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Browsing Around Among Old Books*

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When I gave the subject of this paper to the committee having in charge the announcement of subjects for the ensuing year, I had little thought of what I should tack to it that would fit the text. As soon as I began to write I discovered that my subject was capable of indefinite expansion. In fact, like old John Gilpin, "I little dreamt when I set out of running such a rig."

I begin by anticipating and admitting the truth of the criticism which I foresee will be made, that this paper was written by an old foggy who, in the last fifty years, has not progressed with sufficient rapidity to meet all modern requirements.

I have always liked to nose about an old second-hand book store. It is like wandering through an old curiosity shop. What strange old books we stumble upon—historical, political, religious, philosophical, scientific, poetical—all in a jumble. We are pretty certain to find Rollins's *Ancient History* and a lot of other old histories and encyclopedias. We shall be likely to find *Josephus*, *Plutarch's Lives*, *Tupper's Proverbial Philosophy*, and *Dick's Works*, and a lot of old school books, *Morse's Geography*, *Kirkham's Grammar*, *Pike's Arithmetic*, *McGuffey's Readers*, and perhaps some of *Webster's Spelling Books* and a lot of old atlases. We shall also be likely to find some of *Peter Parley's* children's books and other juveniles of a past age. Probably we shall find some old theological books—*Clarke on the Promises* and Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress*, lying peacefully side by side with *Paine's Age*

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of *Reason*, *Jack Shepherd*, and *The Pirate's Own Book*. We shall also find a great number of novels, mostly very old ones, *Thaddeus of Warsaw*, *Scottish Chiefs*, and *Children of the Abbey*, a lot of Maryatt's and perhaps some of Maria Edgeworth's *Popular and Moral Tales*. We shall be certain to find a large and miscellaneous assortment of old-timers that we never heard of before. Mingled with these we may possibly find a few law books, mournful remains of some young lawyer whose conscience forbade his charging fees commensurate with the value of his services, and some old medical books, full of jaw-breaking terms that frightened some young medical student into abandoning his chosen profession.

As for myself, I never could go into a second-hand book store and get out without buying a book. I suppose that I was an easy mark for dealers in old library junk. Occasionally I have an opportunity, of which I always gladly avail myself, of rummaging around in old closets, in attics and garrets, and picking out old books that have been handed down from generation to generation and have finally been tucked away in dark corners where they have not seen daylight for years; some that were worth something once, some that were never worth anything.

I have always been interested in reading about old libraries and in knowing what kind of books were in them. When John Bunyan wrote *Pilgrim's Progress*, a large part of it having been written while he was in prison, he had only two books, the Bible and Fox's *Book of Martyrs*.

We have a hint of some of the books in the library of Judge Sewall, of Boston, as far back as the year 1700. Sewall was a great lover of books. Here are the names of a few of the books ordered by him from London—with which doubtless most of the members of this Club are familiar: *Ars Cogitandi* (2), *Le Grand's Philosophy* (Latin), *Heerboordi Meletomata* (3), Dr. Charleton's *Physiologia*, Dr. Moor's *Immortality of the Soul*, *Metaphysics*, *Ethicks*, Glanvil's *Sceptis Scientifica*, Dr. Wilkin's *Natural Principles*, and *Duties*, his *World in the Moon*, Stallius, his *Regulae Phylosophicae*, Stierij *Questiones Physicae cum Praeceptis*, *Philosophiae*, *Burgerdicius*, *Logick with Heerebord's Notes*, the great *Historical, Geographical and Poetical Dictionary* being a curious Misscellany of Sacred and Prophane History printed at London for Henry Rhodes.

One of the earliest known public libraries in the Northwest Territory was a library established in Athens county, Ohio, about the year 1804, long known as the "coon-skin" library. It was so called because the books were bought, generally in Boston, in exchange for coon-skins and for the skins of other fur-bearing animals, mostly those shot and trapped by the farmer boys of the neighborhood. The first purchases, we are told, included the following: Robertson's *North America*, Harris's *Encyclopedia*, 4 Vols., Morse's *Geography*, 2 Vols., Adams's *Truth of Religion*, Goldsmith's *Works*, 4 Vols., *Eveline*, 2 Vols., *Children of the Abbey*, 2 Vols., *Blair's Letters*, Clarke's *Discoveries*, Ramsey's *American Revolution*, Goldsmith's *Animated Nature*, 4 Vols., Playfair's *History of Jacobinism*, *George Barnwell*, *Camilla*, 3 Vols., *Beggar Girl*, 3 Vols. Later purchases included: *Shakespeare*, *Don Quixote*, *Locke's Essay*, *Scottish Chiefs*, *Josephus*, Smith's *Wealth of Nations*, *Spectator*, *Plutarch's Lives*, *Arabian Nights*, *Life of Washington*.

