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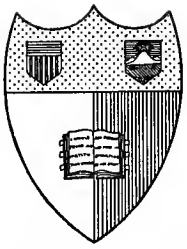

Columbia University
STUDIES IN ROMANCE PHILOLOGY AND LITERATURE

FRENCH CRITICISM OF AMERICAN LITERATURE BEFORE 1850

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FRENCH CRITICISM OF AMERICAN LITERATURE BEFORE 1850

BY

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TO

MY GRANDFATHER AND GRANDMOTHER

WARREN AND VIRGINIA WHITE ELMER

NOTE

Approved for publication, on behalf of the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures in Columbia University.

HENRY ALFRED TODD

NEW YORK
Jan. 31, 1917

FOREWORD

In the following study an attempt is made to discover French opinion on the subject of American literature, from about the beginning of the nineteenth century to about the year 1850. While it is thus primarily a contribution to the history of French criticism, it deals with one of the least important of its aspects, both because of the scarcity of American literary works of excellence, and because but few French critics of ability wrote about those that did exist. Thus, in the first part of the investigation, it will be necessary to depend in large part on scanty notices of translations, or of American books come into the hands of the editors of French periodicals. Gradually, more extended reviews will be made, and the merely bibliographical details will lose the importance they at first had as the only indications of the knowledge of American literature possessed by the French. It is not the purpose of this study to furnish an indication of all notices bearing on books by American authors; thus indications of mere booksellers' announcements, when no criticism is offered in connection, are generally omitted in the last two decades. On

the other hand, all the criticism in the representative French periodicals dealing with American literature, and in the books written about the United States, so far as indicated in the bibliography, has been presented.

But these periodicals have been selected merely as containing judgments fairly representative of the general French idea of our literature. Not only is no complete bibliography intended — although such a work would have been much appreciated had it existed — but no analysis is attempted of many articles or books touching the subject. It is probable that no one will be tempted to compile and index all that has been written in France on American literature. The present volume, in any event, is intended to supply a general view of its department of French criticism until the bibliography shall have been made, and then utilized from the standpoint from which this book has been written.

I wish to thank Professor Adolphe Cohn, Professor John L. Gerig, Dr. Carl Van Doren, and very particularly Professor Henry A. Todd for corrections and encouragement. To Professor Todd I am obliged, in addition, for a patient reading of the proof.

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THE FRENCH CRITICISM OF AMERICAN LITERATURE

I

Introductory

French criticism of American literature began approximately with the year 1825. Preceding years had indeed seen a number of translations of American works into French and certain notices upon them or upon untranslated publications. But the French interest in America had hitherto been of a different nature from literary; and very naturally. For although national pride or a curiosity in the matter of bibliography has prompted the bringing together of enormous lists of titles in what may be called American literature in the larger sense, still the number of works among these possessing a degree of excellence apart from their historical interest remains small, almost nothing indeed, relatively to those of Europe. To-day, we may suppose, a colony or nation corresponding in importance to the America of the eighteenth century would receive more attention for its literature. But, aside from the fact that books travelled slowly and at more hazard in

those days, there is the more important fact that France had almost no general reviews other than learned, before the end of the eighteenth century. But France had not been looking to America for literature. Since the days when this hemisphere was 'El Dorado,' a land of mystery with somewhere in it the very fountain of youth and happiness, a land where all was different from the Europe where men suffered want, and hate, and age; for France at least this land had always continued to be in some sort a Utopia, where the weary search for the philosopher's stone was not requisite to set one above the misery of his fellows in the Old World, or where he should find brothers and not enemies among men. Since the conception was an ideal, no toil and disappointment were of sufficient force to shake it; and we find it growing still up to the time of our Revolution in the enthusiastic interest in our cause. And it expressed itself even more sincerely no doubt, even into the following century, in the charming conception, the "man of nature," the "good savage."

The interest in the American Revolution and in the subsequent political system, is the turning-point, however, where that old ideal, being as it were attached to the American soil, must, if it were not to be abandoned, find its way henceforth among men and their works, and

no longer range unhindered where nature and her unspoiled children were living out the Golden Age. The "good savage" and the inspiring world where he moved had disappeared, giving way to European settlers who would soon make it all over into the banal city and country Europe knew too well. But this population had devoted itself in the face of what was most powerful in Europe to an ideal that bid fair to bring another Golden Age, one of intelligence, where the mind as well as the heart should have a place. Would not this new people embody the new ideal in a comely and novel and living manner? And would not the American writers express what was characteristic in the western civilization that France had helped to preserve and of which such high hopes were entertained?

We are able to see to-day, and indeed there were those who witnessed the French and American Revolutions who perceived the fundamental difference between those movements, the theoretic impulse of the one, the practical character of the other. Gouverneur Morris, smiling sceptically at the ardent theorizing in Parisian salons, according to which everything would soon be well in France, and without any detail or contingency being of possible interest meanwhile — since the theory was good and the result must therefore be sure — Gouverneur Morris furnishes us with the contrast between

the one change and the other. How was it possible, then, that when America proved industrial, when literature that should express the most worthy, the most human side of this nation proved the least of its interests, when what was produced indeed seemed modelled closely upon that of Great Britain — how was it possible that the disappointment, the disgust of France should not be in proportion to its former enthusiasm? But the ideal was too deeply rooted to wither; its manifestations are often to be met with in the study of the French judgments upon our literature, if indeed it does not constitute the touchstone for the right interpretation of those dicta that would otherwise seem harsh or unintelligent.[1]

[1] Useful lists of the principal translations of American authors into French, and of French works upon America are to be found in Gustave Lanson's "Manuel bibliographique de la littérature française moderne."

G. D. Morris, in "Fenimore Cooper et Edgar Poe d'après la critique française du 19e siècle" (Paris, Larose, 1912) has furnished a very complete treatment of the French criticism of Cooper's novels and of Poe's tales. For those writers the work is much more complete than the present one.

An interesting résumé of the part dealing with Poe was published by Dr. Morris in an article entitled "French Criticism of Poe" in the "South Atlantic Quarterly" in 1915 (vol. XIV, pp. 324–329). In this article he modifies the current opinion that Poe's popularity was from the first greater in France than in the United States, and that the French enthusiasm for his writings caused a reaction in his favor at home.

II

From 1800 to 1830

However, the reception given to him who was probably the first of our great writers, to Franklin, was openhearted and evidently general. The scientist whose researches were considered of the first importance, the patriot and legislator, the diplomat who had known how to make himself popular at Paris as perhaps no other had done, Poor Richard, finally, "le bonhomme Richard" — Franklin had many titles to the esteem of France. But he was, of course, as a literary man, the author of the "Autobiography," and of the "Almanac," "La Science du bonhomme Richard." We may consider "Poor Richard's Almanac" a work of literature in the stricter sense, or we may not; at any rate we shall see later on how it was looked upon as a representative American work; but the fact that it was well known in France seems very evident. Franklin is constantly referred to as Bonhomme Richard. The "Magasin encyclopédique" (2e ann., t. 5, p. 569) in 1797 announces the "Opuscules de B. Franklin, en anglais et en français . . ." with the remark:

Ce volume, très-joliment imprimé, contient le bon homme [sic] Richard en anglais et en français. . . .

The same periodical for the following year announces a French translation of works of Franklin, including the "Autobiography."[1] In the review the "Almanac" is particularly spoken of:

Le citoyen Castéra a jugé à propos de traduire de nouveau et de terminer ces Œuvres morales par le "Chemin de la fortune, ou la Science du bonhomme Richard." On retrouve avec plaisir ce petit ouvrage, qui en vaut bien de plus volumineux: c'est l'extrait du bon sens des siècles et des nations.

And in the same reviewer's article on the "Autobiography:"

Pendant le séjour que Benjamin Franklin fit en France en qualité de ministre plénipotentiare des États-Unis, parut la première partie des confessions de J. J. Rousseau: cet ouvrage . . . donna l'idée aux personnes qui étaient plus intimement liées avec Franklin, de l'engager d'écrire aussi les mémoires de sa vie: il y consentit.

Almost twenty years later two French editions of his letters occasioned another expression in his regard, this time from a notable editor, A. L. Millin, of the "Annales encyclopédiques." Speaking of the letters:

[1] "Magasin encyclopédique," 4e année (1798), vol. III, pp. 372–97.

On reconnaît dans les unes le négotiateur habile qui a éminemment contribué à fonder la liberté de son pays; dans d'autres, le savant physicien qui a enlevé la foudre aux dieux comme il avait ôté le sceptre aux tyrans, et dans toutes on retrouve le bon homme [sic] Richard, dont la sagesse est toujours indulgente, rend l'exercice de la vertu facile, et sait joindre à ses préceptes de fines et spirituelles plaisanteries.[2]

And again in 1817, the reviewer for the lately re-established "Journal des Savants," Daunou, a propos of these same translations of Franklin's correspondence, expresses the wish that France might have a complete translation of his works:

Par son caractère personnel et par celui de ses ouvrages, Franklin serait du petit nombre des écrivains qui appartiennent à tout le globe: mais il sera, du moins, réclamé tout entier par les trois pays où il a fait les plus longs séjours, l'Amérique, l'Angleterre et la France.[3]

[2] "Annales encyclopédiques," 1817, vol. III, pp. 167 *sqq.* The heading is: "Correspondance choisie de Benjamin Franklin, traduite de l'anglais; édition publiée par W. T. Franklin, son petit-fils . . . chez Treuttel et Würtz, Paris, Londres, Strasbourg."

The reviewer, "A. L. M." (A. L. Millin?), remarks (p. 169): "M. Janet a publié une autre édition de cette correspondance, et les deux éditeurs se font, à ce sujet, une petite guerre dont nous ne devons pas nous mêler." The citation is on p. 167.

[3] "Journal des Savants," June, 1817, pp. 348–56. Citation, p. 356.

For an appreciation of the French feeling for Franklin at the

There is little enough in these notices that is to the purpose in a purely literary sense, and had the average French reader of the period been questioned about Franklin, he would probably have disposed of him something in this manner: that he was pre-eminent as a scientist, an accomplished and successful diplomat, and with all this, a charming personality. That he would have classed him more naturally with men of letters, is very doubtful indeed, notwithstanding the popularity of the "Almanac." Franklin, like Dr. Johnson, and like many another whose works would justify a most particular attention for their intrinsic worth, was nevertheless over and above all else a personality. We are more familiar with and more interested in Boswell's "Life of Johnson"

end of the eighteenth century, *v.* Mignet, "Vie de Franklin," published in 1848 as the seventh of the "Petits Traités publiés par l'Académie des Sciences morales et politiques" (Paris, Pagnerre, Paulin & Cie; and Firmin Didot Frères). It is significant that the rest of the title of Franklin's life is: ". . . à l'usage de tout le monde." Mignet's language in reporting Franklin's meeting with Voltaire is, as well, significant of the feeling for Franklin about 1850: "Cédant eux-mêmes à l'irrésistible émotion de l'assemblée, ils s'embrassèrent, au bruit prolongé des applaudissements universels. On dit alors, en faisant allusion aux récents travaux législatifs de Franklin et aux derniers succès dramatiques de Voltaire, que 'c'était Solon qui embrassait Sophocle'; c'était plutôt le génie brillant et rénovateur de l'ancien monde qui embrassait le génie simple et entreprenant du nouveau." (p. 178)

than in "Rasselas" or the "Lives of the Poets," because Johnson has remained what he was for his contemporaries, a personality overshadowing his production, the result of his activity. That the works of such an author must inevitably contain the very essence of what constitutes a literary work, was less evident in France in the first quarter of the nineteenth century than it became later on. And it is in the middle of the century that we shall have an opportunity of learning the detailed views of French criticism on Franklin as a literary man. For the moment, what has been noted will serve as a fair specimen of the sort of notice given to most American books, whether in the way of belles-lettres or of works of a historical or scientific nature.

In general, what notices of our literature appeared cannot be called critical; generally they occur in the bibliographical notices of the month, and as it were incidentally. The French reviews of the time seem for the most part to have considered it their special function to inform readers of books that had recently appeared, and to give accounts of the principal matters debated in the academies. And their interests were not what might be called local. The "Magasin encyclopédique," for instance, in the period from 1795 to 1800, mentions the activities of "literary societies" from India to Iceland, the establishment of a Lappish press in

Nordland, Sweden, and so on in great variety, together with notes of whatever publications may have come to hand from any of these localities. In this particular case, what is to the purpose here is the lack of any mention of the kind from the United States; that for a period of five years one of the principal reviews should have contained no literary mention of America, is certainly a very noteworthy fact in this connection. On the other hand, there is an occasional notice of work in some branch of the exact sciences, either in the academies or published independently of them. It is true that under the caption of "Literary News" there was frequently a section dealing with the United States; but the term 'literary' is here used in the broadest possible sense; moreover, the notices occurring there were more frequently than not in the wider field of science, as when in the "Magasin encyclopédique" in 1803 (vol. V, p. 522) an article bearing the promising title "Nouvelles littéraires des États-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale," is found upon examination to treat exclusively of such questions as the theory of winds and currents, shells, skeletons of mammoths. . . . The "Journal des Savants" for the year 1816, when it was re-established by the government, contains no mention, even bibliographical, of the United States.

The "Mélanges de littérature" of J. B. A. Suard (Paris, Dentu, 1803, t. III, p. 183) contain a brief paragraph on the subject of American literature that is much like what will be found a quarter-century later:

Vous voulez savoir quel est l'état de la littérature et des sciences dans les États-Unis? de quelle considération les gens de lettres et les savants y jouissent? La littérature et les sciences demandent du loisir, et personne ici n'en a . . . En général on lit plus qu'on n'a jamais fait; mais tout concourt à faire donner la préférence à la littérature anglaise.

From 1819 on, however, the "Revue encyclopédique," which continued the "Annales encyclopédiques," that had in 1817, in turn, been the new title for the "Magasin encyclopédique" several times cited — from 1819 on the "Revue encyclopédique" takes regular note of American publications and academy proceedings. The fact still remains that the chief interest is shown to be in science rather than in belles-lettres. The distinguished reputation of Franklin would seem to have reflected a light upon American science, and to have made it of perhaps undue importance to France — relatively, at least, to the subject of this research. In 1820, there is a note of the principal American literary or philosophic societies, about ten in number if we include those "pour l'établissement d'une

paix permanente et universelle," given as a sort of index to the progress of learning here.[4]

As an example of literary criticism, if it can be called such, the following lines of a review by Depping of Warden's "Description of the United States" [5] will show the general attitude

[4] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. V (1820), p. 15. There are noted seven American "Sociétés scientifiques, littéraires, ou philosophiques établies dans les principales villes des États-Unis." They are: The (Philadelphia) American Philosophical Society, the first volume of whose proceedings was published in 1771; The (Boston) American Academy of Arts and Sciences, founded in 1780; The Academy of Arts and Sciences of the State of Connecticut, founded in 1799; The Charlestown (S.C.) Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1814; The (New York) Literary and Philosophical Society, founded in 1815; The Columbian Institute (of Washington); The (New Orleans) Medical Society.

The following year the same periodical (vol. X, 1821, p. 436) contains another notice of the same nature: "États-Unis: Nouvelle société savante — Institut national ou Académie des Belles-lettres. . . ." On p. 623, an extract of several pages from the constitution of the society is given in translation, and the remark is made that the object of its work — that of attempting a standardization of English in the United States — is laudable, because of the fact that the population of the United States is so scattered, and without some such central authority usage in language here would become too loose. Certain members' names are mentioned: J. Q. Adams, Brockholst Livingston, Joseph Story, William Lowndes, William S. Cordell, Alexander M'Leod, and Joseph Stearns.

[5] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. V (1820), p. 501: D. B. Warden; Description statistique, historique, et politique des États-Unis de l'Amérique septentrionale . . . traduite de l'anglais. (Paris, 1820, Rey & Gravier, prix: 40 fr.) Warden is mentioned as formerly an American consul in France.

towards the American ideal as conceived in France.

L'auteur convient que la littérature et les arts ne jettent encore aucun éclat en Amérique. Faute de grands écrivains nationaux, on réimprime les meilleurs ouvrages anglais; on copie le théâtre de Londres. Au premier aperçu, on pourrait croire que l'énergie des sentiments de ce peuple, qu'aucune mauvaise institution ne comprime, devrait développer le génie, et l'on pourrait s'étonner de ne trouver chez lui aucun ouvrage qui en porte le cachet. Peut-être aura-t-il des hommes de génie, quand il sera dans la maturité de sa croissance; mais, dût-il n'en jamais avoir, il s'en consolera aisément. Pour quelques hommes éminents qui lui manquent, il possède généralement, ce qui est bien plus utile à un peuple, le bon sens, l'élévation des idées, la rectitude de l'esprit, et l'amour de la justice et de l'égalité. Ailleurs, on parle aux passions, ailleurs, on a besoin d'entraîner et de séduire. En Amérique on parle à la raison; et pour ce langage le génie n'est pas indispensable.

This is of course idealization, although it seems certain that at least by contrast to the political history of France in that generation, there is a grain of truth in the generalization — all, no doubt, that can ever be expected of such. At any rate, it is an opinion concurred in in France, and one of the early passages illustrating what was noted a few pages back about the

tenacity of the Utopian conception of America hitherto entertained there. The Utopia is no longer the pastoral one of the eighteenth century, where the ideal of poetry was all-pervading, but has become a political one, a little tempered by inevitable reality, but not unrecognizable.

So much for those who would accord the United States a part, at least, of the characteristics requisite for literary production. Not all would grant so much:[6]

La littérature anglaise, si riche en chefs-d'œuvre de tout genre, est là toute prête, et il semble que les Américains se croient dispensés de s'en occuper —[with literary production]— Il serait difficile de citer un seul ouvrage, soit en prose, soit en vers, produit du génie américain, qu'on puisse placer parmi ceux du second order en Europe.

The "Revue encyclopédique" was one of the most serviceable channels for the communication of this reality. That a very incomplete idea of the United States was entertained in France at this time, it is hardly necessary to say, but that a conscientious effort began to be made is at any rate the evidence of a conviction that a better acquaintance would prove of

[6] "Mercure étranger," 1813, vol. I, pp. 65–6. An extract from letters from America, signed "R * * *."

worth. In 1821 the above-mentioned periodical has the following:[7]

N. B. Comme nos relations avec les États-Unis de l'Amérique sont encore très-irrégulières et mal établies, nous ne pouvons donner que de loin en loin ceux des ouvrages périodiques ou autres qui viennent à notre connaissance. Nous invitons . . . à . . . nous transmettre, soit les annonces des meilleurs ouvrages, publiés récemment dans leur pays, soit les nouvelles qui peuvent intéresser les sciences, les arts, et la littérature.

Such is the following:[8]

Boston. — Manuscrits grecs. — Des manuscrits grecs que le professeur Everett a achetés, dans le mois de juin dernier, d'un prince grec établi à Constantinople, viennent d'arriver à Boston. En voici la note. . . . [They are manuscripts of the Fathers, and of other ecclesiastical literature, among others, of Saint Gregory of Nazianzus, etc.]

. . . ce sont les seuls manuscrits grecs de l'antiquité que possèdent les États-Unis.

Such periodicals as reached France were generally reviewed, or at least announced. Of especial interest among these was the "North

[7] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. X, (1821), p. 144, in the section "Bulletin bibliographique des livres étrangers," where, it should be mentioned, American books were likely to be noted. They were not likely to be otherwise dealt with.

[8] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. VII (1820), pp. 367–8. In the section "Nouvelles littéraires."

American Review," upon which there is the following remark, suggested by the January number of 1820:[9]

Cet ouvrage périodique, l'un des premiers de ce genre qui ait été publié dans les États-Unis d'Amérique, justifie les espérances qu'en avaient conçues les amis de la saine littérature et de la vraie philosophie.

An article in it upon the program of literary and scientific courses at the University of Virginia is briefly summarized as being of particular interest, and the table of contents given in part.

. . . nous espérons pouvoir, dans le cours de l'année prochaine, établir des relations plus suivies avec l'Amérique du Nord, et rendre compte du contenu des principaux recueils de littérature et de sciences publiés dans ces contrées.

But for a few years more their efforts in this way seem not to have been very fruitful, as there appears only one notice besides those for the "North American Review" in the following year of 1821; it is upon a couple of numbers of "The Western Review and Miscellaneous Magazine" for the year 1820, published at Lexington,

[9] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. VIII (1820), pp. 108–9. Review of the "North American Review and Miscellaneous Journal," No. XXVI, January, 1820.

Kentucky.[10] The contents of these numbers as reported in the "Revue encyclopédique" are interesting; they include: "An Essay on Ambition and Happiness," an article on Scott's "Ivanhoe," a "dissertation" on "esprit," one upon Oriental idylls, another on "Ohio River Fishes," and finally, extracts from "un ouvrage intitulé 'Le Livre d'esquisses de Geoffroy Crayon' par M. Irvine [sic]." In literary matters, it is often evident that the French awaited British judgments upon American works before pronouncing, and not only in the period under consideration. The natural inference is, either that French critics were not sufficiently acquainted with the field, or that they were timid in expressing opinions that might later be questioned in a country more able to furnish valuable judgment in those subtle matters of language and style that are determining in literary criticism. Granted that there is reason to suppose so much, still it would not do to stop at that as sufficient explanation. Certainly an effort was being made to appreciate the literary America; but America, for France, was not literary, it was political, just as it had been the type of the revolutionary ideal. A notice of half a dozen numbers of the "North American

[10] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. X (1821), p. 145. The copy of the "Western Review" was, vol. II, No. 4, May, 1820; they had also the number for August of that year.

Review" of 1821, certain allowance being made for pique, still represents very well that tone of feeling in regard to the American literary sense.[11]

Ce journal littéraire, rédigé sur le plan des "Revues" anglaises . . . offre des espèces d'essais, écrits la plupart avec beaucoup de talent, sur les livres indiqués en tête de chaque article. . . .

Si les vues des rédacteurs de ce recueil sur les affaires politiques sont presque toujours parfaitement justes, il n'en est peut-être pas de même de leurs jugements littéraires. Ils nous paraissent partager un peu les préjugés des Anglais contre la littérature des autres pays, et surtout contre la littérature française. On lira toutefois avec intérêt l'analyse de l'ouvrage de madame Necker de Saussure sur la vie et les écrits de madame de Staël; l'article sur les observations historiques relatives à la Hollande, par Louis Buonaparte; l'extrait de la vie privée de Voltaire, par madame de Graffigny; ceux de l'histoire de l'astronomie, par Bailly; et des mémoires de Suard, par Garat; et enfin, l'article sur l'indifférence en matière de religion, par l'abbé de la Mennais. (Signed: "B—n.")

One is somewhat at a loss to understand the reproach that Americans made unfair distinctions to the prejudice of French literature.

