

THE EDITOR'S DIARY.

Of Yankees and "Yankee Doodle."

REFERRING to certain sneering and intemperate allusions to this young land by English publicists reproduced recently upon these pages as indicative of the true British attitude toward us, Mr. Andrew Lang chides us gently for assuming that such journals as the "Academy" and the "Saturday Review" are really representative, and makes fresh declaration of the unselfish friendliness to us of our older cousins. Such assurances, especially from a source so distinguished, and presumably authoritative, find ever a ready welcome among those of us who continue to regard ourselves as lovers of peace and concord; and it was with peculiar satisfaction that we prepared to accept these in particular while sojourning temporarily within His Majesty's dominions. Imagine, then, the distress of mind which ensued, almost immediately, upon our finding that on that garden spot discovered by the Spanish Bermudez, but appropriated by the English Somers, American boys are prevented from attending schools by English lads who congregate in great numbers for the deliberate purpose of hazing them. Granting readily the essential brutality of youthful exuberance the world over, and conceding, of course, the non-participation and even perhaps the disapproval of their elders, the dominance of resentful prejudice in the breasts of these young Britons of the better class against their American relatives can only be held to mean that the disappearance of the traditional distrust and dislike which grew out of the Revolution is not yet complete. Whether, if the cases were reversed, American schoolboys would behave with like discourtesy we would not venture to assert; if common reports of actual experiences be correct, probably not; but positive protestation would ill become one in whose eyes the red coat is still

nearly, if not quite, as hateful as it was in those of the embattled farmers at Lexington. Such we imagine the effect to be, as English writers bitterly complain, of the accounts of the struggle against oppression formerly given in our primary school-books and reiterated with emphasis by teachers at the multitude of "four corners" throughout the length and breadth of the land. For the gradual but, as we are informed, certain elimination of these resentful teachings from the school-books of to-day we should, of course, be duly grateful—and probably are.

There is delightful irony in the fact that the most derisive term applied by an English lad to an American boy is "Yankee." True, since our own Civil War, during which social amenities prevailed to a limited degree between "Yanks," on the one side, and "Rebs," on the other, the word has taken on a new colloquial meaning; but, as originally used, it actually stood for "English," having been coined by the Indians, whose guttural limitations restricted their pronunciation of "English" to "Yengees," then "Yangees," from which "Yankees" easily followed. Even though Thierry's theory be accepted, that "Yankee" is a corruption of "Jankin," a diminutive of John, applied by the Dutch of New York to the residents of New England, the reference was, of course, to Britons, and therefore, from their view-point, necessarily complimentary—as "John Bull" is or even "Tommy Atkins." Moreover, as early as 1713, it was held to denote great excellence, being used at that time by the Cambridge farmers at their auction sales of "Yankee good horses," "Yankee cider" and the like.

Possibly that exasperating tune, "Yankee Doodle," had something to do with the discovering of the term "Yankee" by the English—and, if so, one could hardly blame them for harboring a prejudice against the Yankee nation, although even at that, if we admit their own pretensions, they had only their own stupid selves to blame. It has ever been the wont of the British upper classes to speak opprobriously of their stronger antagonists and sometimes, if we may be so bold, of their betters.

When Charles the First ascended the throne a ditty familiar in the nurseries of high society was "Lucy Locket," afterwards known in New England as "Lydia Fisher's Jig," and running like this:

“Lucy Locket lost her pocket,
 Lydia Fisher found it;
 Not a bit of money in it,
 Only binding round it.”

A smart Cavalier, adapting the jingle to political conditions, produced the following:

“Nankey Doodle came in town,
 Riding on a pony,
 With a feather in his hat
 Upon a macaroni.”

A “doodle,” according to Murray, was a simpleton, “a sorry, trifling fellow”; a “macaroni” was a knot in the ribbon. The particular Nankey characterized thus derisively in this case was Oliver Cromwell. The next adaptation appeared in 1766 in connection with a caricature ridiculing William Pitt for espousing America’s cause, and incidentally sniffing at the French and Virginia negroes thus:

“Stamp Act! le diable! dat is de job, sir:
 Dat is de Stiltman’s nob, sir,
 To be America’s nabob, sir,
 Doodle, noodle, do.”

