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Four lectures on the Literary Relations of England and America by George Gordon, LL.D., D.Litt, President of Magdalen College and Professor of Poetry in the University of Oxford. Tuesdays, 15th, 22nd, 29th March, 5th April 1938. Royal Institution of Great Britain.

I. Character of the New England settlements. Massachusetts, Boston and Harvard. Communications with England. Early American scholarship and book-collecting: the Winthrops, Mathers, etc. Gifts of books from eminent English sympathizers in seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Notable American residence of the philosopher Berkeley. Literary production in America strongest in politics and oratory; in poetry and belles-

¹ The lecture-titles are not in the typescript; they have been supplied from the *Times* report.

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ANGLO-AMERICAN
LITERARY RELATIONS

ANGLO-AMERICAN LITERARY RELATIONS

By

GEORGE STUART GORDON

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PREFATORY NOTE

THIS book consists of the lectures delivered, on the Watson Chair Foundation of the Sulgrave Manor Board, in University College, London, in March 1931, and now first published. The lecturer for that year was George Stuart Gordon, who had been Merton Professor of English Literature at Oxford from 1922 to 1928, and had in 1928 become President of Magdalen. He died in March 1942, at the age of 61, leaving much unpublished that he had hoped to revise for the press.

Those of his friends who knew that Gordon had laboured in the field, as yet little tilled, of Anglo-American literary commerce deplored his failure to come to the point of publication. It was known to me from himself that this was one of his major studies; and from another that it was what most men would have regarded as fit for publication. One who had heard all the Watson Lectures told me it was a pity that incomparably the best of those series was the only one still unknown except to its hearers. With a friendly eye, therefore, to Gordon's reputation, and a publisher's to other considerations, I inquired from time to time how this matter stood. But I got little encouragement; the stuff was in a drawer, he hoped one day to take it out; but there was much to do at it, and no opportunity.

There came a point near the end of his last illness when he braced himself to an heroic effort at the ordering of his papers and the communication of his wishes. He even corrected his manuscripts, and filled some gaps. I was in attendance, during this last flicker of the candle, to give what help—what tragically little help—I could by way of advice. But we had only one interview

of any length, and I could not much interrupt the urgent flow of his thoughts, which were concentrated mainly on his miscellaneous essays, his Shakespeare, and his Shelley. I was however able to interject an inquiry and a suggestion about the Watson Lectures. It was received with some impatience; that was unfinished work, and time pressed. Yet he admitted that the lectures were assembled and might be thought fit to print. A few days later he told his wife that I might have the manuscript to use at my discretion.

The materials entrusted to me comprised: (1) a typescript of perhaps four fifths of the whole, corrected both in ink and in pencil; (2) a duplicate typescript of most of (1), hardly corrected; (3) manuscript which had presumably not been typed (as well as most of that which had); (4) typed extracts. All these were filed, with substantial accuracy, in six folders, one for each lecture. There was also a considerable mass of raw material in notebooks and loose sheets.

The corrections in the typescript readily revealed themselves as of two kinds. The corrections in ink, for the most part verbal, clearly belong to the time of the original lectures, and there is no question of their validity. The corrections in pencil consist mainly of large deletions. These as clearly belong to the re-delivery of the six lectures, in 1938, as four lectures for the Royal Institution. For my purpose, therefore, they are of no validity. There are also a large number of corrections and jottings; on these I have had to exercise editorial discretion. Most of the positive corrections were manifest improvements, and I have adopted them. The marginal hints I have had for the most part to ignore; but occasionally I have added a footnote, where I found something too good to miss.

There remained, when I had done what was obvious, some ragged edges. These I have thought it would be

wrong to smooth. I have therefore left them almost untouched, indicating the continuity or discontinuity of my material by insertions within brackets and by occasional footnotes. I do not think that the irregularities of the material impair in any substantial measure the value of the study as a whole.

It must be judged, however, as unfinished work. Gordon was especially conscious, as he told me on his death-bed, that he had not been able—in the space and time he disposed of—to do justice to the American literature of our own day, in which he was widely read and which he had much pondered. It was matter of deep regret to him that, often solicited, he never achieved a visit to the United States.

More than ten years, be it remembered, have elapsed since his work was done. For the version of 1938, though it embodies some revision, was in the main a matter of hasty abridgement and adaptation of older work.

March, 1942

R. W. CHAPMAN

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lettres timid, scanty and imitative. Boston in eighteenth century yields precedence to Philadelphia as intellectual and literary capital. Prompt reprinting and sale of English authors. Importance of Benjamin Franklin as herald to England and Europe of the new America. Rebellion of the Colonies, and divided English sympathies. The literature and literary consequences of the American Revolution.

II. American literary development in early nineteenth century. The intellectual lead reverts from Philadelphia to Boston. The War of 1812. Formation of American complex: boundless self-confidence and extreme sensitiveness to criticism. Importance in America of leading English Reviews. Criticisms of American habits, language, literature, and institutions by English travellers and reviewers, and expressed American resentment. Improvement of relations and of American literary status with (i) the advent of Washington Irving, Fenimore Cooper, etc.; (ii) the fashion of intellectual and artistic pilgrimages to Europe (Ticknor, Longfellow, etc.); (iii) the later emergence of the New England group of writers: Emerson, Prescott, Longfellow, Thoreau, Hawthorne, Whittier, Lowell, etc. Increase of mutual knowledge and of Anglo-American literary friendships and correspondence. Some famous visits: Emerson in England and his symbolic friendship with Carlyle: Charles Dickens's two visits to America. Wide circulation of English books in the United States and alert appreciation of new English writers. Vexed question of copyright,

III. The New England group of writers (*continued*): classic age of American literature. Literary dependence on England still confessed, but rightly resisted. The strange cases of Edgar Allan Poe and Herman Melville,

Rise and growth of the lecturing habit in America, and of the practice of inviting English lecturers (Thackeray, Matthew Arnold, etc., etc.). The American search goes on for a purely native literature: the need impressively announced by Emerson in 1837, and later proclaimed and exemplified by Whitman. The opening up of the American continent: effect on New England primacy and on American literature generally of the westward expansion of the United States. English interest in the 'Wild West' and the frontier life. Friendly reception in England of the new American strain in Whitman, Bret Harte, Mark Twain, etc. Copyright troubles continue.

IV. Literary relations in the last fifty years. New elements and conditions in American literary world. Problem of the American 'exiles': Henry James, etc. Increased range and volume of American scholarship: the national raid on the galleries and libraries of Europe. American literary independence in the twentieth century, and especially since the war. Forms in which most successful and influential. Impact on England of American language, literature, and habits of mind. English alarms and consolations.

I

EARLY AMERICAN LITERATURE

BEFORE I embark on the subject of these Lectures propriety demands some reference to the history and purpose of the foundation which is responsible, I hope not culpably, for my presence here.

Twenty years ago a British-American Committee, looking round for some memorial to mark the approaching completion, in the year 1914, of one hundred years of peace among the English-speaking peoples, made what seemed to them the surprising discovery that there existed in this country no stated teaching of American History: that in no British University, or any other institution of learning and enlightenment in this island, was any Chair, Lectureship, or other rostrum to be found for the dissemination of truth about the History, Literature, and Institutions of certainly the most numerous, and in some important respects most powerful and impressive portion of the English-speaking world. The Committee, very properly, made the foundation of such a Chair the first article in their programme.

The year 1914, however, proved, on the whole, to be a somewhat unfavourable date for Peace festivities. The War came, and dissolved these conversations. They were revived on the conclusion of Peace, still animated by that passion for centenaries which, through some arithmetical sorcery, exercises, in all departments of life, so powerful a fascination on the modern mind. Only, for the centenary of the Treaty of Ghent, of which few in this country had heard, was now substituted the more significant Tercentenary of the Pilgrim voyage on the *Mayflower*. This new occasion of Anglo-American fraternity, coloured as it now was by recent companionship in arms, suggested still more

forcibly the desirability of at any rate lessening, if one could not altogether remove, the prevalent ignorance in this country of American history and institutions. It was at this stage of the matter, in the winter of 1919, that Sir George Watson intervened: a successful, generous, and enlightened English merchant, whose death last summer we have reason to deplore. He offered to endow the required Chair; with some reluctance, for he was a modest man, allowed his name to be attached to it; and in June 1921, in the Mansion House, under the appropriate presidency of Lord Balfour, the inaugural lecture was delivered by the man of all men most fitted by understanding and achievement, and by the declared confidence and affection of the American people, to launch any such project: I mean, the late Lord Bryce. From that time annually, in various universities of this country, six Watson Lectures on American history have been delivered, by scholars chosen alternately from the two countries. It is now the turn of Britain, and no serious decline will, I hope, be inferred in the prestige and vigour of the Chair from the fact that literature this time, instead of the more bustling business of politics and economics, is the selected theme, and that I have been chosen to deal with it. I must confess that in the field of American history and literature I am a late learner. But for that very reason I have an advantage over my predecessors (and as it is probably my only advantage I emphasize it) in having enjoyed, like most of my countrymen, and for the greater part of my life, intimate personal acquaintance with precisely that state of ignorance which it is the purpose of this foundation at least to startle if not expel. The Watson Chair was for a year or two the only Chair of American history in this country, and if it is no longer unique, that must be attributed in part to its example.

The literary relations of this country and America have never been fully or critically surveyed, and I do not for a moment pretend to any exhaustive knowledge of them. The beginning of the inquiry is much clearer than the end. The overpowering reciprocity of Anglo-American literary relations at the present day, the immensity of the mere production, and the inextricable tangle of literary and commercial motives, provide the literary historian with a problem of almost forbidding complexity. The beginning was quiet and simple. It had its principal base in New England, and more particularly among the settlers on Massachusetts Bay. That strong and austere community had already what is claimed as a prime American characteristic: they were a community of readers. Their polity and civilization were founded on the English Bible; they were the people of a Book; and they were guided from the first by scholars and divines. It is calculated that of the 25,000 persons resident in Massachusetts in the year 1645—fifteen years from the first settlement—almost one hundred were Oxford and Cambridge men, of whom six had been Fellows of their Colleges. A peculiar colony: like no other, indeed, in history. The consequences were immediate and lasting. Education, and even scholarship, became from the first a communal concern. Within five years of the settlement Boston had its grammar-school, and presently, by law, every town in the province. Within six years of the settlement Massachusetts had voted a college; another six years and the first Harvard class had graduated, there was a growing Harvard library, and an infant Cambridge Press. It is almost startling to see, thus early formed, the infant lineaments of that later ripe and influential society. Boston is a curious place,' wrote Henry Adams in 1876. 'Its business in life is to breed and to educate. The parent lives for his children; the child, when

educated, himself becomes a parent, or becomes an educator, or both. But no further result is ever reached. Just as at twenty the parent reproduces himself in a child, so the teacher reproduces himself in his scholar. But neither as child nor as scholar does the new generation do more than devote itself to become in its turn parent and teacher.' Adams's nineteenth-century impatience may or may not have been just. But the reproductive and educative mission of colonial Boston and its neighbourhood could not be better described. The time was not ripe for shining works. But throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, on principles adopted in the first decade of its existence, it prepared the ground—a choice but stubborn soil—for that Anglo-American culture by which New England is distinguished to this day; which was to produce, in its turn, in mid-nineteenth century, what must still be regarded as the golden age of American literature, and in the Society of Cambridge and Concord, the only completely literary community, in the European sense, which the American continent has yet seen.

Popular histories have overdramatized the undoubted early hardships of New England, and, generalizing from the Pilgrim settlement at Plymouth, which was for a time isolated, have represented the colonists as practically cut off from the world.¹ I have been struck on the contrary, in examining the relations of the American states with England, during the century and a half of their dependence, by the regularity of communication which was maintained even from the early days of the final² settlements. There was a steady sea

[¹ In three places in this section Gordon has scrupulously noted in the margin that a sentence or so is 'somewhat too closely borrowed' from the work of T.G.Wright, *Literary Culture in Early New England, 1620-1730*, Yale University Press, 1920.]

[² A page of the MS. is here missing, and I suspect that the word 'final' is a typist's error.]

traffic, and a trip to England, by those who could afford it, was not regarded as an extraordinary affair. An active correspondence was maintained, by the leading men of New England, with the English scientists, divines, and men of letters of the day, nor can any break or failure be detected in this admirable continuity except in our uncongenial Restoration period, after the overthrow of Puritan Government in England. The character of the New English colony is throughout displayed in its unfailing appetite for books. Every English ship brought casefuls, and from time to time—so early was formed this now confirmed American practice—a whole library was shipped from England and bought for Harvard or broken up.

Two great New England families stand out in this bookish colony as providing probably the first examples of the book-collector on American soil. In one of them I may claim a personal interest, for Samuel Mather, the first graduate Fellow of Harvard, a younger brother of Increase, the Harvard President, returned to England and became a chaplain in my own College at Oxford. The Winthrops and the Mathers, though they bought to read, loved books as books. They had correspondents in England looking out for what they wanted, and the younger Winthrop, a Fellow and correspondent of the Royal Society, even took in the Frankfort catalogue. When John Dunton, the London bookseller, went to Boston in 1686 to sell some books, and to collect bad debts from his New England customers, he was amazed at the sight of Cotton Mather's library of some four thousand volumes: 'one of the best (for a Private Library) that ever I saw; nay, I may go farther, and affirm, that as the Famous Bodleian Library at Oxford is the glory of that University, if not of all Europe . . . so . . . Mr. Mather's Library is the glory of New England, if not of all America. I am sure it was the

best sight that I had in Boston.' Dunton found Boston stirring with booksellers—among them, need I say, a Scot, 'one Duncan Camber.

These material matters of the transmission and collection of books, important as they are at every period of my subject, in the first or colonial period, when native American literature was dormant, are almost the subject itself. One of the most gratifying features of that long and patient traffic—and no account of the literary relations of the two countries can be complete without it—is the active sympathy of Englishmen, of the Englishman at home, with the American experiment of culture in the wilderness. The stream of gifts is steady, from Sir Kenelm Digby's chest of books in the early days to the parcels of Robert Boyle the chemist and his fellow members of the Royal Society, and the eighteenth-century benefactions of Hollis and Berkeley. Thomas Hollis, the English republican and Milton enthusiast, was a little laughed at in England, but Benjamin Franklin, who knew him, was more kindly. 'It is prodigious,' he said, with Hollis in mind, 'the quantity of good that may be done by one man, if he will make a business of it'; and Franklin was a good judge of that, having to some extent made a business of it himself. Hollis founded two Chairs at Harvard, and lavished books on the College for twenty years. He even forestalled our modern methods of begging by having the Harvard Library catalogue printed and sent to England, so that his friends might see its needs for themselves. The foundation of Yale by a body of Harvard graduates created a rival beggar, and an attempt was made (to which Hollis's answer is extant) to divert some portion of his generosity to the younger college. The attempt failed, I will not say as it deserved, but Yale did well for all that. In 1714, to cite one example, there arrived at Newhaven over 700 volumes from

England, four-fifths of which were gifts from various English gentlemen, sympathisers with these efforts at New World learning. Their names are worth hearing, for they included Sir Richard Steele, Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Richard Blackmore, Richard Bentley, Edmund Halley the astronomer, and Elihu Yale himself. A number of these eminent persons presented their own works, Dick Steele contributing 'all the Tatlers and Spectators' in eleven volumes. Could anything be more friendly and agreeable, or, I may add, more pertinent to the subject of this discourse?

The name of a later and still more generous benefactor recalls one of the most pleasing and indeed romantic episodes in the whole history of Anglo-American relations. On 23 January 1729 there arrived, in the Narragansett waters, making for Newport in Rhode Island, an English ship conveying, as the town authorities were presently informed, 'a great Church of England dignitary called Dean'. This proved to be Dean Berkeley, the celebrated philosopher, divine, and man of letters, whom the *New England Weekly Courier* announced in due course to be 'a gentleman of middle stature, of an agreeable, pleasant and erect aspect'. The American reporter, it will be seen, was already feeling his way, already toying with that yet-to-be-revealed Republican candour which was to startle Matthew Arnold and so many other distinguished visitors to the United States. Berkeley brought with him a Royal Charter for the establishment of a missionary university in Bermuda, of a Christian Athens which was to be a centre of enlightenment for the Heathen of the West, and settled down in the charming surroundings of Rhode Island, with his newly wedded wife, to await the government grant which never came. The island was very proud of its visitor. He was liked and admired;

built a two-storey wooden house which he called *Whitehall* (which still stands)¹ within easy reach of Newport; preached sometimes; visited the Narragansett Indian camps; studied, wrote, held synods of missionaries, and made philosophical converts. It was here, facing the sea, in a favourite alcove in the Hanging Rocks still shown, I believe, to strangers, that Berkeley composed his *Ahiphron*, and also, if tradition be true, the famous verses in which he foretold the splendid future of America. I shall be forgiven, I hope, by American patriots, if I single out these compositions for celebration as probably the best piece of English prose and the best English verses to be written on American soil for two hundred years, unless we include Sandys's *Ovid*. America has its share in the prose as in the verse, for the scenic beauties of the *Alciphron* are recognizably drawn from the landscapes of Rhode Island. Even the fox-hunting scene in the Fifth Dialogue—the first sporting scene in Anglo-American literature—was suggested, I fancy, by actual hunts in the Narragansett country, which maintained, like Rhode Island, a prosperous aristocracy of the old English fashion, given even to horse-racing for silver tankards on the beach.

Berkeley was nearly three years in Rhode Island, and only left for England, a disappointed man, when convinced that his scheme had failed, that his 'Christian Knight-errantry' had miscarried. On his departure he characteristically left a chestful of books to be distributed among those who needed them. He never lost interest in New England. His little estate in Rhode Island he made over to Yale to found scholarships, and the line of Berkeleian Scholars, among them some of the

[¹ Owned by Yale University, to which he gave it, and leased by the Society of Colonial Dames, which preserves it.—Gordon in margin.]

most eminent names in America, continues to this day.¹ This gift he followed up by shipping to Yale the best collection of books, as it was then reported, which had ever been brought to America at one time—some thousand volumes, including a set of the English poets, and, appropriately, a copy of his own recently published *Alciphron*. Forgetting nobody, he even presented an organ to the church in Newport where he had preached; a similar offer to a church in Berkeley, Mass., was refused with horror.

His special interest in Yale (I say special, because he gave books to Harvard also) was partly due, no doubt, to his friendship with the Connecticut scholar Samuel Johnson, one of the acutest thinkers of that time in America, a convert to his philosophy, and the teacher of another Berkeleian, subtlest of all American reasoners, Jonathan Edwards. Johnson had travelled in England, had visited Pope at his villa, and taken back from Twickenham cuttings of Thames willow for plantation on the wilder banks of his own river. He was a convinced Berkeleian before Berkeley reached America, and became presently his personal disciple. The correspondence which passed between Berkeley and Johnson at this period, on Space, and Time, and the Archetypal Ideas—strange merchandise for the Newport-Stratford sloop—has been described by an American critic as 'the most notable in the history of early American thought'. Johnson's *Elements of Philosophy*, published in 1752 by his friend Benjamin Franklin, and dedicated to Berkeley, is even credited with having sown in the American mind the seeds of that philosophical idealism which was to enjoy a delayed fruition in the time of Emerson.

As if this were not enough, Berkeley's influence is

¹ President Dwight, the grandson of Jonathan Edwards, was one of them, and published an American edition of *Alciphron* in 1803.

to be met even in the history of American art. There is a portrait at Yale of which they do well to be proud: a group of eight persons, in which Berkeley is shown standing beside a table with his hand upon his favourite Plato. His wife and another lady are seated near him, the lady with Berkeley's infant son in her arms. The artist himself appears in the group, one Smibert, brought over by Berkeley to direct the Museum of Arts in the visionary Bermudan University, and probably the first really qualified professional painter in New England. Smibert settled in Boston, and will be remembered, if for nothing else, for this portrait, and because he had Copley for his pupil: Copley, who in so many portraits still hanging in Harvard and in Beacon Street has preserved, in all its bleak high-mindedness, the noble and unmitigated old Boston type. Put a man like Berkeley anywhere, it seems—uproot him, transplant him, wither him with disappointment—and still his greatness and goodness, the vitality of his mind and heart, reach out to everything about him.