A copy of the "American Annual Register" for 1827 reaching the editors of the "Revue

[11] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. XII (1821), pp. 573–4. The numbers of the "North American Review" mentioned are: Nos. 1 to 6, of the New Series, 1821.

encyclopédique" in that year suggests a note calling attention to the rapid progress of periodical publication in the United States.[12]

A number of the "Philadelphia Monthly Magazine" for 1829 contains an article describing the French criticism of American literature as better than the dicta of the English; the "Revue encyclopédique"[13] takes occasion to thank the "Philadelphia Magazine" for helping them know in more detail a land as worthy of attention as "la noble patrie de Franklin et de Cooper."

Perhaps these notices of American periodicals constitute after all the most valuable information that the general reading public in France obtained of activity in letters in the United States of that period. For the reviews of books for the most part were so very inadequate as to give a vague, but probably also a distorted, image of the status of American literature. We find the preconceived idea constantly intruding itself into those judgments which, to

[12] Vol. XXXIV, p. 405. Other notices of American periodicals are to be found in the "Revue encyclopédique" as follows: 1826, v. XXIX, p. 132, on the "Atlantic Magazine"; 1825, v. XXVII, pp. 755–6, on the "New York Review and Athenaeum Magazine"; 1826, v. XXIX, pp. 133–4, on Louvet's "Réveil" of New York. And in the same for 1827, v. XXXV, pp. 119–22, there is an article by Isidore Lebrun on American "Ouvrages périodiques," where he says: "On porte à près de 600 le nombre des ouvrages périodiques de l'Amérique du nord."

[13] 1829, vol. XLIV, pp. 695–8.

be valuable, should be unprejudiced, very much as in the case of the opinion as to the literary judgment of the editors of the "North American Review," cited above. And this is particularly so of the poems that are criticised. There are two mentions of that forgotten poem "Mississippian Scenery," by Charles Mead, published in 1819.[14] It suggested the following reflections in the mind of the reviewer:

Nourris des chefs-d'œuvre de la littérature anglaise, pouvant puiser à la même source d'heureuses inspirations, d'où vient que les Américains n'ont encore rien produit de remarquable dans les lettres? Le génie du commerce étoufferait-il chez ce peuple le goût des beaux-arts et de la poésie? On serait tenté de le croire, en voyant la médiocrité de ses productions poétiques. Ce sont de pâles et faibles imitations des écrivains anglais, tout y manque de chaleur et de vie. Point de descriptions animées; point d'accents mâles et généreux, tels qu'on doit en attendre d'un peuple libre, créateur de son indépendance et n'obéissant qu'aux lois qu'il s'est lui-même imposées. Ces observations se présentent en foule à la lecture de l'ouvrage que nous annonçons.

At this date it is not remarkable that no mention of Irving should have been made to temper the severity of the phrase "the Ameri-

[14] "Revue encyclopédique" for 1820, vol. VIII, p. 343, and *id.*, 1822, vol. XIII, p. 129.

cans have not yet produced anything of note in letters"; as Irving's "Sketch-Book" could not be expected to have a wide circulation in France upon its publication. But the wide generalization, as contrasted with the universal enthusiasm for the personality and works of Franklin, will show how little he was considered as distinctively a man of letters. But from another point of view there is a special interest attaching to the lines quoted, since one so seldom meets, in this period of French criticism, with an admission of the fact that American literature must naturally begin with the imitation or adaptation of English models. Generally, the tone is almost querulous when this fact of limitation is in question.[15] It would be diffi-

[15] The following, both signed (Mme) L. Sw. B(elloc), although somewhat later than the criticism last cited, are still sufficiently similar in tone to the notices already cited to be considered typical (comp. note 9):

"Revue encyclopédique," vol. XLII (1829), pages 146–7: Willis' "Token" (Bost., Goodrich, & Lon., Kurnett, 1829) is discussed as follows: "Voilà quatre ou cinq ans qu'on publie régulièrement en Angleterre des recueils de prose et de vers élégamment imprimés, et ornés de vignettes des meilleurs artistes. Ces livres, faits à l'instar de nos 'Tablettes romantiques', de nos 'Almanach des Muses', etc., se composent de morceaux détachés, de fragments, de contes, de poésies; les noms des auteurs, et surtout des peintres et des graveurs qui y ont contribué en assurent la vogue. Cette mode a passé en Amérique . . . On y désirerait plus d'originalité: une empreinte plus marquée du pays et des mœurs nationales. Partout se fait sentir une imitation servile de la littérature anglaise. On

cult, and no doubt in this place fruitless, to attempt a proof that American literature was in no way like the characterization of the French reviewers. Certainly it was better, in every respect more worthy than they conceived it; but whatever is unreservedly condemned is likely to be better than its reputation.

It was noted above that France appears to have suffered a disillusion in regard to the United States: in proportion as the principles of the American Revolution had seemed noble, the results of that effort had been awaited with

ne comprend pas que des esprits divers semblent jetés dans le même moule. Parmi les contes les plus remarquables nous citerons, 'Le Fils d'un Gentilhomme', 'La Ruse', 'les Émigrants'. Là, du moins, on n'est plus en Europe . . ."

(*Id.*, vol. XLIII, pp. 393–4): Samuel Kettell's collection "Specimens of American Poetry" is thus dealt with: "Toujours même défaut dans ces sortes de recueils, et toujours même plainte de notre part . . . une désespérante monotonie dans la pensée et dans l'expression trahit une imitation persévérante des Anglais. Il y a dix ans, c'était Pope et son école; aujourd'hui c'est Byron et Moore. Comment expliquer cette aridité . . .? Il y a . . . une grande somme de talent, mais nous parlions du génie, qui est rare partout, et qui, en Amérique, ne s'est encore montré que dans les vives et poétiques inspirations de l'auteur du 'Dernier des Mohicans', du 'Corsaire rouge', etc. Ici, il y a de la grâce, des vers habilement faits, d'assez jolies images, mais qu'on a vues partout. Peut-être y aurait-il de l'injustice à ne pas excepter les compositions de Halleck, où l'originalité se montre de loin en loin. Dans son 'Château d'Alnwick' il y a de la verve et de l'avenir. Il est jeune, qu'il s'affranchisse des traditions littéraires, qu'il se confie à ses propres forces, et il aura donné à son pays un poète de plus."

anxiety — and the results, so far as literature was concerned — seemed lacking. But may we not suppose that the feelings of Frenchmen were rather more complicated in this regard than they would have had us realize? They felt, and rightly, that, with whatever differences in the mode of dealing with the political questions confronting the two countries, the general principles contended for in both were identical. And the enemy of both was England. Jefferson is somewhere reported to have said that if he could not live in America, he should find France the most congenial to his mode of thought of all nations; Franklin certainly gave no different impresson to the land that so highly honored him. The Englishman Thomas Paine, rejected by his country and adopted by America and by France, as it were in concerted protest against the ideas of the common enemy, is only a striking example of the trend of international opinion. Is it not easily comprehensible that the ordinary French reader of the '20's should have been a little disconcerted and a little piqued at the anglophile tendency of the American literature of that day? It is a noteworthy fact that the critics of this literature were as yet to come in France; the straggling notes so far encountered were for the most part written, excepting Daunou's, by hands that have left no work by which they may be judged

more trustworthy than the most casual reviewer for periodicals; and such indeed they seem to have been. But as such, incidentally, they doubtless represent with considerable exactitude the prevalent opinions.

One misapprehension in criticism appears, however, in all this: that the political affiliations of a nation, even its political theories and ideals, may be expected to react upon and direct the form of its literature. In their criticism of American literature the French reviewers tacitly disavowed what they would fervently have maintained had they been discussing the output of French Switzerland or of French Belgium: that the great determining factor in literature is language. Nor were they consistent in those special criteria applied to American literature: it is only at a later period that the name of Jefferson became significant in a literary sense, and we have seen how little "Poor Richard's Almanac" and the "Autobiography" of Franklin were considered in that light. All this was extra-literary, and yet, all that is to be produced in America smacking of the old traditions, the "goût de terroir" of that legitimate and genuine source of cultivated literary expression, English literature, will be decried, as were Irving's books, because they bear the "cachet" of that land that was, after all, America's past. It was felt, and expressed, that because the

United States were separated from "old Europe" by an ocean, because they had disengaged their destinies from the intricacies of European politics, that their spiritual and intellectual tradition must lie with a perpetually resounding Declaration of Independence, or else — all this was not the clearer for being maintained as self-evident in France — or else with those true children of the American soil, — Hurons, Algonquins, Mohicans. . . . America was a new, free land: it must express its newness, its freedom, in letters that should be the very opposite of that which in fact was the trunk of which they could only be the branch — English literature. No allowance was made for the immense process of assimilation that must be gone through with in the United States before any work at once finished and national could appear.

There are two modern literatures that began to receive attention in France at almost the same time, and the destinies of which seem to have been, from similar beginnings, as different as possible. From the tenth century to the eighteenth, Russian literature got almost never outside the bounds of that substratum of literature that we call folk-song and proverb, and then, at the end of the period, only to fall into an excess of imitation of Western European letters that finds no parallel even in America. Yet nineteenth-century criticism is at one in

finding the modern output of Russia the very type of national expression. The reason is, of course, that Russia was able to build out of the traditions of a race, without being taxed with treason to the spirit of nationality: Saltykoff (Shtchedrin), Ostrovsky, and even Turgenief, were able to be modern, and national, and yet throw into their works that ancient color of phrase and reference that is the soul of a literature. Images hallowed by generations of use until they had become the type of moods and ideas for the readers who in this modern age are frequently the writers, became for Americans almost a sort of taboo: Irving's affectionate reinvocation of a breath of eighteenth-century English atmosphere, Longfellow's middle ages, were indiscriminately condemned in their time, as will be seen. The nightingale must not sing across the verse of any poet who happens to be American — for the nightingale does not sing in America, although it had always sung for him from the pages of the poets who had formed him.

It is not, as was said, possible to deny that there was a misuse of these forms and images in our literature; it is not to be denied that for the most part, so far as verse was concerned, there was the coin-mark of convention over all. That American poetry was too often cold, is true. But it is the purpose to comment here

rather upon the state of French criticism in respect to it. And it does not appear to have been merely the overuse of means and modes of expression; it is rather and above all the legitimacy of such at all in American literature that is brought in question.

Such was the general tendency as to the point of view regarding the United States. Yet a part of the facts as we now understand them may be found scattered here and there in the judgments of the reviewers. Noting the "Southern Review" and the "American Quarterly Review" in 1829, this judgment was offered in an unsigned article in the "Revue encyclopédique:" [16]

Ces Revues traitent de tout, hors de l'Amérique et des ouvrages américains . . . d'où vient ce dédain? Serait-ce que les hommes, plus vieux que le sol fécond sur lequel le hasard les a fait naître, ne sont pas en harmonie avec cette nature riche et grandiose où nous autres Européens nous allons retremper nos âmes amollies? Serait-ce qu'en dépit le leurs meilleurs institutions, les Américains tournent parfois un œil d'envie et d'amour, vers ce vieux continent d'où leurs pères s'exilèrent? . . . Les États-Unis n'ont point de passé, et contents du présent, à peine se permettent-ils des rêves d'avenir. . . . La critique n'y est pas non plus à la hauteur de celle d'Angleterre, ni progressive et en marche comme parmi nous: savante et consciencieuse, elle s'appesantit trop sur les détails, et manque

[16] Vol. XLII, pp. 408–9.

de cet attrait qui fait lire un livre ou un article jusqu'au bout.

It is unfortunate that such opinions regarding American criticism are not documented, at least by reference to those works from which the reviewer drew his conclusions. But in the case of American historical and critical writing, there will be ample attention given to it in France in later years. We can, however, suppose that copies of the "New York Evening Post" (est. 1801), of Benjamin Silliman's "American Journal of Science" (est. 1818), as well as the reviews mentioned, may have been among the materials easily accessible in France. And in the way of books, in 1802 appeared Noah Webster's "Rights of Neutral Nations in Time of War" and Count Rumford's fourth volume of "Philosophical Papers," and must have been known in France; later, probably, Ticknor's "Outlines of the Life of Lafayette" (1825), and possibly also Edward Everett's "Progress of Literature in America" (1824). But of this last it is to be regretted that there is no mention, not to say analysis and discussion; it would have furnished an excuse to a critic to formulate those ideas in regard to a new literature which we can now only attempt to reconstitute from these scattered notes. However, we may conclude that at this time a thorough discussion of the subject was not

considered worth the making: here at least is an illuminating fact.

However, there is a very desultory but still approximately complete notice of the poetical production of the United States from 1824 to 1830, especially when we consider the light in which this production was regarded in France. It was customary to say that poetry was here only the diversion of dilettanti and frequently of very youthful ones.[17] Nevertheless, it seems to have been thought a duty to mention as many of these efforts as came to hand, and if the poetic merits could not be discussed, to make some criticism at least of the merits of the argument or of the poet in other respects than as to his verse.[18]

[17] Summer-Lincoln Fairfield's "Poems" are thus reviewed by Louise Belloc in the "Revue encyclopédique" in 1824, vol. XXI, p. 355: ". . . Tous leurs poètes sont jeunes, et leurs œuvres tellement imparfaites que ce ne sont guère que des promesses pour l'avenir qui se réalisent rarement . . . En ne considérant le volume que nous annonçons que comme le début d'un auteur de dix-neuf ans, on peut à peine encore y trouver quelque mérite. Il renferme des vers heureux mais il y en a beaucoup qui sont fort mauvais, et partout l'emphase y occupe la place de la raison et de la véritable poésie."

[18] For instance, Solomon Southwick's "Pleasures of Poverty" (reviewed in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1824, vol. XXII, p. 375) could evoke only a rather spirited denial of the poet's thesis, that poverty is an unmixed blessing.

Daniel Bryan's "Lay of Gratitude" — "recueil de poëmes écrits à l'occasion de la visite du général Lafayette aux États-Unis" — (reviewed in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1826, vol.

Solomon Southwick and Daniel Bryan and "Monsieur Coffin" are forgotten, perhaps unjustly. Who, excepting Franklin, and Cooper, and Irving, remains to-day much more than a name, even in America? Yet certain poets of the period are still mentioned, if not much read, among us, and in a general way it may be said that they did not pass unnoticed in their day in France. The praise of them was rarely

XXXII, pp. 389–90) could hardly, by its very nature, be passed over: "Tout n'est point également bon dans le recueil du poète américain; mais les amis des vers y distingueront plusieurs morceaux pleins de verve et d'imagination, tels que le 'Salut' ('The Greeting') . . . et le 'Congé' ('The Valedictory'). . ."

Bryan had, however, attracted sufficient notice by this tribute to France in the person of Lafayette, to make himself heard upon a later occasion and a very different one. In 1826 appeared in Washington his "Appeal for Suffering Genius; a Poetical Address for the Benefit of the Boston Bard." The following year, evidently at the earliest possible opportunity, the "Revue encyclopédique" (1827, vol. XXXIV, pp. 666–8) has this: 'Ce petit poème est un appel plein de chaleur à la pitié et à la charité publiques: un poète demande pour un autre poète un lit et du pain. Ce n'est pas avec la froide indifférence d'un critique qu'on peut lire ce cri de détresse. M. Bryan, dans des vers empreints d'une tremblante anxiété, met à nu la misère de l'homme qui a célébré les gloires de l'Amérique . . ." (and in a footnote to page 667) "La Direction de la Revue encyclopédique aime à payer un tribut à l'homme de génie malheureux, en ouvrant une souscription au profit de M. Coffin, et en souscrivant elle-même pour une somme de 20 fr. Les personnes qui voudraient prendre part à cette souscription, pourront déposer leurs offrandes à notre bureau, rue d'Enfer Saint-Michel, No. 18." There is no other criticism of a literary nature in this notice, which is signed by Mme Belloc.

unqualified; generally, on the other hand, the sum total of the praise seems hardly to balance the strictures, more or less justified, that were passed upon them. And so far as that is concerned, can we wonder, or can we complain, that this was so? It was not in the day of Lamartine, of Vigny, of Hugo, of Musset, that France needed to search for poetry abroad. We should be wrong, no doubt, even in the case of a lingering preference for one or other of these American poets, to criticise with harshness or resentment the somewhat condescending or disparaging attitude toward us. Rather, the profit of such a study must come out of a scrupulously impersonal unravelling of the real thread of literary theory from all the waste of snobbism and of prejudice.

So far as poetry is concerned, the standard set in France was a very high one, or perhaps rather a very severe one, not only as regards verse-structure, but also the very materials and mood of poetry. Whether the English tradition permits a wider range in this latter element, would be a question perhaps worth study; at any rate it constantly presents itself in the reading of French opinions of English poetry — and particularly of American poetry, about which it is not unfair to suppose that the French allowed themselves a somewhat fuller liberty of censure than might be ventured upon

by them in the case of England, where poet or critic found a solid breastwork in unquestioned literary tradition:

La "Clio," mélanges de poésies, par M. James Percival, annonce du talent; mais on y trouve toujours cette teinte philosophique qui s'accorde rarement avec l'inspiration.[19]

The premise might be questioned, or a definition required, before such a dictum need be accepted; it must have been supposed, however, that no defender of the opposite side would present himself.

L'analyse[20] d'une nouvelle production que les muses américaines ont inspirée à M. Hillhouse paraît fort indulgente: la structure étrange de "Hadad," poëme dramatique, sera jugée en Europe avec plus de sévérité.

And this notwithstanding a more favorable review that had appeared the year before in the same periodical:[21]

[19] "Revue encyclopédique," 1823, vol. XVIII, pp. 541–2, upon poems of Percival appearing in "The North American Review" for January, 1823.

[20] In the "North American Review" for January, 1826, new series, No. 25. The passage is from the "Revue encyclopédique" of 1826, vol. XXIX, p. 740.

[21] "Hadad, a Dramatic Poem," by James A. Hillhouse. The "Revue encyclopédique" (1825, vol. XXVIII, p. 423) gave a complete outline of the plot.

Il y a dans ce poëme beaucoup d'imagination, des situations très-dramatiques, de l'intérêt, et souvent un grand charme de poésie. La première scène . . . est remplie de beautés du premier ordre. . . . Quant à l'intervention d'un agent sur naturel, c'estune licence justifiée par plusieurs passages des saintes-Écritures. J'ai cru remarquer dans les discours de Hadad quelques réminiscences du second ange de Moore, dans son poëme des "Amours des Anges." Il y a aussi çà et là des mots empruntés sans doute aux coutumes et aux mœurs des Hébreux, mais dont le sens est obscur . . . il faut une couleur générale qui se retrouve partout. Une peinture historique a son harmonie comme un tableau.

There appears to be little enough here that is distinctively criticism of American literature; except — and the point indicates the general opinion as it had already been formed — except that suspicion of the reviewer of a resemblance between Hadad and the second angel of Moore's "Loves of the Angels" . . . ; also excepting, perhaps, the tone of the feeling as to borrowed words betokening a certain crudity in the composition. Borrowed words marched by battalions into French poetry after Victor Hugo, and after Leconte de Lisle some thirty years later;[22] yet they have not generally been thought in

[22] V. Nyrop: "Grammaire historique de la langue française" (2me éd., 1904), vol. I, pp. 105–6.

themselves jarring or disparate; it is only their overuse or their misuse that constitutes a fault. Here again, as always, the reviewer does not express himself at sufficient length, and all that one can be sure of is that there was a feeling that such questions in American poetry demanded only mention, not analysis.

But the tendency to discover worth in American literature only in so far as it was in some way distinctively American may have had something to do with the tone of opinion upon an oriental poem like "Hadad," or upon any other exotic inspiration — for exoticism in America was not distinguished from imitation in the cold and heartless sense that admits of no inspiration. Richard Dana's poems[23] got a review in point:

Si l'on suppose que la littérature américaine est fille de l'indépendance, on admettra sans peine que les pays affranchis ne manquèrent point de bardes, que la poésie prit part à toutes les solennités nationales, célébra les événements glorieux pour la patrie, déplora ses infortunes, exprima, dans toutes les circonstances, les affections et les vœux des citoyens. Le

[23] "Poems," Boston, 1827, reviewed in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1828, vol. XXXVIII, p. 686, by "Y." This signature does not appear under any review of poetry of special interest except this one. Like most of the writers of these short notices, the full name is a little hard to come at, and probably it is not worth while to search it out; that the opinion is printed in the fewest possible words, and found its circulation in that form, is the fact, and a sufficient one.

recueil des poëmes historiques d'un peuple fait partie de ses annales aussi bien que de sa littérature. M. Dana n'a pas consacré ses chants à des sujets nationaux, quoiqu'il ait orné de ses vers quelques traditions ou contes populaires dans l'une des pièces de ce recueil, intitulée: "Le Boucanier." Il choisit des sujets tristes et touchants; il se plaît à dépeindre les souffrances de deux amants aux prises avec l'adversité, séparés un moment par la mort, réunis enfin dans le même tombeau. Il semble que son talent serait mieux placé en Europe qu'en Amérique, que ses accents y trouveraient plus d' échos: et, si cette observation est juste, on ne devra pas la négliger, lorsque l'on comparera l'ancien monde au nouveau, quant à la situation morale des habitants.

What could there be in the American character that could make sorrow and melancholy, always two of the strongest motives of poetic expression, strange and dissonant elements in life? "Il semble que son talent serait mieux placé en Europe qu'en Amérique . . . ," yet Richard Dana was certainly American. Indeed it would seem that the nation that would pass such opinions upon another could hardly be trusted to judge. Yet it is, after all, only an example of the careless classification method that is the first step toward right judgment of imperfectly known facts; and the United States after all, were, relatively so unimportant in

letters, and so hard to know intimately. But although relatively unimportant in letters, they were almost supremely important in theoretical politics. Surely the Americans themselves must appreciate and revere even more than Europe those principles they had upheld and with which they were in continual, invigorating contact. This great ideal would permeate and inspire them in their best expression: "If one supposes American literature to be the daughter of independence . . . ," says the French reviewer. . . .

However, there is the possibility, as was suggested, that the French were wide of the mark in setting up their standards for estimating American poetry; seeking where there was little to be found, and neglecting those characteristics — such as Dana's — that might have furnished an index to the real manner of thought and feeling in the United States they misunderstood.

In spite of their misconception, they do not often fall into an excess of praise: Willis's collection of American poetry upon local traditions and legends, published in 1828, although not of the lineage of political poems, is of that other hardly less popular one of nature and Indian lore.[24] Willis's method seems to have

[24] "Revue encyclopédique," 1829, vol. XLI, pp. 169–70, review signed "Lamst."

been rather the promotion of new production than the gathering together of poems already written; his volume is thus described:

. . . une collection de quarante nouvelles ou légendes, fondées sur des traditions et embellie par la description pittoresque des vallées, des forêts immenses, des lacs majestueux de l'Amérique du Nord. . . .