It may be noted that fiction was well represented in this list and that the novels were pretty well up to date, including the latest English novel, Madame D'Arblay's *Camilla*. French novels had not then made their appearance in this country.

Speaking about old books suggests a query: When is a book to be regarded as old? This is a question as difficult, although not quite so delicate, as one about a lady's age. Some books age prematurely. Most novels are of this kind. Some of them are regarded as old in six months; some in a year; most of them in two years; some, like *Robinson Crusoe*, seem to be endued with perpetual youth.

This question naturally leads to a consideration of the vitality of books. A few, like old classics, have lasted for centuries. The poets seem to live longest, but the list of English poets whose poetical works have lived over one hundred years is surprisingly small. Some great orations of Demosthenes and Cicero have come down through the ages, and some of Pitt's and Burke's and Fox's are still read. Of the great American orations how many are read today? Patrick Henry's speech on the Stamp Act is still read and still declaimed by the school boys. Webster's reply to Hayne and a few other of his speeches still live. Lincoln's Gettysburg address will be read as long as the American nation lasts. Of all the American speeches in the last fifty years I recall but

one that will probably be read in the next century. That is the speech of Colonel Robert Ingersoll, delivered in Indianapolis in 1876, or rather that portion of it beginning with the words: "The past rises before me like a dream." I heard all of it, standing in a drizzling rain within a few feet of the orator. I have read it many times since, and its eloquence always thrills me anew.

A considerable part of the literature of the seventeenth century consisted of books of a religious cast, sermons, tracts, discussions and the like. This was so in England, especially in the Cromwellian period. Carlyle tells us of this kind of literature and its fate.

"The Fast-day Sermons of St. Margaret's Church Westminster, in spite of printers, are all grown dumb! In long rows of little dumpy quartos, gathered from the book stalls, they indeed stand here bodily before us; by human volition they can be read, but not by any human memory remembered. We forget them as soon as read; they have become a weariness to the soul of man. They are dead and gone, they and what they shadowed; the human soul, got into other latitudes, cannot now give harbour to them."

Nearly all the literature in New England during the seventeenth century was of Puritan cast. One of them, John Norton's *The Orthodox Evangelist*, published in Boston in 1654, I have tried time and again to understand, but I never could grasp its meaning.

I suppose that theological students still read some of Hooker's and Jonathan Edward's sermons. Perhaps they are read by others out of curiosity to see if they still smell of fire and brimstone as has been charged. This reminds me that I once wanted to examine the volume of Jonathan Edward's works, containing his celebrated sermon on *A Sinner in the Hands of an Angry God*, one which it has been said New England may have forgiven but has never forgotten. I asked Mr. Fishback, a former President of this Club, if he could loan me the volume, when he answered with some warmth that he did not have it, but that if he had it the first thing he would do would be to burn it. This is not one of the volumes that I ever skim through for amusement. I hope, however, to vindicate myself against the suspicion of hopeless heresy by saying that I have some theological books in my library which I can read, and which I do sometimes read, with interest and profit, and without having a nightmare. Among these are the sermons

of two members whose names are still honored in this Club, Reverend Oscar McCullough and Reverend Myron Reed.

As illustrating the vitality of books, let us consider those of the Elizabethan age, a great age in English literature, and not so far back when we measure time by centuries. Of course, Shakespeare's works stand pre-eminent. His fame increases rather than diminishes. But Shakespeare was the greatest literary creative genius that ever lived. He is the product not of one only, but of many centuries. Next to Shakespeare stands Milton. He is still recognized as standing at the head of English epic poets. Daniel Webster, the prince of American orators, in the greatest of his orations, his reply to Hayne, drew from *Paradise Lost* the most striking of his illustrations. Still, I think it may be safely affirmed that *Paradise Lost* was not as popular in the middle of the nineteenth century as it was at the beginning of it, and that it is not as generally read now, either in England or America, as it was fifty years ago. Spenser's *Fairy Queen*, so noted in its day, is, of course, remembered, and the adventures of the Red Cross Knight and the fair Una are still read, but only by a very small minority of reading people. In the preface to Hart's *Essay on the Fairy Queen*, published in 1847, the author says: "Spenser was once regarded as the great storehouse of moral and intellectual truth. But the fashion of literature changes and the *Fairy Queen* has now become not unlike a half-decayed and unfrequented cathedral of the olden time." How many now read Bunyan's *Pilgrim's Progress* in comparison with the number of those who read it fifty or one hundred years ago when more copies of it were sold than were copies of any other book except the Bible.