I have mentioned more than once the name of Benjamin Franklin, and that household word reminds me that I have not yet put, and may even be suspected of evading, the obviously critical questions: what literature, if any, did America produce in those first two centuries? And if any, what relation had it with England? To the first and principal question the accepted answer among Englishmen, and till fairly recently among Americans, is that, some of Franklin's writings excepted, America produced no literature before 1800. This assertion was made with iteration, and, I am afraid, with satisfaction also, by many English writers in the early years of American independence, with the not unusual implication that the sterility perhaps was radical. Time has dealt with that implication, but, insults apart, most Americans have thought the case

not worth defending, from a general feeling, I suppose, that for what preceded the Revolution, or rather failed to precede it, the United States has no distinctive responsibility. If their colonial predecessors, as is universally acknowledged, astonished the world in everything else that makes a country great, they are content to be found guilty of an early deficiency in the arts. I think myself that this is a little to miss the point, and that literature is very narrowly defined if we are to exclude from that title and dominion the books of the early travellers and historians of America, the fantastic greatness of Cotton Mather's *Magnalia Christi Americana*, the superb faculty of Jonathan Edwards, the spiritual beauty of Woolman's *Journal*, and the political and oratorical genius of the American masterpieces of the Revolution. Of essays, poems (though Philip Freneau was a true poet), of novels and belles-lettres generally, America, it may be said, produced nothing, or next to nothing, before the nineteenth century, of more than parochial value. But literature and belles-lettres are not the same thing. Literature is always wider than the class of works which we call literary. Wherever a man has fairly set down the best that he knows about the thing he knows best, and in words that tell his meaning, there, always, will be literature.

I write the wonders of the Christian religion flying from the deprivations of Europe to the American strand; and, assisted by the Holy Author of that religion, I do, with all conscience of truth . . . report the wonderful displays of His infinite power . . . wherewith his Divine Providence hath irradiated an Indian wilderness.

Whatever else he may have done, there Cotton Mather wrote literature.

Not long after I first began to experience these things, I gave an account to my father of some things that had passed in my

mind. . . . And when the discourse was ended, I walked abroad alone, in a solitary place in my father's pasture, for contemplation. And as I was walking there, and looking up on the sky and clouds, there came into my mind so sweet a sense of the glorious majesty and grace of God, that I know not how to express. I seemed to see them both in a sweet conjunction; majesty and meekness joined together; it was a sweet, and gentle, and holy majesty; and also a majestic meekness; an awful sweetness; a high, and great and holy gentleness.

I am reading from Jonathan Edwards on a crisis of his youth, and surely I am reading literature.

All this time the song of the angels remained a mystery; and in the morning my dear wife and some others coming to my bedside, I asked them if they knew who I was; and they telling me I was John Woolman, thought I was light-headed, for I told them not what the angel said, nor was I disposed to talk much to anyone, but was desirous to get so deep that I might understand this mystery.

So John Woolman, the travelling Quaker, in his *Diary*. And again:

There is a principle, which is pure, placed in the human mind, which in different places and ages hath had different names; it is, however, pure and proceeds from God. It is deep, and inward, confined to no forms of religion, nor excluded from any, where the heart stands in perfect sincerity. In whomsoever this takes root, and grows, of what nation soever, they become brethren.

What professional man of letters, belles-lettré away, would not give much to have earned, through the wages of the spirit, the right to such a style? Charles Lamb knew this. 'Get the writings of John Woolman by heart,' he says, 'and love the early Quakers.'

America's failure at this time to shine in poetry and belles-lettres was the natural consequence of provinciality. The English classics of the day were imported, bought, and imitated, but their urban tone was

out of keeping with new societies in which leisure was yet unrecognized and which had no literary class. Also, distance told, those three thousand miles of ocean, in ways not easily explained. The latest poem, the last new novel, did not, somehow, perfectly carry; some virtue was lost in transit. Why? If you ask me that I take refuge in another analogy, and cite the discovery of modern physics that when a light-wave is attenuated by spreading, what it suffers from is laziness rather than actual loss of power. What is weakened is not the power, but the probability that it will exert itself. Addison and Swift, Pope, Thomson, and Goldsmith were potentially in America what they were at home. But their light spread thinner, and their power lagged. Yet their American imitators learned much by trying. If *The Spectator* bred no Western Addison, *The Essay on Man* no Pope, they exercised a thousand young American aspirants, and the literary soil was fertilized by these attempts. The dullest and most provincial period in all American history—the latter years of the seventeenth and the early years of the eighteenth centuries—was precisely the period when literary relations with England were at their lowest ebb.

After about 1730 there seems to have been comparatively little trouble in buying, or procuring on order from an American bookseller, any current English book. A certain Dr. Hamilton of Maryland, justly celebrated as the first American to take a holiday, made a jaunting trip, in the year 1744, from Annapolis to Portsmouth in New Hampshire. He was a reading man, carrying an *Iliad* and a Shakespeare with him, and, when he turned to lighter literature, found all the latest English novels on the Philadelphia bookstalls. Philadelphia, by this time, robbing Boston of its primacy, had become the literary and publishing centre of America, and was to retain that position to near the

close of the eighteenth century. Here were published the first magazine in North America, and (portentous of much) the first daily newspaper of the United States. Here was published a long series of first American editions of English standard authors, which are now the ambition of collectors, together with the first American-printed English Bible. An edition of Burns, who was later to guide the American dialect Muse, was published as early as 1788, in the first instance, no doubt, for Scottish settlers, but also for his blast of freedom. With every decade this trade grew sharper. I note, for example, that Johnson's *Rasselas* and Goldsmith's *Traveller* were published in Philadelphia in the same year, 1768: *Rasselas* so called for the first time on any title page, and further prophetically distinguished—which pleased the Doctor when a copy reached him—by having for its imprint, not 'Philadelphia' but 'America', as if his genius were not to be confined to the single town of publication, but universally diffused throughout the continent. It is some index of this reprinting activity that Johnson's *Shakespeare*, his *Dictionary*, and an abridgement of his *Lives of the Poets* were all published in Philadelphia before the end of the century.

During the greater part of this period, before the troubles of the Stamp Act, very little was known in England of what America was doing, either in literature or anything else, except trade and commerce. That no striking literary works emerged from the Western Continent excited no surprise, for nothing of the kind was looked for. English authors from time to time heard that they were read in the New World, and derived a vague romantic pleasure from the news. If they also happened to hear that they were being reprinted there, the pleasure was still romantic—and unfinancial. Now and then an American visitor might

arrive, to pay his respects, or a letter from an American admirer: like that of the Rev. Mather Byles, proclaimed in his neighbourhood as 'Harvard's honour and New England's hope' who 'Bade fair to rise, and sing, and rival Pope'. This clergyman, who continued to bid fair and never actually rose, sent specimens of his poems to Pope, as an indication, he says, 'of the reputation which you bear in these unknown climates'. Such things were pleasing. But the truth is that most of the literary people in England in the first half of the eighteenth century, when they thought of America at all, were more interested in the American Indian than in the Colonists: either as an object of Christian conversion, or from a sentiment for the virgin wilderness, and for the Redskin as the noble savage, the Natural Man. The celebrated visit of the four Indian kings to London in the reign of Queen Anne, on which Steele and Addison both wrote papers, meant more to English curiosity than all the visits of colonial versifiers put together. I am reminded of the passage in Burke's great *Speech on Conciliation* where he imagines the guardian angel of the veteran Lord Bathurst unfolding to him, as in a vision, in the year 1704, the grandeur and the future glories of England, and then directing his gaze to 'a little speck, scarce visible in the mass of the national interest, a small seminal principle rather than a formed body', with these words:

'Young man, there is America—which at this day serves for little more than to amuse you with stories of savage men, and uncouth manners; yet shall, before you taste of death, show itself equal to the whole of that commerce which now attracts the envy of the world. Whatever England has been growing to by a progressive increase of improvement, brought in by varieties of people, by succession of civilizing conquests and civilizing settlements in a series of seventeen hundred years, you shall see as much added to her by America in the course of a single life!'

Burke proceeds:

If this state of his country had been foretold to him, would it not require all the sanguine credulity of youth, and all the fervid glow of enthusiasm, to make him believe it? Fortunate man, he has lived to see it! Fortunate, indeed, if he lives to see nothing that shall vary the prospect, and cloud the setting of his day!

I wish I had time, in this survey of two centuries, to present as they deserve the great orators, reasoners, and pamphleteers of the American Revolution which then agitated Burke, or their quiet, universally competent and significant announcer Benjamin Franklin. It was Franklin who first opened the eyes of intelligent men in England to the evidence that the American Colonies were bound for more than commercial greatness: that they were producing, in fact, a new national genius, a new American man, and one that could express himself, moreover, with power and fluency in English prose. Of this late and disturbing type Franklin was himself at once the herald and the most illustrious example: the foremost man of his people, and the first to emerge from the anonymity of a new land into the light and recognition of Europe. Yet there are differences in Franklin that honourably bind him to his time, to mid-eighteenth century, to the date of his first maturity, his *floruit*. He never *boasted*, for example, this Philadelphian ex-printer; his prudent maxims—which, printed on broadsheets, adorned and guided so many English homes—were against boasting. He was devoid, to the end, of that shrillness of his younger countrymen. His famous *Autobiography*, the best story in the world of a self-made man, at once moral and carnal, is also, because it is his, one of the quietest books in the English language. Bunyan, Addison, and Defoe had been his earliest reading, and he had learned from them, what all his experience was to confirm, the cardinal virtue of

simplicity. The only incongruous thing about Franklin is that he was born in Boston, but it is now generally accepted in the United States, I believe, that this was an accident, and that, in all essentials, he was really born in Philadelphia at the age of seventeen. In the mellower and more worldly Pennsylvanian civilization he grew to his full development without hindrance. He had been almost everything in his time that an American could or can be, even a Colonel; and his achievements as writer, printer, publisher, scientist, inventor, diplomatist, and town 'boss'—for he made and ran Philadelphia—would fill all the six lectures of this course. He was much in England, which he liked, even thinking once of settling here; knew everybody he cared to know; and was on Boswell's select list of people to cultivate. 'I am really the *great man* now,' writes Boswell in 1768. 'I have had David Hume in the forenoon and Mr. Johnson in the afternoon of the same day, visiting me. Sir J. Pringle and Dr. Franklin dined with me today. ... I give admirable dinners and good claret.' No visitor, I am sure, enjoyed the collation more than Franklin. Observe that he wasn't invited to meet Johnson, whose views on Franklin and Americans generally were somewhat painfully known. But he might well have sat down with Hume, who had proclaimed him 'the first philosopher and indeed the first great man of letters whom America had given to the world.'

I am inclined to believe that the most magnificent irruption of the American genius into print is the literature of the American Revolution. Great as Franklin was, admirably American, and well as he could write, he could never have prepared England for so impressive a revelation. Nothing, indeed, that America has since done in literature, can equal that astonishing display of force. For the first, and almost the only time

in the history of America all the powers of the American mind—legal, commercial, literary, political, oratorical—were directed to one end: the protection of national rights, and the expression of an ideal. The State Papers of the Stamp Act Congress and of the Congress of 1774 travelled over Europe and produced astonishment there. They have been justly described as the first authoritative presentation to the Old World of the intellectual and political condition of the New, and were nowhere more warmly admired than in England; for we can be honest adversaries. The great Chatham, when the papers of the Congress of October 1774 were laid on the Table of the House of Lords, thus directed their Lordships' attention to them:

When your lordships look at the papers transmitted to us from America, when you consider their decency, firmness and wisdom, you cannot but respect their cause, and wish to make it your own. For myself, I must declare and avow, that in all my reading and observation of history—and it has been my favourite study—I have read Thucydides, and have studied and admired the master-states of the world—for solidity of reasoning, force of sagacity, and wisdom of conclusion, under such a complication of difficult circumstances, no nation or body of men can stand in preference to the General Congress at Philadelphia.

A year later Jefferson had drafted the Declaration of Independence, perhaps the most famous political instrument in the world, a document very vulnerable in many respects, because man is imperfect, and sometimes dismissed by Americans themselves as belonging to the sophomore period of the national eloquence. I admire its nobility, and how it bears everywhere upon it the stamp of a great national movement and personality.

Of the pamphleteers of that time I have less knowledge than I should like: but John Dickinson, the author of the *Farmer's Letters*, Samuel Seabury, the Loyalist

Westchester farmer, and Francis Hopkinson, I now reckon among my friends. From Alexander Hamilton and *The Federalist* I learn more, I find, than from any other book of statecraft whatsoever. And even Tom Paine, the renegade Englishman, of whom England could make no use, but whom Franklin singled out and presented to his colleagues as a choice instrument of revolution—even Tom Paine, of whom Leslie Stephen said that his ignorance was vast and his language brutal, I can read with admiration for his unrivalled power of journalism and his irregular (certainly irregular) political genius.

Most of these men are now praised and little read, and barely included until lately in American histories of literature. Yet they too, like those earlier writers from whom I quoted, have about them that nobility that attends on men who are doing something hard, and something necessary to be done, and doing it, as they believe, for the first time. An eminent American scholar, Professor Woodberry, stating the orthodox view, says that men rather than books are the landmarks of these two centuries. And that is true. Their lives were much richer than their writings. 'The printed word', he also says, 'was used as a social instrument with great power, but not for literary ends.' And that is also true. But when he proceeds on these grounds to exclude the products of this social instrument from all literary consideration, I am startled by the rigidity of my profession. For what does it matter that their ends were not literary? And of how many of the greatest books might that not be said? Was the chief end of the Bible literary? Or of Plato's *Republic*? Or of Milton's *Areopagitica*? Or of the pamphlets of Swift? Or of Burke's speeches? I am glad to see that a later race of American literary historians are now asserting the contrary doctrine, and arguing that more acquaintance

with the written record of these first two centuries would improve American criticism generally.

To a taste unperturbed by finical and transitory definitions of literature there is something absurd in a critical process which preserves a Restoration Comedy, and rejects Bradford's *History of Plymouth*) which prizes a didactic poem in heroic couplets and despises the work of Jonathan Edwards; which relishes the letters of some third-rate English poet, but finds no gusto in the correspondence of Benjamin Franklin; which sends a student to the novels of Messrs. Godwin (and Brockden Brown), but never thinks of directing him to *The Federalist*.

I cannot overstate my agreement with this. I would go further. I hope that the time will come when this part of our common literature—these noble writings from the outposts of what was still our common civilization—will make their way into our histories of *English* literature. If there are rebels among them, that will be no new thing. Our literature, thank God, has always had room for rebels, even when there was room for them nowhere else.

II

THE RISE OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

WHEN Rip Van Winkle woke up from his long sleep about the year 1800 he saw (perhaps you remember) not much that was new to him except the head of President Washington hanging where King George's head had once hung, and strange faces, of course, instead of familiar ones. Washington Irving would seem to have been in the right about this. Though events had occurred, in those twenty or thirty years, of infinite portent and significance for the future of America, the outward aspect and material conditions of things had changed little. The United States, however 'free and enlightened', and by common American consent 'the wonder and envy of the world', were still in 1800, as we see them from this distance, a parcel of small half-organized communities clinging on the edge of a very large continent: four and a half millions of free white persons (the British Isles had fifteen), four of which millions were loosely settled in the old thirteen states and the more restless remaining fraction thrusting out across the Alleghenies into the debatable lands of Tennessee, Kentucky, and Ohio. There was no town, as yet, of 100,000 inhabitants. Boston had 25,000; New York 60,000; Philadelphia, still the literary and intellectual capital of the United States, for the last ten years the seat of Government also, had 70,000, and was at this time, by all accounts, the pleasantest town of the three.

I thought it proper to give these figures, and to give them now, because they throw into relief the initial magnitude of the American task, and the vaulting optimism of American ambition. Being now their own masters, they proposed to themselves, characteristically

and most laudably, a simultaneous career of material and mental conquest: not only to get wealth, and subdue and populate the wilderness, but, wherever Europe excelled, to match or excel Europe. No American citizen could ever forget that his Republic had been born in defiance, and was still, in many ways, a challenge to the world. A challenge—and also, as he knew, an experiment hitherto untried, in the success or failure of which he and all his fellow-citizens were involved. It is worth while to get this right, and at the outset, because it helps to explain a rather difficult American characteristic of this time, and not of this time only—a very natural and excusable characteristic, let me say, which has excited, perhaps inevitably, and more especially in England, much overpointed criticism: the combination, I mean, of boundless confidence and pride in everything American with an almost morbid desire that this pride should be confirmed by outside, and if possible by English, commendation. The contradiction of these two attitudes is superficial. As challengers of the Old World they *had* to be confident, and did indeed feel so; and time has justified them. As remote experimenters in the constitution of society they were bound, being sensible men, to have their doubts.

This troublesome complex was nowhere more evident than in the department of literature. For to have a literature of their own was, of course, a necessary branch of their general ambition: a literature which should be recognized as distinctively American, yet such as Europeans must respect. That the genius was there no American, on principle, could doubt; nor any sensible European who had given an hour to the American literature of the Revolution. Yet, that crisis once over, it was slow to appear. There had been attempts to force it. Wild demands had been made, in the early years of the Republic, when feelings were still warm,

for a national literature so completely uncontaminated by England as to be written (for this was urged) in some other adopted tongue. Some attempts had been made, also, to present America with an epic—*Columbiads* and the like—without which, it was then thought, no country could set up house in literature. But these extravagances passed, and calmer counsels prevailed. In the first decade of the nineteenth century little coteries were forming, with their appropriate magazines, in the normal and time-honoured literary fashion: lounging places for talent, and apertures, perhaps, for genius. In the advent of these things, and of the fruitful idleness and companionship which they commonly imply, we may detect the beginnings of modern American literature.

Historians date from about the year 1804, partly because the mails were opened to them in that year, the vigorous enterprise in magazines which still distinguishes the United States. Even in the first twenty years of the century their number and variety excite astonishment. Every profession and pursuit, all ages and both sexes, had soon their special monthly or weekly oracle. I note among the rest *The Intellectual Regale or Ladies' Tea-Tray*, edited by a certain Mrs. Carr of Baltimore, who states in her prospectus that she knew the malignant part of mankind would scoff at a woman editor, but a mother would brave death for the support of her offspring, and 'she had five'. Mrs. Carr, except as a domestic heroine, does not concern us. I turn instead to a little group of writers, the coterie of *The Portfolio*, established in Philadelphia in the year 1801. It was with this talented and sauntering group that Tom Moore the poet, in the year 1804, passed what he calls, with a superciliousness, I am afraid, then typical of the British visitor, 'the few agreeable moments which my tour through the States afforded me'.

'If I did not hate as I ought the rabble to which they are opposed', he goes on, 'I could not value as I do the spirit with which they defy it; and in learning from them what Americans *can be*, I but see with the more indignation what Americans *are*.' This is silly enough, but it is interesting to find that already, in the United States, there was a circle which refused to take time and dollars seriously, and laughed, as such circles will, at the universal *bourgeois*, at the honest puffing self-importance of the average man. This group was hotly Anglophile, and generally in Federal circles at this time all the gods of the English hierarchy were worshipped: Johnson and Burke (the abuser and the defender of America), now equally admitted as masters of wisdom, and all the newer with the older poets—Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge, as well as Pope. The *Lyrical Ballads*, in their years of trial, had nowhere more loving admirers than in America.

One of the most interesting events in the literary history of this time is the lead which Boston again began to take, and Harvard College with it, in the intellectual and literary life of the nation. The founding, in the year 1815, of the *North American Review*, recognized at once by the *Edinburgh* and *Quarterly* as potentially their equal, was mainly a Boston and Harvard achievement. This journal, as intentionally American as the *Portfolio* had been English, collected about it many of the best writers of the country, and by giving them a centre, and making them known to each other, may even be said to have established an American school. I dwell on this a little because of its Bostonian origin. From about this time, and throughout the nineteenth century, Boston, that stony vineyard, her grapes no longer sour, and soon to ripen, became and remained what Philadelphia had been so long, the cultural centre of the United States.