With such a beginning, it was almost inevitable that the collection should be designated a little later on as "ce charmant volume." However, a certain very constant criticism reappears:

. . . les pièces de vers sont assez bien tournées, mais elles manquent pour la plupart d'originalité.

And then follows a rather cavalierly introduced:

Comme échantillon du prix que l'on offre aux auteurs américains, nous ajouterons que M. Willis prévient qu'il paiera un dollar (six francs) par page de prose; ou vingt-quatre dollars par feuille d'impression.

The "Token," of 1830 [25] received an ultra-complimentary mention that will hardly fit in with anything else to be found in this period. Probably there is no one who would give it

[25] The "Token," edited by S. G. Goodrich, 1830, published in Boston by Carter & Hendee, and sold by Hector Bossange in Paris, (prix 10 fr.); notice in "Revue encyclopédique," vol. XLV (1830), p. 104.

the name of criticism at all, and yet for completeness it may be as well to cite it:

. . . la lecture de plusieurs pièces nous permet de décider que les productions littéraires du Massachusetts et du Connecticut ne seraient pas tout à fait indignes de figurer à côté des pièces du même genre que publient les Coleridge, les Rogers, les Campbell, les Southey, les Walter Scott, les Hemans, et les Landon. . . .

Ultra-complimentary is hardly the term that one would apply to "not absolutely unworthy to be placed with the poems of the same kind" of the chief English writers of the day—an almost doubtful compliment, indeed, were we not familiar with what was generally expressed about American poetry.[26]

[26] "Amer Khan, and other Poems," by Lucretia Maria Davidson, collected by Samuel F. B. Morf, [sic] are noted in the list of new books in the "Journal des Savants" for June, 1830, p. 384. And Mme Belloc wrote a few appreciative lines in the "Revue encyclopédique" (1830, vol. XLVI, pp. 130–3) upon the same collection.

"The Life and Letters, together with Poetical and Miscellaneous Pieces" of Wm. Person, reviewed in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1822, vol. XIV, p. 109, had likewise received a notice as appreciative, no doubt, as the work deserved: "Ses vers harmonieux et faciles respirent quelquefois une mélancolie touchante; mais on y retrouve toujours le sentiment de la divinité, une confiance inaltérable dans sa bonté et sa miséricorde." Remembering the remarks upon Richard Dana's poems in 1828, it is not hard to understand that it did not occur to the reviewer to consider Person in any way as an American poet. The sincere opinion would not frame with any current

Little as there was in France about American literature up to the year 1830, upon the side of poetry, there was even less upon prose. Certainly, if American literature has earned a name in Europe so far, it has hardly been for its poetic production; on the contrary, in prose, particularly in the short story and in the novel, the reputation of this country has been very high abroad; and of all our prose-writers few have been more popular than Cooper and Irving.

Of Cooper there are the following notices:

M. Cooper est le Walter-Scott de l'Amérique: ses romans, inspirés par ceux du célèbre Écossais, se rattachent toujours à l'histoire de son pays. (Follows an outline of the plot of "The Last of the Mohicans.") On trouve trop souvent peut-être dans ce roman des scènes de combats et de batailles; le dénoûment est peut-être aussi trop tragique . . . mais l'intérêt y est vivement excité, et l'auteur a su peindre avec un art admirable la nature inculte de ce pays, et les mœurs sauvages de ses habitants.[27]

theory about American characteristics. Lucretia Maria Davidson and Person are exceptions; generally what was produced here was considered particularly in its national, or supposedly national, significance.

[27] "The Last of the Mohicans," New York, 1825; noted in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1826, vol. XXX, pp. 703–4. The reviewer indicates the edition probably used by him: "Cet ouvrage a été réimprimé à Londres, 1826, J. Miller, 3 vol. in-8°; puis traduit et publié en français, Paris, 1826, Gosselin, 3 vol. in-12°."

Defauconpret's translation of Cooper, in 1827, received a longer notice the following year, and one of the few of the period under treatment that really merits in some respects the name of review, in that there is an attempt made at some sort of analysis and that historical fact and not individual taste is made the basis for the judgment rendered; the article is signed "B. J." (probably Bernard Jullien):

Lorsque les premiers ouvrages de M. Cooper parurent à Paris, les romans historiques de Walter Scott étaient déjà connus en France depuis plusieurs années; et telle était l'avidité du public pour ce genre d'écrits, telle était l'admiration que l'auteur écossais avait généralement excitée, que l'on crut devoir lui faire honneur à la fois de l'invention et de la perfection du genre où il excellait. On ne voulait admettre ni concurrence ni comparaison avec lui. . . . La vérité se faisait jour néanmoins . . . il arrivait de cette polémique . . . que le goût du public, fortement prononcé pour tout ce qui rappelait des souvenirs historiques, fit naître une multitude d'autres ouvrages du même genre. . . .

. . . les qualités du célèbre romancier américain lui sont propres, tandis que ses défauts appartiennent en grande partie à celui qu'il imite. . . . (Outlines of Cooper's novels follow.)

Les qualités qui distinguent généralement les romans de M. Cooper sont les suivantes: un

intérêt toujours croissant et égal à celui que Walter Scott et Wander Velde ont su répandre dans leurs ouvrages; l'observation exacte des localités, et une vérité constamment soutenue dans les caractères; enfin, une peinture des passions tellement vive qu'il fait toujours partager au lecteur celles qu'il prête à ses personnages. . . . (But Cooper has certain faults:)

Je mets au premier rang la manie de faire son roman en quatre volumes. On est forcé, pour arriver à ce nombre, d'avoir recours à un usage immodéré des dialogues . . . Walter Scott a mis à la mode ce moyen d'allonger un livre. . . .

Un autre caractère de tous les auteurs qui appartiennent à l'école de Walter Scott, c'est l'emploi de personnages en quelque sorte surnaturels et qui exercent sur les autres acteurs une influence merveilleuse, qui trop souvent n'est pas expliquée: l'Espion, le Pilote, Lincoln le père, sont des êtres de ce genre. Sous le rapport de l'intérêt, on aurait tort de s'en plaindre; car nous sommes tous tellement amis du merveilleux, que nous ne pouvons nous en détacher, sous quelque forme qu'il se présente . . . mais . . . dans un roman destiné à peindre la société au sein de laquelle nous vivons, j'aimerais mieux qu'on ne présentât pas de ces êtres fantastiques. . . .

. . . un peu de monotonie, car il oppose presque toujours deux sœurs ou deux cousines ou deux amies, dont l'une est la sensibilité même, et l'autre la gaieté personnifiée. . . .

M. Cooper est l'un des hommes que son beau

talent et son noble caractère doivent le plus faire estimer. . . .[28]

Of Irving there is less: beside a few incidental mentions in connection with other American writers, the following lines by Depping, in a long review dealing almost exclusively with the historical questions brought out in the "Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus," are all that it is of interest to cite from the literary point of view:

Le style annonce une plume exercée; il a peu de vigueur et de nerf; mais il abonde en tableaux intéressants, et partout où il a fallu de l'élégance et du naturel, l'auteur a déployé beaucoup de talent. Sa narration marche parfaitement, tout y est bien exposé, sans confusion, sans effort; il y a des passages pleins de charmes. . . . L'auteur a semé sa narration de réflexions judicieuses qui naissent du sujet et arrivent toujours à propos.[29]

After these disappointing notices — disappointing when one reflects that the works were

[28] Cooper: "Œuvres complètes" traduites de l'anglais par A. J. B. Defauconpret, Paris, 1827, Gosselin; 28 vol. in-12°; prix 84 fr. — The notice quoted appeared in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1827, vol. XXXVI, pp. 346–360.

[29] Irving: "History of the Life and Voyages of Christopher Columbus," Paris, 1828, Baudry, 4 vol. (&) Le même ouvrage, traduit de l'anglais par C. A. Defauconpret fils, traducteur de l' "Histoire d'Écosse" par sir Walter Scott; Paris, 1828, Ch. Gosselin, 4 vol. The review cited is in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1828, vol. XXXIX, pp. 95–109.

considered sufficiently interesting to merit translation — is it worth while to call attention to the banal indications of Miss Sedgwick's "Redwood," [30] of her "Travelers," [31] of the anonymous "Redfield, a Tale of the Seventeenth Century," [32] of the novel "What is Gentility?" [33]

Two notices, however, furnish a certain interest, the one by naming the principal American authors as the French judged them, the other because it illustrates the British ascendancy over French criticism of American literature at this time.

[30] H. D. Sedgwick, brother of the authoress, sends the "Revue encyclopédique" a "Réclamation au sujet de la traduction française de 'Redwood' (Paris, Boulland, 1824, 4 vol.)," — *id.*, 1825, vol. XXVI, p. 889. He informs the editors that "Redwood" is not, as the translator stated, by Cooper, but by Miss Sedgwick; taking occasion to explain, apropos of the novel, the difference between the Shakers and the Quakers. . . .

[31] Notice in "Revue encyclopédique," 1825, vol. XXVII, p. 132. The work is simply referred to as a good child's book of travel.

[32] Reviewed in "Rev. ency.," 1825, vol. XXVIII, pp. 445–6. ". . . Mais l'ouvrage offre d'ailleurs une sorte de mérite . . . il retrace les lieux, les temps, les mœurs . . . le lieu de la scène est Long-Island . . . on y retrouve en action les récits de Charlevoix et de Crève-Cœur; on y reconnaît les scènes plus récemment et si bien esquissées par le colonel Timberlake et M. Perrin-Dulac. C'est là selon moi, le mérite de cet opuscule, et ce mérite n'est pas commun."

[33] Reviewed by Lamst in the "Rev. ency," 1829, vol. XLI, pp. 147–8: An outline of the plot, and then: "Ce joli roman est rempli d'intérêt, le dialogue est vif et spirituel, les scènes bien amenées, les épisodes liés avec goût au sujet principal. Le but de l'auteur a été de prouver la nécessité d'une bonne éducation."

Depuis un an ou deux, says Madame Belloc,[34] apropos of Paulding's anonymously published "Koningsmarke, the Long Finne," l'Amérique a produit plusieurs auteurs distingués. M. Washington Irving a été le premier à s'élancer dans la carrière romantique; plusieurs de ses contemporains l'y ont suivi. M. Cooper, dans "L'Espion" et "Les Pionniers," s'est montré l'élève d'un grand maître, sir Walter Scott, mais il rappelle trop souvent qu'il n'est qu'imitateur. Cependant, il faut féliciter l'Amérique de ces conquêtes. . . . Si elle n'est pas riche en traditions anciennes, elle offre à ses historiens des sites sublimes, les traits énergiques d'un peuple fondateur. . . . Ce n'est point ce qu'a voulu peindre l'auteur du roman que nous annonçons . . . la plupart . . . du genre comique. Il y a dans son ouvrage des vérités d'ensemble, mais peu de ces nuances délicates qui annoncent une observation de la nature.

Always the same feeling evident on the part of France: America was the land of nature; the American should depict nature, and American nature. . . .

Of "The Humours of Eutopia" [35] there is

(The title is translated as "Qu'est-ce que les gens comme il faut?" In a note, the following:) "Ce charmant ouvrage, qu'on lira toujours avec plaisir, vient d'être traduit en français, et paraîtra incessamment chez M. Sédillot, libraire, rue d'Enfer, no. 18."

[34] Reviewed in the "Rev. ency.," 1824, vol. XXI, p. 136.

[35] "The Humours of Eutopia" . . . par un Eutopien. Philadelphia, 1828, Carey, 2 vols., reviewed in "Rev. ency.," 1828, vol. XL, pp. 651–2, by "Y."

practically nothing, but apropos of that novel a great deal about the critic:

"L'auteur de ce roman a cessé de vivre; c'était un jeune homme de grande espérance. . . ."

Cet avertissement des éditeurs a sans doute procuré à l'ouvrage de nombreux lecteurs en Amérique: en Europe, on fera plus d'attention au mérite littéraire, à l'originalité. . . .

Avant de juger l' "Eutopie" en France, et de la faire passer dans notre langue, on fera bien de consulter nos voisins d'outre-mer. Ils ont conservé plus que nous la connaissance des mœurs des tribus indigènes de l'Amérique. . . . Si les Anglais font à ce roman un accueil empressé, nos traducteurs pourront se mettre à l'œuvre, mais si le public de Londres néglige la nouvelle production américaine, les Parisiens la recevraient plus froidement encore. . . .

Such frank, one might well say such cynical admissions, are very rare; but the evidence is none the less manifold that they would have been appropriate for much of the criticism before 1830 relative to this subject.

However the originality of criticism upon what was known may impress us, whatever we may think of the interesting fact that American works were translated into French and published in Paris without receiving more than a few cursory lines of notice in the most liberal reviews, it remains certain that but little, in sum total, was known of American literature.

Little got through to France, and with that little acquaintance was but slowly made: it will be noticed that the French reviews generally appeared from one to two or three years after the first publication in America of the works considered — not infrequently, however, on the very eve of any London reprint. . . .

Had it not been for one publicist, Marc-Antoine Jullien, "celui qu'on appelait Jullien de Paris," says Sainte-Beuve,[36] qui, jeune, s'était fait tristement connaître par son fanatisme révolutionnaire, et qui, vieux, tâchait de faire oublier ses anciens excès par son zèle honorable de fondateur de la "Revue encyclopédique . . ." — had it not been for the interest of Jullien, it is probable that not a dozen critical notices of our literature could have been found from the pens of French critics before 1830. That America realized the fact, is evidenced in a sort of semi-official recognition on the part of the Columbian Institute of Washington (founded 1816). The "Revue encyclopédique" [37] says:

L'Institut Colombien vient d'adresser un diplôme de membre correspondant à M. Marc-Antoine Jullien, de Paris, auteur de l' "Essai sur l'emploi du temps," et fondateur-directeur de la "Revue encyclopédique," en lui témoi-

[36] "Nouveaux Lundis" (Calmann-Lévy), t. X, p. 245, 4 septembre, 1865, in the article on Ch. Duveyrier's lectures on "La Civilisation et la Démocratie française."

[37] "Rev. ency.," 1828, vol. XXXVIII, pp. 228–9.

gnant combien les Américains sont reconnaissants du soin avec lequel, depuis dix ans qu'il est fondé, ce recueil s'est attaché constamment à mieux faire connaître à l'Europe les travaux et les progrès de l'Amérique du nord en tout genre, et à presenter en même temps aux Américains un tableau curieux et instructif des travaux et des progrès des différents états de l'Europe et des autres contrées.

The recognition was indeed well accorded; one searches in the other French periodicals of the time in vain for critical remarks; at most one meets now and then with a bare notice of publication of an American work, either in English or in French translation.[38]

[38] The following are for the most part merely announcements of American books or periodicals, or brief extracts in translation. They add nothing of interest to the idea of the French criticism of American literature as it has been found up to this point:

John Eliot's "Biographical Dictionary" announced in the "Mercure étranger," vol. II, 1813, p. 189.

Joel Barlow's "Columbiad" noted in the same year, vol. I, pp. 384–6. Barlow's contention that modern warfare is very apt to inspire the poet, is given in a translated extract from his preface to that epic, where he enlarges on the impressive nature of modern battles.

The same periodical (vol. II, 1813, pp. 74 and 75) publishes prose translations signed "S . . . É" of Mrs. Hunter's "Death-Song of an Indian Cherokee Warrior" and of the Rev. James Whartoix's "Dying Peruvian Cacique." The taste for sentimental reflections upon the "good savage" has been noticed. James Montgomery's "Wanderer in Switzerland" was announced without criticism in the same periodical, in 1814 (vol. III, p. 360).

The "Mercure de France" published, in 1817 (vol. II, p. 605), the translation of an article by A. Jay on M. de la Pommeraie, with this note: "M. Benjamin Russell, éditeur du journal américain 'The Columbian Centinel', publia l'article suivant, le 26 août, 1805." The article was entitled "The Quaker." The notice is, of course, of interest merely because it shows that "The Columbian Centinel" was in the hands of the editors of the "Mercure de France." The following is given for a similar reason; it is taken from the "Mercure étranger" (vol. III, 1814, p. 434): The (New York) "Analectic Magazine" . . . "qui contient la critique des journaux d'Angleterre" is announced, and this brief estimate of Irving appended: "L'auteur . . . est M. Izving [sic] de New-York, jeune homme plein de talents, ainsi que l'ont reconnu les Anglais mêmes dans l'ouvrage périodique qui a paru pendant quelque temps à New-York, intitulé: 'Salmagundi.'"

III

1830–1835

THE period of notices padded with a certain subjective criticism that, indeed, hardly deserves the name, draws to a close with the year 1830 approximately. At least, so much may be said, as compared with the later period, — that following 1835.

In making this contrast, however, two considerations present themselves, and should doubtless be stressed somewhat, as serving to give a more exact idea of the nature of this change. Exploration is, after all, but the preliminary to the map: each fact, as it is discerned, is taken for its own sake. It is of primary importance, but until its place with relation to its surroundings is known, it is misunderstood: if a generalization is attempted upon the basis of this fact, or of scattered facts not yet correlated, the generalization will be worthless, or if fairly enduring, then only so by chance. Certainly the French were explorers in our literature during the period just studied; and on the whole, with this important fact well realized, should we not, after all, accord to the brevity of their notices a certain appropriateness, and admit that, for whatever reason, they felt that

the time for criticism properly speaking was not yet come, and consequently refrained from its practice? The second fact is, possibly, less creditable from the critical point of view, but represents a clinging to an ideal — the one noticed at the beginning of this study. The year 1835, although it seems to be the starting point of the body of properly critical study of American literature, is however far from putting a term to the sort of opinions which have been seen thus far. In fact, the ideal, the foregone conclusion consequently, of what America should be, will tinge the conception of all French writers far into the century, if not, indeed throughout and up to the present time. The ideal will be manifest in two ways; for in exact proportion as men had the traditional faith in the land, the contrast between that faith and the fact that men seemed really unchanged by its influence will be clear-cut and disappointing. Enter here the "Yankee," as the term is understood abroad, and the American wanderer in Europe taken as the type either of snobbism or of discontent with a purely material ideal—and all the rest of the reverse of the medal.

So far there seems to have been but an imperfect distinction between the ideal of the potency of the unspoiled wilderness, and the influence of the democratic ideal upon men. In a sense, to be sure, the two conceptions are

identical in their conclusions: the type of man representing either will be an individual unhampered by tradition, with its prejudice and its tyranny. But the man communing with nature will develop in his freedom ideal impressions and instincts; he who represents the perfect civil arrangement will be the creature of a community of thought. The former will be the poet, the latter the philosopher. The opposite of the man of nature is the degenerate; the opposite of the democrat is the tyrant. It is a little hard to say which of these negative conceptions more nearly approximates the unfavorable estimate that we shall have sometimes to encounter; but it is only reasonable to suppose, in view of the respect entertained abroad for certain American scientists and historians, and the comparatively doubtful acceptance of our poets, that France felt that Americans had proved themselves rather as citizens, as eminently reasoning and reasonable; that on the other hand they had failed in their opportunity to become the poets of mankind.

Such generalizations are bound to be a little thin-drawn, yet they are not necessarily altogether intangible. Adelaide Montgolfier, basing a review of the question upon the works of James M'Henry, Emma Willard, and the anthology of George Cheever entitled the "American Commonplace Book of Poetry," and writing in

1831, indicates certain parts of what has just been said:[1]

C'est vainement que les critiques de New-York prétendent que 'le génie de la poésie, en désertant l'Angleterre, va se réfugier sur leurs rivages; que la vie positive est l'élément dans lequel les Muses vivent et se meuvent. . . .' ("North American Review"—October, 1831, pp. 298–9) Bref, c'est en vain que la "Revue américaine" assure que la doctrine rétrécie d'intérêt et de bien-être individuel qui font la prospérité actuelle de l'Amérique favorisent l'essor de la poésie et des arts. Loin de là, les luttes de l'égoïsme mercantile leur sont antipathétiques.

Les précédents font les sciences et tuent la poésie: car, plus l'homme est près de la nature, plus il est poète; les Américains ont derrière eux pour faner la fraîcheur de leurs images, pour user et épuiser leur langue, tout la littérature anglaise. Aussi c'est chez les Natchez, les Wampanoags, les Iroquois, les Mohicans, les mille tribus des bois, des prairies, des lacs et des rives des fleuves qu'il faut chercher les poètes du Nouveau-Monde. . . . Cooper l'a senti, et c'est au matelot qui s'identifie avec son vaisseau et dort à la musique des vagues; c'est à l'Indien dont l'esprit erre dans les bois avec les brises, dont les regards plongent dans les savannes, qu'il a demandé des inspirations et

[1] Jas. M'Henry: "The Pleasures of Friendship"; Emma Willard: "The Fulfillment of a Promise"; Geo. B. Cheever: "The American Commonplace Book of Poetry," Boston, 1831. The review, signed "Ade. M.," appeared in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1831, vol. LII, pp. 432–9.

une littérature que l'Amérique policée n'avait pas; mais ces tribus sauvages meurent, car elles n'étaient que poésie, et la civilisation épaisse et positive d'un peuple de commerçants les étouffe. Cooper a rafraîchi un moment l'imitation de Walter Scott dans ces sources de vie, de telle sorte que nos premiers journaux littéraires n'ont pas craint de le mettre au niveau et même au-dessus du romancier historien. . . . Néanmoins le son natif que la lyre américaine, jusque là faible écho du concert de la mère patrie, a rendu sous les doigts de Cooper, est isolé, et la longue liste des poètes et des poésies que nous présente M. Cheever, bien qu'on le loue de n'avoir rien oublié de saillant, n'enrichira pas beaucoup la littérature. Ce n'est pas un nouveau ton ajouté à l'harmonie du monde, c'est un lointain retentissement.

What the "new note" that was expected might have been, how the author of the notice would have described its characteristics, we can surmise; yet the America of the twentieth century is witness that "the native note of the American lyre" — so far as this can be said to be in any way the expression of vast wildernesses and unspoiled men — must indeed be but "isolated," very temporary indeed, and in fact, the voice of nature only, and not the voice of America. The wildernesses disappear, and men gradually become subject to the European conditions of life. If anything is typical of American literature — as of course something

must be — it must be traced rather to those permanent political peculiarities that distinguish the nation from others. Nowadays, we are beginning to feel that another factor, not emphasized — if realized — at that time in France, the mingling of races here, is possibly supremely important. But, in passing, there arises the question as to how real, in fact, the humanity of Cooper's novels was, even in the day of immense forests and virgin prairie. "Cooper's noble Indians, in fact," says Professor Barrett Wendell,[2] "are rather more like the dreams of eighteenth-century France concerning aboriginal human nature than anything critically observed by ethnology; and Natty Bumppo himself is a creature rather of romantic fancy than of creative sympathy with human nature."