How many other books of the Elizabethan age have been forgotten or their names, if remembered at all, are remembered only by a few explorers of literary ruins? How many of the orations, the poems, the novels, since the Elizabethan age and before the beginning of the Victorian age, are read by any considerable number of people today? Here is a list of the poet-laureates of England since 1670 as given in Chambers's *Encyclopedia*: John Dryden, Nahum Tate, Nicholas Rowe, Laurence Ensden, Colley Cibber, William Whitehead, Thomas Wharton, Henry James Tye, Robert Southey, William Wordsworth and Alfred Tennyson. We remember Colley Cibber, not for his poetry, but because of his *Apology*, for his life. We remember Dryden and we still read

Wordsworth and Tennyson; but who reads the poems and how many remember even the names of the others? How many books of the nineteenth century may we safely affirm will be read at the end of the twentieth?

In order to curtail within a reasonable limit what I have to say about old books, I shall be obliged to restrict my remarks to those generally read in the days of my boyhood and young manhood—say between 1850 and 1860—excluding the old classics, scientific works, political books, and books read principally by students and scholars.

I was born on October 24, 1839. Milton thought that he had been born an age too late. I am glad that I was born into this world just when I was. I am glad that I was born in the nineteenth century; that I was born in a progressive and not a decadent age; that I was born in America; that I was born in a republic. It was an age of great beginnings; science was expanding; in Europe the people were chafing against despotism and questioning the divine right of kings; in England they were clamoring for reforms in government; civil and religious liberty were growing; Victoria was crowned Queen of England in 1838 and the great Victorian age began. Nowhere was civilization making more rapid strides than in America. Literature everywhere felt the touch of progress, but it is of literature as it was about the middle of the nineteenth century and of books then generally read that I wish more particularly to speak.

In the early fifties I lived in the family of Samuel P. Oyler, my step-father, in Franklin, the county seat of Johnson county, in Indiana. There was no public library in the town. The State Legislature had made provision in 1852 for a system of public township libraries, but the system soon broke down and the books in the Franklin township library disappeared..

The Indiana State library was established in 1825, but did not make much of a showing until after 1850. Even in Indianapolis, the capital of the state, there was no public city library until 1871.

Nevertheless we had books. There was a small but good collection in the Franklin College library. There were several very good private libraries in the town, and the owners were liberal in loaning their books. My step-father was a great lover of books and he had a considerable and very good collection of them, which I now have and which includes many of the books men-

tioned, and many more that are not mentioned, in this paper. Among his books were some old histories, including Robertson's *History of the Middle Ages*; some philosophical works, such as the philosophies of Brown and Cousins, a few scientific books, and some books of a theological cast, such as Gregory's *History of the Church*, *Jews' Letters to Voltaire*, Ranke's *History of the Reformation*, John Norton's *Orthodox Evangelist*, and sermons and discourses sufficient for a small family; also Edward's book on *Spiritualism*, which had begun to be talked about.

His library also included a large number of biographies, some collections, such as Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, Creasy's *Eminent Etonians*, and a great number of individual biographies. Among these was Weems's *Life of Washington*, published in 1837, in which the good rector who wrote it told about the hatchet and the cherry tree and other stories illustrating the pious training of the Father of His Country. These long remained, but were finally exploded by Sparks and other iconoclastic historians, who showed that, notwithstanding his early training, that illustrious man had some of the failings of other mortals, one of them being that he was liable to give way to violent paroxysms of rage in which he was apt to swear like a trooper. My step-father's library contained several dramatic works, including those of Shakespeare, Beaumont and Fletcher, Boker, Ben Jonson, Massinger, and Bulwer, but I must admit that I never read any but those of Shakespeare. In the library were also many poetical works, including those of Milton, Dryden, Pope, Wordsworth, Burns, Byron, Moore, Scott, Tupper, Montgomery, Ossian, Praed, Mrs. Hemans, Eliza Cook and several others. The library also contained the *Tatler* and *Guardian*, *Spectator*, and the essays of the leading British essayists. It also contained most of the works of the leading English novelists, Fielding, Smollett, Maryatt, Bulwer, Scott, Dickens, Jane Austen, Maria Edgeworth, Miss Mitford, and other standard English novels; also Tupper's and other English novels of less note.

