

country, in the same sense that the Rockies and the Blue Ridge and the Mississippi belong to it. And of these great features of our literature, as of our mountain ranges and great river, we can only, in the face of the disqualifying clause conditioning our selection, say that doubtless they could have been produced on other than American soil, but that—they were not.

Leaving out, for obvious reasons, the supreme names of our first and most glorious literary period, that of the American Revolution, the classical era of our patriotic genius, and leaving out, also, as *hors concours*, the renaissance of eloquence and of high achievement with the pen that preceded and followed our second revolution, the Civil War, what are the authors remaining that represent the whole country without geographical or political divisions? Fiske, Parkman, Mahan, we dare assert, are such; they have contributed to the literature of the world histories that are characteristic of American genius and life; and as Americans they represent the whole country. Their peers in our poetry are Poe, Longfellow, and Lanier.

Cooper was our first and, as it seems, our last great American romanticist. The day was, if it is so no longer, when

American children (not Eastern, Western, Northern, or Southern children) read their Cooper with their Walter Scott, and learned to companion Cœur de Lion and Uncas, Long Tom, Leatherstocking, Ivanhoe, in their hearts as in one heroic heaven. In that same day they learned their Longfellow by heart, and made recitations from the "Building of the Ship," "Evangeline," "Miles Standish," "Hiawatha," as they recited from "Marmion" and "The Lady of the Lake;" Longfellow was then held to be the American Scott in poetry, as Cooper was the American Scott in fiction. Hawthorne comes after Cooper, only in chronological sequence.

Mark Twain and Joel Chandler Harris close the list. Perhaps they should head it; for of all the names in it, theirs, perhaps, pass most successfully through the test of a rigid application of both the conditions imposed upon candidates for entrance into it. Not only have they contributed to the literature of the world new, original, and characteristic elements of American genius, but we may say absolutely that what they wrote could not have been produced on any but American soil; and that they are Americans in every sense of the word.

## Marks of Distinction

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INDFUL of their national origin, Americans will surely harbor no desire to separate their literature from the body of English literature to which it proudly and forever belongs. But for convenience of treatment, and more especially as a concession to growing national pride, our literature may be distinguished from British literature by obvious and important marks. These, in addition to American authorship in the English tongue, of course, are, subject-matter, conception, and expression, peculiarly American. The books that are characteristic of our life and genius, such as "The Virginian," "An American at Oxford," and "The Battle-Ground," to use recent illustrations, have one or more of these marks. There is no room here for explaining or

justifying this statement, but it may be clear from further examples of far more import.

When, long after the struggle for American independence, out of which came many a speech and not a few poems full of the new patriotism, Emerson finally delivered his famous address on "The American Scholar," there could be little doubt, less then than now, that his conception of the new independence yet unattained was intensely and personally American, and that his utterance was as the voice of the people. A little later, Hawthorne, emerging from a deep and absorbing study of his own section, began a series of books devoted to a phase of life and thought once peculiarly his ancestors' but made as peculiarly his own. This series culminated, artistically,

in "The Scarlet Letter," not only the most characteristic and unique picture of a gloomily unique period, but also, in the words of a distinguished Justice of our Supreme Court, no less versed in letters than in law, "the greatest novel yet written by an American." To mention one other New England production—where many deserve to be mentioned—it is clear that, in spite of borrowed form, and in spite too of the easy parodies that tended to make this form ludicrous, Longfellow's "Hiawatha" has preserved, as no other poem or prose recital, that separate and distinct atmosphere encompassing with its poetic haze the romantic and idealized Indian. Whatever corrections of fact or form may be necessary, the appeal of this poem, especially to the romantic stage of youth, is persistent and genuine.

Earlier than these, however, was the semi-serious hoax, so seriously taken, perpetrated by Irving in his "Knickerbocker's History of New York." Against the true Americanism of Irving's later work perhaps a case may lie, though any foreign claim to Irving should be stoutly protested; but this early work represents, beyond all controversy, the American impression, conception, and expression of a social state never before had and never again to be revived. While the popularity of this book may decrease as the occasion of its wholesome humor recedes, it is not likely that such a fate will overtake Cooper's "Leatherstocking Tales;" for their fame will be preserved by a character hardly less interesting than its turbulent author. In the case of this creation, the judgment of foreigners not only anticipated the judgment of the next generation of America, but the present estimate of these books among foreigners seems to indicate the permanent spell their author has cast.