A few particular notices follow in the review last cited, and they are worth reproducing since they concern certain names not yet forgotten, and moreover definitely state a few of the facts of the English influence upon American writing, as then understood:

Dans ce nombreux essaim de poètes (in Cheever's collection), je distinguerai cependant Bryant et Dana: tous deux suivent le mouvement littéraire que Byron, Scott, Wordsworth

[2] "A Literary History of America," 7th edit., N.Y., Scribner, 1914, p. 186; *ibid.*, p. 183, for a remark upon the stylistic superiority of Cooper in translation.

et Crabbe ont imprimé à l'Angleterre, et qui s'éteint dans les voix affaiblies de Coleridge et de Southey. Mais ils ont mêlé aux impressions des poètes anglais quelque chose de leur propre fonds: il y a de l'émotion religieuse dans les chants élevés de Dana. Wordsworth qu'il imite souvent, est certes plus harmonieux; il a la marche bien autrement souple, ondoyante et capricieuse; mais on aurait peine à trouver dans les morceaux les mieux inspirés du poète du lac un enthousiasme plus profondément senti qui celui qui s'exhale dans quelques pièces de Dana, entre autres dans ces vers sur l'immortalité:

Ce saint mot est écrit sur le rayon limpide
Que la lune argentée épanche dans le vide;
Il flotte sous l'éclat du couchant . . .

Bryant imite assez souvent les coupes des stances de Byron, dans "Don Juan" et "Childe Harold." Cependant il s'essaie vainement à narrer en vers. . . . Et si le nom du poète du 19e siècle vient un moment à l'esprit en lisant les poésies descriptives de Bryant, c'est à des inspirations pleines de fraîcheur et d'un sentiment de jouissance au sein d'une nature neuve et féconde qu'il le doit. . . .

. . . "La Musique sentimentale" de Halleck, est une gracieuse chose; quant à Wilcox . . . il nous déplaît justement à cause de la monotone langueur de ses descriptions. . . . Les vers de M. Peabody . . . sont extrêmement touchants. . . .

Une hymne de Long-Fellow attire une attention particulière, non par des vers qui rappelent,

sans l'égaler, la belle ode sur le général Moore, citée par Byron, mais à cause du sujet.[3] Elle fut faite en l'honneur du comte Pulawski, noble Polonais, mort à l'attaque de Savannah, dans la guerre de l'Indépendance. . . .

(Speaking of Emma Willard:) Il y a une verve bien touchante, une poésie bien haute dans cette âme qui se consume comme de l'encens en présence de la Divinité, parfumant, éclairant tout autour. En commençant cet article je ne voulais voir de source d'inspirations que dans les relations de l'homme avec la nature. Il y en a une plus abondante, plus belle encore: c'est dans les relations d'amour et de dévoûment des hommes entre eux. C'est là que nous autres peuples civilisés nous pouvons vivifier notre littérature, miroir toujours si fidèle de la société.

The advance over the sort of review written heretofore is evident: — it begins to be thought worth while to go into some detail. A quarter-century of desultory reading of American books had given the background that made the detail of interest. And certainly the author attempted comparisons and criticisms that were meant to illustrate the American writers. What is perhaps of the greatest importance to emphasize here, is not the subjective character of the first part — the characteristic is constant in the body of criticism to be studied — but rather the fact that the article is, after all, short and summary, and

[3] "The Hymn of the Moravian Nuns of Bethlehem," by Longfellow.

that it is of the nature of a notice, not an article purporting to deal at all exhaustively with the subject. Had it been so, the author would have explained to our greater satisfaction the grounds for coupling Byron and Scott with Wordsworth and Crabbe as leaders in a single movement, and making Bryant a disciple of them all. Nowadays, such juggling with names would perhaps seem akin to legerdemain in France. In any case, granted that Bryant resembled these four poets, he was a more protean genius than we now imagine, and the innately imitative character of Americans will be readily allowed.

It is fortunate that the same reviewer has left another rather extended notice, this time of a prose writer, thus giving an insight into the varying preconceptions of American authors in the two forms.[4] Incidentally, these pages contain a note of dissent in regard to Irving and Cooper. We are at first reminded that for the French these two names have represented the best in American literature, but at the same time Irving is described as having gotten the utmost possible from a "petit talent et d'un petit esprit," and Cooper receives the doubtful

[4] Charles Brockden Brown's Works. The review, signed A. M. (Adélaïde Montgolfier), appeared in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1831, vol. XLIX, pp. 625–7. She says: "il y a près de trente ans qu'un roman de Brown, traduit en français, je crois par M. Pigault de Mont-Baillard, sous le titre de 'La Famille Wieland', révéla un talent original et profond."

compliment: ". . . peu ont été plus que lui tour-à-tour sublimes et bizarres." They are the representatives of classicism and of romanticism in the New World. Those who preceded these two writers are considered "unimportant." [5] Not that the reviewer is of the opinion that they were. The name of Charles Brockden Brown is brought forward in a manner calculated to leave one in some doubt as to whether he was not judged more worthy of fame than the other two. For us, in spite of the fact that Brown's works have been several times reprinted during the last century,[6] he is hardly more than a name — the first professional author, some have said, in the United States. There has been protest all along, on the part of those who have studied his works, against indifference toward him: he is credited with genuine penetration as an analyst of certain of those workings of the mind that impel — we may say — the powerless victim of an initial conviction to the logical acted conclusion that may be contrary to all the instincts of the doer; and many have felt, in the description of those sombre undercurrents of thought, a master's talent in the conduct of the elements of mystery

[5] "Sont non avenus" is perhaps even a stronger expression than the one used to translate it.

[6] Boston in 1827, Philadelphia in 1857, and, in a limited edition, at Philadelphia in 1887.

and of terror. Our reviewer voices this admiration: "'Wieland,' she says, revealed an original and profound talent. It was not a reproduction of exterior things, but the conscientious study of the heart of man, of its mysterious raging (frénésies), its resistless flights. . . ." How original Brown was is a delicate problem, as always, when it is question of a model improved upon: for it is not called doubtful that a great element in Brown's work was suggested by the works of the English novelist Godwin. The fact is even admitted in the review, but not insisted upon, in view of the worth of the later writer, that set him near enough his original model to make it evident that he, too, had power and talent. It is in that sense a sort of parallel to the case of Walter Scott and Cooper, except that in the present case the pupil is generally acknowledged to have equalled, if not surpassed, the master.

In any event, and whatever degree of truth we may happen to find in the verdicts rendered, one fact is evident enough in all this: both prose writers and poets in America were found to imitate English models; but whereas no real merit was to be found consistently evidenced in the American poets, elsewhere it was found to a greater degree: "an original and profound talent," says the reviewer of Brown; but in the same writer's judgment, the American poets

had added "no new note in the world-harmony," only "a distant echo." The French idea of Irving as a littérateur hardly frames with this general rule, it is true, but for all that the general rule does seem to exist. How much of this sort of criticism is due to the commonly acknowledged superiority of the prose-writers over the poets, — how much to the preconception regarding America that grew up in France with the nineteenth century? It would be very interesting to know. But since absolute demonstration is impossible in such matters, the suggestion only is thrown out: that there was such a preconception does seem to be the case — may in fact be an important element in the history of the idea studied here.[7]

[7] (Rev.) Ed. O. Griffin: "Remains," edited by Francis Griffin and by John M. Vickar, D.D., "professeur de philosophie et de morale au collège de Columbia, New-York," 1831; reviewed likewise by Adélaïde Montgolfier in the "Revue encyclopédique," 1832, vol. LIV, pp. 99–100. She says: "Ses observations dans sa tournée en Italie n'ont presque, comme c'est l'usage des voyageurs en ce pays, rapport qu'aux arts, jugés avec le goût en peinture d'un littérateur et d'un Américain, c'est-à-dire d'un homme dépourvu de l'instinct, et de cette culture des sens nécessaires pour jouir réellement des arts, et quiconque n'en jouit pas ne les peut juger. . . . Les vers de M. Griffin sont ceux d'un jeune homme qui a fait d'excellentes études, et qui puise ses inspirations poétiques dans les émotions qu'il a dues à la lecture des grands auteurs classiques grecs et romains." One feels, in reading these remarks, that those expressions and judgments that depend upon the mind, were felt to be more sure than such as are prompted by the emotions.

The American theatre had heretofore received but little attention, and was to receive little for some time to come. In 1832 William Dunlap's "History of the American Theatre" was published by Bentley, in London, in two volumes; possibly the place of publication of the edition that reached the editors of the "Journal des Savants" was the fact that persuaded them to announce the work the following year.[8] We may at least infer from the brevity of the notice that the subject was not considered one of living interest: "The introduction of plays in the United States of America, in the last century, suffered obstacles that were recurrent with the year 1811, when a theatre-fire broke out during a performance." That is all that the "Journal des Savants" found worth while mentioning. Certainly the particular domain of that publication was not precisely the modern theatre of any country, much less of America; therefore the brevity of the notice has nothing in it to surprise one. What, however, makes it interesting is the evidently general lack of information on the subject among the well-read public of France that could give such a remark, calculated only to arouse a certain superficial curiosity, the currency of a notice in the "Journal des Savants." For the "Journal des Savants," America was as yet no literary nation; for the

[8] June number, 1833, p. 382.

"Revue encyclopédique," whether it was or not, American writings and intellectual activity of all kinds were of the most lively interest.

Three years before the above notice of Dunlap's history, and two before the actual publication of that work had suggested to Europe that there was an American drama, the "Revue encyclopédique" had published a fairly lengthy consideration of the subject, by Madame Belloc.[9] The notice is unreservedly unfavorable:

Aux États-Unis où rien ne gêne le développement libre de la pensée, où les théories les plus audacieuses, les rêveries les plus chimériques, peuvent chercher et trouver auditeurs, l'art dramatique est au moins aussi nul qu'en Angleterre: de pâles reproductions de nos vaudevilles de la rue de Chartres, des drames de l'Ambigu-Comique et de la Gaîté, traduits littéralement, charment les loisirs des habitants du Nouveau-Monde. Un auteur ambitieux hasarde de loin en loin une imitation froidement classique du "Caton" d'Addison, la plus glaciale des œuvres classiques. Mais de ces compositions chaleureuses qui mettent en jeu une foule d'émotions, de ces puissants appels à la sympathie, de ces

[9] 1830, vol. XLVIII, pp. 693–5. Heading: "Richard Penn Smith: 'The Eighth of January', drame en 3 actes, Philadelphie (Mackensie), 1829." The review is signed L. Sw. B. Reviews over this signature are frequently referred to by the editors in other notices as by Madame Belloc. Sometimes the first two initials are given with the entire last name. Adélaïde Montgolfier and others are similarly identified.

cris délirants et passionés qui vous enlèvent de force à vous-même, il n'en est point. . . .

Which suggests to the writer to remind the Americans once more, that until the shackles of Europe, and above all of Great Britain, are cast off in matters literary, there will be no hope of an American literature. But once more, there is no enlightening suggestion thrown out

. . . . . to guide
Her little children stumbling in the dark.

It is admitted that Americans had "fallen into barbarism" when they wished to be quite original; evidently, a literature of barbarism was not to be considered precisely the normal intellectual and emotional expression of the United States. What, then, was expected? Madame Belloc, who has insisted more than most French critics upon this desideratum of originality in American letters, does not explain herself clearly upon this point.

But the question of the American theatre is a special question, certainly, for it would appear that there are reasons which hindered the development of that particular form as a national expression. Indeed, its relative obscurity in the earlier period of our history would seem to be, if negatively, a national expression. The United States of 1830 — and the same is of course true

of a far more recent period as well — were too permeated with the puritan idea to give much play to dramatic art. The restriction was perhaps largely incidental to the religious tradition, but it is none the less true that the theatre was not here, as in France, the natural field that a serious mind would choose for the expression of the best that was in him. We must admit that the drama as a whole occupied a place in public consideration somewhat analagous to that of comic opera to-day; by no means unrespectable, but essentially for amusement. Later, we shall find this fact realized in France. In 1830 it was not emphasized at its just value, if expressed.

An article on Irving — not a review merely this time, although "The Alhambra" is the occasion of it — in the "Revue des deux Mondes" in 1832[10] restates very much the same ideas upon American literature as a whole that we have seen — but with perhaps greater frankness in respect to what the French sought there. The writer repeats the opinion that American literature is known only through Cooper and Irving. Certain other names are known, it is true; among them those of Miss Sedgwick and of Paulding; but Miss Sedgwick is of no importance, Paulding of but little;

[10] A. Fontaney: "La Littérature américaine: Washington Irving — 'The Alhambra,'" vol. VI, pp. 515 *sqq.*

and as for the others less known, whatever currency their names may have, it is entirely at second hand, for they are known only to the "industrious readers of the Revues étrangères." And as for Cooper and Irving, they owe their reputation much less to the originality of the form in their works than to the "nouveauté" of the customs they at first depicted:

Leurs livres nous plaisaient, surtout parce que nous y trouvions ce que nous cherchions si laborieusement, et ce que nous rencontrons si peu sur notre sol usé: — à-savoir, quelque coin inexploré de l'art: quelque chose de neuf et d'inédit.

No doubt this is all true, so far as it goes, but perhaps it is well to note here that there is a discrepancy in the statement. Supposing true what is said in the statement transcribed, how are we to explain that other opinion, that Paulding, for example, does not count? For Paulding, too, sought his characters and his scenes in the American territory; moreover, there is a certain human truth about the characters in "The Dutchman's Fireside," to choose the most popular of his novels, that one may almost state to be lacking in the idealized beings of Cooper's novels, and that was certainly a secondary consideration with Irving, so far as his American sketches are concerned: there are real people in "Bracebridge Hall"; "Knicker-

bocker's History" is a portfolio of caricatures. One could not carry this thesis very far, it is true, in connection with Irving, but it is at least true that there is a contrast between his intention and Paulding's that should entitle the latter to consideration as a sincere writer upon, or about, his native country. Why, then, is it stated that Paulding "hardly counts"? Evidently, not for the reason adduced: that Europeans, searching for "nouveauté," could not have recognized it in Paulding, as well as in many others. . . . Paulding certainly lacks the sure and delicate touch that distinguishes Irving — that is always the criterion of a literary work. To suppose that a French public would not instinctively feel that difference between Irving and Paulding, would probably be supposing too much. However much Frenchmen may have desired to see American works freed, to a degree, of European literary traditions, we have no evidence, as was remarked before, that they sought here, any more than anywhere else, for clumsily constructed work as being something to be desired. This would seem to explain the apparent discrepancy in the article here being studied.

But in 1832 Cooper's "Bravo" had been out a year; his "Heidenmauer" (which is not mentioned, however, in M. Fontaney's article) was being published. Irving's "Conquest of Gran-

ada" appeared in 1829, and in 1832 "The Alhambra."

Voici cependant [says our writer] qu'aujourd'hui, comme s'ils avaient complètement exploité les mines fécondes de leur jeune continent, ils viennent nous disputer les filons épuisés de celles de notre vieille Europe.

And therefore — loss of interest. Loss in interest for Europeans, to whom Europe was familiar, to whom America was a matter to awaken curiosity, — that was an inevitable result. But for the Americans, for whom, after all, Cooper and Irving were writing, and from whom they must expect the deciding voice in regard to their work, — for Americans, probably, the interest in their books would not be lessened by reason of the change of scene. Fontaney finds Cooper's "Bravo" less original than his American novels; the fact is, that it never has had any popularity. But of Irving the same is hardly true; as for the type of composition of the "Alhambra," as for that of the "Conquest of Granada," neither of which can expect the popularity of a comic history or of a work of pure fiction, those books have surely been among the greatest successes in American publication; indeed, they almost constitute an exception to the general rule. The reason has been, that to Americans they have been of the greatest interest; and they have stood the test of time very

well, which goes a long way to prove their real literary worth, the question of originality included.

. . . Jamais Washington Irving n'a fait un aussi heureux emploi de son talent et de son habileté que dans ses esquisses de mœurs américaines. Son histoire satirique de New-York est encore, sans contredit, le plus spirituel, et le plus piquant de ses ouvrages. . . . "La Conquête de Grenade" et surtout la "Vie et . . . Voyages de Christophe Colomb," sont des ouvrages fort estimables, et qui ne seraient point passés inaperçus, fussent-ils sortis de la plume d'un auteur moins connu. Les deux derniers étaient même tout-à-fait de son ressort, et se rattachaient particulièrement à l'histoire de son Amérique: aussi nous semblent-ils fort supérieurs à "La Conquête de Grenade."

So we have, once more, an expression that is only that of a personal opinion, untempered by sincere effort to understand the facts as they were; in short, hardly criticism, as we now understand the word.

In the same year with the article just cited, appeared another in the "Revue de Paris," based upon the "Alhambra" and Cooper's "Heidenmauer."[11] Here the reviewer is naïf in his resentment at the choice of scene:

[11] "Revue de Paris," vol. XL (1832), p. 263. The article — or rather notice — is with reference to French translations of these works: "Contes de l'Alhambra," Paris, Fournier, 2 vols.,

Les deux auteurs les plus en vogue des États-Unis semblent d'accord pour oublier leur pays dans leurs compositions récentes, et il y a de leur part une véritable ingratitude d'écrivains, en même temps qu'un faux calcul, lorsqu'ils empruntent leurs sujets à la vieille Europe.

Three years later there will be less resentment on account of the "Monikins."[12]

Le nouvel ouvrage de Fenimore Cooper, "Les Monikins," traduit par M. Benjamin Laroche, vient de paraître à la librairie Charpentier. L'auteur des "Mohicans," de l' "Espion," a ouvert, dans cette production, une voie toute nouvelle à son talent. "Les Monikins" sont à la fois un roman amusant et une satire philosophique de la société actuelle. Cooper, dans ce livre, jette le ridicule non-seulement sur l'Angleterre, mais encore sur son propre pays. . . .

Not all critics have found the satiric vein of Cooper as "philosophic" as did this writer.

The "Journal des Savants" notes, in 1832, a recently published work of a general nature upon America, that the reviewer characterizes, with the brevity usual in that periodical in speaking of what regarded the United States, simply as containing "many notions that had not been found as yet (que nous n'avions pas

and "L'Heidenmauer, ou le Camp des Païens," Paris, Ch. Gosselin, 4 vols. An English text of the "Heidenmauer," published by Baudry, is also noted.

[12] "Revue de Paris," vol. XXI (1835), p. 136.

encore rencontrées) in books published or current in France."[13]

As might be supposed from the circumstances of his life, the interests of Achille Murat were above all political; incidentally, he was a man of business.[14] The questions discussed by him are principally such as relate to the working of the American government. The last of the ten letters, however, that compose the book, purports to deal with manners, fine arts, and literature. Really, it is nothing but an account of American aristocratic society, as he had found it in the decade of his residence in the United States: the status of women — particularly of society women, American hospitality, the characteristics of North and South, the bustle and extravagance of New York, the society of Philadelphia — "much more enlightened than that of New York," he says, that of Rich-

[13] "Journal des Savants," March, 1832, pp. 186–7: Achille Murat, citoyen des États-Unis, colonel honoraire dans l'armée belge, ci-devant prince royal des Deux-Siciles — "Esquisse morale et politique des États-Unis de l'Amérique du nord"; Paris, imprimerie Vve Thuau, librairie Crochard, 1832. . . .

There was an English translation, entitled "The United States of North America." The 2d edition of it appeared in 1833 in London (publisher: Effingham Wilson). This translation was used in writing of Murat.

[14] There is a discussion of this personage in the "Revue historique," vol. XCIV, pp. 71–90, written by Georges Weill and entitled, "Les Lettres d'Achille Murat." There are to be found a number of biographical details.

mond, and above all, of Charleston, where he found Americans at their best; New Orleans, Saratoga, and the centre of all, Washington. . . . All this, treated in thirty pages, will leave the writer but little opportunity for a serious discussion of the fine arts and literature, one would presume. He attempts none. He names no representative of either; he can hardly be said to have either a favorable or an unfavorable opinion about them, as they exist in the United States. Certainly, he supposed both to be, relatively to their status in Europe, of minor importance.

He is not partisan, neither is he particularly interested in the phase of the subject he is treating. Yet he has the advantage that goes with those somewhat negative qualities: he can be really critical. Moreover, his residence in America had given him a first-hand knowledge of many details. He is able correctly to estimate certain facts which we already have very frequently seen misinterpreted.

"Everybody is literary in the United States," he says, "for everybody has received a good education." "Literature, at the present moment, is almost entirely oral, oratory being that branch of it which is the most advanced." "I am aware that we number among us authors distinguished in those kinds of literature which require lightness of style, and grace and fresh-

ness in the coloring; but these are exceptions to the general rule; these are the isolated forerunners of a generation of literary men yet to come."

Which was, of course, probably relatively true — only we must accept his definition of "literary" as meaning simply "literate"; that Americans were generally capable of adequate self-expression in their political and social life. He goes on to explain the condition; — and it is in this explanation, such as it is, that the worth of his criticism lies. And he approaches the question through the fine arts and the theatre, which he seems to conceive as the most typical expressions, along with music, of "art for art's sake," to use an expression not employed by Murat. There seem to be two causes, to his mind, for the tardy development of those interests in the United States. The first is the fact that here, owing to the necessity of self-support on the part of almost everybody, few have the leisure necessary for such production. He states explicitly that in his opinion there is no lack of genius or of taste in the United States — only men are forced, out of self-protection, into those pursuits that are the most remunerative: " . . . as long as the work of the poet or the painter is less remunerated, he says, than that of the lawyer or the preacher, people will speak, and not write." And his observation about the

fine arts, although he does not state it precisely in support of this theory, nevertheless confirms it to a certain extent. Of these arts, architecture is that most perfected here: he speaks of the public buildings, churches, town mansions, as being appropriate to their uses, and designed with elegance and solidly built. Of those less commercial arts, painting and sculpture — apart from architecture — he does not speak as having arrived at any degree of perfection.

This fact of the direction of the talents into the best remunerated line of effort, is, however, not a fundamental fact: it is but the manifestation of a sentiment that must have created the scale of remuneration. Murat does not say this in so many words, but it is evident that it was his feeling in the matter, for he goes on to develop what he conceives to be the prime reason of all this. His manner is unusual:

Take Phidias or Apelles, he says, drop them into one of our towns in the midst of a public ceremony, the 4th of July, for instance, the anniversary of the declaration of independence, one of the most courageous and most rational acts that a nation has ever performed. First of all they will hear the cannon roaring on all sides, the ships will have all their flags hoisted, all the militia will be under arms, the different societies, the different professions and trades, will form themselves into a body to join the procession formed by the magistrates and the

militia. It will repair to some church, where a very grave man, dressed in a black gown, with melancholy air, bilious complexion, and lengthened figure, will announce to them, in a doleful tone, that although their ancestors may have signed that immortal declaration, they are not the less damned if they have continued to swear or to dance on Sundays; and that it is not merely being free, but that it is necessary also to be Christians and elected in order to be saved. . . .