Besides the books I have mentioned there was also in my step-father's library a considerable miscellaneous assortment of literary odds and ends not worth particular mention. My own father, who died when I was an infant, had made the beginning of a library and among his books, which I inherited, were the volumes of the old *Encyclopedia Americana*, the second edition, published

in 1836, in thirteen volumes. The binding is still as good as new, a delight to the eye, nothing like the shoddy stuff we get nowadays.

So that in my younger days I had access to all the books that I had the time and opportunity to read. Indeed, there were many books in my step-father's library that I never had time to read; but there were also a great many that I did read. To these I have since added many more. Ever since then I have appreciated the advantage of having a good home library where the children of the household *see* the books every day and have an opportunity to get acquainted with them and to make companions of them.

Most of the English books of any note in England were reprinted in this country, and in them we find the imprints of some old American publishing houses whose names are now recalled only by the title pages of the books they once published.

There were some English books, besides poetical works and novels, that were popular in America in the early fifties. The two volumes of Chambers's *Information for the People* were reprinted in this country in 1854 and had a great sale here. They contained in compact and readable form a vast amount of information about many scientific, historical and other subjects of interest to the general reader, and were of special value to those who were unable to purchase the more voluminous but expensive encyclopedias. Dick's *Complete Works*, also containing a great deal of general information written in popular style, were reprinted in 1851 in this country, where they had an immense sale. Other English books, such as Humboldt's *Cosmos* and all of Hugh Miller's including his *Old Red Sandstone*, *My Schools and School Masters*, and *Footprints of the Creator*, were also well known in this country in the early fifties. The doctrine of Evolution, then thought to border on sacrilege, had also begun to attract attention and Darwin's *Origin of Species* was widely read in America as well as in England. Spencer's *Social Statics* also excited much interest, and gave a great impetus to the study of sociology in the United States as well as in England. Another English book, extremely popular in America in the early fifties, was Martin Farquar Tupper's *Proverbial Philosophy*, published in 1839. It was unmercifully ridiculed by critics; nevertheless it passed through over forty editions and was translated into several languages. It had an extraordinary sale in the United States, where, it is said,

over five hundred thousand copies were sold. DeTocqueville's *Democracy in America* was also very popular.

Most reading people in America in the year 1850 knew something about ancient and modern history, but there was a prevalent prejudice against both Gibbon and Hume on account of their religious views. Moreover, the style of both was too pompous to suit the popular mind. Macaulay in his *History of England*, the first two volumes appearing in 1848, had begun to make history more attractive than it had ever been made by any prior historian.

In American history in 1850 the leading historians were Bancroft and Hildreth. It seemed that the publication of Bancroft's history would never end. The first volume was published in 1834 and was succeeded by others at varying intervals, the last, the tenth, not being published until many years afterwards; so that Bancroft's history has been styled by one critic, "A mammoth preparation to *begin* a History of the United States." There were some objectionable features in Bancroft's style, and another critic says that his history might properly be called "The Psychological Autobiography of George Bancroft as Illustrated by Incidents and Characters in the Annals of the United States." Hildreth was strongly anti-slavery, with marked federal proclivities. His work was very dry, but has always been regarded as authoritative. Other American historians were Prescott, and later, Motley and Parkman. The latter's *Conspiracy of Pontiac*, published in 1857, is not only historically accurate, but it is as fascinating as a novel.

Of course all reading people read Shakespeare, although such was the prejudice against the theater that many who read Shakespeare would not venture to see one of his plays acted upon the stage. At an early day one of the preachers in Indianapolis was suspected of heterodox notions and was obliged to resign his pastorate. One of the serious charges against him was that he had been caught in the very act of reading Shakespeare to his wife. I feel bound to say that the capital city of Indiana by the middle of the nineteenth century had made considerable progress in literary liberty, to which, doubtless, Henry Ward Beecher, who at a later period occupied a pulpit in Indianapolis, largely contributed.

The first part of Goethe's *Faust* was published in Germany in 1806 and there were several English translations prior to 1850, but the best, that of Bayard Taylor, was not published until 1871. It is impossible to translate the exact meaning and the nice shade

of poetic coloring from one language into another, and for this reason Goethe's great work was not generally read in America in my younger days, but the poets whose poems were most generally read were the English and American poets.