The literary relations between England and America at this time, and for the first twenty or thirty years of the century, were troubled, I am afraid, by many misunderstandings, which the war of 1812 did nothing to remove. English travellers toured America, and reported social deficiencies. The first literary traveller to make a stir in this way was Captain Basil Hall, the friend of Scott.

I have said something of our first travellers in the United States. Let me turn now to another organ of opinion by which the American people set far too much store: I mean our monthly and quarterly reviews. How cruel and irresponsible they often were, even when well-informed! English reviewers kept asking when that American literature was coming along, and made lists of what had begun to be called Americanisms. As if this were not enough, relations were further poisoned by the animosities of politics, so that the admiration of America became, in this country, almost a test of party feeling. So early as 1805, Benjamin Silliman, an American traveller, encountered men in England 'whose admiration for America knew no bounds', who almost embarrassed him, he says, by their encomiums on the American people, and their corresponding disgust with their own country. There were others again who 'could find no good in a Republic'. Through all our Reform periods this tiresome game went on, of using America as Radical ammunition. For the same political reason the *Edinburgh Review*, despite its liveliness, was much more friendly to America than the *Quarterly*. I open the *Quarterly* at random (vol. 2) and read: 'Their drama is so bad as almost to reconcile us to the present state of our own.' Vol. 10: appearance of the first American Wag, in a parody of the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*. 'The first effort of American wit would necessarily be a parody. Childhood is everywhere a

parodist. America is all a parody, a mimicry of her parents.' In the same volume: 'In some sense the love of literature may be said to gain ground in the United States', and then the writer quotes as evidence an American notice headed 'Stealing Books', and announcing that if the gentleman who took, or, more properly, stole, certain books that are named, will return them, no questions will be asked. Still wantoning, he proceeds to the favourite ground of the American barbarization of the English language, and asks us to share his horror of a usage which can *progress* a bill, *jeopardize* a ship, *guess* a probability, proceed by *grades*, hold a *caucus*, and *conglaciate* a wave; which can allow the President of Yale to talk of a *conflagrative* brand, and President Jefferson to speak of *belittling* the productions of Nature. Even the pioneer names must yield matter for a reviewer's mirth: Bigmuddy River, and Littlemuddy River, Good Woman River, and Blowing Fly Creek:

Ye plains where sweet Big-muddy rolls along,
 And Tea-pot, one day to be famed in song,
 Where swans on Biscuit and on Grindstone glide,
 And willows wave upon Good Woman's side.
 How shall your happy streams in after time
 Tune the soft lay and fill the sonorous rhyme!
 Blest bards, who in your amorous verse will call
 On murmuring Pork and gentle Cannon-Bail;
 Split-Rock, and Stick-Lodge, and Two-Thousand-Mile,
 White-lime, and Cupboard, and Bad-humour'd Isle!
 Flow, Little-Shallow, flow! and be thy stream
 Their great example, as it will their theme!
 Isis with Rum and Onion must not vie,
 Cam shall resign the palm to Blowing-Fly,
 And Thames and Tagus yield to great Big-Little-Dry.

Even the *Edinburgh Review*, for political reasons more friendly than the *Quarterly*, still was patronizing.

Literature is one of those finer manufactures, which a new country will always find it easier to import than to raise.

Literature the Americans have none—no native literature, we mean. It is all imported. They had a Franklin, indeed; and may afford to live for half a century on his fame. There is, or was, a Mr. Dwight, who wrote some poems; and his baptismal name was Timothy. There is also a small account of Virginia by Jefferson, and an epic by Joel Barlow—and some pieces of pleasantry by Mr. Irving. But why should the Americans write books, when a six weeks' passage brings them in their own tongue, our sense, science and genius, in bales and hogsheads? Prairies, steam-boats, grist-mills, are their natural objects for centuries to come. Then, when they have got to the Pacific Ocean—epic poems, plays, pleasures of memory, and all the elegant gratifications of an antient people who have tamed the wild earth, and set down to amuse themselves. This is the natural march of human affairs.

This kind of thing was all the more galling because it was what *some* Americans had begun to say themselves. The importation, in fact, was constant. Everett of Harvard, replying in 1821 to the now familiar charge that Americans maltreated the English language, retorted that Americanisms were as keenly hunted down in America as in England, and English as correctly spoken. For where should they learn *bad* English?

We are derided and taunted with our dependence on the English press. We are scorned for the poverty of our literature. It is well known that our children's books are English; that many of our text-books used in the colleges are English; that our standard professional works are English; that our stage is supplied from England; that Byron, Campbell, Southey, Scott, are as familiar to us as to their own countrymen; that we receive the first sheets of the new novel before the last one is thrown off at Edinburgh; that we reprint every English work of merit before it is dry from the English press; and that the English version of the Scriptures is the great source whence the majority of Americans imbibe the English language.

This did not, of course, answer, and did not pretend to answer, the irritating question what *American* literature was doing. I am afraid that, on this matter, both nations were shown up: England as supercilious, and America as vain. She had promised too much, even in the literary sphere still gambling in futurities. One English reviewer wrote:

Other nations boast of what they are or have been, but the true citizen of the United States exalts his head to the skies in the contemplation of what the grandeur of his country is going to be. Others claim respect and honour because of the things done by a long line of ancestors; an American glories in the achievements of a distant posterity. Others appeal to history; an American appeals to prophecy, and with Malthus in one hand and a map of the back country in the other, he boldly defies us to a comparison with America as she is to be, and chuckles in delight over the splendours the geometrical ratio is to shed over her story. This appeal to the future is his never-failing resource. If an English traveller complains of their inns and hints his dislike to sleeping four in a bed he is first denounced as a calumniator and then told to wait a hundred years and see the superiority of American inns to British. If Shakespeare, Milton, Newton, are named, he is again told to 'wait till we have cleared our land, till we have idle time to attend to other things; wait till 1900, and then see how much nobler our poets and profounder our astronomers and longer our telescopes than any decrepit old hemisphere of yours will produce.'

The American propensity to look forward with confidence to the future greatness of their country may be natural and laudable. But when they go further and refer to the wished-for period as one in which the glory of England shall be extinguished for ever, their hopes become absurdities. Let us suppose the day is come when their proudest predictions are accomplished, when the continent shall be theirs from sea to sea; when it shall be covered by contiguous circles of independent states, each a kingdom in itself, with the great Federal Constitution like a vast circumference binding them together in strength and union, and when it shall be the home of countless millions of free and

enlightened Americans. Let us suppose the time arrived when American fleets shall cover every sea and ride in every harbour for purposes of commerce, of chastisement, or protection; when the land shall be the seat of freedom, learning, taste, morals, all that is most admirable in the eyes of man, and when England, sinking under the weight of years and the manifold casualties by which the pride of empires is levelled in the dust, shall have fallen from her high estate. In that day of her extremity, what language might an Englishman hold to an American boasting of the superior grandeurs of his country? Might he not truly say: America has reason to be proud; but let her not forget whence came the original stock of glory she has laid out to such good account. Might we not say: Who were the men who first cleared the barren tracts that have since become a garden? Englishmen. Who taught you the art of navigation? Englishmen. From what code did you catch the first spirit of freedom which won and has so happily maintained your independence? From the laws and institutions of England. Where did your infant science and literature find their models of deep thought, of exquisite composition, of sublime conception? In the writings of immortal Englishmen, your ancestors and instructors. No, America can achieve no glory in which England has not a share. Let the name of England fade from the list of nations, let her long line of statesmen, heroes, scholars, be buried in oblivion; yet so long as an empire of Americans survives, speaking her language, cherishing her institutions, and imitating her example, her name shall be pronounced with veneration throughout the world, and her memory be celebrated by a glorious monument

We think America is doing wonders. We heartily congratulate her. But she is yet in her infancy, and must not, like a forward child born to a great estate and the dupe of domestic adulators, assume the tone of riper years. She must be docile, industrious, patient of rebuke that conveys instruction. She must not talk much of glory till it comes.

It is a sobering commentary on all this wrangling, and a reminder how great a part of it, so far as the Englishmen were concerned, was simply the pleasure of the skirmish and the joy of pointed writing, that the

criticism by far the most bitterly remembered—still remembered indeed—was Sydney Smith's. 'In the four quarters of the globe', he asked, 'who reads an American book? or goes to an American play? or looks at an American picture or statue?' Yet this same Sydney Smith, in the year 1843, was stung by a retort that he had shown hatred of America. 'Hate America!' he replied, 'I have loved and honoured America all my life; and in the *Edinburgh Review* and at all opportunities which my trumpety sphere of action has afforded, I have never ceased to praise and defend the United States.' And, no doubt, he honestly believed this.

It was natural that the Americans should look to England for encouragement in their cultural adventures. 'Every author who imitated Scott or Byron, every lawyer trained in English jurisprudence, every painter who studied Haydon or Northcote, every editor who filled his sheet with English press clippings, was interested in English pronouncements on their position.' They could hardly be persuaded, especially after the war of 1812, that this unvarying belittlement was not an organized conspiracy. They should have remembered what a reviewer is, and comforted themselves with knowing that the greatest Englishmen were sound. The great poets of this time—Wordsworth, Shelley, Byron, Coleridge, were all friends of the Republic. Coleridge spoke with indignation of the 'shallowness and vulgar incivility of English visitors to the United States', and described America as

Britain with elbow-room and doubly free . . .
. . . Each heaven-sanctioned tie the same
Laws, manners, language, faith, ancestral blood,
Domestic honour, awe of womanhood.

Coleridge, you will remember, had thoughts of settling

in America, like so many other great men—from Milton to Keats, from Cromwell to Napoleon, from Pym to Mr. Pickwick. He liked meeting Americans and knew many of them: had even talked with Commander Decatur in Malta; and was proud that some of his articles had been used, after the unhappy war of 1812, 'in several of the Massachusetts state-papers'. He owed something, also, like several of his most eminent fellow-poets of England, to American literature: to the admirable travel-books of Hearne and Carver, of Bartram, of the emigrant Crèvecoeur. How many young idealists like Coleridge and Southey, or tired philosophers of that time, must have sighed over Crèvecoeur's idyllic farmer life, and his picture of the new American man!

What then is the American, this new man? He is either an European, or the descendant of an European, hence that strange mixture of blood, which you will find in no other country. I could point out to you a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. *He* is an American, who leaving behind him all his antient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new government he obeys, and the new rank he holds. He becomes an American by being received in the broad lap of our great *Alma Mater*. Here individuals of all nations are melted into a new race of men, whose labours and posterity will one day cause great changes in the world. Americans are the western pilgrims, who are carrying along with them that great mass of arts, sciences, vigour and industry which began long since in the east; they will finish the great circle. The Americans were once scattered all over Europe; here they are incorporated into one of the finest systems of population which has ever appeared, and which will hereafter become distinct by the power of the different climates they inhabit. The American ought therefore to love this country much better than that wherein either he or his forefathers were

born. Here the rewards of his industry follow with equal steps, the progress of his labour; his labour is founded on the basis of nature, *self-interest*, can it want a stronger allurements? Wives and children, who before in vain demanded of him a morsel of bread, now, fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and to clothe them all without any part being claimed, either by a despotic prince, a rich abbot, or a mighty lord. Here religion demands but little of him; a small voluntary salary to the minister, and gratitude to God; can he refuse these? The American is a new man, who acts upon new principles; he must therefore entertain new ideas, and form new opinions. From involuntary idleness, servile dependance, penury, and useless labour, he has passed to toils of a very different nature, rewarded by ample subsistence—This is an American.¹

We are to hear it again and again—and most potently in Whitman.

The debt of Coleridge and his friends to Bartram is more specific.

The thick black cloud was cleft, and still
The Moon was at his side:
Like waters shot from some high crag
The lightning fell with never a jag,
A river steep and wide.

So Bartram's Floridan storm flashes again in *The Ancient Mariner*.

And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

It is Bartram again, put to music. Wordsworth is another of Bartram's beneficiaries, in *Ruth*, and half a dozen other poems. America should be proud of Bartram.

[¹From *Letters from an American Farmer*, by St. John de Crèvecoeur, 1783, PP.4-5.]

If I were asked what has happened to that foolish Anglo-American quarrel of which I have felt obliged, to-day, to say so much, I should answer, I think, that it still goes on in a very cousinly sort of way, with the ball carefully removed from the pistol. As a duel with intent, it was stopped, and in the right way, by the appearance on the scene of first one and then another American writer, so clearly master of his art that petty criticism, at sight of them, fell silent. Washington Irving and his *Sketch-Book* (1820), Fenimore Cooper's *Spy* (1821), and the whole Leatherstocking Saga, the poems of Bryant, and the published oratory of Webster opened at once a new chapter in American literary history. Irving and Cooper went straight to English hearts, and had presently as many friends in Europe as in America.

III

FRIENDSHIP IN LETTERS

I CLOSED my last lecture on the names of Washington Irving and Fenimore Cooper. They are names which still come pleasantly to the ear, for the *Sketch-Book* and Knickerbocker and the Leatherstocking Saga have never ceased, in either country, to be enjoyed. To the American, on the other hand, of 1830, as I attempted to suggest—to the American of that date, concerned about his literature and the figure it made abroad, the sound of these names was more than pleasant. It was triumphal, and had a national campaigning value of the first order.

We were agreed, I think, that this American satisfaction was well-founded. Whatever may happen to Irving and Cooper, whatever neglect may one day fall upon them from the vagaries of human taste, they are in one respect secure: they must always be remembered as the first citizens of the United States who crossed, without question, and with a purely *literary* passport, the classic threshold of English literature, and established themselves in the unforced and everyday reading of the English-speaking world. Fenimore Cooper was a cantankerous citizen, and the dawn of literary understanding between England and America, which owed much to his novels, owed little to their author. Yet his meeting with Sir Walter Scott in the drawing-rooms of Paris, in the winter of 1826, was a more spectacular event in Anglo-American history than the life of Irving can show. Scott put up with his manners, had him to breakfast, and notes a further meeting: 'In the evening to Princess Galitzin. Cooper was there, so the Scotch and American lions took the field together.' It was America's best day in the international literary sweep-

stakes since Benjamin Franklin left Paris, and was not again to be equalled until the Decadents of Paris adopted Edgar Allen Poe. I reckon it as tactically fortunate, however, that Irving was so much the more *typical* of the successful American writer of his century: in his combination, I mean, of English sentiment with a sound Americanism. He was one of the first of a long line of American writers and scholars, from that day to this, to whom the doors of English society have been open—who, in repeated visits, while proudly holding to their national character, have accepted English ways and made English friendships. Irving was an almost perfect first ambassador to our court of letters. When the Royal Society of Literature presented him with its medal; when Oxford set the precedent of honouring American literature by conferring on Irving its highest honorary degree, the undergraduates firing questions about Rip Van Winkle and Ichabod Crane, and asking who discovered Columbus—it was evident that we had turned a page, that a new chapter had opened in our relations with America. Yet the highest, the choicest compliment was neither of these. It was paid by Hazlitt when, in his *Spirit of the Age*, he reviewed Charles Lamb and Irving in one essay—Elia and Geoffrey Crayon—as birds of the same feather. The cup of Anglo-American fraternity has never to this day, at the feast of literature, more nobly overflowed.

Irving and Cooper were both New Yorkers. The next race of American writers, the men who so abundantly and influentially expressed themselves in the thirty or forty years before and during the Civil War, were almost all from New England, and from the most intensive and cultured part of it, Massachusetts. Even Edgar Allen Poe, internationally the most famous of them and America's most distinguished Bohemian, had no more success than Franklin in evading being born

in Boston, though his wayward genius was naturally exercised elsewhere. The first signs of the new era were seen in Boston and Harvard, in an outspoken discontent not only with the official religion but with the intellectual equipment of these places, now felt to be superficial, and indeed in a general uneasiness about the country as a whole. The United States was then entering on perhaps the crudest stage of its astonishing expansion, and the gawkiest period of its democracy. The large-minded statesmen who had ushered in the Republic had left few successors, and there was a serious decline in the standards of public life: a decline of which, in some departments of American affairs, there is continued evidence to this day. In such circumstances this New England literary community of which I speak, college-bred for the most part, did what might have been predicted of it. It stood aside from the scramble of a too grossly material world, and turned inward upon itself. 'The American Eagle', said Emerson, 'is a mighty bird; but what is he to the American peacock?' To the painful pleniloquence of the Republic, as it waxed and kicked, to its bragging and boasting and new blaze of publicity, it opposed, this community, a gospel of quietness and thought, of sitting still now and then, and the modest art of a cultured private life. It was proclaimed by the Republic, and is still proclaimed, that the chief duty of a country is to raise the standard of the average man. No objection at all—on the contrary, said our Puritans—if Individualism may have equal rights; if, regardless of the average, and of any mass opinion whatsoever, a man may be permitted to look into his own mind, and say out plainly and publicly what he finds there. A thing not always easy to do; there have been times in America when it was not even safe. This movement of thought took a variety of forms, some noble and some fantastic. 'We are all a little wild

here with numberless projects of reform. Not a reading man but has a draft of a new community in his waist-coat-pocket.' 'I begin to think', says Emerson, 'it behoves every man to quit his dependency on society as much as he can, as he would learn to go without crutches that will soon be plucked from him, and settle with himself the principles he can stand upon.'

Emerson and Thoreau most fully represent the virtues of this quietism, this thirst for simplicity; but all were touched with it, from Hawthorne even to the worldly Lowell, for it was in the air of New England. I take it, in fact, to be the principal gift of that community to the world.

The poets, scholars, critics, novelists, historians who belonged to this New England group circulated mainly about Cambridge and Concord, and created among them the finest, or as it is called the classic, age of American literature. Their names are as familiar in this country as in America; Emerson, the greatest of them—the best writer, I think, and furthest-seeing mind America has produced—Longfellow (long acclimatized in England: the first poet I ever read, never asking whether he were English or American); Whittier (less known, but good to know); Hawthorne and Thoreau (each perfect in his kind); the dapper Oliver Wendell Holmes, who made talk a pleasure in two continents even at the breakfast table; and Lowell, so gifted, so versatile, so admirable on English literature—so that all our students used to read him—and yet (what is it?) not *quite* first-rate. Add to this list the imposing band of the New England historians, from Bancroft to Motley, and you have a performance of which the oldest nations might be proud. Three authors stand solidly outside this circle, though among the greatest of all, Poe, Melville, and Whitman: the first a homeless genius, in whom America claims little, and now the

property of the world: the others, on the contrary, so strangely and profoundly American that it was almost left to England to take them up—their powers not even yet quite confidently assessed, though their place is very evidently among the highest.

This close New England group, all known to each other—the market used to be full of their presentation copies—looked most of them deliberately East, and nourished the English connection. They had English friends, enjoyed our English landscape, and knew their London, their Stratford, and the Lakes. That the time would come when the English connection might be less valuable, they were well assured; but equally clear that that time had not yet come. 'We lean on England,' said Lowell. The American market was still flooded with cheap pirated editions of our books, which sold, if the book were popular, up to 50,000 or 100,000 copies. When Captain Marryat visited New York, he found that the very bootboys knew his characters, and Dickens could hardly move for the grateful mass of his admirers. The critical American was preternaturally alert, and some of our greatest modern writers—to some extent Carlyle, and Browning wholly—had adoring students in America while English opinion was still cold.