Do you sincerely think that, if our Greek artists had never seen popular rejoicings in any other way, they could ever have produced their great works? It was with the soul still full of the games of the Palæstra . . . it was . . . on quitting the arms of Lais, of Phryne, and Aspasia; and it was by following their advice, and even that of Alcibiades, that the marble became animated, that the canvas spoke. As long as we have different manners, it is impossible to rival the productions of the Greeks.

It would not do to quibble about the exactness of Murat's contrast; he certainly had no intention of making a carefully reasoned study of American characteristics. What is certain is, that if French readers got from this vivid generalization some conception of the puritan ideal of seriousness and of restraint that, as compared with French customs at any rate, governed American society, then they got a more true and serviceable criterion for a judgment of the United States of that day than they

appear hitherto in possession of. The exaggeration of the American commercial spirit had been too much emphasized as a contrast to the potency of nature and of the democratic ideal over the thoughts of men. Here at last appears a little — indeed, much indispensable — information about conditions as they were, and, incidentally, perhaps the most genuine, if the most unostentatious, criticism of our literature. One can only regret that Murat gave no more attention than he did to a detailed study of the literature of his adopted country; he could not have failed to make for a more thorough understanding and sympathy between the French and the Americans. The bilious carping of Fenimore Cooper, the uninformed criticism that had been seen thus far in France, are in distressing contrast to the sincerity of this cosmopolitan prince-democrat.

It was natural that the somewhat scornful tone of a great deal of the French criticism should arouse some feeling in any American who was able to follow it in the years that have just been studied. Unfortunately, the only answer to such remarks is to produce works of such unquestionable merit that the spirit of stricture will find no further place. And it is generally true that the journalistic instinct that prompts such criticisms and their answers is not present in the minds that will produce the

masterpieces of original genius. Philarète Chasles, who is soon to be noticed, certainly justified the American literature, but he did not have its defence in mind when he began to write upon the subject; he was intent only upon finding out the truth in regard to it. Cooper, when he enters into this stupid quarrel of nations who had no quarrel, who simply were not acquainted, only adds fuel to the flames. It does not appear that the writer who is about to be mentioned had any particular effect one way or the other; for his exposition of American literature is not competent, or else it is too prepossessed; on the other hand, he had the negative quality of not wishing to create ill feeling.[15] His is only the natural sentiment that an American familiar with French would experience, provided he were not rather more reasonable than most people, upon reading the inadequate and somewhat patronizing notices that were usual in the French periodicals. Vail's "Réponse," which is only a thin pamphlet, is almost entirely concerned with other questions than literary ones, just as might be expected considering the relative scarceness of any opinion whatsoever in France upon the United States as a literary nation.

[15] I refer to the "Réponse à quelques imputations contre les États-Unis, énoncées dans des écrits et journaux récens," par Eugène A. Vail, citoyen des États-Unis . . . Paris, 1837.

. . . n'y aurait-il pas mauvaise grace à refuser tout essor de l'imagination . . . quand dans toutes les bibliothèques, dans tous les boudoirs, on recontre des noms comme ceux des Paulding, des Cooper, et des Irving?

And he says little more in the couple of pages that he devotes to that side of the question.

Several years after, when Philarète Chasles had written his important article on American literature in the "Revue des deux Mondes," in 1835 — this article had already appeared, by the way, before Vail's pamphlet — and the year following the second part of Tocqueville's "Démocratie en Amérique," of 1840, Vail published a second work, a book this time, devoted entirely to the study — or it would be more exact to say, to the justification — of American literature in the eyes of French readers.[16]

It is very unfortunate indeed that so much effort should have been given, where so little critical ability was present to make it of permanent worth. Not that it had none: its pages are crammed with names of American writers in every possible division of literature. As a catalogue for a prospective student, Vail's book would have merit. But as criticism it is negli-

[16] "De la littérature, et des Hommes de lettres aux États-Unis d'Amérique" par Eugène A. Vail, Citoyen des États-Unis. Paris, Ch. Gosselin, 1841.

gible. He gives a general classification of recently published books — the classification of the publications of a year (pp. xiv–xvi), in support of a remark that the American taste in literature is toward utility, and toward the serious — thus confirming the general impression in France. But where statistics fail him, as practically everywhere in his volume, his remarks are on a par, for critical acumen, with the worst of those that have come to our notice in the French periodicals, — a constant repetition of the theme that Americans have been too much neglected from the literary standpoint, and that all their productions have a certain merit, always a justification. There is no variety in his estimates, except the inevitable one of a relative degree of excellence when mentioning one American writer in connection with another. An analysis of his book would be profitless here, on that account as well as because, as was mentioned, it had no great influence in any way. The fact of his American nationality — he was the son of an American consul and born in Lorient — would perhaps not have been a sufficient reason for not giving him more space, since his book was written in French and published in Paris.

That year[17] an article, signed P. Dillon, based

[17] "Revue des deux Mondes," 4e sér., vol. XXVII, pp. 953–68 (1841).

upon Vail's book, appeared in the "Revue des deux Mondes." It was hardly to be expected that the periodical that had published, and was to continue for a number of years to publish, the articles of Philarète Chasles, would find the ideas of Mr. Vail in themselves extremely enlightening. But the subject was becoming one of great interest, and any consideration of it at such a length was bound to get notice and criticism. The article in question, it is needless to say, corrects the overenthusiastic remarks of Vail, but would seem to most to-day, no doubt, somewhat too sweeping in a division that is made of American literature. The reader can judge.

Vail had emphasized the utilitarian and the serious sides of American literature: his analysis of recent publications with regard to a classification under different heads showed a great preponderance of manuals of religious and philosophic books over those of poetry and drama. Dillon goes a little further:

Le travail, rien que le travail, voilà en quoi se résume toute existence américaine. On ne saurait s'attendre à trouver au sein d'une société ainsi organisée une littérature riche en poètes, en dramaturges, en romanciers.

We shall find that, among other causes, democracy and puritanical protestantism have

been adduced as reasons why the theatre and poetry had not flourished in the United States. The unavoidable fact of the existence of a creditable production in the way of sketches and novels had made the exclusion of the division of prose fiction rather impossible to most critics; in this Dillon is original — if we should not say inexact — in his views.

Probably he was forced to a certain degree into his extreme view, out of a desire to correct the eulogistic tone of Vail's book.

. . . l'étranger n'est pas médiocrement surpris de voir des esprits graves mettre les noms, fort estimables sans doute, d'un Joel Barlow ou d'un Bryant à côté de ceux de Corneille et de Racine, sans se douter de l'énormité du sacrilège.

We are hardly less surprised at the sacrilege, as he calls lack of judgment or ignorance, of setting the name of Joel Barlow beside that of Bryant. . . . Dillon is not at his best in those moments when he traffics in the cheap commodity of great names. There is more interesting matter in his article.

He makes a new division of American literature into two epochs: that before the year 1800, approximately, and the following years. But he does not make this arbitrary division in date.

Dans la première, nous rencontrons une élévation véritable, tous les indices d'un vrai talent. Jefferson, Madison, Franklin, Jay, tous les signataires de la déclaration d'indépendance, esprits nobles et éclairés, appartiennent à cette première époque. Lisez leurs ouvrages immortels, et comparez-les à ceux de la génération actuelle. Quelle différence.

In the next chapter it may appear that Dillon has enlarged in this classification upon an observation of Tocqueville. Dillon finds that in the second epoch the spirit of the literature has, as it were, suddenly weakened and faded; "on dirait que les intelligences s'y sont soudainement affaissées." And the cause? Literary expression is no longer founded, as in the days of the Signers, to a great degree upon the "political and literary traditions of monarchical Europe" that helped to produce these "great writers and bold thinkers"; to-day, not an aristocracy of intelligence, but the uncultured mass, will judge of an American work, and it is to the mass that the writer must pledge his production. We could have wished that Dillon had gone into the question of Bryant, of Emerson, of Longfellow — although in the two latter cases he need not, since their production was to come later in many of the parts of it that seem to us the most important, and since he had particularly mentioned Bryant as represent-

ing rather the weak side of American literature we may wish that he had tried to demonstrate a little more fully the truth of the theory he advances; would he have found that these three writers did, as a matter of fact, address their thoughts to pleasing the larger public? One may admit that Longfellow is in the most of his productions attractive to the greater number — or was in his day — but, whether he wished to be or not, can as much be said of Bryant and of Emerson? There is perhaps as much to be said against as for such a thesis. Other aspects of American literature, such as its journalistic manifestations, might have been adduced; but the proof of one point of view does not demonstrate truth.

And so it is with the rest of Dillon, as with Vail. The merit of Dillon's article was, of course, to correct Vail's statements, but neither is thoroughly critical; — Vail not at all so. The article in the "Revue des deux Mondes" had another merit, although it would not appear from the extracts that have been given as having a special interest for their content. This merit is the tone of the article, which is reserved in spite of its strictures, and rather kindly and appreciative in tone than carping; it must have helped, after all, to make for an interest, and a fairly suitable initial outlook on the subject for French readers. And the fact of the publica-

tion of so large a book as Vail's, and its criticism in the "Revue des deux Mondes" shows a considerable interest in the subject.

There remain to be noticed in this connection, not for any other reason than to show that with the publication of Tocqueville's work from 1835 to 1840 there was a considerable body of French studies upon one aspect or the other of the United States, two works, which, however, do not deal at all with the particular matter in hand. The first is M. Chevalier's "Lettres sur l'Amérique du Nord," published in two volumes at Brussels, in 1837; it deals with the industrial and commercial aspect of the nation. The second is Guizot's French translation of Jared Sparks' collection of "The Writings of George Washington"[18] which appeared in six volumes in Paris. Guizot's translation is a selection from Sparks' collection, and is preceded by an "Introduction sur l'influence et le caractère de Washington dans la révolution des Etats-Unis d'Amérique." In this introductory essay Guizot confined himself strictly to the political side of Washington's career, and one searches in vain for any idea that could be applied to the American literature as such. The appreciation of Washington is, however, of so elevated a nature, that one feels in reading it that if, as was probable, Dillon was acquainted with it when he wrote

[18] Gosselin, 1839–1840.

his appreciation of Vail in the "Revue des deux Mondes," we may have the genesis of his idea of the division of American literature into the exalted period of the Signers, and the characterless one that followed.

IV

Alexis de Tocqueville

Our concern with Alexis de Tocqueville begins with the year 1840, when the second part of his work "De la Démocratie en Amérique" was published.[1] This second part is subdivided into four sections, entitled, respectively, "Influence de la démocratie sur le mouvement intellectuel aux États-Unis," "Influence de la démocratie sur les sentiments des Américains," "Influence de la démocratie sur les mœurs proprement dites," and "De l'influence qu'exercent les idées et les sentiments démocratiques sur la société politique." It is principally with the first two sections that the present study will have to deal.

The very general interest felt for the first part of the work is well known, and is attested

[1] The first part, dealing with the political institutions, had come out in 1835. The edition of this work used, and referred to here, is that contained in the "Œuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville publiées par Madame de Tocqueville," 17e édition, Paris, Calmann Lévy. The "Démocratie en Amérique" comprises the first three volumes of this edition, and is dated 1888. The first two volumes contain the first part of the work as originally published in 1835 — that part dealing with the political institutions; the third volume contains the second part, published in 1840.

by the many articles based upon it appearing in the French and English reviews. The phrase "articles based upon it" is used advisedly; for the distinguishing characteristic of this work is its suggestiveness. One feels that on this account it is in a sense above criticism. Certainly it is not a work that can be resumed; on the contrary, any exhaustive study of it would be bound to exceed the original in length, so condensed is it. There have been numerous considerations of this aspect or of the other, but the commentary has not been written. And it seems unfortunate that this is so, for it is one of those works that require constant elucidation; and whatever conclusion might be arrived at as to the validity of the opinions set forth, the whole is too suggestive to be profitless.

Of the second part, Madame de Tocqueville has this to say in her introduction:[2]

Cette seconde partie de "la Démocratie en Amérique" a eu, il faut le reconnaître, un moindre succès que la première. Elle n'a pas sans doute été moins achetée, mais je crois qu'elle a été moins lue. Beaucoup moins de feuilles périodiques en ont rendu compte. Elle renferme une si grande quantité d'idées condensées dans un étroit espace et toutes rigoureusement enchaînées les unes aux autres, que plus

[2] "Œuvres complètes d'Alexis de Tocqueville". . . vol. I, pp. xiv–xv.

d'un lecteur recule, avant de s'engager dans un labyrinthe dont il craint de perdre le fil. Je ne sais plus quel écrivain a fait la remarque que, toutes les fois qu'on veut lire cet ouvrage d'un bout à l'autre et d'une seule traite, on éprouve quelque fatigue, et que, si on se borne à en lire une page prise au hasard, on ne ressent que le charme d'une œuvre supérieure. . . . Les meilleurs esprits et les meilleurs juges persistent cependant à regarder cette seconde partie de "la Démocratie" comme l'œuvre de Tocqueville qui atteste le plus de puissance intellectuelle. . . .

I think that the fact that the first part dealt with the more purely political aspects of the United States had something to do with the relative indifference that was the fate of the second part, for, as has been seen, the American theory and practice of government was a matter of paramount interest in the restless Europe of the first half of the nineteenth century.

It does not appear that any more serious criticisms were ever made of the work — criticisms, I mean, that have proved valid — than those minor ones of style and sentiment. The method was too original, too well sustained, to be condemned in the eyes of thoughtful men. And the attitude was too broad to offend even those who would be little inclined to find great good in the democratic constitution of the United States. For, when we have stated that

Tocqueville believed in the democratic principle, we can admit that in the rest he was non-partisan. His study is indeed centered upon the American aspect of democracy. But this is probably the case only because he had at hand no other good example of the democratic theory applied and more or less successfully worked out in a large modern state. His interest, after all, is not in the democracy of the United States, except as in an example: certainly he does not consider it a model to be followed elsewhere, nor even as in all aspects the criterion for the land where it was developed. There is no proselytizing intention anywhere. One does not find that he unconditionally condemns the monarchical form of government; so long as the majority is able to express itself, so long as all have equal rights to that expression, the form of bureaucracy, since there must be a head in every state, is a matter of minor importance, and may have various solutions. (cf. p. 107, note 35.) There is none of the warmth of the thoroughgoing partisan in Tocqueville; on the contrary, one feels that he is, as we say, "all mind"; and this mind goes on unswervingly in the development of its idea, very oblivious and very careless of traditional connotations of words and of the thoughtlessly preconceived ideas that have spoiled so much of the effort made in France to understand America. What-

ever we may decide as to his method, he is scientific in his attitude; incidentally, he is a great relief in that respect from what we have seen, and from the most of what is to be studied.

In the passage cited, Madame de Tocqueville mentions the extremely close texture of his argument in the second part of his work, and advances that as one reason why the book was found difficult to read. Another reason was that mentioned, that the matter was of somewhat less interest. A third difference in the two parts presents itself upon the reading of the work. "La Démocratie en Amérique" is not a history, but neither is it strictly a commentary, as one is inclined at first to classify it — and in this sense, that it is but sparingly documented. This is a superficial distinction, one may say, since he has treated his subject with such completeness. Nevertheless, it is the reason why his work has rather the character of an essay than that of a minute study. The third difference between the two parts that was referred to is this: that in the second part this lack of documentation makes itself more felt than in the first. In the section dealing with the political questions he is able, without specifically naming certain laws, to treat of them under their general headings in relation to the democratic spirit. Literary tendencies are less tangible, and the fact that in all the considera-

tion of literature he does not mention a single American name upon which one can base the conclusions that he draws, is confusing and unsatisfactory in a sense. Granted Madame de Tocqueville's statement as to the closeness of the reasoning in this second part, it is not hard to understand why it was little read — why there are relatively few articles upon it in periodicals.

It was mentioned that in the first part, his idea is very evidently to develop the workings of the democratic state; one constantly feels reminded in the second part that his interest lies in developing what he conceived to be the normal working of the democratic principles upon men and consequently upon literature.

It will frequently be noticed that his conclusions are singularly like those of other French critics as to the characteristics of American literature; but these conclusions are not the result of preconception of the kind that was so very common in France. There are times when the statements made by him do not seem beyond question, but one does at least feel that, even when this is the case, Tocqueville arrived at them by an unprejudiced acceptance of what he considered the truth about democracies, and that his developments of his opinions are logical rather than simply dictated by his wishes with regard to the final conclusion.

"The truth about democracies" has just been referred to as being Tocqueville's concern; this is strictly correct, and to the extent that, as was mentioned before, his concern for the United States is really only that for the medium through which the study of the larger question is to be made. When Tocqueville reaches a conclusion about American literature, it is likely thus to be made to serve as one about the literature of democracies in general. He has been called, and it is unquestionable that he indeed was, a "generalizing historian."[3] And there is no better example of his attitude toward this view than in his discussion of the methods of historians. Incidentally, it will be noticed that here, as elsewhere, he seems rather to be writing simply upon democracies in general than upon the United States.

M. de la Fayette dit quelque part dans ses Mémoires que le système exagéré des causes générales procurait de merveilleuses consolations aux hommes publics médiocres. J'ajoute qu'il en donne d'admirables aux historiens médiocres. Il leur fournit toujours quelques grandes raisons qui les tirent promptement d'affaire à l'endroit le plus difficile de leur livre, et favorisent la faiblesse ou la paresse de leur esprit, tout en faisant honneur à sa profondeur.

Pour moi, je pense qu'il n'y a pas d'époque où

[3] *V.* Gabriel Monod in his article on Albert Sorel in the "Revue historique," vol. XCIV, p. 91 (Sept.–Dec., 1906).

il ne faille attribuer une partie des événements de ce monde à des faits très généraux, et une autre à des influences très particulières.[4]

This remark is introduced into his discussion of the writing of history in aristocracies and in democracies, — the whole treatment in this second part is conducted through such comparison — of which he has this to say: that in the aristocracy, where certain individuals are very important, historians attach much importance to them in explaining the development of affairs, and are thus likely to seek minutely into their lives to find the explanation for this or for that. On the other hand, in democracies, where the individual is of little account, the actions of all are consulted, which is only saying that general causes are sought out.[5] And even the rank and file of historians adopt this generalizing method, with the results that he suggested above (note 4). And in parenthesis, there never was a more generalizing book than this very "Démocratie en Amérique," a fact that Tocqueville would doubtless have been the first to acknowledge; what saves it is the fact that its author happened not to be mediocre.

This disposition toward generalization seems, indeed, to be his conception of the distinguishing

[4] DA, vol. III, p. 145 (DA will be used to designate "De la Démocratie en Amérique").

[5] DA, vol. III, p. 143.

characteristic of democratic thought, and that of America incidentally.

It is, however, far from being the introductory process that one would expect, perhaps, to find in a people with small instruction or little culture. On the contrary, he considers it to be a very late development in the history of thought. It is, in fact, impossible to generalize before one has a considerable acquaintance with particular facts. And one must, inevitably, find general relationships existing between certain of the facts of the knowledge that has been acquired during centuries of thought and investigation.[6] It is to be noticed here, incidentally, that Tocqueville does not fall into the seemingly current idea that the Americans are a new people:

Les Américains sont un peuple très ancien et très éclairé, qui a recontré un pays nouveau. . . .[7]

But he finds that of the two branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, the American is the one that indulges more in this method of generalization. The reason for this lies in the status of men in the two nations. For in an aristocracy, where permanent distinctions of caste and of wealth exist, the members of each become thoroughly unlike those of the others, and to the extent that "on dirait qu'il y a autant d'humanités distinctes

[6] DA, vol. III, pp. 23–5.

[7] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

qu'il y a de classes." What would apply to one caste would not be true of another; generalization would become impossible. In a democracy like the United States, on the other hand, where all men are approximately equal in condition, or become so after a time, what applies to one must be true of a very great number. Generalization becomes as natural there as it is impossible in many cases in an aristocracy.[8]

This tendency to generalization is reflected, first of all, in matters of language.[9] In an

[8] In his studies upon the United States, Tocqueville was assisted by Professor Jared Sparks of Harvard, who gave him information, or obtained it for him. *V.* Herbert Baxter Adams' "Jared Sparks and Tocqueville," published in the "Johns Hopkins University Studies," in 1898. One therefore naturally thinks of Sparks as one of the American historians with whom Tocqueville must have been most familiar. Sparks could hardly be used as an illustration in point to support Tocqueville's contention as to the characteristics of democratic historians; and indeed it is not necessary that he should be. This circumstance is cited here simply to show how desirable a documentation of the "Démocratie en Amérique" would be, even now, as a sort of test for Tocqueville's intensely interesting theory — or what sometimes appears, for all its plausibility, as little else.

[9] *V.* Chapter XVI of the first division of this second part (vol. III, pp. 108–119), entitled "Comment la démocratie américaine a modifié la langue anglaise." It is one of the chapters that deal definitely with the United States; in the greater number of those of this second part, Tocqueville, it must be repeated, seems not to be considering the United States much more than any other modern state with democratic ideals as his particular example. It will be noticed, in his treatment of poetry, for example, that the only names he mentions in support of certain ideas are those of European poets.

aristocracy, it is the educated caste, the smaller number, that sets the pace in matters of language. It is not possible to maintain that Tocqueville really supposed that the educated class governed the language of the people at large; but it would be easy to show that in this place his words are somewhat ambiguous, and that they lend themselves to a misunderstanding — a misunderstanding that would not, however, be at all unfavorable to the thesis that he develops. It is not necessary to go so far: reading him in good faith, and trying rather to appreciate his point of view and to reconcile it with the facts as we understand them, we can simply suppose that here he is speaking rather of the written language that, ipso facto, impresses itself for a longer period than the spoken upon those who can get into contact with it; that it is, in short, the language of the smaller number in an aristocracy, but of the number that, nevertheless, is powerful over the greater in all matters where they come into contact, and that consequently does, after all, have a very considerable influence over the trend of language. This is doubtless what Tocqueville meant to say, and it is a long way from being equivalent to the simple statement — of which he might be accused — that in an aristocracy the educated minority, and in a democracy the people at large, more or less uneducated, con-

trol the progress of a language. But the passage that deals with this question should be given, at least in part:

Dans les aristocraties, la langue doit naturellement se participer au repos où se tiennent toutes choses. On fait peu de mots nouveaux, parce qu'il se fait peu de choses nouvelles; et, fît-on des choses nouvelles, on s'efforcerait de les peindre avec les mots connus et dont la tradition a fixé le sens.

S'il arrive que l'esprit humain s'y agite enfin de lui-même, ou que la lumière, pénétrant du dehors, le réveille, les expressions nouvelles qu'on crée ont un caractère savant, intellectuel et philosophique qui indique qu'elles ne doivent pas la naissance à une démocratie. Lorsque la chute de Constantinople eut fait refluer les sciences et les lettres vers l'Occident, la langue française se trouva presque tout à coup envahie par une multitude de mots nouveaux, qui tous avaient leur racine dans le grec et le latin. On vit alors en France un néologisme érudit, qui n'était à l'usage que des classes éclairées, et dont les effets ne se firent jamais sentir ou ne parvinrent qu'à la longue jusqu'au peuple.