Of course Milton, if we class Shakespeare among the dramatists and not among the poets, stood at the head of the old English poets. "Not to know Milton," it has been said, "is to argue yourself unknown." In his essay on Milton, Macaulay asserts that as "Civilization advances Poetry necessarily declines;" but notwithstanding the great authority of Macaulay, his assertion does not seem to be sustained as applied to lyric poetry and may be questioned, even as to epic poetry, when we consider the popularity of Tennyson's *Idyls of the King*. There are other reasons, besides the advance of civilization, by which we may account for the decline in popularity of Milton and other of the old English poets. However this may be, it is certainly true, as already stated, that Milton's poems were not as popular in the middle of the last century as they were at the beginning of it, and that they are not as popular now as they were fifty years ago. Other of the old English poets, like Dryden, although celebrated in their day, were not so popular in this country in the early fifties. Some of Pope's poems, such as his *Essay on Man* and his *Eloise and Abelard*, were read, but Pope's poems had seemingly lost their charm. Some of the older poets were remembered, but more for their shorter, than for their longer poems, and some were remembered for only one or two, as we remember Goldsmith for his *Deserted Village*, Gray for his *Elegy in a Country Churchyard*, or Campbell for his *Battle of Hohenlinden*. Indeed, by 1850, people had not only forgotten the poems, but also the names of many of the old poets. These had been succeeded by a newer generation, Byron, Thomas Moore and others. Byron occupied then, as he still does, a somewhat anomalous position among early English poets. His *Don Juan* was very witty. It also contained some beautiful stanzas, but the levity and low moral tone which characterized the entire poem made it objectionable to many reading people, prejudicing them not only against this particular poem, but against all of Byron's poetical works. Nevertheless, his *Destruction of Sennacherib* exhibited a sublimity of thought and expression equaled by few of the English poets, and there were passages in some of his other poems, such as the lines in *Childe*

Harold describing the the Battle of Waterloo, and the lines depicting the Dying Gladiator, which displayed poetic genius of the highest order. This served to place Byron, notwithstanding the objections to his *Don Juan*, in the front rank of English poets. Thomas Moore was also well and favorably known, but chiefly by his shorter lyrics, such as *Oft in the Stilly Night* and some others rather than by *Lalla Rookh* and his longer poems.

Of the longer modern poems by far the most popular in England and in America in the early fifties were Scott's *Lady of the Lake* and *Marmion*, which retain their popularity to this day. My mother could begin with almost any line in the *Lady of the Lake* and quote from memory a whole page.

Of the writers of short poems, Robert Burns was extremely popular. His exquisite poem, *The Cotter's Saturday Night*, was as familiar in my youth in America as it was in England. So were some of his other short poems, such as his *Ode to a Mouse*. Tennyson published his *In Memoriam* in 1850, and in 1854 his *Charge of the Light Brigade*; his *Idyls of the King* did not appear until 1859. These at once received unstinted praise both in England and in this country and placed Tennyson in the front rank among English poets.

One English poet, Wordsworth, achieved great fame despite the sneers of his critics, and in almost every volume of selected poems we find more quotations from those of Wordsworth than we find from any other English poet except Shakespeare. Wordsworth became poet-laureate in 1834 and died in 1850. Some of his earlier poems gave little promise of his subsequent fame. It is difficult to recognize any great poetical genius in such poems as the one about *Goody Blake and Harry Gill*, or in the poem which tells of *Betty Foy* and her Idiot Boy, concluding with this stanza:

"And thus, to Betty's queries, he
Made answer like a traveler bold
(His very words I give to you)
'The cocks did crow to-whoo, to-whoo
And the sun did shine so cold'
— Thus answered Johnny in his glory
And that was all his travels story."

or in the poem about Peter Bell, with a donkey as chief hero, and which winds up by telling how wicked Peter—

"Forsook his courses, renounced his folly
And, after ten months of melancholy,
Became a good and honest man."

and one would have to be of an extremely lachrymose as well as poetical disposition in order to weep over Alice Fell.