The pleasant friendships which grew up between many of these writers and their literary contemporaries in England may be traced in numerous letter-books and memoirs. Of them all the most famous and enduring—so that it has become a symbol of the rest—was the epistolary companionship—I say epistolary, for they met but thrice in forty years—of two of the strongest and least tractable characters in either continent: Ralph Waldo Emerson and Thomas Carlyle. It was in the year 1833 that Emerson, then a man of thirty, first landed in this country, eager, like Wash-

ington Irving before him, to meet or set eyes on the great men of the island, and above all on the English writers who had taught or touched him. 'Like most young men of that time', he says, 'I was much indebted to the men of Edinburgh and the Edinburgh Review—to Jeffrey, Mackintosh, Hallam, and to Scott, Playfair, and de Quincey.' He had also a strong desire to see the faces of Coleridge, Wordsworth, Landor, and one other, Carlyle, whom even so early he had marked as a hidden genius and future master. 'I suppose', he reflects, 'if I had sifted the reasons that led me to Europe, when I was ill and advised to travel, it was mainly the attraction of these persons.' Scott was dead before he reached England, but most of his other ambitions he found no difficulty in gratifying. It is interesting to collect his testimony on this experience. 'To play bo-peep', as he calls it, 'with celebrated scribes' has been known to disappoint, and Dr. Johnson, you remember, would always discourage it. 'Dearest Madam', he said to a certain feminine enthusiast, who had begged to be introduced to a famous author, 'Dearest Madam', he replied, 'you had better let it alone; the best part of every author is in general to be found in his books.' He went so far, indeed, as to recommend to authors the great advantage of keeping out of sight. 'It has long been the custom of the oriental monarchs to hide themselves . . . and to be known to their subjects only in their edicts. The same policy is no less necessary in him that writes.'

Emerson's testimony lies heavy in the other scale, and is doubtless more honourable to humanity. 'I have found writers', he says deliberately, 'superior to their books.' He met Landor at Florence, Coleridge, then one of the strongest of intellectual forces in America, he met at Highgate, and Wordsworth at Rydal Mount. Coleridge was old and preoccupied, but Wordsworth

was alert and to the point, even venturing to dictate what America needed. 'You need', he said, 'a Civil War (which to Emerson seemed a paradox) to teach the necessity of knitting the social ties stronger/ A hard and forward-looking old poet!

But the prime encounter of this visit was at Craigenputtock, where Carlyle, then thirty-eight and hardly known (which made Emerson's visit the more startling) was then living in high and melancholy self-communion, 'with not a person to speak to within sixteen miles except the minister of Dunscore.' The two men, sincerity staring out of them, took a long walk on the hills, and then 'sat down and talked of the immortality of the soul'. Thus began one of the rarest and truest friendships anywhere to be found in the jealous records of literary intercourse. 'I shall never forget the visitor', wrote Mrs. Carlyle, long after, 'who years ago, in the Desert, descended on us, out of the clouds as it were, and made one day there look like enchantment for us, and left me weeping that it was only one day.' It is a day that in the long and now mellowing history of Anglo-American friendship should be marked in red.

Their correspondence opened with Emerson's return the following year to Massachusetts, and continued at varying intervals to nearly the end of their long lives. The two volumes in which it is principally contained have this further propriety that they are edited by Charles Eliot Norton, a name of honour in this context because no man in the last century did more to promote acquaintance and understanding between the scholars and writers of England and of his own country. Emerson was the first to commit himself: 'a letter today from Emerson of Boston in America', Carlyle notes in his diary: adding, 'Precious is man to man'. He was roused to prompt reply. 'For me', he declares, 'America now exists, having Emerson in it.' And plunging on, 'So

here', he cries, looking over the water, let me repeat once more what I believe is already dimly the sentiment of all Englishmen, Cisoceanic and Transoceanic, that we and you are *not* two countries, and cannot for the life of us be; but only two *parishes* of one country, with such wholesome parish hospitalities, and dirty temporary parish feuds, as we see; both of which brave parishes *vivant! vivant!* And among the glories of *both* be Yankee-doodle-doo, and the Felling of the Western Forest, proudly remembered; and for the rest, by way of parish constable, let each cheerfully take such George Washington or George Guelph as it can get, and bless Heaven! I am weary of hearing it said, "We love the Americans", "We wish well", etc., etc. What in God's name should we do else?¹

Like so many in the Old World who have found themselves oppressed at once by poverty and imagination, Carlyle had indeed thought of the American continent not merely for a visit, but as a refuge. 'It occasionally rises like a mad prophetic dream in me that I might end in the Western Woods!' It was a dream of which he was never to hear the end. 'Now as to the welcome hint that you might come to America (as if Carlyle had ever meant it!) . . . Come', says Emerson, 'and found a new Academy that shall be church and school and Parnassus . . . I dare not say that wit has better chance here than in England of winning world-wages, but it can always live, and it can scarce find competition. Indeed, indeed, you shall have the continent to yourself were it only as Crusoe was king. If you cared to read literary lectures, our people have vast curiosity, and the apparatus is very easy to set agoing.' It is impossible to read, without something of that awe with which one gazes at the infant source of some giant river, what is probably the first serious

[¹ Carlyle to Emerson, 12 Aug. 1834 (*Letters*, 1883, i. 19-20).]

invitation to a British man of letters to go and lecture in America. The date is 1834, so that the apparatus which even then was so easy to set agoing, and would be so difficult now to stop, has been running for a hundred years. Carlyle believed himself to be attracted by the scheme, but I think never really meant it, though Emerson refused to give up hope, and was reinforced from time to time by deputations of young Bostonians who wished to see and hear the Master. Even as late as 1870, when Carlyle was seventy-five and had washed his hands of the world, a rumour reached America, and appeared in the Boston press, that he was coming. 'Pure moonshine, alas', Carlyle replied. 'One Boston Gentleman (a kind of universal Undertaker, or Lion's Provider of Lecturers . . .) informed me that *The Cable* had told him; and I had to remark, "And who the devil told the Cable?"'

Emerson was one of the two persons, Carlyle has recorded, who encouraged Fraser the publisher, poor distracted man, to go on with *Sartor Resartus*, and being accordingly made happy by the receipt of four stitched copies of that work, struck off 'for friends', promptly set about the business, which ever afterwards he made his own, of spreading the Carlylean fame and doctrine in America. Presently he reports that some thirty or more intelligent persons in Massachusetts have actually been found to understand the book, and that if a hundred copies were sent out they would sell at once. A little later, and *Sartor* had been reprinted, and was being preached from the best pulpits and lecture-rooms in the State. Carlyle declared that of all the early reviews of *Sartor*, the most understanding he had seen came from America. It was a great day in the Concord household when Carlyle's *French Revolution* arrived, the only author's copy in America, and in Cheyne Row when Emerson's slighter return was opened: his in-

stantly famous oration on *The American Scholar*. 'My friend!' said Carlyle, 'you know not what you have done for me there. It was long decades of years that I had heard nothing but the infinite jangling and jabbering . . . and my soul had sunk down sorrowful, and said there is no articulate speaking then any more, and thou art solitary among stranger-creatures? and lo, out of the West comes a clear utterance, clearly recognizable as a *man's* voice, and I *have* a kinsman and brother: God be thanked for it! I could have *wept* to read that speech; the clear high melody of it went tingling through my heart; I said to my wife, "There, woman!" She read; and returned, and charges me to return for answer, "that there had been nothing met with like it since Schiller went silent." My brave Emerson !'¹ Meanwhile Carlyle was doing for Emerson what Emerson was doing for him, spreading his wares—in London, in Lakeland, in the Universities—until people began to ask the hoped-for question: 'Has that Emerson of yours written nothing else?' They wrote prefaces for each other's reprints, and were in all things like brothers, By 1838 *The French Revolution*, which had caught the young men of Harvard, had spread out to New Orleans, to Nashville, and Vicksburg, and ten years later was being 'read with eagerness' in Texas, 'on the Colorado'. Emerson also, by that time, was established in England, and was soon selling for a shilling a volume on our railway bookstalls. What sorely troubled Emerson was that a poor man like Carlyle should get not a penny on his works from the American public. 'I am ashamed', he wrote, 'that you should educate our young men, and that we should pirate your books. One day we will have a better law, or perhaps you will make our law yours.' On this difficult topic I shall have something to say in another lecture, and on the persistent

[¹ Carlyle to Emerson, 8 Dec. 1837 (*Letters*, 1883, i. 141-2).]

and, I am glad to say, partly successful attempts of Emerson, when he could bear the fraud no longer, to secure Carlyle some modest profits.

Throughout the long years of that friendship Carlyle's house in Chelsea became increasingly an American house of call. Professor Longfellow turns up, hardly yet known as a poet; Henry James the elder; Margaret Fuller, Emerson's transcendental comrade (and might she, please, be shown Tennyson and Browning?); Miss Sedgwick, the American Maria Edgeworth, much courted; Bancroft the historian; Prescott, reported as infinitely lionized; and sad Miss Delia Bacon, the high-minded priestess of a crazy faith. There was also, recommended by Emerson, a certain gentleman called Hedge: 'One of the sturdiest little fellows', Carlyle patiently sends word, 'I have come across for many a day: a face like a rock, a voice like a howitzer; only his honest kind grey eyes reassure you a little.' There was Senator Hoar, also, of Concord, 'a solid, sensible, effectual-looking man', whom Carlyle got under way for Oxford: "*both* Universities was too much for the limits of his time,' Carlyle explains, 'so he preferred Oxford.' Nothing wrong so far. But he should have been coached a little in the domestic conditions of the Oxford of that time—the celibacy of its Fellows, for example. Dr. Jacobson, who took him about, would not then have had to confess that he had received (with blushes) a handsome 'Gift for his Child' from the Senator: and would Carlyle accordingly thank him and blush to him? Perhaps the visitor who gave Carlyle most pleasure—they met at breakfast somewhere—was the American orator Daniel Webster. 'A magnificent specimen! You might say to all the world, this is your Yankee Englishman, such Limbs we make! ... As a Logic-fencer, Advocate, or Parliamentary Hercules, one would incline to back him at first sight

against all the extant world, the tanned complexion, that amorphous crag-like face; the dull black eyes under their precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces, needing only to be *blown*; the mastiff-mouth, accurately closed:—I have not traced as much of *silent Berserkir-rage*, that I remember of, in any other man.¹ Emerson was delighted. 'I cannot tell you how glad I am that you have seen (him) . . . All my days I have wished that he should go to England . . . We send out usually mean persons as public agents, mere partisans, for whom I can only hope that no man with eyes will meet them; and now those thirsty eyes, those portrait-eating, portrait-painting eyes of thine, those fatal perceptions, have fallen full on the great forehead which I followed about all my young days, from court-house to senate-chamber, from caucus to street.'²

How they seize and embalm greatness, these two, between them!

I should have expected that Carlyle would have tired of all this calling. But he had a genuine warmth for the business, and reports with satisfaction that:

American Notabilities are daily becoming notabler among us; the ties of the two Parishes, Mother and Daughter, getting closer and closer knit. Indissoluble ties. I reckon (he goes on) that this huge smoky Wen may, for some centuries yet, be . . . a yearly meeting-place for 'All the Saxons'. . . After centuries, if Boston, if New York, have become the most convenient 'All-Saxondom', we will right cheerfully go thither to hold such festival, and leave the Wen.³

It is sad to see, as the years pass, the sluggishness of age descending on their letters, and a weariness of writing. They grow busy about their Collected Editions, which they faithfully exchange. It was in the year

[¹ Carlyle to Emerson, 24 June 1839 (*Letters*, 1883, i. 247-8).]

[² Emerson to Carlyle, 8 Aug. 1839 (*ib.*, i. 255).]

[³ Carlyle to Emerson, 8 Aug. 1839 (*ib.*, i. 247).]

1869, when they were both growing old, that Carlyle had a thought, 'occasionally present to me', he says, 'for many years back', and now divulged—of testifying his gratitude to New England, or to New England acting through her Emerson, by bequeathing to it his 'poor Falstaff regiment' of books, the books he had bought and used in writing his *Cromwell* and his *Frederick the Great*. He had broached it to Charles Eliot Norton, and now confessed it to Emerson himself: was it a foolish idea or not? How far from foolish he was speedily convinced, and the books now rest in Harvard College, which was vouched for by Emerson as 'newly active' and 'expansive in all directions' under a recently elected President called Charles Eliot. How the wheel comes round! It is like the old days of Steele and Berkeley.

Emerson paid, in all, three visits to England, the last in 1872, and saw Carlyle twice before his return. They said good-bye then, and no more letters passed; ten years later both were dead.

It was on this last visit, or rather on its conclusion, that a ludicrous incident occurred, which I may be forgiven for relating. Scarcely had Emerson returned to Concord than a scurrilous interview with him appeared in an American newspaper, animadverting with great severity upon several English contemporaries. Swinburne, in particular, was singled out for abuse of a singularly revolting kind. That Emerson should disapprove of Swinburne might be regarded as axiomatic: Henry Adams, a more cosmopolitan American, said that it had taken him twenty years to get over *his* meeting with that poet. But the interview, to any one who knew Emerson, must have been evidently fictitious. The paper, however, was sent to Swinburne, who wrote to Emerson for some such assurance. He received no reply. What followed must be described in

the *ipsissima verba*¹ of Sir Edmund Gosse, upon whom no shade of such a situation could be lost:

Early in February 1874, Swinburne, who had been spending the winter at Holmwood, came up to town for the day, and made an engagement with me to meet him. Soon after twelve o'clock we seated ourselves upon a bench in St. James's Park. It suddenly occurred to me to say, 'Did you ever receive from Emerson an answer to your letter?' Swinburne had been very quiet and reasonable hitherto, neither raising his voice nor shaking his limbs, and my question was followed by such a complete silence that I turned to see whether he had heard it. His whole frame was quivering with a sort of anguish, his faded red curls were dancing under his broad felt hat, his eyes were fixed on the water while his hands leaped at his sides, but he made no sound. After a few moments he said, with considerable emphasis:—'I did NOT!' I then enquired, 'You will take no more notice, I suppose?' He answered, 'I have just taken exactly such notice as a gentleman in my position was bound to take. I have written him another letter.'

Alarmed at what this second letter might have contained, I rather feebly said, 'I hope your language was quite moderate!' Whereupon Swinburne, absolutely bounding with excitement, and in a voice so shrill that I glanced round with satisfaction to perceive that nobody was near us, shrieked out, 'Perfectly moderate! I merely informed him, in language of the strictest reserve, that he was a hoary-headed and toothless baboon, who, first lifted into notice on the shoulder of Carlyle, now spits and splutters from a filthier platform of his own fouling! That is all I've said!'

When Emerson and Carlyle were still young men a minor industrial discovery was made, and made almost simultaneously in England and America, that an author has a voice—and if he could write a lay sermon, could presumably also speak it. What was more, some modest fee seemed not improper: and so the lecturing trade began. Emerson, whom I have quoted on

[¹ Quoted from the Ashley Library Catalogue, vii. 59.]

this already, when he gave up the Church found the lecture-platform a better pulpit, and on the fees thus honestly earned he mainly lived. The Lyceum, as it was called, became a national American institution. How English authors, from Thackeray to J. B. Priestley, have profited since that day by this American passion, I need not tell you: or how hard they have had to work for it. On that subject, which is clearly a very intimate part of my theme, I hope to say something in my next lecture. What interests me for the moment is to observe how very seldom we seem to issue counter-invitations, and ask American writers to address *us*. There was a scheme once to bring Lowell over: but I must tell the story from the beginning. It has some bearing on my present office, indeed, and the foundation of the Watson Chair, and I will conclude my lecture by relating it.

Sixty-five years ago, in 1866, Mr. Henry Yates Thompson of Liverpool, with Lowell partly in his mind, offered to endow a lecturer, to be appointed by the President and Fellows of Harvard, to instruct the *English* Cambridge in the 'History, Literature, and Institutions of the United States of America'. This generous and intelligent proposal the Cambridge Senate rejected as a dangerous novelty, for a medley of reasons—ecclesiastical, political, and academic—which now make strange reading. Every safeguard was provided. The Vice-Chancellor of Cambridge might veto any appointment if he disapproved of Harvard's choice; and either University might at any time terminate the lectureship. In the end a vote was taken whether, *by way of experiment*, a lecturer to be nominated by Harvard and approved by the Vice-Chancellor should be allowed the use of one of the University rooms for a single course. By 110 votes to 82 the Senate decided against even this tentative approach to the

acceptance of Mr. Thompson's offer. The question had caused some excitement, and there was the usual war of flysheets and muster of voters. Charles Kingsley, who eight years later, in his dual character of militant Christian and man of letters, was to pay a triumphant visit to the United States, as Regius Professor of Modern History urged the University to accept the lectureship, and he had the best men in Cambridge on his side. He pointed to the distinguished character of Harvard—'an offshoot, practically, of our own University ... Its rulers, learned and high-minded gentlemen, painfully aware of our general ignorance about them, and honourably anxious to prove themselves (what they are) our equals in civilization, will take care to send us the very best men whom they can find.' This in answer to the academic snobbery which asked if Harvard standards could be trusted—a question, in such a context, now of merely antiquarian interest. A fear more generally expressed was that Cambridge might be 'Americanized'—by which was meant, it appears, not what we now mean by Americanization, but 'democratized', imbued with republican, democratic, or revolutionary principles. Even Kingsley treats this fear as not wholly illusory, but reminds the University of the quarter from which the proposal came: from the 'representatives of that class in America which regards England with most love and affection; which feels itself in increasing danger of being swamped by the lower elements of a vast democracy . . . which now holds out the right hand of fellowship ... as to one of the most conservative bodies in this country, because it feels itself a conservative element in its own country ...' If there be (as there is), he asserts, an attempt going on to 'Americanize' England, on the part of certain Englishmen, what better defence than to teach the educated young men of England about America; to let them hear

the truth from worthy American lips; and judge for themselves.

He had himself, he goes on, become painfully aware, when attempting in his public lectures to deal with the history of the United States, 'how little was known, and how little, then, could be known, on the subject¹. Even the essential books were absent, though that want had since been partly supplied by a large addition of American literature to the University Library. How important that these obstacles should be still further removed by the residence of an American gentleman among them!

'Of the general importance of a scheme of this kind, of the great necessity that our young men should know as much as possible of a country destined to be the greatest in the world, I shall (he concluded) say little. I shall only ask—If, in the second century before the Christian era the Romans had offered to send a lecturer to Athens, that he might tell Greek gentlemen of what manner of men this new Italian power was composed, what were their laws and customs, their intentions, and their notion of their own duty and destiny—would Athens have been wise or foolish in accepting the offer?'

I am afraid that what Athens would or would not have done in the situation stated had very little weight with the average Cambridge voter. 'Are members of the Senate aware', said one of them, 'that Harvard University, as far as it professes any form of religion, is distinctly Socinian, or, if Americans prefer the term, Unitarian?' This question, we are told, was very damaging. Would not the appointment of such a lecturer, said another, 'pander to that which is perhaps the worst vice inherent in the North-American character, namely SELF-CONCEIT?' (In the flysheet this terrible word is printed in capitals!) One of the University voters was Leslie Stephen, then at the outset of his literary career,

and cherishing fresh and grateful memories of society in the New England Cambridge and Concord, where he had found, in J. R. Lowell, a friend for life. When Stephen's disgusted letter arrived, Lowell was amused. 'Socinianism! heavens! we've got several centuries ahead of *that*, some of us, or behind it, if you please.'

Cambridge missed, in 1866, a pioneering chance, but I cannot suppose that the result would have been very different at Oxford. Emerson, visiting Oxford in 1847, and remarking on its conservatism, ventured to doubt if that learned body had yet heard of the Declaration of Independence. This was doing the University perhaps a little less than justice, but Oxford ignorance of American affairs was then, doubtless, profound, and only exceeded by the indifference with which such ignorance was regarded. To-day its Harmsworth Chair is steadily naturalizing American studies in an atmosphere of entire good feeling and good will.

I have described at length the episode of the Thompson Lectureship because it shows how far, in our attitude to the United States, we are ahead of even sixty years ago; how far we have travelled from our old insular disdain, our vested suspicions, and the more dubious last ditches of the Victorian Age. It reveals less happy relations of this country and America, and how needless was that unhappiness. It reveals also, what particularly interests me, the inherent power of literature to bridge these peevish animosities. The one satisfactory feature in an otherwise absurdly unsatisfactory affair is the serene friendship of one or two English and American men of letters.

