

enlarged upon to make further discussion necessary: the stilted dialogues, the tedious love-passages, the insipid heroines,—“young and ingenuous persons of the female sex,”—and the *manqué* humorists, like Master Cap in “The Pathfinder,” whose humor consists, for the most part, in harping on the word “circumstance.” The question then arises whether the novel of adventure is *ipso facto* inferior to the novel of character. “There can be no greater absurdity,” says Professor Lounsbury, “than to speak of this kind of story, as is sometimes done, as being inferior in itself to those devoted exclusively to the delineation of manners or character; or even of the subtler motives which act upon the heart and life. As well might one say that the ‘Iliad’ is a poem of inferior type to the ‘Excursion.’” This may pass as a comparison between the types, but as between, say “The Spy” and Hawthorne’s “Scarlet Letter,” *e. g.*, we think it misleading. The “Iliad” is superior to the “Excursion” on its own ground. It is better poetry, better art, more perfect in plan, more beautiful in language and verse, more imaginative in style, and fully equal in its power to touch the deeper springs of emotion. If the “Iliad” were merely a story of adventure like “The Spy,” the comparison might stand. But it is because Cooper fails to do what Homer and Hawthorne both can do, that “The Spy” is inferior to “The Scarlet Letter.” He is not master of laughter and of tears; neither the secrets of passion nor the secrets of thought are his. Nor has his workmanship that fineness of grain which, in the absence of other qualities, will sometimes secure immortality.

Professor Lounsbury quotes Balzac’s saying that, “if Cooper had succeeded in the painting of character to the same extent that he did in the painting of the phenomena of nature, he would have uttered the last word of our art.” This strikes us as smelling of the asphalt of the boulevards. The great Parisian cockney’s conception of American nature was doubtless taken from Chateaubriand,—whom Lowell has termed “the inventor of the primitive forest.” That Cooper loved the wilderness and the sea is true, and much of their freshness breathes from his pages. The air of the frontier, the raw edge of civilization, he caught and reproduced wonderfully. His “Leatherstocking Tales” have, in this particular, a genuine historical value. But of his descriptions of nature it is fair to say, using Balzac’s language, that they are “paintings.” They are precisely that, and distemper paintings, moreover. As you come close to them the perspective vanishes, and you see a flat surface rudely daubed. Of that more intimate and imaginatively suggestive handling of nature, that poetic and spiritual insight which looks into it and through it, there is nothing in Cooper. Therefore, even as mere description, we would rather have a few pages of “Walden” or “The Maine Woods” than all the pictures of lake, and sea, and forest that Cooper ever drew.

#### Adams’s “John Randolph.”\*

THE interest which attaches to the life of Randolph is mainly now an interest springing from curiosity.

\* John Randolph. By Henry Adams (American Statesmen Series). Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co. 1882.

The record which he has left behind him is so full of eccentricity, inconsistency, and irrationality that it is a constant surprise to the reader of any life of him that he should ever have been a political leader of sane men. Toward the end of his life, indeed, even his contemporaries and admirers failed to be able to follow the rambling rhodomontade with which he puzzled the reporters of the Congressional debates; but there was a long period during which he exercised a powerful influence at Washington,—an influence recognized then as legitimate. Possibly the explanation is to be found not so much in Randolph as in the circumstances of the country in his time. The United States was, intellectually and morally, in the early part of this century, much more provincial than it is easy for us now to picture to ourselves. It had, in fact, just ceased being a province and just begun to be a country. It was thinly settled and poor, and yet conscious of its coming greatness. It was intensely conscious of everything about itself, and, among other things, of its new race of politicians. The stage was a small one, but a great drama was to be enacted upon it; no one knew how soon or precisely what it was to be, and consequently every one who approached the foot-lights was received with an attention which now often seems out of proportion to the part in which he was cast. It is no wonder, therefore, that Randolph, with his daring and presumption, should have persuaded the audience, for a time, as he did himself for his whole life, that he was one of the heroes of the plot, and that any one who wished to understand its development would do well to listen attentively to him.

It is hardly possible to go over the events of his political life and come to the conclusion that he had any definite principles of action. Quarrelsome and combative, he was far more at the mercy of his passions than Jackson ever was; and it is for this reason, not from any want of painstaking on his biographer’s part, that the latter fails to put before us anything that can really be called a political career. His political life began and ended with the assertion of himself, and it is impossible to-day to see how the course of American history would have been appreciably affected one way or the other had John Randolph never been born. Mr. Adams does, indeed, make him out an earlier Calhoun in his views on the position of the South; but in this respect he was so far ahead of his time that his opinions produced no impression, and now possess merely an antiquarian interest.