These poems were mercilessly ridiculed by Jeffrey, then the Autocrat of British reviewers, in the *Edinburg*, at that time the greatest of the reviews. Jeffrey was not simply severe; he was almost ferocious. He began the review of the *Excursion* with this savage sentence: "This, we think, has the merit of being the very worst poem we ever saw imprinted in a quarto volume." A later English writer, less prejudiced than Jeffrey, expresses this opinion of Wordsworth: "Had he gone on writing nothing but the 'Betty Foy's' and 'Alice Fells' which Jeffrey laughed at we should not have had in this place to do a biography of him. It is despite a great deal of perverse drivel, besides indifferent matter otherwise, and not in the least because of it, that he continued, and must continue, to be remembered." But Wordsworth did write some poems that are often quoted, such as the one on *Revisiting the Banks of the Wye*, the one entitled *She Was a Phantom of Delight*, and one on *Intimations of Immortality*. One of them, *We Are Seven*, was reprinted in the old McGuffey's Reader and was familiar to American school children in my boyhood days.

Robert Browning was little known in America prior to 1850. His most noted, poem, *The Ring and the Book*, was not published until 1869. An English critic says that "It can be comprehended by poets only," and, it may be added, by but few of them. After more than forty years of futile efforts to decipher the meaning of some of its occult passages they still remain unintelligible to the great majority of American readers.

Mrs. Hemans was the most popular of the female English poets. She was a voluminous writer. Her verses were highly praised by Jeffrey and other English critics. Her larger and more ambitious poems have not sustained the reputation of the author and her shorter ones were of unequal merit, but some of them were very beautiful and have become classics in English Literature, such as her *English Homes* and *Treasures of the Deep*. Reprints of the English editions of her complete poetical works were produced in this country at an early date and made her as well known in this country as in England. The original manuscript of her well known poem, *The Landing of the Pilgrim Fathers in New England*, is carefully preserved among the sacred relics in Pilgrim Hall in Plymouth, Massa-

chusetts. Some of her poems, such as *He Never Smiled Again*, and *Casibianca*, the one that tells of the boy who "stood on the burning deck," were printed in the school books in my boyhood days and *Casibianca* was a favorite poem for recitation in village and country schools. Some of the poems of Mrs. Eliza Cook, another English poetess, not so famous as Mrs. Hemans, were also popular in America as well as in England. *The Old Arm Chair* was one of my mother's favorites.

We had some American poets as early as 1850 who afterward became famous. Bryant's *Thanatopsis* was published in 1816, and many other of his poems at later dates. Neither Whittier nor Longfellow, prior to 1850, had become known as one of the greatest American poets.

Whittier began writing poetry as early as 1825, but most of his poems prior to 1850 were written in condemnation of slavery. No complete collection of them was published until 1849. *Maud Muller* was published in 1854; *Eternal Goodness* in 1865; *Snow Bound* in 1866 and *Tent on the Beach* in 1867. His *Snow Bound* is as striking and beautiful a description of New England rural life as Burns's *Cotter's Saturday Night* is of rural Scottish life. Through many of Whittier's poems there runs a deep religious vein, but his theology was in striking contrast with the fire and brimstone kind that had been handed down by such Puritan ministers as Hooker and Jonathan Edwards. This is especially true of the *Eternal Goodness* and *Snow Bound*, two poems that would have immortalized Whittier's name if he had never written any others. Not only do they charm us with their poetic imagery and melody but the sublime faith of the poet which is expressed in them reaches and comforts our souls. We see it expressed in this passage from *Snow Bound*:

"Alas for him who never sees
The stars shine through his cypress trees!
Who, hopeless, lays his dead away,
Nor looks to see the break of day
Across the mournful marbles play!
Who hath not learned in hours of faith,
The truth to flesh and sense unknown,
That life is ever Lord of Death,
And Love can never lose its own!"

We also see the poet's faith in these beautiful stanzas in *The Eternal Goodness*:

"And so beside the Silent Sea
I wait the muffled oar;
No harm from Him can come to me
On ocean or on shore.

I know not where His islands lift
Their fronded palms in air;
I only know I cannot drift
Beyond His love and care."

I have mentioned Burns's *Ode to a Mouse*. Considering it merely as an illustration of poetic art I think it one of the most beautiful lyrics ever written, charming for its simple but exquisite imagery; but we see the contrast between the hope that cheered and sustained Whittier's soul and the doubt that clouded and depressed the soul of Burns when we compare the stanzas above quoted with this in the *Ode to a Mouse*.

"Still thou are blest, compar'd wi' me!
The present only toucheth thee:
But Och! I backward cast my e'e,
On prospects drear!
And forward, tho' I canna see,
I guess and fear."