IV

BRITISH AUTHORS IN AMERICA

I PROMISED in this lecture to say something of the long line of English travellers to the United States, so many of whom promoted literature and their own fortunes by lecturing in that country, and by writing the almost proverbial book about it afterwards. The earliest of these travellers were business men and prospectors, and the tone of their comments was dictated by the success or failure of their hopes. The first literary traveller, and the first, also, to raise that storm of indignation in America which was to become, I am afraid, the almost habitual consequence of these British commentaries, was Captain Basil Hall, the friend of Scott. Mrs. Trollope, while preparing her own wasps' nest, noted that Hall's book was 'read in city, town, village and hamlet, steamboat and stage-coach', and that 'a sort of war-whoop was sent forth' unprecedented in her recollection. She was told that the book contained not one word of truth from beginning to end; that the British Government had commissioned Hall to write it, in order to depress the English Radical admirers of American institutions. The 'moral earthquake' which the book produced was active for years.

Her own book, first published in 1832, was to eclipse even Hall's in the perturbation it occasioned. 'At every corner of the street', we are told, '... a large placard met the eye, "For sale here, with plates, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, by Mrs. Trollope". At every table d'hôte, on board of every steamboat and in all societies, the first question was, "Have you read Mrs. Trollope?" And half the people would be seen with a red or blue half-bound volume in their hand, which you might vouch for being the odious book, and

the more it was abused, the more rapidly did the printers issue new editions.' Much the same thing happened when some ten years later Dickens published his *American Notes* and *Martin Chuzzlewit*.

Three reflections on this occur to one to-day: the fundamental sensitiveness which could be so seriously offended by *anybody's* book of travels; the impulse to deny the existence, when pointed out by a stranger, of customs and practices which Americans themselves acknowledged, and the best deplored; and, lastly, the fact that everybody *read* the libel. In this last, if one thinks of it, lay American salvation. As book after book appeared, singling out for admiration or no less violent dispraise almost precisely the same things, the American reading public, which was also, fortunately, the American nation, took thought and mended. I have not a word to say for most of these English commentators. They showed amazing inattention to what America was then doing, to its vast and proper task, which was the taming of a continent. They constantly remind me of the foolish English gentleman who visited Wellington in Spain and asked to see the army. Wellington took him through the camps. 'But', faltered our gentleman, looking about the while for some martial array, some Horse Guards Parade, 'I see only men cooking, or sleeping, or moving things about, or mending their clothes,' 'You have seen then', said Wellington, 'an Army.' The American nation, at the time I speak of, was in much the same position as the Peninsular Army. It was a nation on campaign, a civilization in its shirt-sleeves, to which the finer points of manners were irrelevant. Nevertheless, as I have said, because everybody read and because everybody fussed about them, these English criticisms did good. For the time came when the American nation was in danger of getting too much *used* to shirt-sleeves.

It is interesting to-day to anthologize from these earlier nineteenth-century books of travel some of those habits and customs which have been thought by so many visitors to distinguish the United States. Their icehouses and their rocking chairs; their cocktails and the national chewing habit (tobacco till the 'seventies, and now gum); that active and universal tendency in virtue of which one English traveller, not otherwise unfavourable, asserted that their national emblem should be, not an eagle, but a spittoon; their religious revivals and temperance agitations; their rowdy newspapers and spoiled children; their autograph-hunters; their gift for advertisement and their belief in slogans; the lack of privacy in their public conveyances, and their long-suffering endurance of public inconveniences, both still sometimes complained of; their quick meals; their strange unrest; their prudery, no less strange; and their general confidence that they speak better English than the English. All these I find, so early were they formed, in the books of English travellers of nearly a century ago, and there are few English travellers since who do not repeat some of them.

Captain Marryat is perhaps the first considerable English writer who surveyed the Americans in print. He found himself, on landing, already well known, an errand-boy gravely inquiring of him whether Mr. Midshipman Easy had left the King's service, and whether he had seen Mr. Japhet lately. He had, in fact, which sounds very modern, a play running at that time in New York. Marryat is one of the more understanding of our English travellers, liked the American energy and enterprise, and declared that 'the mind can hardly calculate upon the degree of perfection and power to which the United States may in the course of two centuries arrive.' It was his fortune to offend a lady of whom he asked, when she had fallen, if she had hurt

her 'leg'; and to be present in Boston at a Temperance Revival. The *Ode to Cold Water*, sung on that occasion, he has very properly preserved; and as it has so close a recent bearing, though composed in 1837, and as it is also, I should say, one of the best American poems of its time, and is moreover unknown to the anthologists, I will ask your leave to read it. It was a characteristic composition of evangelism and advertisement.

I

In Eden's green retreats
A water-brook that play'd
Between soft, mossy seats
Beneath a plane-tree's shade,
Whose rustling leaves
Danced o'er its brink,
Was Adam's drink,
And also Eve's.

2

Beside the Parent spring
Of that young brook, the pair
Their morning chant would sing;
And Eve, to dress her hair,
Kneel on the grass
That fringed its side,
And make its tide
Her looking-glass.

3

And when the man of God
From Egypt led his flock,
They thirsted, and his rod
Smote the Arabian rock,
And forth a rill
Of water gush'd
And on they rush'd
And drank their fill.

4

Would Eden thus have smiled
Had *wine* to Eden come?
Would Horeb's parching wild
Have been refreshed with *rum*?
And had Eve's hair
Been dress'd in *gin*
Would she have been
Reflected fair?

5

Had Moses built a still,
And dealt out to that host.
To every man his gill,
And pledged him in a toast.
How large a band
Of Israel's sons
Had laid their bones
In Canaan's land?

6

Sweet fields beyond Death's flood
Stand dress'd in living green,
For from the throne of God,
To freshen all the scene,
A river rolls,
Where all who will
May come and fill
Their crystal bowls.

7

If Eden's strength and bloom
Cold water thus hath given—
If e'en beyond the tomb,
It is the drink of heaven—
Are not *good wells*,
And *crystal springs*,
The very things
For our hotels?

I am tempted, having researched in these matters, to quote other examples of the early American gift of advertising, for example: and their belief in the gravity and power of slogans. One cannot read with indifference, remembering what has come to pass, the story of the Turtle, observed in the streets of Boston in 1835, 'walking with the step which Cicero recommends to philosophers, before the door of a restaurant, with the words written on its back, "TO-MORROW SOUP".' Nor Lyell's experience, some ten years later, in Jackson, Missouri, on going down to dinner at his hotel, to hear the landlord call the large crowd of diners to order, proclaim, in the loud voice of a herald, 'Gentlemen, we are a great people,'¹ and then call out the names of all the viands on the sideboard.

The most stirring of all our literary visitors to America was Charles Dickens. Dickens did not lecture; he *read*. But his reception was ominous of much to come. His first visit was paid in the winter of 1841, while he was still a very young man. But he was already the author of half a dozen books—from *Pickwick* to *Barnaby Rudge*—which had more readers in that country than in England. He was given a reception more cordial, it was said, than had fallen to any visitor since Lafayette. His old friend, Washington Irving, had urged upon him the craving of his admirers in America to see him, but nothing could have prepared him for what he found.

How can I tell you, he wrote, what has happened since that first day? How can I give you the faintest notion of my reception here; of the crowds that pour in and out the whole day; of the people that line the streets when I go out; of the cheering when I went to the theatre; of the copies of verses, letters of congratulation, welcomes of all kinds, balls, dinners, assemblies without end?... I have had deputations from the Far West, who have

[¹ Heil Hitler! Gordon in margin (1938).]

come from more than 2,000 miles distance: from the lakes, the rivers, the back-woods, the log-houses, the cities, factories, villages, and towns. Authorities from nearly all the States have written to me. I have heard from the universities, congress, senate, and bodies, public and private, of every sort and kind. 'It is no nonsense, and no common feeling', wrote Dr. Channing to me yesterday. 'It is all heart. There never was, and never will be, such a triumph.'¹

Dickens thoroughly enjoyed it, but of course it had its trials. They are, he said, a 'friendly, earnest, hospitable, kind, frank, very often accomplished, . . . warm-hearted, fervent, enthusiastic people.' His liking was given not only to cultivated Easterners, but to the picturesque wild fellows from the West, and their representatives in Congress. 'Splendid men to look at, hard to deceive, lions in energy, Crichtons in varied accomplishment, Indians in quickness of eye and gesture, Americans in affectionate and generous impulse. It would be difficult to exaggerate the nobility of some of these glorious fellows.' Only, he was never left alone, and oh! their bores.

There is a line in my chin (on the right side of the underlip) indelibly fixed there by the New Englander I told you of in my last. I have the print of a crow's foot on the outside of my left eye, which I attribute to the literary characters of small towns. A dimple has vanished from my cheek (American actresses insure them now)², which I felt myself robbed of at the time by a wise legislator. But on the other hand I am really indebted for a good broad grin to P. E., literary critic of Philadelphia,. . . who told me ... that I had 'awakened a new era' in his mind.³

Dickens, as I say, and as his *American Notes* were to prove, admired much in America, and was emphatic in declaring it. But there was a good deal also which he

[1 Letter from Charles Dickens, Jan. 1842.]

[2 The parenthesis is Gordon's.]

[3 Letter from Charles Dickens, Apr. 1842.]

found it impossible to excuse, even in a pioneering country: their penal system, the pigs that made New York their playground, the dilapidated streets, even of their largest cities, their yellow Press, the universal habit of expectoration, from which no carpet, even, could claim exemption, and their immoral denial, as he held, of copyright privileges to English authors. On this subject of copyright he dared to risk his popularity, and both in public and in private—such was the warmth of his resentment—ignored the strained silence with which his protests were received. He was soon, let it be confessed, homesick, and there is something pathetic in the picture which he presents, on the western part of his journey, travelling with a Shakespeare and an American Geography, and playing *Home Sweet Home*—that moving American ditty which we have naturalized—every evening on steam- and canal-boat on an accordion. He even spoke meanly, in his impatience, of the Mississippi, 'the beastliest river in the world', thinking it 'well for society' that this renowned father of waters has no children who take after him. He had suffered, I need hardly say, from the inquisitive attentions of the Press, like many since from our squeamish country. 'If I were to drop a letter in the street, it would be in the newspaper next day, and nobody would think its publication an outrage.'¹ One newspaper had objected to his hair, as not curling sufficiently, and to his dress as being somewhat foppish, 'and indeed, perhaps rather flash'. 'But such', the report went on, 'are the differences between American and English taste—rendered more apparent, perhaps, by all the other gentlemen present being dressed in black.'

I suppose it was provincial of the United States to take so seriously as they did the first impressions of a young English novelist of thirty, and even the parodies in *Martin Chuzzlewit*. But it could not have been other-

wise. His books were adored, and he had been treated like a king: there was the feeling that their kindness had been abused. When it was known that he was to write a book on his experiences, expectation, we are told, was on tiptoe. Nineteen hours after the first copy reached New York it had been reprinted and was on sale. Within two days the New York publishers had sold 50,000 copies. I will not attempt to describe the wounded self-esteem, the indignation with which it was read. Part of the anger, no doubt, was due to its truth; to the certainty with which he touched abuses; to the knowledge that Dickens was honest, and had the ear of the world and of posterity. 'President Felton of Harvard', says a recent historian of the matter, 'admitted that the American Press was quite as appalling as Dickens represented it to be, and a well-known passage in Thoreau's *Cape Cod* bears him out; but the American of 1840 did not want the fault advertised to the world.' And so, indeed, with all the rest. Lord Bryce has recorded that Theodore Roosevelt often said to him that the pictures Dickens drew in *Martin Chuzzlewit* of the West as he saw it contained a good deal of unpleasant truth. Well, it is all an old story, and I am told that the *American Notes* are now prized in the United States, and may be found in most homes which possess even a modest collection of books. The Americans are a good-natured people, and forgave Dickens almost as soon as they forgave Dr. Johnson. When he visited America again, not without some hesitation, twenty-six years later, he found himself still the most popular writer in that country, and read the death scene in *Dombey*, the trial from *Pickwick*, and other favourites, to crowded audiences which had forgiven him everything. 'In every house, in every car, on every steam-boat,' says Forster, 'in every theatre of America, the characters, the fancies, the phraseology

of Dickens were become familiar beyond those of any other writer of books.' 'Even in England,' said one of the New York journals, 'Dickens is less known than here; and of the millions here who treasure every word he has writte, there are tens of thousands who would make a large sacrifice to see and hear the man who has made happy so many hours. Whatever sensitiveness there once was to adverse or sneering criticism, the lapse of a quarter of a century, and the profound significance of a great war [the year was 1867], have modified or removed.' The sacrifice affirmed was real: people stood all night in a freezing cold to secure a seat at his recitals. He found changes everywhere, enormous changes, except in the pleasant Cambridge circle which once more welcomed him to its little island of cultured quiet. New York he hardly recognized, and at the farewell dinner given there, spoke of the growth in all the graces and amenities of life, since his former visit. He promised that no copy of the *Notes* or of his *Chuzzlewit* should in future be issued by him without accompanying mention of these and other changes. He had been ill most of the time with a cold which even the local invention of brandy, rum, and snow, called a 'Rocky Mountain Sneezer' was unable to dislodge, but he returned at peace with the American people and with some £20,000.

Dickens, as I say, didn't *lecture*, though, had he chosen, he might well have done so. Thackeray, however, by 1852, had delivered in America his *English Humourists of the Eighteenth Century* at the rate, as he remarks, of 'a pound a minute nearly'. It was a pleasure to him to find how much his books were read. 'The prettiest girl in Philadelphia, poor soul,' he reports, 'has read *Vanity Fair* twelve times.' His lectures were very successful, and three years later he returned and gave his *Four Georges*. It had not escaped attention,

however, and was noted against him, that 'he had spoken of the intemperate habits of the wits of Queen Anne's time as if he would like to have drunk with them,' As if, of course, he wouldn't! This weakness slipped out; but Thackeray, where he could command himself, was almost culpably discreet, warned, no doubt, by Dickens's example. He gives a certificate of beauty to the American ladies, and, so far as I remember, in his letters home (for he was careful not to write a book), says nothing in particular about anything else in America.

Anthony Trollope paid a visit during the Civil War, and while he found much to admire, particularly in the teeming North West, still found, like his predecessors, the children spoiled, the women pampered, the meals too hurried, the politicians corrupt, and the newspapers mendacious. He also testified that he had never found an American who did not own some books; and that the readers of Dickens, Thackeray, Tennyson, and other popular English authors were as 10,000 to every 1,000 in England. He went so far as to think that of every ten men in the Old World, nine would live happier in the United States.

The Civil War, which to the older American of to-day is still 'the War' and even 'the Great War'—set the United States on a new path, and removed, by its confirmation at once of Union and of Progress, most of the fears of the former generations, and much of the old sensitiveness to criticism. One might like or not like the United States; but it was impossible for anyone not to respect her. One might detest democracy, and oppose it elsewhere, but here, undeniably, democracy had succeeded. Some of the old weaknesses persisted, persist now, to an English eye, as to an American even English life is *still* oddly feudal. But they are noted in a different spirit, not as the weaknesses of a struggling country, but as the defects of strength.

I cannot pretend to have consulted all the books and letters in which our literary representatives in the last half century have described their experiences in America—the joys and fatigues (both genuine and both extreme) of transatlantic hospitality, and the gratification or disappointment of the monetary return. Freeman the historian, Herbert Spencer the philosopher, and Matthew Arnold are the vanguard of an army of *post-bellum* visitors from this country, and an army which is constantly recruiting. Freeman was liked, and heartily returned the liking, though he found American civilization on the whole monotonous, their scholars few, and a tendency, still observable among their academics of the second rate, to use a language of much pretension and little meaning. 'From the discourse of a professor of rhetoric', he says, 'I carried off one phrase, the "economy of interpreting power", which I have found no one on either side of the ocean able to explain to me.' He recommends the wise precept of Mr. Chucks in *Peter Simple*—'Spin your yarn in plain English.' Since the rise of the new psychology, which America has made its own, the temptations to this kind of jargon have proved infinite and irresistible, and are corrupting, indeed, the English language everywhere.

That Herbert Spencer should have been induced to break the mould of his routine and take the American voyage must be claimed as one of the triumphs of the Great Republic. He came, it is true, incognito, and disappointed his hosts both of the Press and of the table by his resolute assumption of privacy. The Press summed it up in a single heading: 'Mr. Spencer's arrival and disappearance,' Denied the confidences of interview, they invented habits for him, as is their way. One paper asserted that he always slept with a bag of hops under his pillow, and had been seen,

when he arrived, carrying the hop-bag under his arm. Another announced that he 'subsisted entirely on dry toast and sardines'. His utterances, on the other hand, about America and American life were received with great respect, even when he denounced the disappearance of freedom from its national home, and from the *very forms* of freedom itself. 'It is true that those who rule you', he said, 'do not do it by means of retainers armed with swords; but they do it through regiments of men armed with voting papers who obey the word of command as loyally as did the dependants of the old feudal nobles, and who thus enable their leaders to override the general will.' ... 'The "sovereign" people', he ventured to say, 'was becoming a puppet.' He thought also that they were working too hard, and told them so. He had seen too many lined faces, and urged, for a time, a gospel not of 'work' but of 'relaxation'. He retained throughout the rest of his life the warmest recollections of America's welcome, and is only once known to have lost his temper with an American citizen. This was when he was requested by an American doctor to bequeath to him 'the most perfect and wonderful brain of the century'. A request so complicated by adulation might have embarrassed some men; but the reply, in fact, cost Herbert Spencer the minimum of time and trouble. [There is a mark of omission here in the margin.]

Matthew Arnold visited America in 1883, a year later than Spencer, and went expressly as a lecturer, in the now time-honoured way. Prepared as he was to find Americans a reading nation he was justifiably astonished on being told that the very conductors and brakesmen on the railway lines had read his books, and knew of him as the son of Dr. Arnold. He was also astonished, justifiably or not, to discover that on his tour, as he passed from city to city with his wife, the

special compartment in which he travelled was labelled 'The Arnold Troupe'. Standardization, even here. He was not an impressive lecturer, and was indeed not heard until in alarm he took some lessons in voice-production. Even his appearance failed to satisfy, and a certain Chicago newspaper said so:

'He has harsh features, supercilious manners, parts his hair down the middle, wears a single eyeglass and ill-fitting clothes.' Yet Arnold in England was thought the mould of form! He was most successful in Boston, where he spoke of Emerson as Emerson should be spoken of, and warned his hearers, as Emerson might have done, of the dangers of a civilization too incessantly concerned with the average man. He said frankly that he found American civilization not sufficiently *interesting*.¹

Arnold has expressed himself elsewhere on this topic, in an address delivered in London in the year 1888 at the unveiling of a memorial window to Milton presented by a Mr. Childs of Philadelphia. It appears as one of the second series of the *Essays in Criticism*.²

Whatever one may think of the general danger to the world from the Anglo-Saxon contagion, it appears to me difficult to deny that the growing greatness and influence of the United States does bring with it some danger to the ideal of a high and rare excellence. The *average man* is too much a religion there; his performance is unduly magnified, his shortcomings are not duly seen and admitted.

We trouble less in the twentieth century about these problems of the nineteenth, from a feeling that they may solve themselves; but they are no doubt real, and more pressing in America than elsewhere.

[The MS. at this point becomes discontinuous.]

[¹ *Civilisation in the United States*. Boston 1888. Part IV.]

[² Second Series, 1888, p. 57. The quotation is chosen conjecturally; Gordon did not indicate the passage.]

Twentieth century visitors. Wells, Bennett, Chesterton, etc., etc.—generously delighting in the exuberance of American life, its power, its lavishness, its generosity.

And yet ... is it wrong that one does not envy America even its youth, its clear air, and its possessions? That one prefers this murky island with all its problems and wheezy inheritances?

[Then follows 'Quote Nevinson'. But from the type-written extracts which follow it is clear that Gordon intended to put first two extracts from Walter Page; for at the end of the leaf containing these he has written: 'Then Nevinson'.]

*England before the War*¹

. . . The two things that this island has of eternal value are its gardens and its men. Nature sprinkles it almost every day and holds its moisture down so that every inch of it is forever green; and somehow men thrive as the lawns do—the most excellent of all races for progenitors. You and I can never be thankful enough that our ancestors came of this stock. Even those that have stayed have cut a wide swath, and they wield good scythes yet. But I have moods when I pity them . . . This moss that has grown all over their lives (some of it very pretty and most of it very comfortable—it's soft and warm) is of no great consequence—except that they think they'd die if it were removed. And this state of mind gives us a good key to their character and habits.