Toutes les nations de l'Europe donnèrent successivement le même spectacle. Le seul Milton a introduit dans la langue anglaise plus de six cents mots, presque tous tirés du latin, du grec, ou de l'hébreu. . . .

Le mouvement perpétuel qui règne au sein d'une démocratie tend, au contraire, à y renouveler sans cesse la face de la langue, comme celle des affaires. . . . Alors qu'elles (demo-

cratic nations) n'ont pas le besoin de changer les mots, elles en sentent quelquefois le désir. . . .

Chez ces peuples, c'est la majorité qui fait la loi en matière de langue, ainsi qu'en tout le reste. . . . La plupart des mots créés ou admis par elle . . . serviront principalement à exprimer les besoins de l'industrie, les passions des partis ou les détails de l'administration publique. . . .[10]

And these new words, inasmuch as the people who create them are not educated in the classics, will not be of Latin or of Greek type, but chosen from the modern languages. Greek or Latin words will, indeed, be adapted, and they will be used, strange to say, above all by the ignorant:

"Le désir tout démocratique de sortir de sa sphère les porte souvent à vouloir rehausser une profession très grossière par un nom grec ou latin. Plus le métier est bas et éloigné de la science, plus le nom est pompeux et érudit. C'est ainsi que nos danseurs de corde se sont transformés en acrobates et en funambules."[11]

To return to the adapting of words to new needs; it was noted that Tocqueville finds that they are generally chosen from the modern languages. And of the modern languages, it is naturally the one native to the people in question that will furnish the most of these.

[10] DA, vol. III, pp. 109–11.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 112.

And here we arrive at the generalizing tendency which was already noticed in another connection. The very use of native words in new senses gradually takes from them the definiteness that was originally theirs, and tends to leave them finally with as many significations as there are contexts.

Cela fait que les écrivains n'ont presque jamais l'air de s'attacher à une seule pensée, mais qu'ils semblent toujours viser au milieu d'un groupe d'idées, laissant au lecteur le soin de juger celle qui est atteinte.

Ceci est une conséquence fâcheuse de la démocratie. J'aimerais mieux qu'on hérissât la langue de mots chinois, tartares ou hurons, que de rendre incertain le sens des mots français.[12]

Expressions that seemed common or vulgar originally thus come to be used with a better connotation, and the reverse, too, might take place. For, he says, there are but few expressions that are inherently vulgar or distinguished: usage generally makes them the one or the other; and usage becoming flexible on account

[12] DA, vol. III, p. 113. Here, again, although Tocqueville gave the impression, up to the last phrase, of having the United States in mind — since his chapter is on the English language as found in the United States — nevertheless, it is easy to see that his mind was running at least as much upon French. Therefore, the data upon which he bases his conclusions we may suppose to be, here as elsewhere in the second part, quite as probably French as American.

of the mingling of classes, their original sense is lost.[13] The constant change that takes place in a democracy is of a nature to break down one conviction after another, and to leave the greater number of men with this in common, that they have general rather than definite ideas about most matters: the flexible general formula is thus the only one that they can maintain for any length of time. The words of the language and the beliefs of the nation are thus mutually responsive.[14]

Man in a democracy has but two sorts of ideas:

Il n'a que des idées très particulières et très claires, ou des notions très générales et très vagues: l'espace intermédiare est vide.

There is, therefore, a very great probability that, in ceasing to deal with matters of definite knowledge, the man in a democracy will fall at once into the region of large generalities and become bombastic — "boursouflé." And this, Tocqueville says, is precisely the case of American writers and speakers. Poets in a democracy, for instance, seek to express the colossal — "le gigantesque" — in the pursuit of which they are likely to lose sight of the really important —"le grand."[15]

[13] DA, vol. III, p. 115. [14] *Ibid.*, p. 118.

[15] *Ibid.*, pp. 131–2; ch. xviii: "Pourquoi les écrivains et les orateurs américains sont souvent boursouflés."

And this naturally introduces here his ideas about American poetry — although it is not in the same chapter, nor under the head of what is inflated or bombastic that he treats the subject.

But he does not think that democratic nations will be likely to produce poetry with that restraint in imagination or inspiration, or control over them, that is essential to the highest expression. It will not be a prosaic one; he seems rather to fear that in respect to imagination it may be incoherent and far too unreal.[16]

For poetry, to Tocqueville, could not be consistent with any distortion:

La poésie, à mes yeux, est la recherche et la peinture de l'idéal.[17]

Not, however, that it is simply the representation of the world in so many aspects accurately described. A certain degree of idealization in this representation is, to him, the very function of the poet; — only, the imagination, in leading the poet too far afield, will completely estrange him from that degree of reality which is, as it were, the foundation of the ideal.

This is an excess that American poetry might fall into, if it is developed to a degree. A menace that seems to appear to him more real is a probable lack of effort on the part of Americans

[16] DA, vol. III, p. 133. [17] *Ibid.*, p. 120.

in those lines. His reasons lie again in the characteristics of the democratic form of government in its effect upon men.

Chez les nations aristocratiques, il arrive quelquefois que le corps agit comme de lui-même, tandis que l'âme est plongée dans un repos qui lui pèse. Chez ces nations le peuple lui-même fait souvent voir des goûts poétiques, et son esprit s'élance parfois au delà et au-dessus de ce qui l'environne.

Mais dans les démocraties, l'amour des jouissances matérielles, l'idée du mieux, la concurrence, le charme prochain du succès, sont comme autant d'aiguillons qui précipitent les pas de chaque homme dans la carrière qu'il a embrassée, et lui défendent de s'en écarter un seul moment. Le principal effort de l'âme va de ce côté. L'imagination n'est point éteinte; mais elle s'adonne presque exclusivement à concevoir l'utile et à représenter le réel.[18]

So much for the reasons that might keep Americans, even with a considerable talent, from giving attention to the writing of poetry.

There are more serious causes why, even granting a certain liberation among some from the bonds that attach men too closely to the details of their daily life, poetry may not be produced. There are two that have to do with its subject-matter.

The practical trend of democratic education,

[18] DA, vol. III, p. 121.

together with the new faith in the future of humanity that equality in opportunity brings about, diverts attention from the past: old legends and old history will not furnish democratic poets with the characters around whose actions they will write. Their interest is rather in the future than in the past. He does not deny that the present may also present a certain interest in democratic nations, only it is not possible that it should be so to the same degree as in aristocracies.

Après avoir enlevé à la poésie le passé, l'égalité lui enlève en partie le présent.

Chez les peuples aristocratiques, il existe un certain nombre d'individus privilégiés. . . . La foule ne les voit jamais de fort près . . . on a peu à faire pour rendre poétique la peinture de ces hommes.

D'une autre part . . . des classes ignorantes, humbles et asservies; et celles-ci prêtent à la poésie par l'excès même de leur grossièreté et de leur misère, comme les autres par leur raffinement et leur grandeur. . . .

Dans les sociétés démocratiques, où les hommes sont tous très petits et fort semblables, chacun en s'envisageant soi-même, voit à l'instant tous les autres . . . un objet d'une grandeur médiocre, et qu'on aperçoit distinctement de tous les côtés, ne prêtera jamais à l'idéal.[19]

What, then, is the nature of the poetry of a

[19] DA, vol. III, p. 123.

democracy? He is ready to admit that, so far as the United States is concerned, it has, as yet, no poets.[20] But it has ideas that lend themselves to poetry, and that will some day be developed in that form. The intimate resemblance that he supposes to exist among all the members of a democracy, and that precludes the poetry of the court or of the peasant, will some day direct attention to the destinies of humanity as a whole. Poetry will cease to deal with the particular: the characters that it will present will be types, not individuals:

Les écrivains qui, de nos jours, ont si admirablement reproduit les traits de Childe-Harold, de René et de Jocelyn n'ont pas prétendu raconter les actions d'un homme; ils ont voulu illuminer et agrandir certains côtés encore obscurs du cœur humain.

Ce sont là les poèmes de la démocratie.

L'égalité ne détruit donc pas tous les objets de la poésie; elle les rend moins nombreux et plus vastes.[21]

Is the poetry of nature, which almost all the French critics we have encountered in this study feel to be the key-note all too seldom sounded of the true poetry of America; — is this poetry of nature, inspired by the solitude of plain and forest and mountain, indeed the true expression of American poets? He says:

[20] DA, vol. III, p. 125.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 130.

Je suis convaincu qu'à la longue la démocratie détourne l'imagination de tout ce qui est extérieur à l'homme, pour ne la fixer que sur l'homme.[22]

On s'occupe beaucoup en Europe des déserts de l'Amérique; mais les Américains eux-mêmes n'y songent guère. . . . Le peuple américain se voit marcher lui-même à travers ces déserts, desséchant les marais, redressant les fleuves. . . . Cette image magnifique . . . suit chacun d'eux dans les moindres de ses actions.[23]

One is probably likely to feel that here, in one respect at least, French criticism of our literature was beginning to find a right direction. One can only be surprised that the very facts of the case should not, before 1840, have begun to change the opinions of those interested in America as to the destinies of its poetry.

It has already been noticed that Tocqueville felt that literature, from the productive side, could be only a secondary interest with Americans for some time to come. The reading public would not, in any case, be very likely to appreciate works more than usually thoughtful or in any way excellent. On the contrary:

N'ayant qu'un temps fort court à donner aux lettres, il veulent le mettre à profit tout entier. Ils aiment les livres qu'on se procure sans peine, qui se lisent vite, qui n'exigent point de recherches savantes pour être compris. . . .

[22] DA, vol. III, p. 124.

[23] *Ibid.* pp., 125–6.

Les petits écrits y seront plus fréquents que les gros livres, l'esprit que l'érudition, l'imagination que la profondeur. . . . On tâchera d'étonner plutôt que de plaire, et l'on s'efforcera d'entraîner les passions plus que de charmer le goût.[24]

For such a people, what would be the most natural preference in literary matters? Tocqueville thinks that without any doubt it is not in reading itself, so much as in the theatre, that this will be found.

The theatre is, indeed, he says, the popular form of literature, and was so, to a degree, even in the aristocratic nations. There the people gained entrance as well as the privileged classes, and its opinion was of more import than in judgments upon other forms of expression that may be called literary.

This being so, it will follow that in a democracy the theatre will be the child of popular opinion in the very widest sense; it will be the exact expression of the ideas of its spectators, and the æsthetic or moral ideal of the more cultured class will have to find its expression elsewhere, or only to a small degree upon the stage.[25]

This is what may be expected in democracies at large, and in the United States among the others, ultimately. But for the present, the

[24] DA, vol. III, pp. 99–100.

[25] *Ibid.*, p. 135.

theatre had not made any considerable progress in America.

The explanation of this temporary condition he finds principally in the nature of the origin of the nation. The Puritan ideal could not be expected to foster a kind of literature that was popular because above all it diverts; and besides, he says, the theatre was singled out by the Puritans as an especially evil form of amusement.[26] Not only that, but because of the very regularity of life, — the sobriety with which the Puritan ideal had tinged all American customs, — the theatre could hardly be expected to thrive.

Two other reasons: the fact that the United States had had no great political disasters, and that the lives of individuals were less likely to be rendered tragic here than in lands where marriage is not always possible for those who love — the possibility, in short, as we may infer, for men to lead a normal and happy existence both in their national and in their individual consciousness, is not likely to produce either tragedy or comedy.[27]

[26] DA, vol. III, pp. 140–1.

[27] Il n'y a point de sujet de drame dans un pays qui n'a pas été témoin de grandes catastrophes politiques, et où l'amour mène toujours par un chemin direct et facile au mariage. Des gens qui emploient tous les jours de la semaine à faire fortune et le dimanche à prier Dieu, ne prêtent point à la muse comique. (*id.*)

Certain of the characteristics of democratic literatures, and of the American incidentally, as Tocqueville understood them, have already been noticed. He goes further.

Literature as an industry, first of all, he thinks will be a very common manifestation:[28] "sellers of ideas" will be legion. And their wares will naturally be at once what the public desires, and what can be rapidly enough produced to bring the seller his fortune. If he does not write the sort of thing that we have already found indicated — the somewhat flimsy tinsel work that is likely to please for a moment and then fall into nothing with the passing of a few years — if he does not write this, he will write of what is in one way or another useful,[29] or of what is of interest in connection with religion, or politics, for example.

In short, the interest will be entirely away from art for its own sake, entirely away from the forms that will no longer be understood.

J'ai fait voir — à-propos de la méthode philosophique des Américains, que rien ne révolte plus l'esprit humain dans les temps d'égalité

[28] DA, vol. III, p. 103.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 80, where he discusses the arts more particularly; yet this is a statement that supplements the passage where he discusses the reading of Americans as he infers it to be from an examination of the American book-shops in Ch. XIII: "Physionomie littéraire des siècles démocratiques," DA, vol. III, pp. 92–3.

que l'idée de se soumettre à des formes. Les hommes qui vivent dans ces temps supportent impatiemment les figures; les symboles leur paraissent des artifices puériles. . . .[30]

The theoretical character of these passages — their prophetic rather than their really descriptive trend — is evident. Tocqueville, too, would not have us think that he means all that he says to apply to the American literature of his day.

As a matter of fact, he goes so far as to declare, with many others whose writings have been noticed here, that literary America was really English in its traditions. He seems to make the distinction between what we are accustomed to call a "pseudo-literature" — one imperfectly, if at all, representing general contemporary opinion — and the real literature of the United States. After stating that the American reading public generally waits for English judgments upon an American work before pronouncing for or against it, he introduces his distinction with the following rather caustic remark, and develops his idea briefly.

C'est ainsi, qu'en fait de tableaux on laisse volontiers à l'auteur de l'original le droit de juger la copie.

Les habitants des États-Unis n'ont donc point encore, à proprement parler, de littérature. Les

[30] DA, vol. III, pp. 42–3.

seuls auteurs que je reconnaisse pour Américains sont des journalistes. Ceux-ci ne sont pas de grands écrivains, mais ils parlent la langue du pays et s'en font entendre. Je ne vois dans les autres que des étrangers. Ils sont pour les Américains ce que furent pour nous les imitateurs des Grecs et des Romains à l'époque de la renaissance des lettres, un objet de curiosité, non de générale sympathie. Ils amusent l'esprit, et n'agissent point sur les mœurs.[31]

[31] DA, vol. III, p. 94. As was stated at the beginning of this chapter upon Tocqueville, any commentary upon him with a view to arriving at a fairly definite idea of his sources would be bound to be far longer than the original. And this study is rather an attempt to present in its general lines the French criticism upon our literature, without giving any one critic undue space. It is possible here merely to note in reference to the citation above that Tocqueville, too, believed a literature to be representative only in so far as it was representative of the tendencies that he believed most typical of the nation; the rest was for him a pseudo-literature. Democracies are impatient of forms, therefore the writing according to the model of the English classics was not typical of democracies, but only a temporary phenomenon in American literature. Democracies are above all anxious to express themselves with particular concern for the future; therefore those American writers who chose their scenes in the Europe of long ago, are imitators of British writers who did so, and not typical of America. It would be hard to contest with Tocqueville his position that democracies look to their own future for their best inspiration; nevertheless, one feels that he disposes too summarily of the important fact that past European history made a very strong appeal to the writers of the United States. It might plausibly be maintained that democracy is an impossibility, that men living under that system look back with longing to an age when life was made more simple by an iron-bound division into castes,

Tocqueville does not think — enough has already been said to make this evident — that this tardy progress of the United States in literature is due to the equality that was sometimes given as the cause why Americans did not produce more in that way. He thinks that those who maintain this are only confusing the results of democracy with the results of the conditions that are characteristic of the United States:

Je ne puis consentir à séparer l'Amérique de l'Europe, malgré l'Océan qui les divise. Je considère le peuple des États-Unis comme la portion du peuple anglais chargée d'exploiter les forêts du nouveau monde; tandis que le reste de la nation, pourvu de plus de loisirs et moins préoccupé des soins matériels de la vie, peut se livrer à la pensée et développer en tous sens l'esprit humain.[32]

This seems to him the natural solution, under the circumstances, whereby the race could best work along the two paths leading to intellectual progress and to material prosperity.

But the very fact that the United States and England, in the sense especially of having the same language, were only one race divided, was

and that, democracy being impossible to reconcile with contentment, this will always be characteristic of democratic literatures. . . . Tocqueville here evidences his predilection in favor of democracy, possibly drawing unjust conclusions.

[32] DA, vol. III, pp. 60–1.

an important reason why the United States should be little occupied with literature. The tradition of the language was so intimately identified with literary tradition that it was most natural that the trend of literature should be very slowly diverted so long as the vehicle in the two lands remained the same.[33]

Si les Américains, tout en conservant leur état social et leurs lois, avaient une autre origine et se trouvaient transportés dans un autre pays, je ne doute point qu'ils n'eussent une littérature. Tels qu'ils sont, je suis assuré qu'ils finiront par en avoir une.

Tocqueville's constant comparison of the effect of the democratic form of government upon men, as distinguished from that of the aristocracy, would naturally incline one to think that he puts a very large emphasis upon the political conditions as an influence in forming men. He does; but he realizes that his method of parallelism might lead his readers to the opinion that he considered that one influence all-important. It would be an inexact opinion, he says; for although he has almost constantly adduced this as explaining conditions, he recognizes that other elements come into play as well. However, he maintains that the influence of the political constitution is of paramount importance.[34]

[33] DA, vol. III, p. 94.

[34] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

He recognizes, too, the impossibility of finding in reality a democratic state or an aristocratic state; or even, if found, conditions are always changing, and what would be true of the United States, for example, in one generation, — considering that as the democratic state in its most important manifestation, — would be otherwise in the next. In fact, the progress from an aristocracy to a democracy is slow and made by steps that are almost imperceptible.[35]

Dans le passage qui conduit un peuple lettré de l'un (état) à l'autre, il survient presque toujours un moment où, le génie littéraire des nations démocratiques se recontrant avec celui des aristocraties, tous deux semblent vouloir régner d'accord sur l'esprit humain.

Ce sont là des époques passagères, mais très brillantes: on a alors la fécondité sans exubérance, et le mouvement sans confusion. Telle fut la littérature française du dix-huitième siècle.

It seems from the above, although it would not be safe to infer it, that he did not consider

[35] Here is as good an example as any in proof of Tocqueville's conception of an aristocracy as distinguished from a democracy, and that has already been referred to. (*v.* p. 84) Although only by inference from the tone of the following passage, it is a sort of proof, as well — if particular proofs were needed when the whole "Démocratie" may be considered one — that he felt that aristocracies were bound to become democracies sooner or later. For the passage of which the following is a part, *v.* DA, vol. III, pp. 100–1.

the typically democratic state as the one where literature would attain its most complete development. His remarks upon the poetry of a democracy, that have been cited, where he says that its subjects are less numerous, but greater or more comprehensive ("plus vastes," v. p. 98), should perhaps be taken into consideration here to temper such a possible conclusion.

The excessive tendency toward generalization, the rapidity and consequent carelessness of construction, the contempt for form and for forms that Tocqueville finds typical of democratic literatures are thus to be corrected by the contrary influence that he found evident in eighteenth-century French literature.

But it is only at very rare intervals that such a condition of mutually corrective influences will be found naturally to occur. In a democracy

> . . . je dois m'attendre à ne rencontrer . . . qu'un petit nombre de . . . conventions rigoureuses. . . . S'il arrivait que les hommes d'une époque tombassent d'accord sur quelques-unes, cela ne prouverait rien pour l'époque suivante; car, chez les nations démocratiques, chaque génération nouvelle est un nouveau peuple.[36]

There is, to his mind, an important corrective that it would be well to keep constantly in mind; it is the study of the classical literatures.

[36] DA, vol. III, p. 98.

For if those writers were lacking in some respects, they were in others, and precisely in those that American authors would be expected to understand the least, most excellent models.

As early as 1827 the question of the advisability of classical studies for a particular purpose in the United States had been raised in France. In 1827 Asher Ware's "Discourse before the Phi Beta Kappa Society" had been published in Portland. In 1830 it found its way into the hands of a French reviewer.[37]

Le sujet traité par M. Ware est celui-ci: l'étude des orateurs de la Grèce et de Rome convient-elle aux citoyens des États-Unis? Les républicains modernes du Nouveau-Monde trouveront-ils des modèles dans Cicéron et Démosthène?

The reviewer feels that political conviction should furnish sufficient guidance to the American orator, and he continues:

Dans les temps ordinaires, l'art oratoire est fort inutile à une république; il ne doit y être question que de bons raisonnements. . . .

It would be difficult to show that eloquence has not in fact given place in some degree to exposition. But the passage was not cited here

[37] "Revue encyclopédique," vol. XLV (1830), p. 645. Review signed "N."

to be defended or disproved. It is only intended to show the difference between what has the ring of a popular idea and Tocqueville's rather more observant conclusion. For him a democracy would have defects as well as virtues; the reviewer of 1830 seems to feel, on the contrary, that the consciousness of freedom — and, we may suppose, the reasonableness and the dignity of that condition — would of itself dictate irrefutable arguments. This is the idealism of inexperience. Tocqueville's language upon this matter — it will be the last citation here — is worth giving:[38]

. . . si les écrivains y (in antiquity) ont quelquefois manqué de variété et de fécondité dans les sujets, de hardiesse, de mouvement et de généralisation dans la pensée, ils ont toujours fait voir un art et un soin admirables dans les détails; . . . tout y est écrit pour les connaisseurs, et la recherche de la beauté idéale s'y montre sans cesse. . . .

Le grec et le latin ne doivent pas être enseignés dans toutes les écoles; mais il importe que ceux que leur naturel ou leur fortune destine à cultiver les lettres ou prédispose à les goûter trouvent des écoles où l'on puisse se rendre parfaitement maître de la littérature antique et de se pénétrer de son esprit. . . . Ce n'est pas que je considère les productions littéraires des anciens comme irréprochables. . . . Elles nous soutiennent par le bord où nous penchons.

[38] DA, vol. III, p. 105.

"Par le bord où nous penchons." . . . It is impossible to forget that Tocqueville was speaking of democracies as he understood the term, and not of America merely. Indeed, giving as he does the impression that he felt the modern world — at least France, specifically, among the nations of Europe — to be gradually progressing in the direction of democratic institutions, it is sometimes naturally deduced that his treatment of literature might be intended to apply to nineteenth century literature in general.

