we fancy that their suffrages, were they to vote upon the subject, as Herodotus tells us the Greek generals voted upon the qualities of leadership displayed in the Persian wars, would result in much the same way. Each general, we read, made Themistocles his second choice; and so each critic, however high he might rank his own qualifications for the task, would be pretty sure to cast his second vote for Mr. Stedman.

It is important, at the outset, to state the exact purpose of this American Anthology. It is not intended to be a poetry book pure and simple, analogous to Mr. Palgrave's *Golden Treasury*. Mr. Stedman might have made such a book, had he wished; what he really set about to do was something quite different. His aim was to illustrate the whole movement of American poetry, from the lyrics of Freneau to the trifles of the latest college graduate, and to illuminate each phase of this historical development by whatever material seemed typical, whether its absolute value were great or small. Mr. Stedman, as a critic, is distinctly influenced by the modern evolutionary conception of the history of literature; and it is well to be reminded that his conception demands, in Amiel's metaphor, that our survey shall not content itself with the triangulation of the peaks, but shall also exhibit whatever is significant in the detail of the contour. Applying this method to the problem before him, Mr. Stedman has found nearly six hundred writers of verse entitled to be represented in this conspectus of a century of American poetical endeavor. Many of these writers are of extreme minority, no doubt; but that is not the point, and no criticism of the volume could be so ill timed as that which should seek to raise an easy laugh by satirical comment upon our six hundred poets. When we find stout volumes bearing such titles as *The Poets of Indiana* and *The Poets of Kansas*, satire is justified, for a vainglorious provincialism is almost certain to be the note of such collections; but the very greatness of the American nation, and the immense significance of its history for the civilization of the future, would offer sufficient reasons for the serious study of its poetry, were that poetry merely respectable in quality and amount.

That American poetry is something more than respectable is a claim that will now hardly be gainsaid, even by the

countrymen of Shelley and Wordsworth and Tennyson. That it has fairly and worthily reflected the idealism upon which this nation was based is a proposition that will be denied by no disinterested critic. That it falls short of the standard of world literature is a fact of far less importance to Americans than the other fact, that it has offered a sincere and intimate revelation of their better moods, strengthened them in their finer impulses, and revealed to them their nobler possibilities. It has, in Mr. Stedman's phrase, once more assumed "its ancient and rightful place as the art origivative of belief and deed." An American born and bred, with the blood of Revolutionary ancestors in his veins and the unbending ethical idealism of the Puritan in his conscience, cares little for the canons of comparative criticism or the hierarchy of literary fame when he reads his Emerson or his Whittier or his Lowell. They are too dear to him to be weighed in the critical balance; their message is too personal to be judged by objective standards. He may yield to none in his reverence for the poets of august and world-resounding names; but he knows that the poets of his own country have been more directly influential in moulding his spiritual life; that they have done for him what the sweetest or the sublimest poets born under alien skies could not have done; that it is from them that he has learned the lessons of

"righteous anger, burning scorn
Of the oppressor, love to humankind,
Sweet fealty to country and to home,
Peace, stainless purity."

And, knowing these things, his critical instincts become dissolved in an emotion of gratitude too deep for words and too insurgent for analysis.

It is in this sense that the poetry contained in *An American Anthology* is a strictly national product, and it is this feeling for its vital significance for us as a people that has made the editor of the collection so sympathetic an expositor. But in a deeper sense we must recognize our poetry as only an affluent of the stream that has been flowing ever since the soul of Cædmon poured itself forth in song. That stream is the true Father of Waters in the literature of the modern world, and American poetry may well be content with its function of chief tributary. Idle indeed is the effort to deal with it, in the philosophical spirit, as a thing apart; such an effort can result only in magnifying its accidental variations and losing sight of its essential characteristics. It should be our proudest boast that in our poetry, as in our politics and our law, "we are sprung of Earth's first blood;" that we

"speak the tongue
That Shakespeare spake; the faith and morals
hold
Which Milton held."

The more carefully we read the contents of Mr. Stedman's representative collection, the more strongly are we persuaded that, in their twofold character as a distinctive American product and as a constituent part of English literature, it is in the latter character that they impress themselves the more deeply upon the intelligence.

William Morton Payne.

RECENT VERSE.

AMONG recent books of verse, Mrs. Fields's *Orpheus, a Masque*,¹ is notable for its delicacy of mood and quiet distinction of manner. In the forty or more pages of this singularly attractive volume, she has presented a new version of one of the most permanently lovely and significant of Greek myths. The Orpheus story has been told many times in modern poetry, and for all its simplicity it lends itself endlessly to new meanings. In Mrs. Fields's *Masque*, the dramatic action turns upon the spiritual growth of Eurydice after her sojourn in Hades. Moved now only by the love that allies itself to highest good, she refuses to follow Orpheus back to "the household ways he loved so well," since she cannot bring herself to abandon the sorrowful and forsaken spirits whom she has learned to know in the shadow land. But Orpheus cannot respond to her entreaties to

"Come, follow and succor
With love and rejoicing
The spirits repentant."

Sadly she disengages herself from him, and he returns alone to Thrace, there to meet strange adventures and a strange doom. Mrs. Fields has given to this sacrificial, purgatorial element in the legend a deep meaning, and she has clothed the poem throughout with an unbroken beauty of expression. The monologues and dialogues are in firm, well-moulded verse; the lyrics are deftly varied in metrical effect; and the *Masque* leaves an impression of grace, purity of feeling, and a vital interpretation of a profoundly imaginative legend.

Another veteran writer whose latest book will bring her fresh laurels is Mrs.

¹ *Orpheus. A Masque.* By MRS. FIELDS. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1900.

² *Afterglow. Later Poems.* By JULIA C. R.

Dorr. Very characteristic of the spirit of her new volume² is the sonnet:—

"Whom the Gods love die old! O life, dear life,
Let the old sing thy praises, for they know
How year by year the summers come and go,
Each with its own abounding sweetness rife!
They know, though frosts be cruel as the knife,
Yet with each June the perfect rose shall blow,
And daisies blossom, and the green grass grow,
Triumphant still, unvexed by storm or strife.
They know that night more splendid is than day;
That sunset skies flame in the gathering dark,
And the deep waters change to molten gold;
They know that autumn richer is than May;
They hear the night-birds singing like the lark—
Ah, life, sweet life, whom the Gods love die old!"

A book of such rich and eloquent verse as this is an evidence not only of ripeness of experience, but of artistic maturity as well. Mrs. Dorr's lyrics have always had the note of spontaneity. They have expressed with rare fidelity the beauty of her northern New England country. They have never failed in musical quality or in genuineness of feeling. But her *Afterglow*, in its tender portrayal of gracious memories, in the pathos and longing with which it addresses unearthly listeners, in its human sympathy and religious faith, shows her fine powers at their very best.

Mr. Lloyd Mifflin comes before the public for the fourth time with *The Fields of Dawn and Later Sonnets*.³ His command of the sonnet form has received wide recognition; and if in this new col-

DORR. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons. 1900.

³ *The Fields of Dawn and Later Sonnets.* By LLOYD MIFFLIN. Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1900.