What are we going to do with this England and this Empire, presently, when economic forces unmistakably put the leadership of the race in our hands? . . . We can do what we like if we go about it heartily and with good manners (any man prefers to yield to a gentleman rather than to a rustic) and throw away—gradually—our isolating fears and alternate boasting and bashfulness. 'What do we most need to learn from you?' I asked a gentle and bejewelled nobleman the other Sunday, in a country

[¹ *Life and Letters of Walter H. Page*, 1921: from a letter to President Wilson written in the first half of 1914 (vol. i, p. 173).]

garden that invited confidences. 'If I may speak without offence, modesty.' A commoner in the company, who had seen the Rocky Mountains, laughed, and said: 'No; see your chance and take it: that's what we did in the years when we made the world's history.'

*The House Memorandum*¹

The English ought to be drawn and quartered for their sluggish stupidity in forever abusing one another and for forever grumbling . . . My own belief is that the only invincible thing in Europe are these same English . . . Yet they wrangle and become 'grouchy' and decline even to permit their friends to know what they are doing. I could with truth tell the whole race what I've often told groups of them, that they are good for nothing except to become ancestors of Americans and Colonials. In America and their large colonies, the English become free and hopeful. The despair, the depression, the melancholy, the slow ichor in the blood—of all Europeans, with the possible exception of the French—is what damns them all. It turns their eyes inward and backward. And yet these are the only invincible people in this world—this race . . . The Spartan women were weaklings beside the English. I daily grow stronger in my Americanism—real Americanism, not the hyphenated counterfeit. For the British race is the best race yet mixed and developed on this globe, and this race comes to its best under freer and more mobile conditions than this rainy isle of dukes and earls permits. People here now discuss everything with reference to 'after the war'. 'What are we going to do after the war? What do we do best?' I have an easy answer. 'Send your children to the United States. Your daughters will become handsomer and your sons more adaptable—they'll be English set free: that's what an American is. The best thing you've ever done is to breed men for freer lands.' And they believe it—some of 'em do at least. These English are the most interesting study in the world. Just when you'd like to hang them for their stupidity, you become aware of such noble stuff in them that you thank God that they were your ancestors. And Europe would be a bloody slave pen to-day but for them. It's a shambles as it is.

[¹ Ibid.: from a letter to the same, written in 1915 (vol. 2 p. 294).

They are not going to get tired. Peace? Yes, on their terms. And, while they are fighting for their lives, they are the only nation that is not fighting also for booty. And among many things that this war is teaching them is the stupidity of their arrogance when they twice provoked us to war. They pathetically yearn for our utmost goodwill—even while they (some of them at least) curse us. My admiration for their racial qualities deepens while my impatience with their ways is heightened. I could write a book in worship of them and another book damning them—both true, both concrete, both definitely proving my thesis.

Good-bye, America!

In mist and driving snow the towers of New York fade from view. The great ship slides down the river . . . Good-bye, most beautiful of modern cities! Good-bye to glimmering spires and lighted bastions, dreamlike as the castles and cathedrals of a romantic vision! . . . Good-bye to heaven-piled offices, so clean, so warm, where lovely stenographers, with silk stockings and powdered faces, sit leisurely at work or converse in charming ease! Good-bye, New York! I am going home. I am going to an ancient city of mean and mouldering streets, of ignoble coverts for mankind, extended monotonously over many miles; of grimy smoke clinging closer than a blanket; of smudgy typists who know little of silk or powder, and less of leisure and charming ease. Good-bye, New York! I am going home.

Good-bye to beautiful 'apartments' and 'homes'. Good-bye to windows looking far over the city as from a mountain-peak! Good-bye to central heating and radiators, fit symbol of the hearts they warm! Good-bye to frequent and well-appointed bathrooms, glory of the plumber's art! ... Good-bye to shady verandas where rocking-chairs stand ranged in rows, ready for reading the voluminous Sunday papers and the *Saturday Evening Post*! Good-bye, America! I am going home. I am going to a land where every man's house is his prison—a land of open fires and chilly rooms and frozen water-pipes, of washing-stands and slop-pails, and one bath per household at the most; a land of

[¹ H. W. Nevinson, 1922: quoted from the English edition, 1926, published under the title of *Farewell to America*.]

fences and hedges and walls, where people sit aloof and see no reason to make themselves seasick by rocking upon shore. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

Good-bye to the copious meals—early grape-fruit, the 'cereals', eggs broken in a glass! Good-bye to oysters, large and small, to celery and olives beside the soup, to 'sea-food', to sublimated viands, to bleeding duck, to the salad course, to the 'individual pie' or the thick wedge of apple pie, to the invariable slab of ice-cream, to the coffee, also bland with cream; to ice-water and home-brewed alcohol! I am going to the land of joints and roots and solid pudding; the land of ham-and-eggs and violent tea; . . . Good-bye, America! I am going home.

Good-bye to the long stream of motors . . . Good-bye to the signal lights upon Fifth Avenue, gold, crimson, and green; the sudden halt when the green light shines, as though at the magic word an enchanted princess had fallen asleep; the hurried rush for the leisurely lunch at noon, the deliberate appearance of hustle and bustle in business. . . . Good-bye to scrappy suburbs littered with rubbish of old boards, tin pails, empty cans, and old boots! Good-bye to standardized villages and small towns, alike in litter, in ropes of electric wires along the streets, in clanking 'trolleys', in chapels, stores, railway stations, Main Streets, and isolated wooden houses flung at random over the countryside! Good-bye to miles of advertisement imploring me in ten-foot letters to eat somebody's cod-fish ... or smoke somebody's cigarettes ... or sleep with innocence in the 'Faultless Night-gown'! . . .

Good-bye to the house that is labelled 'One Hundred Years Old', for the amazement of mortality! Good-bye to thin woods and fields inclosed with casual pales, old hoops, and lengths of wire! I am going to the land of the policeman's finger, where the horse and the bicycle still drag out a lingering life; ... a land of old villages and towns as little like each other as one woman is like the next;... a land of vast and ancient trees, of houses time-honoured three centuries ago, of cathedrals that have been growing for a thousand years, and of village churches built while people believed in God. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

Good-bye to the land of a new language in growth, of split infinitives and crossbred words; the land where a dinner-jacket

is a 'Tuxedo', a spittoon a 'cuspidor'; where your opinion is called your 'reaction'. . . Good-bye to the land where grotesque exaggeration is called humour, and people gape in bewilderment at irony, as a bullock gapes at a dog straying in his field! Good-bye to the land where strangers say 'Glad to meet you, sir', and really seem glad; where children incessantly whine and wail their little desires, and never grow much older; ... I am going to a land of ancient speech, where we still say 'record' and 'concord' for 'recud' and 'concud'; where 'unnecessarily' and 'extraordinarily' must be taken at one rush, as hedge-ditch-and-rail in the hunting-field; where we do not 'commute' or 'check' or 'page', but 'take a season' and 'register' and 'send a boy round'; where we never say we are glad to meet a stranger, and seldom are; where humour is understatement and irony is our habitual resource in danger or distress; where children are told they are meant to be seen and not heard;... Good-bye, America! I am going home.

Good-bye to the multitudinous papers, indefinite of opinion, crammed with insignificant news, and asking you to continue a first-page article on page 23, column 5! Good-bye to the weary platitude, accepted as wisdom's latest revelation! Good-bye to the docile audiences that lap rhetoric for mental substance! Good-bye to politicians contending for aims more practical than principles! Good-bye to Republicans and Democrats, distinguishable only by mutual hatred! Good-bye to the land where Liberals are thought dangerous and Radicals show red! Where Mr. Gompers was called a Socialist, and Mr. Asquith would seem advanced! A land too large for concentrated indignation; a land where wealth beyond the dreams of British profiteers dwells, dresses, gorges, and luxuriates, emulated and unashamed! I am going to a land of politics violently divergent; . . . where meetings break up in a turbulent disorder, and no platitude avails to soothe the savage breast; a land fierce for personal freedom and indignant with rage for justice; a land where wealth is taxed out of sight, or for very shame strives to disguise its luxury; a land where an ancient order of feudal families is passing away and Labour leaders whom Wall Street would shudder at are hailed by Lord Chancellors as the very fortifications of security. Good-bye, America! I am going home.

Good-bye to prose chopped up to look like verse! Good-bye to the indiscriminate appetite which gulps lectures as opiates and 'printed matter' as literature! Good-bye to the wizards and witches who claim to psycho-analyze my complexes, my inhibitions, and silly dreams! Good-bye to the exuberant religious or fantastic beliefs by which unsatisfied mankind still strives desperately to penetrate beyond the flaming bulwarks of the world! Good-bye, Americans! I am going to a country very much like yours. I am going to your spiritual home.

BRITISH AUTHORS' COPYRIGHT

I AM now arrived at the point which comes inevitably in such a course as this—a short course on a great subject—when the lecturer is faced with audit, and begins, somewhat ruefully, to balance his accounts. That in attempting a course at once so brief and so ambitious I was attempting the impossible, I have succeeded in concealing only occasionally from myself, and never at all, I should suppose, from you. Yet I am far from regretting the experiment. My only regret is that I find myself now, within sight of the end, confronted by such a teeming choice of interests most of which I must forgo. As the twentieth century approaches, and increasingly with every year of it, the interaction of the two countries, in literature as in everything else, grows more habitual and intense: authors, publishers, and readers all swimming in an element sometimes highly and characteristically national, sometimes hardly to be distinguished as either English or American, but rather a traders' compound of the two. Had I time I should take you sailing there, and dredge. But I am bound to deny myself, and to select. One important subject, which has engaged for more than a century the attention and even the passions of both English and American authors, it is my obvious duty to deal with; I mean the subject—the now less thorny subject—of copyright. The other principal topic, which I have decided to reserve for my next and last lecture, is the appearance and value of that native strain in American literature which both America and England had clamoured for so long, and of which Whitman is the prophet: that, and what goes with it, the growth, efficiency, and future of the American language—or, as the older

school would say, the English language in America.

To understand the copyright quarrel, and do justice to some of the features of American practice in that matter, it is necessary to go back to American colonial beginnings and the first attempts of the settlers to provide themselves with reading. Perhaps the first English classic reprinted in America was *The Pilgrim's Progress*, a book so greatly to American taste that it was reprinted almost at once—in 1681—and hawked about among the settlements by pedlars, of course at the cheapest possible price. John Bunyan, as we know, had seen a copy, and speaks of it with pride in the poetical preface to Part II. None then resented, and least of all the author, what seemed an elementary and laudable effort of self-help.

Throughout the greater part of the eighteenth century, as I have had occasion to point out, the reprinting business flourished, more particularly in Philadelphia. Most of the commoner English standard works, the current English classics, and the handier books of reference were reproduced at lower prices than were usual or possible in England. They had to be cheap if the colonial public was to afford them, and it was a public of readers. A common practice, to make purchase easier, was to produce the books serially or in parts, like the numbers of a newspaper or periodical. Indeed, for convenience, the two were sometimes combined. Benjamin Franklin's employer, Keimer, issued, for example, at Philadelphia, in 1732, a periodical called *The Universal Instructor in all Arts and Sciences and Pennsyhanian Gazette*: the instruction consisting of weekly extracts from Chambers's *Universal Dictionary*, then a new work at home, beginning with A and going on to Z. When this work was exhausted it was succeeded by instalments from Defoe's *Religious Courtship*: and so on. The most interesting example of

this sort of bonus to readers is a reprint of that popular and improving play, *George Barnwell or the Repentant Apprentice*, which appeared in the columns of *The New England Weekly Journal*, also in 1732.

I labour this matter because the cheap and homely method of publication which thus grew up, and grew up in a native atmosphere of the best motives, never quite died out, and became prominent and effective in nineteenth-century America as part of what I must call the piratical technique. It is possible, I think, to be more lenient with that technique when one knows these origins.

The first copyright act, I believe, anywhere to be found is the English Act of 1709—the eighth of Queen Anne: an Act intended to benefit authors by more efficiently protecting their rights, but in fact a clumsy favour, a fatal blessing. The general belief at that time, and for long after, was that an author's rights in his work are inherent and perpetual: that his book is his natural property. Yet here was a statute which, by naming a term of years for which his ownership must be respected, seemed to treat that natural right as an affair of privilege. This effect seems hardly to have been suspected at the time, and throughout the greater part of the century books were assigned, by authors to their publishers, and by publishers to one another, 'for ever', as the phrase was, or 'in perpetuity'. It was in 1774 that this claim was first fully tested. After memorable arguments, in which some of the highest of our legal authorities maintained opposite sides, the law of England was declared to be against the claim of a perpetual right. The influence of this decision was not confined to England. When it was delivered, the law of two considerable states in Europe acknowledged the principle of perpetuity in literary property: it was subsequently abandoned by both.

I state these facts because of the irony which followed. Having, in this doubtful manner, had their claims reduced from perpetuity to a term of years, from a natural right to a statutory privilege, authors were to be attacked in the nineteenth century, and their publishers with them, as monopolists, whenever an attempt was made to improve their copyright conditions, and secure them a decent return on their work. There has, in fact, been a steady improvement, but never without a fight, and the rumbling cry of monopoly from the friends of the people. You can see at once the fighting advantage of all this to pirates, when appealed to as men of honour. Had the *Waverley Novels* been Scott's property just as *Abbotsford* was, the American publishers who grew rich by pirating them would have had no case. But a monopoly—a thing as unpopular in name as it was presumably unsocial in its nature—a monopoly, moreover, conferred merely by British statute, which did not run beyond these islands—why should a free and enlightened democracy take note of that? And what was an author, anyhow? said the industrialists among themselves. Stringing words together: very pretty: but hardly substantial as a ground for property. Now if he had patented something; that was property if you like, and must of course be protected. It always has been in the United States: internationally too: no nonsense there.

The United States had copyright early: domestic copyright: but even that, it appears, required a campaign. Noah Webster, the celebrated dictionary-maker, the transatlantic father of an industry, so far as English is concerned, now principally American or Scottish—this honourable man travelled on crusade from state to state preaching the equity of author's rights. He was successful, and the series of State Acts then passed were resumed in a general Act of 1790, based on our Statute

of Queen Anne. The term allowed was slight, and is even to-day below the average European standard: but the principle was established.

Not so the principle, towards which Europeans were then gradually proceeding, of the *international* rights of authors. It was France, characteristically, which in the first flush of her new gospel of humanity, in 1793, opened her frontiers, and all the benefits of her domestic copyright, to any who cared to publish there: whether native or alien, resident or non-resident, no matter: there was to be the same recognition for all.

It was not until 1837, the year of the first British International Copyright Act, that a direct appeal was made to the United States by this country to grant some terms of recognition to British literary property. A memorial from fifty-six British authors to the American Congress was presented by Henry Clay in February of that year, and later in the same month a similar petition from a number of authors and friends of literature in the United States. The English memorial carries most of the well-known names—Carlyle, Disraeli, Maria Edgeworth, Tom Moore, Samuel Rogers, Bulwer Lytton, Thomas Campbell. . . . Both memorials were promptly countered by the alert book-making interests in America, of which the most stubborn and the best organized were the printers. Clay drafted a Bill which between 1837 and 1842 was five times presented in the Senate, without effect: though nearly every writer in America was behind it. Even our Government intervened. Lord Palmerston, in 1838, invited the United States to co-operate in a Convention: without result. The trade interests in piracy, the industrial interests of the printers, were too strong, and were to remain, in fact, an effective obstacle for more than half a century from that time.

It was while matters were in this state that Charles

Dickens made his first visit to America, and startled his hosts by refusing utterly to keep silence on a question about which he felt so strongly. He was unprepared for the storm of resentment which he aroused; but with the assurance that the best Americans were all privately of his mind, he defied the press and trade interests, and spoke publicly of the matter as he had a mind and when he had a chance. His letters to Forster at this time are violent, but they are historical now, and give the temperature of his crusade.

I believe there is no country, on the face of the earth, where there is less freedom of opinion on any subject in reference to which there is a broad difference of opinion than in this. . . . There!—I write the words with reluctance, disappointment, and sorrow; but I believe it from the bottom of my soul. I spoke, as you know, of international copyright, at Boston; and I spoke of it again at Hartford. My friends were paralysed with wonder at such audacious daring. The notion that I, a man alone by himself, in America, should venture to suggest to the Americans that there was one point on which they were neither just to their own countrymen nor to us, actually struck the boldest dumb! Washington Irving, Prescott, Hoffman, Bryant, Halleck, Dana, Washington Allston—every man who writes in this country is devoted to the question, and not one of them *dares* to raise his voice and complain of the atrocious state of the law. It is nothing that of all men living I am the greatest loser by it. It is nothing that I have a claim to speak and be heard. The wonder is that a breathing man can be found with temerity enough to suggest to the Americans the possibility of their having done wrong. I wish you could have seen the faces that I saw, down both sides of the table at Hartford, when I began to talk about Scott. I wish you could have heard how I gave it out. My blood so boiled as I thought of the monstrous injustice that I felt as if I were twelve feet high when I thrust it down their throats.

I had no sooner made that second speech than such an outcry began (for the purpose of deterring me from doing the like in this city) as an Englishman can form no notion of. Anonymous

letters; verbal dissuasions; newspaper attacks making Colt (a murderer who is attracting great attention here) an angel by comparison with me; assertions that I was no gentleman, but a mere mercenary scoundrel; coupled with the most monstrous mis-representations relative to my design and purpose in visiting the United States; came pouring in upon me every day. The dinner committee here (composed of the first gentlemen in America, remember that) were so dismayed, that they besought me not to pursue the subject *although they every one agreed with me*. I answered that I would. That nothing should deter me— That the shame was theirs, not mine; and that as I would not spare them when I got home, I would not be silenced here. Accordingly when the night came, I asserted my right, with all the means I could command to give it dignity, in face, manner, or words; and I believe that if you could have seen and heard me, you would have loved me better for it than ever you did in your life.

. . . The effect of all this copyright agitation at least has been to awaken a great sensation on both sides of the subject; the respectable newspapers and reviews taking up the cudgels as strongly in my favour, as the others have done against me. Some of the vagabonds take great credit to themselves (grant us patience!) for having made me popular by publishing my books in newspapers; as if there were no England, no Scotland, no Germany, no place but America in the whole world. A splendid satire upon this kind of trash has just occurred. A man came here yesterday, and demanded, not besought but demanded, pecuniary assistance; and fairly bullied Mr. Q for money. When I came home, I dictated a letter to this effect—that such applications reached me in vast numbers every day; that if I were a man of fortune, I could not render assistance to all who sought it; and that, depending on my own exertion for all the help I could give, I regretted to say I could afford him none. Upon this, my gentleman sits down and writes me that he is an itinerant bookseller; that he is the first man who sold my books in New York; that he is distressed in the city where I am revelling in luxury; that he thinks it rather strange that the man who wrote *Nickleby* should be utterly destitute of feeling; and that he would have me 'take care I don't repent it.' What do you think of *that*?—as

Mac would say. I thought it such a good commentary, that I dispatched the letter to the editor of the only English newspaper here, and told him he might print it if he liked.

I will tell you what I should like, my dear friend, always supposing that your judgment concurs with mine; and that you would take the trouble to get such a document. I should like to have a short letter addressed to me, by the principal English authors who signed the international copyright petition, expressive of their sense that I have done my duty to the cause. I am sure I deserve it, but I don't wish it on that ground. It is because its publication in the best journals here would unquestionably do great good. As the gauntlet is down, let us go on. Clay has already sent a gentleman to me express from Washington (where I shall be on the 6th or 7th of next month) to declare his strong interest in the matter, his cordial approval of the 'manly' course I have held in reference to it, and his desire to stir in it if possible. I have lighted up such a blaze that a meeting of the foremost people on the other side (very respectfully and properly conducted in reference to me, personally, I am bound to say) was held in this town t'other night. And it would be a thousand pities if we did not strike as hard as we can, now that the iron is so hot.