No matter: for whatever his real aim, he was manifestly interested in the United States as the particular basis for the most of his data; and it was doubtless for the sake of understanding the United States that the greater number of his readers took up the work. And, making all allowance for Madame de Tocqueville's suspicion of the minor popularity of the second part, which has been the subject of the present study, still it is certain that no other work dealing with American literature has had such circulation in France. And, admitting here and applying the thesis of Tocqueville that in democracies (if not everywhere) there is the love of generalization, of arriving immediately, without verification through careful detailed study, at certain broad and therefore always handy opinions, one may suppose that his book

served more than any other criticism — I should be tempted to say, more than the reading of American works themselves — to form French opinion about American letters. Whether it did or not, may perhaps appear to some degree in the pages to follow.

V

Philarète Chasles

The year that saw the publication of the first part of Tocqueville's "Démocratie en Amérique" produced another work, shorter and of another order of merit, but more closely related than Tocqueville's considerations upon the political aspects of democracy to the subject in hand — to literature. The work referred to is Philarète Chasles' article in the "Revue des deux Mondes."[1] "De la Littérature dans l'Amérique du Nord," an essay that was to be followed very frequently by others upon the same subject during practically the whole life of the author. His last work, "De la Psychologie sociale des nouveaux peuples," was published in 1875, two years after his death.

It would be unfair to both, and it is unnecessary, to compare Chasles with Tocqueville. And indeed it is of only incidental concern here to determine their relative permanent worth; what is more immediately important is to learn their influence in directing contemporary thought upon American literature. And

[1] 4e série, vol. 3, 1835, pp. 169–202.

it may be said at once that the question is one of the most complicated, and, on account of lack of documents, not possible to determine fully. Such questions are never very tangible, but in this case what appears a surprising lack of criticism upon Tocqueville, and the fact that Chasles' work generally appeared in reviews, is a circumstance that leaves the matter insoluble except in connection with a general outline of what afterward developed in this particular field of criticism.

In this study Tocqueville was considered before Chasles; but as a matter of fact, so far as special consideration of literature is concerned, Chasles preceded Tocqueville, since the study in the "Revue des deux Mondes" is of 1835, and the second part of the "Démocratie en Amérique"— that containing the chapters on the intellectual life — did not appear until 1840. But Tocqueville lives as the author of the "Démocratie en Amérique," and Chasles as a general literary critic whose activity continued for a quarter-century after Tocqueville's masterpiece was concluded.

Although, as was mentioned, the two writers are unlike, and not to be judged by the same criteria; although the close, logical trend of Tocqueville's deductions, founded upon an understanding of principles that seems sometimes like instinct; although his restrained

manner — all contrast strongly with Chasles' exuberance and somewhat hasarded conclusions, still there is often in Chasles a kind of enthusiasm in the logical handling of his material that makes one feel that, as in the case of Tocqueville, it is not mere knowledge, but rather the interpretation of facts, that he feels to be the chief end in literary studies.[2]

Facts, however, for Tocqueville, were generalizations, from which he deduced, by applying his conception of the action of the democratic principle, still other generalizations; facts are in no case — or rarely — separately considered. Chasles, on the contrary, is not only well informed upon matters of detail, — he is said, during a stay in England, to have acquired a thorough knowledge of English, — but he uses these particulars of information constantly. The distinction between Tocqueville and Chasles is thus, after all, fundamental; "La Démocratie en Amérique" bears much the relation to Chasles' studies that the abstract does to the

[2] Gabriel Monod, writing of Albert Sorel in the "Revue historique," in 1906 (vol. 94, sept.-déc., p. 91), says: "Albert Sorel était le dernier des grands historiens généralisateurs, narrateurs, peintres et psychologues du XIXe siècle. Il était de la lignée d'Augustin Thierry, Thiers, Mignet, Michelet, Guizot, Tocqueville, Renan, Taine, Fustel de Coulanges. . . ." Chasles was certainly of the same school, if one school can be conceived to contain writers as diverse as Thierry, Renan, and Tocqueville.

concrete; the methods of dealing with these two categories will be different, the first being that of exposition, and logical, and the second descriptive.

Chasles, like his contemporary J–J Ampère, was a free lance in criticism; his curiosity ranged from antiquity down, through all the great literatures of Europe, with excursions from time to time into philology, into historical erudition. So great versatility, creeping into his judgments, gives them a certain balance and power that — at least in studies upon American literature — it seems no literary critic closely restricting himself could attain; on the other hand it implies a rapidity of workmanship that will frequently leave but a crumbling structure. Sainte-Beuve speaks of him as a "critique érudit"[3] and in his study upon Loève-Veimars[4] he gives the following estimate of him:

. . . C'est là tout un côté de la critique actuelle, de la mauvaise critique; mais hors de celle-là, en face ou pêle-mêle, il y a la bonne, il y a celle des esprits justes, fins, peu enthousiastes, nourris d'études comparées, doués de plus ou moins de verve ou d'âme, et consentant à écrire leurs judgments à peu près dans la

[3] "Portraits contemp.," vol. II, p. 250 (Calmann-Lévy), in connection with Jules Lefèvre.

[4] "Prem. lundis," vol. II, pp. 202–3 (nouvelle édition Calmann-Lévy).

mesure où ils les sentent. Cette espèce de critique est le refuge de quelques hommes distingués qui ne se croient pas de grands hommes, comme c'est trop l'usage de chaque commençant aujourd'hui; qui ne méconnaissent pas leur époque, sans pour cela l'adorer; qui, en se permettant eux-mêmes des essais d'art, de courtes et vives inventions, ne s'en exagèrent pas la portée. . . . Parmi les hommes assez rares de cette nature, nous ne pouvons pas ne pas mentionner M. Chasles. . . .

As far back as 1819 Chasles had begun to write in English,[5] and in 1823 there was published a collection of studies upon contemporary English poets that had appeared in the "Revue encyclopédique," and that bore the title "Coup d'œil sur les poètes anglais vivants."

We can attribute it to what we will, to this good foundation for a real appreciation of the bearing of English literature upon American, or to a conviction that may have forced itself upon him — as we can only wonder that it had not already forced itself more generally than seems to have been the case upon French critics — that identity of language makes for identity, or similarity, of sympathy, in literature as well as elsewhere; in any case, in the

[5] A convenient bibliography of Chasles' writings published in book form is to be found in Thieme: "Guide bibliographique de la littérature française de 1800 à 1906." (Paris, Welter, 1907.)

article in the "Revue des deux Mondes" of 1835, he says that "twenty wars of independence would not keep the United States from remaining English and Puritan." [6] And he goes on, insisting that the United States have had no literature that was not English, — literature, that is, of excellence: Cooper follows Scott, Irving copies Addison. The fact has frequently, if not always, been recognized; but the difference between Chasles and those who had written before him lies in the acceptance of the fact, which he considers an inevitable result of circumstances, not to be combated, since the causes cannot be changed.

But there is another reason why the United States had, so far, no national literature; he maintains — and this in spite of all the fine theorizing about forests, boundless plains, democracy — he maintains, that "the United States are not a society!" Their original population was a band of people seeking freedom of faith; but bands of adventurers came likewise, seeking other freedom. The original population of the land disappeared, leaving a conglomeration of the most various elements. And the indigenous character disappearing, nothing that could be said to constitute a unity among the whole body of the new inhabitants came into

[6] "Rev. des deux Mondes," 1835, 4e série, vol. III, p. 169.

existence to supply the place of what had been lost.

D'abord les indigènes s'anéantissent, et avec eux cet ordre particulier d'idées et de sentiments, qui naît de l'affinité d'une classe d'hommes avec un sol et un climat, et imprime aux mœurs, aux lois, à la parole, un caractère ineffaçable. . . . Les sauvages fuyant de forêt en forêt chargés des os de leurs pères et disant adieu à leur sol . . . emportent avec eux la poésie américaine . . . et . . . les bûcherons, les serruriers, les menuisiers, qui vont leur succéder, n'auront aucune inspiration à transmettre aux générations futures.

The passage seems worth citing, since it represents both the power and the weakness of Chasles' criticism. We have frequently met this idea of American poetry being, as the product of the American soil, the particular characteristic of the Indians. But heretofore the writers upon the subject had not taken the pains to distinguish between a character, a sentiment, and its expression. And the sentiment, after all, was the personal one, the sentiment of the European;—we may even say, at that, the sentiment of the European of Europe rather than of the European of America, who had doubtless too many recollections, in the eighteenth and first quarter of the nineteenth century, of the harrowing details of conquest and defeat to feel that detached sympathy — I

mean the distance that permits of idealization — necessary to a complete poetic expression of the American Land.

> Lo, the poor Indian! whose untutor'd mind
> Sees God in clouds, or hears him in the wind: . . .

That was what the Indian amounted to in the mind of Pope safely ensconced in England, that was about what the "good savage" of a later French generation was going to be made to appear. It may be poetry or not, according to whether a poet or a poetaster deals with the idea; — but it is certain that there is one thing it is not: it is not the expression of the new America. And there Chasles distinguishes himself from his predecessors: he does not expect, he does not claim to suppose, that some magic in the air of the New World was going to change every stern Puritan and every greedy adventurer into a new and strange sort of poet. His love of brilliant conclusions however, of the general, in which he resembles, without equalling Tocqueville, leads him into an unhappy characterization of the American population: he seems to imply, and we shall find the same idea frequently in him, that all in the United States that was not Puritan was industrial or commercial. The population might, indeed, be both the one and the other, but the general

trend of his argument would go to show that he felt there were no other prevalent ideals. It will readily become evident that here is a far cry from that older conception that American poetry might be considered the daughter of liberty. Apropos, what has remained the key-note of the American spirit: the democratic or the commercial ideal, so far as the two are separable?

But Puritanism, for Chasles, was not, in the numerous manifestations of the protestant sects, analagous to catholicism in its influence upon the nation that had adopted it.

Quand les hommes croient comme un seul homme, ce magnifique concert achève de les rendre frères . . . et si quelque âme, marquée secrètement de ce sacerdoce qu'on nomme poésie, vient à entendre ce grand murmure d'un peuple qui cause avec Dieu, elle chante alors . . . elle laisse à son siècle et à tous les siècles un chef-d'œuvre national.

Le protestantisme américain était autre chose. . . . Les croyances éparpillées réduisaient à rien les hautes sympathies, sans lesquelles la poésie est impossible. Le poète est par essence l'homme de tous, et quand tous sont isolés, que devient sa mission?

L'Amérique ne pouvait donc avoir son poète, elle n'avait point une nation à lui donner, ni un culte, ni une patrie; elle ne présentait à son esprit nulle grande et mystérieuse unité, qu'il embrassât sans effort et avec laquelle il

mêlât son individualité propre; la société américaine n'était pas née, elle ne l'est pas encore.

Or, qui n'a point de poésie nationale, ne peut avoir de littérature nationale. La poésie est à la littérature ce que l'accent est à la parole, l'âme au corps, et Dieu à l'âme. . . .

Probably there is little that is very sound in all this, but much that is true, if only as a corrective to what we have seen; — and finally, there is abounding charm and beauty in his phrases. And is this charm, is this beauty, of small importance in a consideration of the French criticism of American literature? There had been relatively little good writing upon the subject heretofore in France — and when those characteristics are uniformly lacking in a body of French prose, one may justly feel that the matter must indeed be of very small importance in that nation, where prose is so uniformly charming. Its presence indicates an interest sufficient to induce men of merit enough to make themselves heard upon questions presumably more immediately important to the French public, to devote their attention to these studies.

But, although Puritanism divided into many forms mutually unsympathetic, it nevertheless remained, by the spirit of restraint that characterized it, a most powerful influence in American thought. It hindered the poetic expression, but it fostered a spirit of practicality, a sort of

prosaic genius, it seems Chasles had in mind, as the opposite of inspiration. And he cites Franklin and Washington as the types of this sort of mind. "De tels modèles, he says, feront d'excellents citoyens, jamais des artistes."

It was not protestantism, as Chasles understood the word in 1835 — it was not protestantism alone that favored the practical and the prosaic in the United States. He does not confuse the American democracy with those of antiquity, as had always been so readily done — not in France only.

On ne peut comparer cet essai phénoménal, les États-Unis, aux républiques anciennes, sanglantes aristocraties portées sur leur char de triomphe par des foules de bipèdes rampants. Ici, pour la première fois, les masses dominent. . . . Veut-on un succès? il faut le leur demander. . . .

The mind, to be heard, must be the practical mind; and ridicule will be the reward of him who gives his attention to poetry. Perfection in workmanship, originality, forms, all these are of no import; the democratic mind, so far as literature is concerned, will try to produce the popular sort; and the popular literature is the literature of periodicals, and especially of daily papers; neither is it those of a high character: it is a fawning, blackguard press that Chasles has in mind: "elle prendra les vices des laquais,

he says: elle sera menteuse, calomniatrice, adulatrice, et pillarde; elle ne sera plus que la servante salariée du bien-être matériel."

But at its best, that is, even when upright, these beginnings of American literature remain prosaic. Chasles accords to Franklin certain literary qualities; but Franklin, unfortunately for his renown among Chasles' readers, "a rimé quelques vers . . . qui peuvent se classer, pour la force poétique, tout auprès des 'Quatrains du sieur de Pybrac.'" Which is as good as saying that Chasles, for one, had not been deeply affected by Franklin's efforts in that direction.

But there are circumstances in the life of Americans that should make for poetic expression: religious "revivals," he says "sont terribles et grandioses," and the descendants of the generation of 1835 would recognize the poetry in such manifestations. The hard existence of the farmer, the bloody struggles of the hunter and the savage, these are the real source of American native poetry, and will one day be recognized as such; but now, again, civilized America despises such themes. So much for the future, when, we may infer, although it is not clearly stated that this is exactly Chasles' thought, so much for the day when the distance of time separating the event from its poetic expression will give room for the proper, or at any rate the necessary, idealization.

For the present, there is too little hardship in the United States of that hopeless, inactive nature that breeds a spirit of melancholy or of revolt, and makes for poetry; too few, if any, of those great national disappointments that make the noble idealist seek a refuge in the solitude of his own heart.

Not, however, that there are not plenty of poets. He mentions Hopkins, Dwight, Barlow, Humphreys, Trumbull, Freneau, Servell, Linn, Lathrop, Prentiss, Boyd, Clifton, Isaac Story, Allen Osborne, Spence, Braynard . . . "en effet," he says, "voilà beaucoup de gens qui font des vers." The most of them imitate Hemans, whose voice, "timid and sweet," chimes well with the scrupulous morality of modern Americans.

He finds a few names, however, that merit a certain praise: P. M. Wetmore, Samuel Woodworth, John Neal, James Nack, Edward Pinckney, Braynard, George Washington Doane, Longfellow, N. P. Willis, Sprague, John Pierpont, Lydia Sigourney, "la seconde mistress Hemans," Rodman Drake, Fitz-Greene Halleck. But he makes the remark, doubtless quite exact, that poetry is not a profession in the United States; after each of the above names, he gives the profession or business of the writer, and frequently enough he finds occasion to remark upon their material prosperity, — the inference

being, that poetry is here the diversion of dilettanti, and not the cry of the soul that demands expression in the face of all hardship: consequently, that it is neither original nor profound. And indeed, he says almost as much: "en général, tous ces poètes se ressemblent, l'individualité leur manque."

There is a third category of American poets, a very small one of three members, that he places above the poetasters and above the poets who appear to him to lack the conviction that for us, as well as for him, is the soul of and the excuse for poetry.

Trois poètes, Bryant, Percival et Dana sont dignes d'être mentionnés. Le sentiment moral est profond et chaste chez Bryant. . . . James G. Percival, avec plus d'inégalités, a peut-être plus de génie . . . quelques-uns des morceaux sortis de sa plume annoncent qu'il se serait élevé jusqu'à la passion, si la passion pouvait fleurir en Amérique. Enfin, George Dana . . . s'est habilement modelé sur le type de Wordsworth. . . .

But with all that, American literature is empty: and Chasles formulates the error of the American writers. They have made the fundamental mistake of taking "words for ideas, and forms for feeling." Everywhere in American poetry one finds the echo of some image or of some sentiment that is essentially

European: the lark sings for American poets, but "unfortunately the lark does not sing in America."

Une teinte pâle et morne se répand sur la poésie. Sa douce monotonie fatigue l'oreille, sa langueur inanimée assoupit l'âme en la berçant de pensées plus communes que mélancoliques. Chaque vers semble un écho affaibli de quelque poésie étrangère, chaque idée, un souvenir emprunté à la vieille Europe.

So much for poetry in the United States. It would appear that historiography might have had a better fate in a land whose traditions were political, and which had as its particular distinction in the eyes of other nations its form of government. So it would appear to Chasles, as well. But in 1835 he does not find that the results had met these legitimate expectations. And he attributes the cause of this failure to the "spirit of mercantile exactness." One may say, in passing, that this is rather a new theory of what we are accustomed to call "German" research, when we speak of that which is done without regard to its significance in relation to other things — the cult of careful method, the art for art's sake, as it were, of research. Possibly there is inexactness here — of the sort that was rather typical of Chasles, with all his good points, when he saw the chance to draw an apt conclusion. Commercial exactness, that

was exactly what one would desire to find in almost anything American, but as a matter of fact, has the interest in knowledge for its own sake, apart from its philosophical import, ever had anything particularly in common with commercialism: from the mediæval annalists to the modern methodologists in research — through all the forms and shades that erudition has taken on, is there anything in common between this ideal of knowledge and the strict accountancy, apart from any shade of an ideal whatsoever, that is governed by commercial necessity? And even if research is frequently nothing but the evidence of a curiosity for facts, still that too has nothing in common with commercialism. The trait so general among French critics of our literature — not to go out of the realm of the matter being considered here — one may say the mania, almost, for apt generalizations, for conclusions that seem plausible, is thus as typical of Chasles as of those many others far less informed than he certainly was about the United States and things American.

He particularly mentions Jared Sparks and Bancroft, not, indeed, as being upon the same plane, for he considers Bancroft superior both on account of his great erudition and on account of his care in research. Sparks is a clear writer, and painstaking in his investigations. But in the case of neither is there any movement, any

unity in the details that goes to build up a real structure with a meaning. And he does not neglect to complain of their weakness of phrase, their lack of color and life. "Toujours une main incertaine, tremblante; une forme lâchée, molle, et prolixe; toujours des documents pour l'histoire, jamais d'histoire."

In Europe, three American writers are particularly well known: Irving, Cooper, and Channing, of whom he speaks but briefly, since public opinion in France had long since decided upon the place these writers were to occupy there. "It would be unjust, he adds, not to add to their number Jonathan Edwards, a metaphysician of the Scotch school." The phrase is of doubtful meaning, in this connection; probably Chasles felt merely that Jonathan Edwards merited a more general recognition.

But it is Irving and Cooper who really represent — to France, to Europe, he says — the intellectual life of the United States. The English include two other writers, Charles Brockden Brown and Miss Sedgwick, the author of "Hope Leslie." We have seen that both these writers were also known in France, but to a relatively slight degree. Cooper is, however, after all, the only author of American life: "Seul, et que cet honneur lui soit rendu, il a su choisir le côté saisissant de la vie américaine."

It seems, then, that he considered the novel,

so far as there was any real expression of America in American literature, to be that form that contained the greatest portion of the native character. Paulding's "Dutchman's Fireside" gives, to an even greater degree than Irving's works of American life had done, a convincing picture of the American home, to the formation of which he considers Scotland and Holland — countries where the domestic virtues are a more than usually important trait of national character — to have contributed in a very great degree.

The idea of the expression of America in American literature was mentioned: Chasles considers that this expression of America is found not alone in American literature — perhaps above all not in American literature. He characterizes the American as a "half-civilization." Granted the premise, it is not difficult to see where he would go to seek the expression of it: in Audubon, in whose great work upon American birds the forests live again, in Chateaubriand, in Campbell's "Gertrude of Wyoming." . . . Is it necessary to insist? Was not America the land of the European immigrant or of his descendants, — is not the expression of the social life of a people more likely to be its true literature than the expression of a voluntary denaturization of that life to fit some preconception of it is likely to be? The French were seeking what they desired should exist in

American literature; finding the facts contrary to their expectation, they were willing to accept the interpretation of Frenchmen, of Englishmen, and of American naturalists.

It might be a study worth while making in this connection, to try to determine in some measure what the effects of environment upon literary expression might be shown to be — provided anything at all conclusive could be advanced upon the general principles governing such development. It would seem, at any rate, that Chasles was right in his remark about the "particular order of ideas and of sentiments that is born of the affinity of a class of men with a soil and a climate, and that stamps upon customs, laws, and speech an indelible character." The Russian literature, for example, which, in its affiliation with the forms of Europe, is, after all, hardly older than the American, is nevertheless formed, and was so at the epoch at which Chasles was writing; and why, if not because of the very relationship of a race with a soil, of which he speaks? A relationship which, however, had existed for centuries, and ended at last the slow process of the formation of the national soul — the word is as good as another. . . . Or if it did not end, for such processes do not end, it had at least arrived at the point where the race might be said to have distinct positive mental characteristics. The

American literature showed, relatively to others, as the French were doubtless right in maintaining, rather negative characteristics — and the most striking, that of imitation. And the strange fact in this criticism of Chasles is that, realizing keenly as he did the importance of these facts, realizing, surely, that racial, or national characteristics are not formed in a few years after the new inhabitants people the land, but only after a much longer period, perhaps many centuries, — that he should have expected a national expression in the sense of those of the European nations. What he expected, what he was looking for, could only be one thing: the expression of American nature, an American land peopled with half-civilized beings, as he says, but, — and he does not insist enough upon this, with Europeans who had recently lost their own, their racial civilization, without, consequently, having as yet been able to develop those thoroughgoing qualities that are accounted characteristics of a new race.

He begins his essay with the assertion that American society does not yet exist, that consequently there can be no American literature: he concludes by saying precisely the opposite:

. . . la société américaine existe, et n'a pas de poésie originale. C'est une littérature de reflet; un tel malheur n'était arrivé à aucun peuple. . . . La nouveauté inouie de cette civi-

lisation doit ajouter à la nouveauté de ces caractères . . . [he had spoken of the wealth and interests that should produce complex characters), et cependant la Muse ne se montre pas, et l'inspiration n'est pas née!

The essay is faulty in general plan, for Chasles does not leave his reader a clear idea as to just what he considered might be legitimately expected in American literature, but is the most complete and suggestive essay that had appeared upon the subject.