Longfellow's *Evangeline* was published in 1848, but his *Courtship of Miles Standish* and many of his beautiful short poems were not published until a later period.

Some of the metaphors in *The Courtship of Miles Standish* are of exquisite beauty such as we see in these lines in which Priscilla, the Puritan maiden, is speaking to John Alden:

"Hence is the inner life of so many suffering women
Sunless and silent and deep like subterranean rivers
Running through caverns of darkness, unheard, unseen, and unfruitful,
Chafing their channels of stone, with endless and profitless murmurs."

But it is in some of his shorter poems that we see more clearly the wonderful power of the poet to draw inspiration from the simplest characters and commonest incidents of everyday life and to clothe them with poetic beauty. This is strikingly manifest in the *Village Blacksmith*, a poem now known and that will always be known wherever the English language is spoken. We see it also

in other of his short poems as in *The Reaper and the Flowers* and in *Rain in Summer*.

Emerson, although known chiefly by his essays, also wrote a few poems disclosing a poetic genius of high order. One of these was his *Concord Hymn*, the first stanza of which is often quoted:

"By the rude bridge that arched the flood,
Their flag to April breeze unfurled,
Here once the embattled farmers stood
And fired the shot heard round the world."

Doctor Oliver Wendell Holmes was widely known by his contributions to the *Atlantic Monthly*, especially by his *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and other prose writings, but he also wrote some poetry of a high order, such as his *Chambered Nautilus* and *Last Leaf*, in which is this stanza, often quoted:

"The mossy marbles rest
On the lips that he had pressed
In their bloom
And the names he loved to hear
Have been carved for many year
On the tomb."

James Russell Lowell was known as a poet prior to 1850. He gained increased celebrity by the first series, begun in 1846, of the *Bigelow Papers*, a witty poetical and political satire written in Yankee dialect. They still retain a unique place in American literature. One often quoted is that beginning with this funny stanza:

"Guverner B. is a sensible man;
He stays to his home an' looks arter his folks;
He draws his furrer ez straight ez he can;
But John P.
Robinson he
Sez he Can't vote for Guverner B."

Lowell was master of the Yankee dialect, of which he had made a special study, as careful probably as any he had made of Greek or Latin. One of the best of his poems in this dialect was the *Courtin'*, portraying a very lifelike and very humorous picture of this agreeable pastime in primitive New England. Among his later poems one, considered by some as his best, is the *Commemoration Ode* in 1865. He became widely known after 1850 not only as a poet but also as one of the founders, and long the editor of the *Atlantic*

Monthly and later still as Minister to Spain and afterwards to England.

There were some American poets who achieved distinction by a few poems, some by only one or two. Poe was known chiefly by his *Raven*; Francis Scott Key, by his *Star Spangled Banner*; John Howard Payne by *Home, Sweet Home*; Samuel Woodworth by his *Old Oaken Bucket*.

Griswold in his *Female Poets of America* has preserved the names of some of the most popular of the early American female poets. In the edition of Griswold published in 1860 there is a list of ninety-three, beginning with Anne Bradstreet, the first American poetess. The first edition of her poems was published in Boston in 1640 and so entranced some of the Puritan divines that one of them, Cotton Mather, compared her to Hypatia, Sorocchia, the three Corinnes, the Empress Eudocia and Pamphila; and the Reverend John Norton expressed the opinion that if Virgil could have heard Mrs. Bradstreet's poems he would have been mortified with the inferiority of his own.

In the early fifties the most popular of the poets named in Griswold's list were Mrs. Sigourney and the Carey sisters, Alice and Phoebe. Included in the list are some western poets. Two of them, Mrs. Sarah T. Bolton and Mrs. Rebecca S. Nichols, were well-known in Indiana. Mrs. Bolton's married life was mostly spent in Indianapolis where she is still well remembered. Mr. Jacob Piatt Dunn has given a very interesting sketch of her in his *History of Indianapolis*. One of her poems, *Paddle Your Own Canoe*, was often quoted for many years after its publication and its popularity was increased by its being set to music. Mrs. Nichols resided in Indianapolis after 1858 and until her death. Several of her poems are included in Griswold's collection. One of them, the *Philosopher's Toad*, is an apt takeoff of the Ancient and Honorable Society of Old Fogies.