The iron was hot; he had seen to that, and presently writes that he has 'in his portmanteau a petition for an international copyright law, signed by all the best American writers with Washington Irving at their head', with a request that he would hand it to Clay for presentation. 'So "Hoo-roar for the principle", as the moneylender said, ven he wouldn't renoo the bill.'

All seemed to go as he wished, and he was not unnaturally proud of the American authors' petition; the truth being that at no time were American authors other than anxious for such a measure. If they hung back, it was from no uncertainty on principle, no need for conversion, but from a more intricate knowledge than any Englishman could possess of the solid forces of industrial and political opposition.

Carlyle, who responded to Dickens's appeal for support, was still more innocent than Dickens of the practical hopelessness of the business.

[A heading follows: Copyright (Carlyle to Dickens).]¹

We learn by the newspapers that you everywhere in America stir up the question of international copyright, and thereby awaken huge dissonance where all else were triumphant unison for you. I am asked my opinion of the matter, and requested to write it down in words.

Several years ago, if memory err not, I was one of many English writers, who, under the auspices of Miss Martineau, did already sign a petition to congress praying for an international copyright between the two Nations—which properly are not two Nations, but one; *indivisible* by parliament, congress, or any kind of human law or diplomacy, being already *united* by Heaven's Act of Parliament, and the everlasting law of Nature and Fact. To that opinion I still adhere, and am like to continue adhering.

In discussion of the matter before any congress or parliament manifold considerations and argumentations will necessarily arise; which to me are not interesting, nor essential for helping me to a decision. They respect the time and manner in which the thing should be; not at all whether the thing should be or not. In an ancient book, revered I should hope on both sides of the Ocean, it was thousands of years ago written down in the most decisive and explicit manner, 'Thou *shalt not steal*'. That thou belongest to a different 'Nation', and canst steal without being certainly hanged for it, gives thee no permission to steal! Thou shalt *not* in anywise steal at all! So it is written down, for Nations and for Men, in the Law-Book of the Maker of this Universe. Nay, poor Jeremy Bentham and others step in here, and will demonstrate that it is actually our true convenience and expediency not to steal; which I for my share, on the great scale and on the small, and in all conceivable scales and shapes, do also firmly believe to be. For example, if Nations abstained from stealing, what need were there of fighting—with its butcherings and burnings, decidedly the most expensive thing

[¹ Carlyle to Dickens, 26 March 1842.]

in this world? How much more two Nations, which, as I said, are but one Nation; knit in a thousand ways by Nature and Practical Intercourse; indivisible brother elements of the same great SAXONDOM, to which in all honorable ways be long life!

When Mr. Robert Roy M'Gregor lived in the district of Menteith on the Highland border two centuries ago, he for his part found it more convenient to supply himself with beef by stealing it alive from the adjacent glens, than by buying it killed in the Stirling butchers' market. ... In many a little 'Congress' in the district of Menteith, there was debating, doubt it not, and much specious argumentation this way and that, before they could ascertain that, really and truly, buying was the best way to get your beef; which however in the long run they did with one assent find it indisputably to be: and accordingly they hold by it to this day.

A characteristic stout letter, which Dickens was grateful for; but as premature as truth must ever be to minds unready for it.

[The MS. here becomes fragmentary:¹

Carlyle's experience of the difficulty of getting authors' money from America—Emerson's devoted plans—Their unexpected results: manna to Carlyle. Quote marked passage—Coming of the Pirate 1841. Quote passage—Cf. Browning episode next page.

Then follows a page headed 'English Literature in America':

See article by D. C. Somervell, 'The Reputation of Robert Browning', in *Essays and Studies by Members of the English Association*, vol. 15 (1929)]:

After *The Ring and the Book* (1868-9) Browning suddenly

[¹The relevant passage in *The Times* report (28 March 1931) is as follows: 'Emerson made devoted plans for obtaining money for Carlyle by having his sheets sent to America for publication, and raised small royalties of £50 and £30, which Carlyle described as manna, but the pirates were already at hand, and Appleton, of New York, succeeded in 1841 in publishing sheets in advance of Emerson.']

penetrated to the great heart of the people—British and American. How else can one explain the singular fact that some time in the early 'seventies the Chicago Railway Company 'began to publish his works, part by part, as an appendix to their periodical time-tables, of which 10,000 copies circulated monthly'? If *Sordello* was the most glorious compliment ever paid by a poet to the public, this was, one presumes, the most glorious compliment ever paid by a railway company to a poet; and the second compliment was as little appreciated as the first, for the poem was stolen, and Browning, like a sensible man, objected as strongly as Dr. Johnson had done, to giving his wares away for nothing.¹

Then there was Mr. Levi Thaxter of Newtonville, Massachusetts, who 'reads you aloud (as his reading is a fine art) to crowds of astonished people, he swears by you, he thinks no one save Shakespeare has a right to be mentioned in the same century with you'. When Mr. Thaxter died in 1885, Browning wrote, by request, a seven-line epitaph for his tomb.

[Heading: Carlyle's help to Emerson. Copyright (Carlyle's Preface to Emerson's *Essays*, second series².)]

Here is a new volume of *Essays* by Emerson; concerning which I am to certify, that this English edition of them seems to be correctly printed; that the English Publisher is one appointed by the Author himself, and is under contract with him as to the pecuniary results. To Emerson's readers in England I am to certify so much; leaving the inference from it to their own honourable and friendly thought. To unauthorized reprinters, and adventurous spirits inclined to do a little in the pirate line, it may be proper to recall the known fact, which should be very present to us all without recalling, that *theft* in any sort is abhorrent to the mind of man;—that theft is theft, under whatever meridian of longitude, in whatever 'nation', foreign or domestic, the man stolen from may live; and whether there be any tread-

¹ 'Would you not, sir (turning to Mr. Thrale), rather give away money than porter?'—*Piozzi Anecdotes*.

[² *Essays*, Second Series, by R. W. Emerson, London, 1844.]

mill and gallows for his thief, or no apparatus of that kind! Such suggestion may perhaps have its weight with here and there an incipient adventurous spirit meditating somewhat in the picaroon or pirate line, and contribute to direct him into better courses: who knows? For other spirits, no longer open to such suggestions, the present Publisher trusts that he has *suggestions* of a much more appropriate, intelligible, and effectual kind, in readiness if needed.

Very happily the Author himself is not, in his economics, dependent on this claim now made for him, or on any such: yet it will be handsome in the British nation to recognize it a little! The labourer is worthy of his hire. Yes; and he that brings us (not in his sleep, I fancy!) new fire from the Empyrean—new tidings of such,—he too, one would imagine, is worthy that we should leave him the exiguous sixpence a copy, which falls to his share in the adventure, and not steal it from him!

More, on this rather paltry department of the business, I had not to say; and to touch on any other department of it was not in my commission at present. I will wish the brave Emerson a fair welcome among us again; and leave him to speak with his old friends, and to make new.

T. CARLYLE

London, 25 October 1844

The principal arguments of the American defenders of piracy were that 'their customers were young, well-educated, and poor—that books were necessities to them, and that they must therefore have them cheap, which they would cease to be if taxed by copyright. The English author, after all, could live on his British sales. And in any case a new country like America could not afford to be fastidious about such things. There was also the industrial question: if International Copyright were granted, the printing and publishing of books in English might well, as things were, desert America, and pass into English control.' The favourite answer, however, was the first. When Harper & Bros., who then battered on English fiction, opposed inter-

national copyright, their ground of objection was not that they would lose a valuable subsidized trade, but that the price of books would be raised and the education of the people interfered with. I am reminded of Lowell's rejoinder to this argument. 'There is one thing better than a cheap book, and that is a book honestly come by/ When one thinks of Walter Scott, killing himself to meet his debts, with piratical sales in America which at a penny or two a copy would have satisfied all his creditors and prolonged his life, it is difficult not to share the indignation of Dickens. Or, to take another case—Green's *Short History of the English People*, which sold in the 'seventies as Macaulay's *History* had done in the 'fifties. It was 'in the portman-teau', says Green's biographer, 'of every traveller who came to us across the Atlantic.' Green was a poor man, but the American pirate paid him not a penny. If he would undertake, however, a revised edition, they spoke of a royalty.

The evil effects of these piratical proceedings on American literature itself can be imagined; and if for no other reason—English profits quite apart—the system was vicious and indefensible. The United States, moreover, could no longer, in the 'seventies and 'eighties, plead colonial simplicity or pioneering poverty. In 1850 indeed, Emerson could still say that where an American spent a dollar an Englishman spent a pound; but that balance (which to-day seems incredible enough) had then swung more than level. There is abundant evidence, not only from the authors but from the publishers of America, that none but established American writers could compete with the current English literature scattered broadcast, at the lowest prices, through the country. And a nation whose literary beginners have no fair chance is unlikely to achieve a great literature. The only way was to

deprive America of her easy booty from overseas, and starve the country into originality.

Mr. Henry Holt, a well-known New York publisher, said before the Senate Committee on Patents in 1886:

The effect of this state of affairs on the opportunities of American authors to get into print or stay in print is very disastrous. I have unused manuscripts in my safe and have lately sent back manuscripts which ought to have been published, but I was afraid to undertake the publication; the market will not support them. I lately published, I think, the most important American work of fiction with a single exception that I ever published. The critics received it with praise. I had to write the author the other day that it had been a financial failure. She is a poor girl of great talent. . .

It is a vastly important subject, this subject of the prosperity of American authors. It is a subject that reaches to the foundation of our civilization. It is the question whether we are to continue to have an American literature—for, as you all know, American literature is languishing even now—the question whether outside of the daily and periodical press we are to derive our ways of thinking, our ideal of life and politics, from alien, unsympathetic sources. But this is not the whole question. It is rapidly becoming a question whether, with a few rare exceptions, we are going to have any serious books at all.

At the same hearing, Mr. Dana Estes, of a Boston firm:

It has been said by some gentlemen that the flood of British reprints has a discouraging effect upon American authorship. I will add my mite to that statement. For two years past, though I belong to a publishing house that emits nearly a million dollars worth of books per year, I have absolutely refused to entertain the idea of publishing an American manuscript. I have returned many scores, if not hundreds, of manuscripts of American authors, unopened even, simply from the fact that it is impossible to make the books of most American authors pay, unless they are first published and acquire recognition through the columns

of the magazines. Were it not for that one saving opportunity of the great American magazines which are now the leading ones of the world and have an international reputation and circulation, American authorship would be at a still lower ebb than it is at present. Take, for instance, an author of eminent genius who has just arisen. I refer to Charles Egbert Craddock—Miss Murfree. Had her manuscript been offered to any one of half a dozen American publishers it is probable it would have been refused. She got an entering wedge by having her articles published in a magazine and sprang into a world-wide reputation at once. How many of these 'mute inglorious Miltons' there are in the manuscripts, tons of manuscripts, scattered about the country, I do not know, but I venture to say there are a good many.

'The English', says Charles Reade, 'are never unanimous in injustice'; nor, on this question, as we have seen, was the American nation. All their authors wished for justice to authors everywhere. Their publishers, also, were often better than the system which they worked, and rewarded their English clients moderately, indeed, but honourably. The better houses established, in fact, a kind of unofficial copyright, and so as a rule it was in England. Yet piracy, of course, went on in both countries, though in England consequentially, because America would have it so, and on a modest scale.

By the 'eighties, after our Copyright Commission of 1878, at which American evidence had been taken, one can detect a different tone in American professional comment. The recalcitrants are preparing for the inevitable.

An interesting example of the change may be seen in a declaration of a certain Mr. Conant, of Messrs. Harper, and it is amusing to take it with the comments of Matthew Arnold, who had been one of the witnesses at the Royal Commission, and had a pecuniary interest,

very ill rewarded, in the American sales of his works.¹

Mr. Conant, who is understood to be connected with the publishing house of the Messrs. Harper, has given ... an exposition of American opinion on the matter . . . The Americans ... have at present [quoting Mr. George Putnam] 'no regulation to prevent the use, without remuneration, of the literary property of foreign authors' . . . The Americans . . . defend this state of things by adopting the cry of 'free books for free men'. A Conference held at Philadelphia, in 1872, passed resolutions declaring that 'thought, when given to the world, is, as light, free to all'; and, moreover, that 'the good of our whole people, and the safety of our republican institutions demand that books shall not be made too costly for the multitude by giving the power to foreign authors to fix their prices here as well as abroad'.

Mr. Conant. . . adopts these Philadelphian ideas in principle. But he maintains that in practice the American publishers have generously waived their right to act on them, and he carries the war into the enemy's country . . . Mr. Conant alleges that the concession in past times of a copyright to English authors 'would have retarded the progress of American culture at least half a century'. . . .

And yet nevertheless, says this good Mr. Conant, 'the course of American publishers, pursued for many years, towards foreign men of letters, shows that they have no disposition to take advantage of the absence of international copyright' . . . 'Few English people . . . have any notion of the amount of money paid to British authors by American publishers'. . . . 'In view of these facts, an American may be pardoned for indulging in a quiet laugh at the lofty tone which the Royal Commission on Copyright assumes in their solemn arraignment of the United States for refusing to grant protection to English authors.' And so the tables are fairly turned on us.

[Then follow rough notes:

The Act of 1891—America the oyster and we the shell—Manufacturing clause—Tribute to men who

[¹ *On Copyright* (Matthew Arnold, in *Irish Essays*, 1882, p. 266): the quotation has been chosen conjecturally.]

brought about the Act of 1891 (53 years, 12th Bill)—Copyright leagues and associations—Copyright Act, 1909—Vestal Bill of 1931—Father to son (Putnams)—Now the Vestal Bill (see *Publishers' Circular*)—*Still* not in International Convention of Berne—American ideals and practice!!]

VI

THE LITERARY HOPES OF AMERICA

IF we have a fault as a people, it is that we too persistently find our greatness in the past. Our past is great, and we do right to study it, but it is, and must be, a ghostly thing. All nations are haunted, and are by nothing more to be distinguished than by the nature of their phantoms: whether ghosts, or visions. We should do well, in these days, to adopt the best of all Americanisms—instead of the worst, as is too much our habit—and, choosing a vision rather than a ghost, follow a phantom of the future.

Nothing strikes one more in tracking the stream of American tendency, than the persistence of the American vision of a great national literature owing nothing to England, but bred of the richness of the American soil. It has its roots in another and earlier ideal—of the new American man. To a thinking minority in the United States—if I may return to literature—the coming of the great American poet—prophet—call him what you will—has been, for over a century now, one of the most potent of all American dreams. That this dream should take the form of a liberation, of a freedom, not yet fully realized, from English tutelage and English literary example, should not be misconstrued. America has always honoured English literature, of which it claims an ancestral share; and her hostility has been shown, not to our English originals, but to American imitations of them. When Mark Twain, in his natural character of Americano, confessed that on taking up a novel of Jane Austen's, such as *Pride and Prejudice*, he felt like a barkeeper entering the kingdom of heaven, he did at least *call* it the kingdom of heaven, though he may have had no desire to

enter there. And Jane Austen, more intimately English even than Dr. Johnson, shares with that great man as devoted a circle in the United States as in this country.

Americans are agreed, have always been agreed, in regarding the year 1837, the year of Emerson's oration at Harvard on *The American Scholar*, as the capital date in this movement, now a century old, for liberation. The emotions roused by that address in the younger generation to which it was directed were still reported, years after, when that generation was ageing, with scarcely diminished fervour, and are alive, with whatever variations, in American criticism to-day. It was an event, said Lowell, 'without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene to be always treasured in the memory . . . What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval. . . !' 'We have listened too long', said the speaker from Concord, 'to the courtly Muses of Europe. . . . Our day of dependence, our long apprenticeship to the learning of other lands, draws to a close . . . Events, actions arise, that must be sung, that will sing themselves. Who can doubt that poetry will revive, and lead in a new age?'

Alas! I fear that events have *never* sung themselves in any country, and never will. A generation later, in the year 1870, another and more abundant American spirit was proclaiming, in newer and more abounding terms, the same Emersonian dream, and gazing, with a faith more democratic than Emerson's, at the same magnificent but still unpeopled vista. Whitman saw, as a necessity of American destiny, 'a class of native authors'—'literatuses', as he unfortunately called them—'far different, far higher in grade than any yet known, sacerdotal, modern, fit to cope with [American] occasions, lands, permeating the whole mass of American mentality, taste, belief. . . giving it decision,

affecting politics far more than the popular superficial suffrage . . . radiating, begetting appropriate teachers, schools, manners, and, as its grandest result, accomplishing (what neither the schools nor the churches and their clergy have hitherto accomplished . . .) a religious and moral character beneath the political and productive and intellectual bases of the States.¹

Underlying all his speculations was, he says, the 'belief in such a class or order. . . .' 'Above all previous lands, a great original literature is surely to become the justification and reliance (in some respects the sole reliance) of American democracy.'²

His reasons for this belief he had already given in verse and prose which remain to this day the most original thing in American literature, and the nearest approach by any American to the glory of his dream. He does not argue, but asserts and acts, as is the way and the prerogative of poets. The Americans, of all nations, he believed, at any time upon the earth, have the fullest poetical nature, the United States themselves being 'essentially the greatest poem'.

In the history of the earth hitherto, the largest and most stirring appear tame and orderly to their ampler largeness and stir. Here at last is something in the doings of man that corresponds with the broadcast doings of the day and night. Here is not merely a nation but a teeming nation of nations. Here is action untied from strings. . . and details, magnificently moving in vast masses. Here is the hospitality which for ever indicates heroes—Here are the roughs and beards and space and ruggedness and nonchalance that the soul loves. Here the performance, disdaining the trivial, unapproached in the tremendous audacity of its crowds and groupings, and the push of its perspective, spreads with crampless and flowing breadth, and showers its prolific and splendid extravagance. One sees it must indeed own

[1-2 'Democratic Vistas' (*Complete Prose Works*, Philadelphia, 1892, pp. 206-7).]

the riches of the summer and winter, and need never be bankrupt, while corn grows from the ground, or the orchards drop apples or the bays contain fish, or men beget children upon women.¹

Regard it first as democracy.

Other states indicate themselves in their deputies—but the genius of the United States is not best or most in its executives or legislatures, nor in its ambassadors or authors, or colleges or churches or parlors, nor even in its newspapers or inventors—but always most in the common people. Their manners, speech, dress, friendships—the freshness and candor of their physiognomy—the picturesque looseness of their carriage—their deathless attachment to freedom—their aversion to anything indecorous, or soft, or mean—the practical acknowledgment of the citizens of one state by the citizens of all other states—the fierceness of their roused resentment—their curiosity and welcome of novelty—their self-esteem and wonderful sympathy—their susceptibility to a slight—the air they have of persons who never knew how it felt to stand in the presence of superiors—the fluency of their speech—their delight in music, the sure symptom of manly tenderness and native elegance of soul—their good temper and open handedness—the terrible significance of their elections—the President's taking off his hat to them, not they to him—these, too, are unrhymed poetry. It awaits the gigantic and generous treatment worthy of it.²

The American Poet, the Homer of this Advent, is to be commensurate with his race: not cut off from the spiritual currents of other countries, but accepting them as contributions to his peculiar task. His spirit will respond to his country's spirit ... he will incarnate its geography and natural life and rivers and lakes.

Mississippi with annual freshets and changing chutes, Missouri and Columbia, and Ohio and Saint Lawrence, with the Falls and beautiful masculine Hudson, do not embouchure where they spend themselves more than they embouchure into him. . . . When the long Atlantic coast stretches longer and the Pacific

coast stretches longer, he easily stretches with them north or south. He spans between them also from east to west and reflects what is between them.¹

And why must we expect this poet, these poets? It is a question which Whitman continues to answer like a poet. Because 'of all nations the United States . . . most need poets, and will doubtless have the greatest.' And this poet—of what nature is he?