So long an analysis of this first essay of Chasles seems justified, given its importance as concerns the whole body of the French criticism of our literature, and since he states in it his general point of view perhaps better than in any other single article of his. But, as was said, his interest in the subject, although he appears to have felt that he was wandering on arid ground, continued to the time of his death in 1873. For although he was not always satisfied—was rarely satisfied—with the authors of whom he wrote, the problem that presented itself to his mind in the study of American literature was one of absorbing interest: there had come into existence a new nation; there was to develop a new people. The phenomenon, on such a scale as it could be witnessed in the United States, was unique in history. One can understand his interest; but it is less easy to understand why,

in that generalizing epoch of criticism, as it has sometimes been called, there were so few others who treated of the subject. The purely political aspect of the United States would naturally be the most tangible side, as it were, of the question, and we find in that field no end of writings of interest. But the literature, as the expression of the people . . . it was simply neglected, so far as serious study goes; Chasles, with all his hasty work, is one of its most attentive students, and one of the most genuinely interested, if the duration of the interest proves that it was deeply rooted in him. And his last work, as was mentioned, "La Psychologie sociale des nouveaux peuples," must in large part have been the crystallization of those very studies. However, "La Psychologie sociale des nouveaux peuples" treats more incidentally than one would expect, judging from the character of his previous work, of the literary manifestations.

The collection of articles, then, known as "Études sur la littérature et les mœurs des Anglo-Américains au XIX[e] siècle," published in 1851, resumes his work up to that date, and one finds in it the substance of articles not included under the same titles.[7]

[7] The "Études" were published in Paris, by Amyot, without date, but the preface is signed, "Institut, Paris, 1851."

The article referred to is "Des Tendances littéraires en Angleterre et en Amérique" in the "Rev. des deux Mondes," nouv. sér., vol. VII, 1844, p. 497.

The chapters that compose this book, or rather the separate essays, for he does not attempt to make any other unity than that of subject out of them, bear the following titles: "Les Puritains," "Littérature des États-Unis," "Poésie de la vengeance," "Romanciers anglo-américains," "Poètes anglo-américains," "'Le Marchand d'horloges,'" "La jeune Acadienne," "Un Incident de la Guerre de l'indépendance," "Avenir des États-Unis." To take up these essays one after the other, and make of each a complete analysis such as that of his article of 1835, would be a long and unnecessary proceeding, since the intention is here rather to establish what were the general theories and ideas about American literature, than to report all that has been said upon the subject in France. Whatever, then, in this series, that throws further light upon his ideas will be selected, and the detailed study of particular writers omitted, so far as it does not aid to a more complete understanding of him than we already have.

And in this study, it will not do to take a given statement as of very great importance in determining Chasles' point of view, for, as has already been noticed, he is not unlikely to be guilty of a seeming contradiction afterward. He would not have used the word "guilty," and perhaps we should not, as he is aware of his characteristic, and explains it at the very

beginning of his book, in the preface, as the inevitable one of such discussions; we may blame him, perhaps, for not trying to conciliate his varying opinions; where he did not, it will be necessary to attempt it here, if he is to be rightly understood.

Involuntarily, on account of the very nature of his research, the European who studies our literature seeks to find in it something that is distinctive, the key-note, as is said — and so far so good; yet he incurs the danger of unduly accentuating some character that appears individual, but that upon further study would perhaps turn out to be only a slight departure, after all, from what might be found elsewhere if sought for. Chasles himself is caught in this pitfall more than once; but he has the ability to see more than one characteristic — and so in a way he redeems himself.

La France de Mirabeau et de Voltaire cherche à se retrouver dans la république nouvelle, sortie des mains de Locke et de Washington.[8] La plupart de nos défauts sont américains. Dans ce pays comme chez nous les paroles sont larges et les phrases sont grandes. Nous appelons un apothicaire "pharmacien"; — nous n'avons plus d'épiciers; sur un écriteau rouge, on lit en caractères jaunes "Commerce universel des denrées coloniales." Les Américains comp-

[8] "Études," p. 245. Hereafter the intial É will be used to distinguish this volume.

tent, ainsi que nous, deux ou trois mille génies en prose et en vers; comme nous, ils parlent avec orgueil de leurs "trois cents meilleurs poètes." . . . . (É, 249)

The lines are irresistible, and the author of them could doubtless not help writing them. We have seen that although at one time France had indeed felt a certain inclination toward the United States on account of the similarity of political ideal, the tendency waned rapidly, in the manifestations that have been studied here, in favor of a conception of America as the type of the industrial nation. Hyperbole and sounding phrases for the meanest ideas were indeed prevalent here — but does his comparison hold? He would not have maintained that it did, probably, to the prejudice of other generalizations that would later attract him. We have the following, at any rate, to qualify what has just been read:[9]

Il semble difficile aujourd'hui d'isoler la littérature d'un peuple et de la soumettre à une analyse spéciale. . . . Londres, Paris, Java, Surinam, Pittsburgh et Halifax donnent les mêmes fruits, d'une saveur fade et aigrelette . . . comme ces liqueurs qui ne font pas faire de folies, qui abreuvent sans danger et coûtent peu. Les originalités tranchées, les livres qui

[9] In the article "Des Tendances littéraires en Angleterre et en Amérique" in the "Rev. des deux Mondes" for August, 1844, p. 497.

ressortent du caractère intime et spécial de l'écrivain, disparaissent chaque jour. Je ne vois en Amérique que le philosophe Emerson et en Angleterre Carlyle, qui se détachent de la masse. . . .

One might have asked, if a given generation formerly was accustomed to produce many more of the strength of Emerson and Carlyle; or again, whether those two were, after all, the sum of independence in literary expression at that time. The thesis, so far as that goes, would perhaps prove indefensible. But one is glad that he expressed the idea, as it tells us at least in some measure how to take the previous one; and so on. . . . A final prediction:

Ce que l'Amérique deviendra, je l'ai démontré dans tous les chapitres de ce volume; une Europe agrandie. . . . (É, p. 504)

seems much better hit upon. Only, he had not precisely demonstrated the probability of it in every chapter. . . . And there are other dicta that are profound and just, so founded upon observation of typical human nature that no one who would give himself the pains to reflect upon ordinary experience would be disposed to question them:

Notre monde vieilli qui cherche à se rajeunir se rapproche, nécessairement, par l'intention du moins, de ce monde jeune et à peine formé qui voudrait se donner pour accompli. (É, p. 245)

To just what degree the above is true, or inexact, is beside the point; with the remark he makes plain not only the reason for the American love of everything European in literature, but also the point of view, the preconception of the European studying our literature and institutions. It was on each side the ideal not meeting the reality of things, and a consequent search for the opposite of the reality of surroundings that in each case might be partly realized abroad.

And realizing the fact, he does not hesitate to fall into the error. One more passage, the length of which will be palliated, not only because of its interest, but because it is alive and has the author's charm of style:[10]

Quelle nouveauté dans le monde et dans l'histoire, par exemple, que le génie américain moderne? Quoi de moins idéal en apparence? Quoi de moins littéraire? Ce génie n'est point aimable. Il n'est point désintéressé. Il s'assied sur des balles de coton, brandit un revolver, voyage de l'Est a l'Ouest, comme le boulet, sans regarder; il a des vertus, mais ébauchées, violentes, turbulentes, furieuses, farouches, sou-

[10] It is from the "Psychologie sociale des nouveaux peuples," pp. 95–6–7, but would seem to have been written some years before the date of the publication of the work, since the author speaks of the Ku-Klux-Klan as existing. Nevertheless — it is one of his final conclusions. We may expect that he would have corrected it with others had he lived longer; he never keeps his conclusions long.

vent grossières. Il n'est pas homogène. Puritain d'origine, avec un souvenir des cavaliers royalistes de Charles Ier, Quaker à Philadelphie, Chinois et Japonais du côté de la Sierra Nevada, polygame près du Lac Salé, mystique avec les trappistes et les spiritistes, il a créé une secte actuelle, celle du Ku-klux-klan, qui professe l'assassinat comme les Thugs ou comme les sectateurs du Vieux de la Montagne. Cependant l'Américain adore Franklin et fête Washington. Point d'unité. Des éléments épars et contraires, des populations infiniment variées qui ne se heurtent pas, parce que l'espace est trop vaste. Partout, depuis Terre-Neuve jusqu'à Sacramento, ambition, besoin d'arriver, ardeur a conquérir la nature, mépris de la vie, un mépris grandiose; ici, la barbarie sombre; là, une civilisation poursuivie avec acharnement; l'homme, redevenu presque primitif; une affinité violente avec la vie sauvage, avec les bois, les forêts, les animaux, la mer, les montagnes, le désert; un grand bonheur à poursuivre l'aventure partout, à risquer sa vie, sa fortune, à braver l'Europe, à étonner les monarchies et le Sud-Américain, à narguer les vieux Anglo-Saxons, les oncles et les pères; quelque chose du parvenu; mais du parvenu héroïque; le dédain de tout ce qui est repos; rien de casanier et accroupi; peu de haines invétérées entre concitoyens, mais beaucoup de violences sanglantes; point de rancunes, mais beaucoup de combats ardents. Le contraire enfin de notre Europe latine, où les salons règnent encore, où les partis se saluent, se sifflent, se conspuent, s'exècrent mutuellement, polis, ulcérés, pleins de rages et

de haines implacables au milieu de leurs sourdes manœuvres.

Telle n'est point la situation morale des États-Unis. Leur caractère si mêlé et si nouveau vient d'avoir son organe. Ce génie, qui s'est à peine reconnu lui-même, a créé sa poésie. Je ne parle ni de Longfellow ni de plusieurs autres, plus Européens qu'Américains, mais d'un nommé Miller. Cette muse nouvelle n'est ni pure ni parfaite. Elle est naturelle et brutale. . . .

Il est aussi abondant que Lamartine en descriptions animées et complètes; aussi ardemment concis que Byron; il est aussi ému que notre Musset; mais le tout confus, énorme, fangeux, une ébauche de Goya, où le génie s'épanche à flots troubles. Est-il classique ou romantique? On ne sait. Espagnol ou Anglo-Saxon? Pas davantage. Barbare ou civilisé? Non plus. Il est tout cela. Son œuvre est aussi peu classique que les meilleurs pièces de Victor Hugo. Elle est aussi peu romantique que les plus larges antistrophes de Pindare. Seulement la santé et la vie sont chez lui.

Goethe s'en serait contenté. Miller est la nouvelle Amérique même.

It is not the purpose here to point out all the errors of fact that are in this passage; much that he states is questionable, at least; but rather, his willingness to ignore certain facts for the sake of arriving at the conclusion that has no other excuse than that he wished to form it. For the sake of finding a writer resembling Europeans as little as possible, and whom he might there-

fore — but before establishing sufficient reasons — consider American essentially, he passes over the host of authors who represent the greater number of Americans, the inhabitants of the thickly settled East, the representatives of the "civilisation poursuivie avec acharnement" that he admits exists, and disposes of them with ease by saying that they are rather Europeans than Americans. It is like those other truths that have been uttered about the Americans: that they were Puritanical, that they were commercial, that they were imitators of European manners, that they were devil-may-care blades one and all, etc. As detail, such remarks are respectable and entitled to respect when qualified; as generalizations, they are but sad specimens of criticism. Chasles, for example, would have us believe that the United States were Puritan in their origin, but tinged "with a reminiscence of the royalist cavaliers of Charles the First." We have not been accustomed to suppose that the South was Puritan in its origin, or that the self-righteous sleep of the New England farmers was disturbed by haunting visions of glittering dames and cavaliers whom their ancestors fled like the pest in times past.

If his generalizations are suggestive, they are not to be accepted without question, and his readers in France in the middle of the century and after must have got what real information

there was to be had in his writings — and we must admit that there was a very great deal, after all — from his remarks apropos of particular writers, sections, or periods. And certain incidental bits about the fate of the American literature in France are valuable for us here.

Quand Robinson Crusoe aperçut la trace des pas de Vendredi sur la plage, il ne ressentit pas plus d'étonnement que le public d'Europe au moment où les romans américains de Cooper lui apprirent que l'on pouvait vivre à New-York, être né sur les bords de la Delaware, n'imiter personne et avoir du génie. Depuis longtemps les critiques avaient decidé que le talent et la qualité d'Américain étaient inconciliables. Une danseuse hollandaise, une Vénus de Médicis née parmi les Esquimaux n'eussent pas été accueillies avec une surprise plus profonde qu'un bon romancier ou un bon poète aux États-Unis. (É. p. 55)

His esteem for the writings of Audubon, as representative of America, was noted; and he takes Audubon as being the last of the writers of the first period of American literary history (É. p. 105), — the epoch of Cooper and of Irving.

It has been seen that Chasles realized, and devoted much attention to, the expression of American nature, as it was found, for example, in Audubon; and of the man of nature, as Cooper described him; and as a certain representative

which he conceives Joaquin Miller to be — expressed himself.

He spoke also of the element of religious fanaticism that forms a part of the subject-matter for poetry in America, without, however, going into the old colonial literature of the New Englanders to illustrate his statement. This he does, apropos of a then lately published work[11] which he takes the pains to translate into French, with an accompanying article. It is a drama, and one that shows great talent, the translator thinks; and he goes on to say why the form had hitherto numbered so few good examples. It is the same reason that is generally felt to-day to be the true one, and that was indicated before in this chapter. Puritanism, a phase of which Matthews dramatized, had been the enemy of dramatic presentations, of the theatre, inasmuch as the theatre was the expression of the keen and passionate interest in human life, that Puritanism decried. Perhaps it is worth while to call attention, in this place, to the change in Chasles' opinion of the importance of Puritanism when he was writing and translating in the '50's, and when, in later years, he wrote, in the "Psychologie sociale des nouveaux peuples," what we have seen re-

[11] This work is Cornelius Matthew's "Works of the Devil." — His article and translation appeared in the "Revue contemporaine" in vol. V of the 1852–3 series, pp. 204 *et sqq.*

garding Joaquin Miller. In that space of time the facts themselves may have changed sufficiently to warrant a new view: — that is, Puritanism as a force in American thought may have seemed to him to decrease much in importance. But it is hardly necessary to posit this, however true it was, as the reason for the new judgment. It is simply worth while to note that he felt the stress of the two forces, Puritanism and individualism, in American literature.

And here we arrive at democracy, of which it will have been noticed he has far less to say than most critics. And he takes Channing as the representative of democracy, in one of his phases — the one that Chasles considers, by the way, his characteristic.

. . . c'est . . . le balancement des opinions, la pondération des principes que le docteur Channing essaie d'établir. . . . Cette lâcheté de la pensée, cette faiblesse devant l'opinion s'effaceront a mesure que les États-Unis s'élèveront à une civilisation plus avancée. Dans le mode actuel des institutions américaines, dans ce jeu naturel et nécessaire d'un peuple qui tend tous les ressorts de son organisme vers la conquête matérielle de la nature et la création des industries, il faut que tout le monde marche en bataillon et se dirige vers le même but. Plus d'opinion libre, plus de hardiesse intellectuelle. Un ostracisme inexorable bannit tout ce qui dépasse un certain module. Anathème sur la pensée qui s'éloignerait de la ligne commune!

De là, une complaisance universelle pour les idées reçues, un jésuitisme souple et facile. . . . On ne veut pas commettre ce crime de "lèse-vulgaire" . . . on étouffe les fantaisies de son esprit; . . . on ne veut point devenir la "bête noire" du troupeau: la liberté politique aboutit à la servitude de la pensée.

Ce ne peut être qu'une situation passagère. Dès que les intérêts matériels seront satisfaits, l'opposition qui ne tardera pas à se former servira de contre-poids à l'opinion . . . l'inquisition populaire s'évanouira. . . . (É. pp. 64–6)

In his article of 1835, he had not much encouragement to give prospective French readers of the American poets: his judgments at that time were, in fact, such as to deter any who might have been curious about the subject from entering into it. In the "Études" is an article, written apropos of Griswold's "Poets and Poetry of America," published in Philadelphia in 1842, where he again goes into the subject, but evidently without much changing his earlier opinions. This time, the only names worth favorable mention, he finds to be those of Street, Fitz-Greene Halleck, William Cullen Bryant, Longfellow, and Emerson. Percival, Charles Sprague, Dana, and Drake are not mere poetasters, one judges, but still cannot claim much for themselves.

He does not consider that there is a remedy for this condition of the country's lack of poetry;

or rather, the remedy will grow with the lapse of time. He takes the question of imagination to be the important one in this connection, letting us, of course, infer that he means a national, a typically American imagination. And he puts his point very strikingly, by means of a sort of definition of imagination: imagination is recollection put to a constructive use, probably unconsciously; such is the sense of his proposition.

De même qu'il serait impossible à un homme privé de souvenir d'avoir de l'imagination, cette qualité de l'intelligence ne peut appartenir à un peuple né hier, dont tout le passé date de la veille. . . . Les États-Unis . . . manquent du crépuscule et de la pénombre que donne la perspective. (É. p. 9)

Americans, however, realized what was lacking in their productions, and, he says, from 1840 had been seeking, on the basis of national traditions, to nationalize the literature. That there should be irregularity and failure he considers inevitable, but those are conditions of such an effort, and must be excused in consideration of the attempt. (É. p. 304)

In spite of the measured praise that he gave him in his earlier study, it is nevertheless Longfellow whom he finds the most interesting in this analysis; and, as may be expected, on account of "Evangeline." Or rather, it seems to have been "Evangeline" that led him to

take up the study of Longfellow, but, once entered into that study, he finds the whole attitude of Longfellow an individual case, as it indeed was, meriting attention for other reasons than the attempt at nationalization.

Briefly, his attitude is this: so far as subject-matter is concerned, Longfellow's choice was excellent: better than that of Voss writing "Louise," better than that of Goethe writing "Hermann and Dorothea." (É. p. 305) The defect in treatment, as Chasles says, what is lacking in "Evangeline," is passion. (É. p. 319) But this defect is redeemed — so far as such a defect can be redeemed by any quality whatsoever, he lets us infer — by a calm that is almost majesty, and by a peculiar depth of feeling. Tegnér, alone, gives an idea of the melody and measured progress of the emotion. One hears in this verse "la permanence triste des grands bruits et des grandes ombres dans ces plaines qui n'ont pas de fin et dans ces bois qui n'ont pas d'histoire." (É. p. 299)

Two more remarks: the technique of Longfellow, learned from a careful study of all the European literatures, is distinguished by a characteristic that seems peculiar to the Scandinavian — or particularly to the Scandinavian poetry of the older period — that of alliteration. The principle of structure was used by Longfellow with a skill and an effectiveness that

show that for him it was no rhetorical trick; he learned it from the Northern poetry, but he used it unconsciously.

And if Longfellow was a Protestant, his work nevertheless has the distinction of displaying a breadth in the conception of Christian ideas that is worthy of very special credit. (É. p. 320)

VI

Conclusions

Before 1835 American literature can hardly be said to have had a real critic in France. The straggling bibliographical notes and the incomplete accounts of such American works as appealed at all to the French reviewers seem to indicate, indeed, not any interest in American literature as such, but rather a mere mention of what was considered the least important manifestation of the intellectual life of the United States. There are certain traces of a feeling of disappointment that American literature did not immediately reflect in poetry and in oratory the idealism of liberty. The idea was general before Tocqueville — and after Tocqueville it regained a considerable ascendancy — that the American people was a new race, and that a new and vigorous literature would come out of it. There are examples, before Chasles and Tocqueville, of mention of what was termed "the tyranny of the English language"; but Chasles and Tocqueville explained the state of matters more exactly by a recognition of facts: it was evident to

them that the American people was not a new people, but an old race transplanted.

The other important consideration for French critics before 1835–40 was that of the American soil. Such unspoiled beauty and majesty as that could not fail, in the ideas of readers of Rousseau, of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, of Chateaubriand, — such nature could not fail, especially when taken together with the ideal of liberty and fraternity consecrating all to a new epoch of human history, to evoke the most enthusiastic confidence in the qualities that would be inherent in American literature. The boon of this new and vigorous expression was not forthcoming; the French were nonplussed, or became querulous over the "tyranny" of English. It took the "Démocratie en Amérique" to make it evident that the destinies of the race were the important consideration in America; that men did not go there to pass their years in religious contemplation before the grandeur of mountain and plain and forest, but to conquer that nature and to suit it to the happiness of the greatest possible number. The democratic ideal was the human ideal, and the well-being of men was the first consideration.

It was stated above that literature was considered in France the least important concern in connection with the United States. The reviewers and travellers expected much in that

line, found but little, and came to the conclusion that the Americans were seriously lacking there, but without explaining the matter to themselves. And it is this lack of serious and intelligent analysis that left them constantly disappointed and disgruntled to a degree never evident either in Tocqueville or in Chasles.

Franklin and Cooper, in their time, were certainly very popular in France; Franklin because he was the most distinguished personality of a nation to a considerable degree the protégée of France, and Cooper because he described American wild nature — which was certainly what a true American should be expected to do! — and because his plots were absorbing. As for Franklin, his popularity was due largely to his ability as a diplomat and as a scientist. We learn from contemporary reviews that "Poor Richard's Almanac" was popular in French translation, but it does not appear that it was considered very particularly representative of American literature.

After the early enthusiasm for America as the representative of the new democracy, in the first quarter of the nineteenth century, — when it was becoming evident that its literature would, at least in its beginnings, follow along the paths of English tradition — the French surrendered the right of first judgment of it to the English; French publishers are advised

to await the opinion of English reviewers upon a given American work before arranging for its translation into French. There is noticeable here a certain discrepancy, too, between the criticism accorded American books, such as the novels of Brockden Brown, and their popularity in French translation. It is one of the reasons for supposing that the American literature as such, given the trend it was taking towards English tradition, was not considered as representative of the nation: that a given work might be interesting in itself, and widely read, as was doubtless the case with the novels of Brockden Brown, but that, at the same time, it would be very probably an imitation of some English writer; therefore relatively unimportant except in relation to the model, and in any case not American.

The periods in the development of the French criticism of our literature are fairly distinctly marked. From the beginning, that is to say from the last decade of the eighteenth century, approximately, to the year 1819, is a period of very scanty remarks upon the subject, mostly confined, of course, in the first part, to the one well-known writer of America, Franklin. In 1819, with the founding of the "Revue encyclopédique," considerably more frequent notices appear, but it is not until the end of the first quarter of the century, 1825–30, that these

notices begin to develop, at times, into attempts at a general appreciation of the main characteristics of American literature. In 1835 the first comprehensive study appeared in Philarète Chasles' article in the "Revue des deux Mondes"; and in 1840, with the second part of Tocqueville's "Démocratie en Amérique," the examination of American literature as the literature of a democracy. Tocqueville as a theoretician supplements Chasles; together they give a fairly adequate general view which those who come later can utilize, if only tentatively, in seeking out the history of the development of literature in the United States.

The French critics who follow Tocqueville and Chasles will profit by their study. They are, besides, to have greater American writers to discuss. Emerson, Channing, Poe, and Longfellow are to be studied by Montégut, Laboulaye, Caro, Jouffroy, Étienne; and the question of slavery and emancipation will be agitated in France as elsewhere around a work of fiction. The two decades from 1840 will be eventful ones in the destinies of American literature; and the character of the discussion of it is not of a piece with what went before 1835–1840. On the whole its history is a development — not always constant, it is true — beyond the status of the discussion where Chasles abandoned it about 1850.

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