If Randolph’s life could be said to be connected with any great human cause or interest, or if he had been anything more than the representative of a decaying provincial aristocracy, it would possess a much deeper pathetic interest than can actually be said to attach to it. It was a sad enough life, from any point of view. He was probably born with the seeds of madness in his brain, and he was certainly doomed to failure and final ruin by nature and circumstances. Allied by birth and traditions to the aristocratic order which was passing away, he was, by the vices of his mind and character, well calculated to do what he could to assist it in its downward career. Even his better impulses and thoughts may be said to have been devoted to making this work more complete. It is impossible to feel much sympathy

for him. He was a lonely man during a great part of his life, and the causes which produced his loneliness then contribute to leave his memory in a species of isolated and historical limbo now. We feel, as we read his life, that in some way he is not like enough to the common human type for us to altogether understand him; and understanding is necessary to sympathy. His changes of opinion are so rapid and inexplicable that we cannot feel sure that he had what we should call belief on any subject. He was an *ami des noirs*; and yet he was the earlier Calhoun. He was a Democrat by profession, and yet he was in deadly hostility to half the Democrats of his party, for reasons which are quite beyond our comprehension. His friendship had the same unsubstantial character as his opinions. He quarreled with everybody, and quarreled irrationally. He had all the materials of a most interesting character, without having a character. He impressed his contemporaries first as a great man, then as an unreliable man, finally as a madman. His life is rather a puzzle for alienists than good material for a biographer.

Mr. Adams, at any rate, though he has evidently tried, has not succeeded in inspiring himself with much of that enthusiasm for his subject which is so essential to successful biography. He records faithfully the freaks and whims, the pyrotechnic displays of rhetoric, the useless quarrels that make up Randolph's life; but they follow each other with so little connection of cause and effect that we feel that the biographer himself is lost in a sort of maze. Of Randolph's rhetoric, both before and after it degenerated into gibberish, he gives some specimens. It is evident that Randolph's hold upon his audience must have come from this source, and a very cursory examination of his speeches is enough to show that he was, at his best, powerful and effective in debate. Had it been possible for him to act steadily with any political party, or even faction, he might have come down to us with a great reputation. But rhetorical powers alone will not make a man a great political orator. He must have some well-defined object to attain, and must know how to explain it, and must be able to fill others with feelings like his own about it. But what was Randolph's object? He seems to have enjoyed discussions as an end in themselves, and, provided he had an opportunity to quarrel and free his mind, cared little which side he was on. And so, in the end, even his admirers came to care as little as he.

St. John's "Natural History and Sport in Moray."\*

AMONG the crowds of red-handed sportsmen that Britain turns out,—men with an instinct for game like that of a terrier for rats,—there occasionally appears one touched to finer issues. Such was Charles St. John, who died in 1856, and whose "Natural History and Sport in Moray," compiled and arranged from his journals and from his "Wild Sports in the Highlands," by C. Innes, is now before us. A more happy combination of the two pursuits was, perhaps, never put together; and such a picture of wild life in the High-

lands of Scotland we remember nowhere else to have seen. It is a worthy companion to White's "Natural History of Selborne," and through its record of personal adventure in pursuit of the creatures whose haunts and habits it describes, appeals to a much larger class of readers than that famous book.

St. John was indeed the ideal sportsman. He had a poet's sensibilities and love for nature, while he was a very close and accurate observer. The mountain, the moor, the lake, the tarn, the shore, had attractions for him that made the presence of game there a secondary consideration. When the season for grouse-shooting arrived, instead of bending all his energies to the slaughter of a great number of birds, he preferred "a good stretch across a range of valley and mountain," usually fixing upon "some burn, some cool and grassy spring, or some hill-summit which commands a fine view," as the limit of his day's excursion, knocking down enough birds to fill his game-bag, happy in the companionship of his dogs, and noting the fine instinct and skill with which they did their work: happy, above all, in the companionship of wild nature about him. The much-abused race of sporting dogs never found a more kind and considerate master. He always had a biscuit for his retriever when he came out of the cold water, and would strip the plaid off his own back to cover him on all occasions when the water was icy, favoring him as much as possible. "It is amusing enough to see the retriever wrapped in plaid, with only his head out of it, watching eagerly for the appearance of a flock of wild-geon or ducks, which he often sees before I do myself." The dog knows what game his master is hunting. "The sea-gull or heron may pass, and he takes no notice of them; but the moment that a wild duck's quack or the whistle of his wings is heard, the dog's ears erect themselves, and he watches my face with a look of the most inquiring eagerness."

There was no wild creature he did not treat tenderly and with an amusing fondness, when chance placed it at his mercy. One day his dog brought him a little water-rail alive. He took it home to show his children.

"When I took him out of my pocket, in which most unaccustomed situation he had been for two hours, the strange little creature looked about him with the greatest nonchalance possible, showing fight at everything that came near him; and when, after having gratified the curiosity of the children, we turned him loose in a ditch of running water, he went away jerking up his tail, and not seeming to hurry himself, or to be in the least disconcerted."

The young curlews, which he comes upon in his walk, he looks upon with the same fond, curious eyes.

"When you catch one, and hold him up for examination, the poor little bird looks at you with such an expression of half-confident inquiry in his large, prominent dark eye, that the most determined collector of birds could scarcely refrain from putting him carefully on the ground again, when he runs to the top of some grassy hillock and looks round at his screaming parent."

St. John was a careful observer, and it would appear that in these journals he had not gone to the bottom of his knowledge of the wild creatures. For instance, he says on page 290: "From what I have myself seen of the cunning of the fox, I can believe almost any story of his powers of deceiving and inveigling animals into

\**Natural History and Sport in Moray.* By Charles St. John, Author of "Wild Sports of the Highlands," "Tour in Sutherland," etc. Edinburgh: David Douglas.