Of all mankind the great poet is the equable man. Not in him but off from him things are grotesque or eccentric or fail of their sanity—He bestows on every object or quality its fit proportions, neither more nor less. He is the arbiter of the diverse and he is the key. He is the equalizer of his age and land—he supplies what wants supplying, and checks what wants checking. If peace is the routine, out of him speaks the spirit of peace, large, rich, thrifty, building vast and populous cities, encouraging agriculture and the arts and commerce—lighting the study of man. . . . In war he is the most deadly force of the war. Who recruits him recruits horse and foot—he fetches parks of artillery, the best that engineer ever knew. If the time becomes slothful and heavy, he knows how to arouse it—he can make every word he speaks draw blood. Whatever stagnates in the flat of custom or obedience or legislation, he never stagnates. Obedience does not master him, he masters it. High up out of reach he stands, turning a concentrated light—he turns the pivot with his finger—he baffles the swiftest runners as he stands and easily overtakes and envelopes them. The time straying toward infidelity and confessions and persiflage he withholds by his steady faith—he spreads out his dishes—he offers the sweet firm-fibred meat that grows men and women.²

And the result, ladies and gentlemen? The result is Whitman, and *more* proclamations: the literatuses he dreamt of, that higher sacerdotal order, have not arrived. The dream is then abandoned, and America is content with the literature she has? No greater error

could be made. Until fairly recently—until American literature went so tough—a whole school of modern American critics, calling themselves *national*, and founding explicitly on Emerson and Whitman, was proclaiming the Emersonian individuality and Whitman's vista of a true democracy, and with hardly a sign of loss of confidence or disappointed expectations, was actively preaching the same faith. 'We shall become a luminous people', said their leader, 'dwelling in the light.'

And this light, which is to make the Americans a luminous people, from what quarter of the compass is it to come? Still from the West, I gather. Always, even in the very home of Easternism, in the sanctums of New England, there is an instinct, sometimes unwelcome, which bids them look that way. So early as 1837 Emerson also, like modern America, looked West for his poet: for one who would, as he says, 'put a sickle to the prairie wheat', and stamp with a moral value those prairies behind prairies, that 'raw bullion of nature' in which America was so rich. He was equally clear that he was not the man to do it: they all are, indeed, even Whitman: there is always some greater yet to come. Emerson, the 'sternly gentle, close-buttoned man', as Carlyle called him, was well aware of the need for some more lavish and generous nature than his could be, or than the lean vigour of New England can perhaps afford. 'Cold, fastidious, ebbing person that I am', he laments. If only he might achieve a 'bolder and truer living', and teach that 'cramp hand' of his to draw some grand and adequate strokes. 'I think the branch of the "tree of life" which headed to a bud in me, curtailed me somehow of a drop or two of sap, and so dwarfed all my florets.' Yet 'what work to be done, what room for a poet', in that 'great, intelligent, sensual, and avaricious America!' I cite these confessions because they point beyond Emerson to New England.

New England has much to give America, and has given much: her finest race, indeed, of men of letters, however now old-fashioned. She has kept watch and ward over the citadel of culture, and still claims to guard the measures if not the weights of literature. But with all its virtues—or probably *because* of them—New England never *looked* like producing the Promised Man, the long-prophesied Homer of American fecundity. For him, it seems to be agreed, if he is ever to come, we must still look West.

In all these matters, throughout the nineteenth century and to this very moment, England has played a triple part, as model, as umpire, and as importer. Let me take them one by one.

The reproach of imitation, of aping English authors, is the oldest charge American literature has had to meet, and is made freely to this day. You remember the two American authors in Lowell's *Fable for Critics*: 'Let's play we're the American something or other—say Homer or Sophocles, Goethe or Scott (only let them be big enough, no matter what).' The traditional history of American literature is studded with these parallelisms: Cooper the American Scott, Longfellow the American Tennyson, Bret Harte the Californian Dickens, even Theodore Dreiser the American Hardy: an unfortunate practice, corresponding, however, to certain undoubted facts, to an ingrained, and at first inevitable, habit in the younger literature of imitating the older, and matching its products with our models. That pungent modern critic, Mr. Mencken of Chicago, reports even to-day no change in this respect, below that is the highest levels. 'Henry Sydnor Harrison is thoroughly American to this extent,' he writes, 'that his work is a bad imitation of something English. Find me a second-rate American in any of the arts and I'll find you his master and prototype among third, fourth

or fifth-rate Englishmen.' I quoted Lowell. He provides, I suppose, the *locus classicus* on this subject, in an address to his countrymen.

There are one or two things I should just like to hint,
For you don't often get the truth told you in print;
The most of you (this is what strikes all beholders)
Have a mental and physical stoop in the shoulders;
Though you ought to be free as the winds and the waves,
You've the gait and the manners of runaway slaves; [in it;
Though you brag of your New World, you don't half believe
And as much of the Old as is possible weave in it;
Your goddess of freedom, a tight, buxom girl,
With lips like a cherry and teeth like a pearl,
With eyes bold as Here's, and hair floating free,
And full of the sun as the spray of the sea,
Who can sing at a husking or romp at a shearing,
Who can trip through the forests alone without fearing,
Who can drive home the cows with a song through the grass,
Keeps glancing aside into Europe's cracked glass,
Hides her red hands in gloves, pinches up her lithe waist,
And makes herself wretched with transmarine taste;
She loses her fresh country charm when she takes
Any mirror except her own rivers and lakes.

You steal Englishmen's books and think Englishmen's thought,
With their salt on her tail your wild eagle is caught;
Your literature suits its each whisper and motion
To what will be thought of it over the ocean;
The cast clothes of Europe your statesmanship tries
And mumbles again the old blarneys and lies;—
Forget Europe wholly, your veins throb with blood,
To which the dull current in hers is but mud;
Let her sneer, let her say your experiment fails,
In her voice there's a tremble e'en now while she rails,
And your shore will soon be in the nature of things
Covered thick with gilt driftwood of runaway kings, . . .
O my friends, thank your God, if you have one, that he
'Twixt the Old World and you set the gulf of a sea;

Be strong-backed, brown-handed, upright as your pines,
By the scale of a hemisphere shape your designs,
Be true to yourselves and this new nineteenth age,
As a statue by Powers, or a picture by Page,
Plough, sail, forge, build, carve, paint, make all over new,
To your own New-World instincts contrive to be true,
Keep your ears open wide to the Future's first call,
Be whatever you will, but yourselves first of all,. . .

But what's that? a mass-meeting? no, there come in lots,
The American Disraelis, Bulwers, and Scotts.¹ . . .

Since Lowell's day the best American literature has achieved its freedom, to the satisfaction no less of England than of America; and in the short story, the novel, the drama, in some of the ranges of free verse, and even in criticism, is producing, in the twentieth century, work unmistakably its own. The second and third rate men will always imitate, wherever you put them, and might be less innocently employed than in imitating Englishmen.

In its attitude to the American Quest, to the search for a national theme and a national literature, this country has a good record. We have always shared the fine American desire for the New Poet of a New Country, and from the first were excited by the heroic Western March. When the halt was called, we looked, like America, to find the Great Man there, 'No myth of Athene or Herakles equal to that Western exploit,' said Carlyle: 'it must find its real poets some day or other.' We were *captured*, indeed, by the Romance of the West. From the days of the Fortyniners to Buffalo Bill the English schoolboy mind was an American playground. The infection spread far beyond literature: though how precious was that literature, if literature it may be called, read surreptitiously below the desk in

[1 'A Fable for Critics', 1848 (*Poetical Works*, 1873, pp. 149-50, 159).]

every school in England! Englishmen got their rifles out, and took passage to the happiest hunting ground ever heard of. Henry Adams, returning to America in 1873, describes his fellow-passengers. 'The usual types were all represented. There was the invariable English Earl going out to kill buffalo. His Countess was with him. He looked like a billiard-marker. . . . Then there were two young English officers also going out to kill buffalo, and whiling away their time by flirting with the New York young woman who is always on board. Then there was the youth fresh from Christ Church, who also wants to kill buffalo. Poor buffalo!' So it went on, and trained us, I fancy, to recognize Walt Whitman, though appearing, in fact, in quite the wrong quarter, as the expected American poet or his splendid forerunner. We were quicker than most Americans in that matter; as we were, indeed, over Herman Melville also, and Mark Twain. Even the verse of Joaquin Miller, the singer of the Sierras, backed as it was by a flannel shirt and high boots, was first hailed in London. Miller became the Oregon Byron, was received by Tennyson, Browning, and the rest, as a poetical brother, and had his American welcome when he had been franked by us.

I like to think that, for a long number of years, few Englishmen of letters visited America without visiting Walt Whitman, and giving him that assurance which his own country withheld. In America for many years he was regarded as a dangerous portent, inspired indeed—that could hardly be denied—but safer perhaps locked up. 'One book, last summer/ wrote Emerson in 1856, 'came out in New York, a nondescript monster which yet had terrible eyes and buffalo strength, and was indisputably American.' It is to Emerson's credit that he was not, like most other Americans, either frightened or shocked by it. 'I greet

you' (he wrote to Whitman) 'at the beginning of a great career.' Yet the book, it appears, the *Leaves of Grass*, thrived badly, because it seemed to want both good morals and good form. Perhaps here and in France, where Whitman got his first followers, the perspective of his performance was more easily found. Now for some twenty years or more, in the United States, Whitman, diluted by Imagism from Paris, has been the literary uncle of more coteries of native poets than can well be counted, and of a pugnacious school of criticism as well.

We come out well over the Mark Twain business also. It is a strange commentary on literary life in America that this authentic man of genius, the author of *Huckleberry Finn*—which I place, with *Moby Dick*, among the great books of the world, great by every test—that this sensitive genius should so long have been forced to play a clowning part, and have been admitted so late to his place on the summits of American literature. Perhaps again from some effect of sanity which distance gives we were quicker than most of his countrymen to seize his stature. Oxford conferred an Honorary Doctorate on him before his name had been admitted to the *serious* catalogue of American writers. Kipling, at twenty-five, had travelled to see him nearly twenty years before that. He made a pilgrimage to Elmira; wished, but had not the courage, to ask him for the corn-cob pipe he was smoking; and when Mark Twain put his hand on his shoulder felt that it was an investiture of the Star of India. Kipling had earlier on his tour explained to an American interviewer that San Francisco was hallowed ground to him because it was Bret Harte's city, and was indignant to be informed that California had long since repudiated Bret Harte because of his residence in England.

It is a difficult matter, this, of the American exiles, and I hesitate to express myself on it. Why do so many

feel driven—writers and artists—to make that sacrifice? Whistler and Sargent and the rest one can understand: the painters' requirements demand a special schooling and a special *milieu*, still best to be had in the older communities of Europe. But a writer would seem to have less excuse. Is it the weight and uniformity of the American democracy, as they themselves assert, that seems to suffocate them? The gospel of the average man and the average book, which sorts so ill with literature? There is no better companion than the average man, when there is something to be done that he understands. But who would willingly be left alone with the average book, the average picture, the average statue? Or is it the blaze of publicity—a literary man of any standing in the United States having, I am told, as much privacy as a goldfish? At any rate they depart, and in numbers much greater than can be complacently accounted for. I do not of course complain, for we have gained by it, and can be well content to endure a system which gave us Henry James and continues to give us Mr. T. S. Eliot.

I wish I had time to say something of modern poetry in America; of all the New Poetry Movements, and especially the first so called in 1912, with its first headquarters in Chicago—of Harriet Monroe, the 'mother superior of the movement', of Edgar Lee Masters, its first laureate; of Vachel Lindsay, its wandering showman; of its governess, Miss Lowell; of Carl Sandburg, through whose blundering crudity shines so often true native strength. I take more easily, I confess, to the New England strains of Edwin Arlington Robinson and Robert Frost, and in this last believe that we may see one of the most considerable names in present-day American poetry. Many of the others puzzle me by their patronymics, and by their exotic quality. Sandburg, Giovanni, Kreymborg, Untermeyer: where are we? This is

Mencken's charge against these groups, that they are a foreign patch on the national quilt—most of them, as he says, being no more Anglo-Saxon than a samovar or a toccata. Let it be so; and let us ask ourselves the question whether these gentlemen with the continental names are less American on that account, or less likely to be the hatchers of an American poetry? The strains from the later immigrations were bound to assert themselves in American art, and may yet surprise us there. Of one of that band, Stephen Vincent Benét, and his remarkable epic of the Civil War, I find it difficult to restrain my admiration. *John Brown's Body*, as he calls it, was published ten¹ years ago, and I am surprised, on the whole, to have heard so little of it in this country. I can say little about it here, except that it is the work of a patriot poet of the highest faculty, and altogether a splendid offering to American history. In his *Invocation* the poet addresses the American Muse like a true son of Whitman—so strongly still does the tradition run—and I beg leave to quote some stanzas.

American muse, whose strong and diverse heart
So many men have tried to understand
But only made it smaller with their art,
Because you are as various as your land, . . .

Swift runner, never captured or subdued,
Seven-branched elk beside the mountain stream,
That half a hundred hunters have pursued
But never matched their bullets with the dream.

Where the great huntsmen failed, I set my sorry
And mortal snare for your immortal quarry.

You are the buffalo-ghost, the broncho-ghost
With dollar-silver in your saddle-horn,
The cowboys riding in from Painted Post,
The Indian arrow in the Indian corn,

[¹ *three* in the MS. of 1931.]

And you are the clipped velvet of the lawns
Where Shropshire grows from Massachusetts sods.
The grey Maine rocks—and the war-painted dawns
That break above the Garden of the Gods.

The prairie-schooners crawling toward the ore
And the cheap car, parked by the station-door.

Where the skyscrapers lift their foggy plumes
Of stranded smoke out of a stony mouth
You are that high stone and its arrogant fumes.
And you are the ruined gardens in the South

And bleak New England farms, so winter-white
Even their roofs look lonely, and the deep
The middle grainland where the wind of night
Is like all blind earth sighing in her sleep. . . .

They tried to fit you with an English song
And clip your speech into the English tale,
But even from the first, the words went wrong,
The catbird pecked away the nightingale.

The homesick men begot high-cheekboned things
Whose wit was whittled with a different sound
And Thames and all the rivers of the kings
Ran into Mississippi and were drowned.

They planted England with a stubborn trust.
But the cleft dust was never English dust.

Stepchild of every exile from content
And all the disavouched, hard-bitten pack
Shipped overseas to steal a continent
With neither shirts nor honour to their back.

Pimping grandee and rump-faced regicide,
Apple-cheeked youngers from a windmill square,
Puritans stubborn as the nails of Pride,
Rakes from Versailles and thieves from County Clare,
The black-robed priests who broke their hearts in vair
To make you God and France or God and Spain.

These were your lovers in your buckskin-youth,
And each one married with a dream so proud
He never knew it could not be the truth
And that he coupled with a girl of cloud. . .

And these you are, and each is partly you,
And none is false, and none is wholly true.

So how to see you as you really are,
So how to suck the pure, distillate, stored
Essence of essence from the hidden star
And make it pierce like a riposting sword

For, as we hunt you down, you must escape
And we pursue a shadow of our own
That can be caught in a magician's cape
But has the flatness of a painted stone.

Never the running stag, the gull at wing,
The pure elixir, the American thing.

We have been great importers from America—from the days of the first nigger songs, of the *Camptown Races* (which Mr. Gladstone used to sing so heartily) to the latest jazz and last slang phrase—we have sampled everything good and bad that she could send us, and now, in our cinemas, see our people apparently at her mercy, exposed to the vulgarest sentiments of the vulgarest section of a trading continent. But we need not take it tragically, I believe: I have much faith in the native humour of this island, and in its power of recovery from all such ailments.

It is impossible in concluding a course of this kind to avoid one reflection. As America extends her power, must we be prepared to see the English sun declining? We have gone through many crises, and it is impossible to number the occasions in the last four centuries when to qualified observers this country seemed marked for

a decline. I look forward to a future, even in this frowning and fantastic world in which we live to-day, when this country, in ever closer sympathy with the United States, and not least because of our common literature, still stands for freedom and the plighted word¹

[This is manifestly a peroration. But it will be seen that Lecture VI is only about half the average length. The raw material suggests that Gordon expanded it with extensive quotation. But in his file of this lecture the typescript (which corresponds closely to the finished manuscript) is followed by a manuscript section headed, 'Some Episodes in the Literary Relations of England and America', and (in pencil) 'Postscript'. Part at least of this section its first sentence shows to belong to the re-delivery of 1938.]

Two years ago, in March 1936, Professor Mims of Vanderbilt University, Tennessee, addressed the English-Speaking Union on the question 'Has American Literature had a fair deal in Great Britain?' To this interrogation — of which the wording, presumably his own, would doubtless have pleased the Founders of the Union — the Professor's answer was a general negative. It had *not* had a fair deal. We had never in the past taken it seriously enough, and even now were too much inclined to derive our notions both of America and of American Literature from its lightest and most trivial productions. It is part of a much older and more comprehensive American complaint that we know, and have always known, as a nation, so little in this country of their history, literature, and institutions, and bear our ignorance so lightly.² The first attempt, so far as

[¹This sentence was added in 1938.]

[² Pencilled in margin: I think this much less true than it was; but how true it was, if you go back far enough, the incident I am about to relate will show. It is the last of my episodes, and ends the lecture.]

I am aware, to provide an official remedy for this national defect was made seventy-two years ago, by an English citizen, and the revealing story of its failure shall be the first of my promised episodes.¹

[On the last page of the typescript—corresponding to page 114 above—Gordon had added a sentence in manuscript, and then 'Quote Page'. Juxtaposition makes it clear that the quotations intended were those which follow.²]

It is difficult for Englishmen fully to understand the service rendered by Walter Page to this country and to his own. The English and American political habits of thought and action are so wholly different, their democracy so differently modelled. The English nation, hardened by the political controversies of a thousand years, finds it difficult to understand that the Americans are not yet a nation, but only a People. Besides which, America is curiously, pathetically, young. While English skins are callous to sword thrusts, American skins writhe under a pin prick. While the American people can be roused to juvenile fury by a chance or intentional phrase implying criticism or depreciation, the English nation is indifferent to the opinion of any man who is not one of its chosen political leaders. These are the characteristics of youth and age in great Peoples.

Not the least of the services rendered to both countries by Page, was his ability to convey to Lord Grey of Falloden a proper understanding of the difference between the outlook of the two Peoples and an appreciation of the sensitiveness of American opinion. It was not so much for what he did to bring America into the war that we have need to be thankful to Page, as for what he did to prevent the English Government from committing acts which might have brought the United States into the war on the wrong side. That he was fortunate in finding Sir Edward Grey at the Foreign Office is one of the main deduc-

[¹The allusion is to the Yates-Thompson story; see above, p. 58. Gordon changed his mind about the placing of this section. It is omitted here.]

[² From the *Quarterly Review*, 1923, of the *Life and Letters of Walter Hines Page*, pp. 307, 316.]

tions to be drawn from a survey of his career as Ambassador. The two men were sympathetic to one another. 'It has been a God's mercy for us that we have so far had a man like Sir Edward Grey in his post', wrote Page to a friend ; and as regards his own post, he felt that 'while it might have been filled by a better man, this much was lucky'—that he had a consciousness of English history and of our common origin, and some sense of the inevitable destiny of the great English-speaking race. They solved their problems quickly, where less congenial spirits would have wasted hours over them, and thus 'could afford to keep secretaries and under-secretaries on tenterhooks in ante-chambers, while they discussed the more congenial subjects of Wordsworth, Tennyson, and other favourite poets.'

Walter Page arrived home in time to die. And he died, as he wished to die in North Carolina, that Southern State where he was born. As his son carried his shrunken body from the train he triumphantly murmured, 'Well, Frank, I did get here after all, didn't I?' Thus ends one of the noblest biographies in our language. Few Englishmen had ever heard the name of Mr. Burton J. Hendrick before this book appeared in print. He has produced a work which can take its place alongside Trevelyan's *Life of Macaulay*, Winston Churchill's life of his Father, or any of the biographies in English—and there are not many of them—which compare with the works of a similar character that French writers have given us.

American literature, thanks to Mr. Burton J. Hendrick's skill, and style, is the richer by a work that Motley would have envied, and Russell Lowell would have been the first to acknowledge as above rivalry. He may claim, by the force of his pen, a unique achievement. It is five years since Walter Page died in North Carolina. During that lapse of time there was no move made by English Ministers and Statesmen to commemorate by some national act the services of the great Ambassador to England and to humanity.

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