As Americans, however, learn more and more of the Indian as he now is, they will ungrudgingly concede that, not in Cooper's romances nor in Longfellow's poem, but in one of the best purpose-novels yet written in America, Helen Hunt Jackson's "Ramona," will be found a far truer conception of the red man and the debt still due him from his white brother. No part of our common country is richer in distinctive peculiarities than the West. The successive tidal waves of life that have

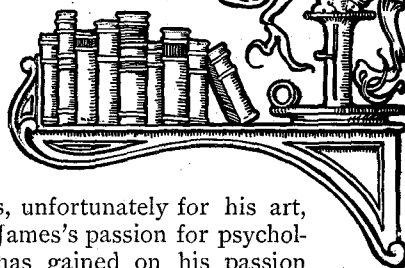
swept across the plains have left each its own separate layer of civilization. No author dare attempt any description of this full-lived section without complete acquaintance with its life, its thought, and its expression; and for this intimacy is needed, not the temporary sojourn of the literary "tenderfoot," but the deeper knowledge of one who has become, by nature or long residence, a part of the life he would paint. From many volumes that might not inaptly or inadequately represent this section richer in promise than achievement, the choice of Bret Harte's "Luck of Roaring Camp" will surely excite no adverse comment. It is not so easy to choose among the others; but Mark Twain's "Roughing It" is named even over his other Western productions, and this without depreciating the full Americanism of the boys' prime favorite, "Huckleberry Finn."

From the Southern States books genuinely American according to the criteria noted above have not been at any time rare, and in recent times have been surprisingly numerous. But the temptation to select ten books from this section alone has been resisted; so the further temptation of naming several that might have been chosen from poetry, fiction, and description must be withstood. Let two be mentioned that will doubtless receive general assent. Joel Chandler Harris's "Uncle Remus" could have been written nowhere but in America, and by no one whose knowledge of the negro was not the result of daily contact in the impressionable years of life. No less confident recognition may be accorded Thomas Nelson Page's "In Ole Virginia;" for among other stories hardly inferior, it includes "Marse Chan," not likely to be superseded or surpassed as the most perfect story of a period now gone.

It were easier to collate fifty titles that might be used to illustrate our Americanism, than select the ten most characteristic of our life and genius; but the die is cast, and as specimens from differing periods, differing sections, and differing types, this list is submitted:

"The American Scholar," "The Scarlet Letter," "Hiawatha," "Knickerbocker's History of New York," "The Leatherstocking Tales," "Ramona," "The Luck of Roaring Camp," "Roughing It," "Uncle Remus," and "Marse Chan."

# THE NOVELS OF A SEASON



**A**MONG the scores of works which have come and will come from the presses this autumn a few may be selected because they bear the stamp of literary quality; a larger group because they are well constructed and interesting stories well worth reading even when they do not rise into the region of books which one wishes to preserve; while the large residue may be ignored as lacking both literary quality and wholesome story interest, being for the most part crude, ill constructed, rapid, cheap, or vulgar. The temptation to write for a market is felt more directly in the field of fiction than in any other department of writing; and in no other field is there so much inferior and worthless work. To this temptation men of real literary gift and the conscience which usually goes with it rarely yield, and in each season a few novels appear which are born in the imagination and experience of serious lovers of art, and make a line of light through the welter, as Carlyle would call it, of insincere and mechanically fashioned novels.

Mr. Henry James has never had any master but his art, any passion but the passion for perfection. His attitude toward life and toward his own vocation has been profoundly serious; he has suffered no changes of public taste to influence him; he has loyally and persistently followed his own ideals. His earlier work was extraordinarily fine in fiber and penetrating in character study; his style was close and fastidious, but it was also clear and deeply expressive, and the human interest was great. This was true not only of the short stories but of "The American," "The Portrait of a Lady," "The Princess Casamassima."

There has always been in Mr. James, however, an instinctive liking for the elusive, the subtle, the complex in character; he has a physician's interest in the problems of morbid experience, a psychologist's passion for following to their end the by-paths of passion. Of late

years, unfortunately for his art, Mr. James's passion for psychology has gained on his passion for the dramatic portraiture of character, and the artist has lost the ground which the psychologist has gained. Psychology is a part of all true fiction, but with Mr. James it has become the greater part; and psychology, while deeply interesting, is no more literature than are anatomy and physiology, which so many coarser-grained novelists have of late years substituted for literature.

Mr. James's latest story, "The Wings of a Dove" (Scribners), is, like all his work, stamped by ability of a high order and by distinction of mind and taste; but it is not in any true sense a contribution to fiction; it is a study in psychology. The characters are realized with marvelous skill, but the main motive of the story is not only improbable—given the character of the heroine it is incredible. It must be frankly said also that, while the story is full of delicate touches, the style as a whole is unmistakably bad—involved, obscure, congested, irritating beyond measure. It is a pity that so great a talent should be so misdirected; the country is full of amateur psychologists, but the artists in fiction may be counted in a breath; we do not need more psychologists, but we are in sore need of more artists.

Mr. Aldrich, in striking contrast to Mr. James, has clarified and perfected a style always singularly pure and limpid. Like Mr. James, he has followed his vocation with a lover's jealous devotion, and as he has grown older has become even more exacting of himself than in those days when his lyrical gift and his charm as a story-teller were first disclosing themselves. He is perhaps the most fastidious