It was but natural that shafts of the wit of the period should be aimed at the uncouth American soldiers; and there was much hilarity in the British camp in Boston when an officer-poet recited the lines which became the real “Yankee Doodle,” beginning with the familiar verse:

“Father and I went down to camp,
 Along with Captain Goodwin,
 Where we see the men and boys
 As thick as hasty-puddin’”—

and continuing with the well-worn references to “Captain Washington,” “My Jemima,” *et al.*, after the well-known fashion designed to “take off” the provincials thus:

“There was *Captain* Washington
 Upon a *slapping* stallion,
 A giving orders to his men:
 I *guess* there was a million.

“And then the feathers on his hat,
 They looked so *tarnal finea*,
 I wanted *pockily* to get,
 To give to my Jemima.

“ And then they had a *swampin'* gun,
As large as log of maple,
On a *deuced* little cart—
A load for father's cattle.

“ And every time they fired it off
It took a horn of powder;
It made a noise like father's gun,
Only a *nation* louder.

“ I went as near to it myself
As Jacob's *underpinnin'*,
And father went *as near agin*—
I thought the *deuce* was in him.

“ Cousin Simon grew so bold,
I thought he would have cocked it;
It scared me so, I shrinkéd off,
And hung by father's pocket.

“ And Captain Davis had a gun,
He *kind* a clapped his hand on't,
And stuck a crookéd stabbing-iron
Upon the little end on't.

“ And there I *see* a pumpkin-shell
As big as mother's basin,
And every time they touched it off
They scampered *like the nation*.

“ And there I see a little keg,
Its heads were made of leather:
They knocked upon't with little sticks,
To call the folks together.

“ And then they'd *fife away like fun*
And play on *cornstalk* fiddles;
And some had *ribbons* red as blood,
All wound about their middles.

“ The troopers, too, would gallop up
And fire right in our faces;
It scared me almost half to death
To see them run such races.

“ Old Uncle Sam *come* then to change
Some pancakes and some onions
For *'lasses cakes*, to carry home
To give his wife and young ones.

"I see another *snarl* of men
 A digging graves, they told me,
 So *tarnal* long, so *tarnal* deep,
 They '*tended* they should hold me.
 "It scared me so, I *hooked* it off,
 Nor slept, as I remember,
 Nor turned about till I got home,
 Locked up in mother's chamber."

Some years before, a British army surgeon stationed at Lake George had composed one or two sneering verses entitled "Yankee Doodle," and Ethan Allen, whose liking for stirring melody was stronger than his taste for classical music, promptly appropriated the tune, so that the fifers and drummers at Dorchester were fully prepared when they received a copy of the Boston composition, and the shrill tune became, probably for all time, our favorite national marching air. It is essentially English, as we have pointed out, but only in our judgment as adapted; in any case, rightly or wrongly, we prefer to accept Duyckinck's declaration that it was taken by the predatory British from an old Dutch harvest-song whose refrain ran:

"Yanker didee *doodle* down
 Didee dudel lawnter,
 Yankee viver, voover, vown,
 Botermelk und Tawnter."

The British officer-poet, however, is entitled to the credit of having made the first use of "Uncle Sam" on record, although there is no indication that he meant it to refer to the States then united only for defensive purposes, thus leaving to the Albany pork inspector the high honor traditionally accorded him for sardonic humor in the use of a branding-iron.

Disregarding considerations relating to the origin of the appellation or traditions enveloping it, what is the true position of the Yankee of the present day? Should one, so called, feel abased or exalted? Has he cause for shame or reason for pride? Assuming an intermingling of vices and virtues in the typical human, which in his case dominate? Does his traditional meanness pale before the glint of his stern morality, or have both been so modified as to be virtually lost in a flabby present? Verily, is there to-day a Yankee living, as Yankees once did live, with malice towards all and charity for none whose existence seems to be unrighteous?

This is a fruitful topic peculiarly inviting to our commercially consanguineous Jew and Scot; but, for the present, contrast may well be confined to the race whose physical robustness and dogged determination have served to triumph over the presumably superior intellectual attributes of their racial rivals. We should say, then, that, in common estimation, the Yankee is keener, shrewder, less dogmatic and more capable of sharp practices than the Briton. In combat, commercial or other, the two are about evenly matched, the exceptional quickness of the one nearly, if not quite, balancing in effectiveness the developed brutality of the other. True culture sits lightly upon both. In minor morals the Englishman excels; in major probities the Yankee is incomparable; the former being certain, the latter undecided, as to the future life. Neither could ever be agreeable to or sympathetic with the other. There is, therefore, little to choose between them in a personal way, especially if one be indisposed to regard his fellow humans with persistent gravity; but as to the effect of the national characteristics of each of the races, respectively, upon its activities and destined purposes, there is no possibility of comparison. Despite the splendid personal freedom which he has achieved and of which he justly, though too frequently, boasts, the Englishman has become so wholly imbedded in the feudal system represented by a landed aristocracy that he is a worse stifter of progress than a Turk. All in England to-day is paternal; therefore, socialistic and absurdly tentative in the face of threatening revolt against wrongs, not fancied, but real, because mentally stultifying by decree of those exercising fatuous authority.

It is idle to deny that, owing to a recent welcoming of political charlatanry, temporarily, at least, eclipsing all party organizations and their concomitant steadiness, like perils confront us in America, but even this briefest of great national existences has already indicated that subversion of a political ideal based upon encouragement of individual enlightenment and achievement is at least remote, if not in point of fact impossible. The self-reliant Yankee made this nation, welded it together successfully, and thus far, in every crisis, even to the recent financial cataclysm, has not only proved equal to, but dominated, every emergency. His habitation is no longer New England, but the entire country, as these late events have proven, and his civic creed con-

tinues to be faith in the supreme ability of mankind, educated to think and act individually, to solve all human problems.

Thus the Briton! thus the Yankee! Between the two, diffidence characteristic of a young and modest segment of the greatest of human races prohibits choosing.

In Defence of Widows and Spinsters.

WE acknowledge the receipt of the following earnest communication from Albany, New York:

"SIR,—Your unwarranted and uncalled-for attack upon a respected and respectable class of the world's population entitled 'No Necessity for Widowhood,' must awaken a feeling of indignation from those who realize the falsity of its statements.

"Lips, long silent in the grave, seem to bear witness against this arraignment of those whom grief has touched, and dear folded hands, years ago laid to rest, seem raised in protest against this indictment for crime of those honored women not only of this age and clime, but of all ages and all climes, who have been the faithful, the intelligent home-keepers 'for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer,' till death has severed the bond.

"God said of woman, in the beginning, 'And she shall be a helpmeet for man'; not the hysterical, weeping, ignorant, hectoring creature described by the author, but a helpmate. This she has proved to be in the majority of cases from that time to this. And men of all ages have borne witness to the noble type of good, heroic womanhood.

"'As one whom his mother comforteth' is the compendium of all that is solacing to a grief-stricken heart, whether that mother be one whom sorrow has touched, or one fortunate enough to keep by her side, through life, the companion who has chosen her.

"First, as a wife is woman assailed; 'Practically all she knows is that milk is good for babies.' Can it be possible, in these days, when women in every branch of study are pressing up abreast of the men, when cooking-schools, dietary, hygienic conditions and nursing are receiving attention from all classes of women, both rich and poor, that one can imagine such a condition as depicted by the writer of 'Wilful Ignorance' and hectoring hysteria because a husband fails to eat as much as usual?

"Then the writer goes on to state: 'Women kill good providers by the score and then hold themselves fit objects of sympathy because, forsooth, of their self-imposed widowhood: we have no patience with such persons.' Never, probably, in all the history of the world has such a brutal sentiment been expressed. The writer states that 'Men are chivalrous.' Surely here, then, is an exception to the rest of humanity.

"Such women have not held themselves to 'be fit objects of sympathy.' On the contrary, as the world has known in all ages, most of the women