The fame of some of the female poets enumerated in Griswold's list, such as Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe and Mrs. Helen Hunt Jackson, rests mainly upon their prose and not upon their poetical writings. Mrs. Julia Ward Howe is also remembered for her prose writings and her poetical fame is based more upon the poems which she wrote after 1860. Her most celebrated poem, *The Battle Hymn of the Republic*, was not written until after the beginning of the

Civil War. In these days not only the poems but the names of most of the authors enumerated in Griswold have been forgotten.

Of course most reading Americans were familiar in 1850 with the essays of the leading English essayists, particularly Jeffrey, Sydney Smith and Macaulay. Many of these were first published in the *Edinburg Review* and were reprinted and published in this country under the general title of *The Modern British Essayists*. In speaking of essays, I must not omit to mention Bacon's and especially the delightful essays of Charles Lamb and those of Addison in the *Spectator*. They are not so much read now as they were fifty or more years ago, but they are as charming as ever. American essays were not so plentiful in 1850, although Emerson's essays were then well known not only in this country but in England.

American humor had not been fully developed in 1850. There are so many shades of it that perhaps it is not safe to say that it has yet been fully developed, for each generation brings to us a humorist of a type wholly different from that of his predecessors. The humor of Dickens is not like that of Artemus Ward; Ward's is not like that of Petroleum V. Nasby, and Nasby's is not like that of Mark Twain; and yet all these shades are pleasing. Irving's *Knickerbocker's History of New York*, a witty burlesque, was published in 1809 and still retained its great popularity in the early fifties. Some of Oliver Wendell Holmes's writings, especially his *Breakfast Table* series, were distinguished not only for their charming literary style, but also for their exquisite humor. Of Lowell's humorous poems I have already spoken. One book of a humorous sort that was quite popular was Haliburton's *Sam Slick*. The sayings of the Yankee clock peddler were not only highly entertaining, but highly instructive, and will repay reading today.

There were some American books not coming within any of the classes before mentioned that were quite popular in the fifties. Among them were Theodore Winthrop's *Canoe and the Saddle*, which afterwards passed to the seventh edition, and Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast*, and some others, mostly of an ephemeral character, that I have not space in which to enumerate.

As akin to the subject of books, it is proper to mention magazines and newspapers. I do not think that the English magazines were generally taken or generally read in America in 1850, at least not as far west as Indiana. The magazines generally read at that

time in this country were American magazines. At the head stood the *North American Review*, established in 1815. Its reading matter was of the solid kind better appreciated by scholars and advanced thinkers than it was by the general public. Probably the most popular family magazine in the early fifties, and for several years afterwards, was *Harper's Magazine*. It is interesting now to look through some of the early volumes with their cheap wood-cuts and compare them with the beautifully printed and illustrated numbers in recent years. What then gave its greatest charm to *Harper's Magazine* was the department styled the "Editor's Easy Chair," in which George Williams Curtis discoursed in his charming and felicitous way.

The *Atlantic Monthly* was established in 1857. It immediately took the high rank which it has ever since maintained. Holmes's *Autocrat of the Breakfast Table* and contributions by other leading writers made the magazine popular from the start.

There were several newspapers, mostly those published in the large eastern cities, having a general circulation in this country as early as 1850, but the *New York Tribune* took the lead in the North. Its political editorials, written by Horace Greeley, Charles A. Dana and other well-known writers of the editorial staff, exercised a powerful influence in shaping the political sentiment of the North. It contained other features that made it popular as a family newspaper, and it was eagerly read by old and young in many homes in the West as well as in the East. One of its correspondents was Bayard Taylor, and his letters telling of his foreign travels were always interesting. In the early fifties the *Tribune* also devoted a portion of its reading pages to fiction. Solon Robinson's novel, *Hot Corn*, quite popular for a time, was first published as a serial in the *Tribune*. The *Tribune* was the first newspaper that I took an interest in reading, and this was long before I reached manhood. My mother prized it more highly than anything in print except her Bible. It was her habit to read every line in the paper except the advertisements. One result of this was that up till the day of her death, in her eighty-eighth year, nothing could ever shake her devout belief—as fixed and fundamental as any of the thirty-nine articles—in the infallibility of the Republican party.

A very popular family newspaper in 1850 and for several years later was the *New York Ledger*. Fiction occupied a prominent

place in its columns. One of its contributors was Sylvanus Cobb, Jr., a very prolific writer, whose novels were widely read. His weekly instalments invariably stopped abruptly in the midst of some exciting incident and concluded with the exasperating statement: "To be continued next week." Another popular contributor was Mrs. Parton, a sister of N. P. Willis, who wrote under the name of Fanny Fern. Her papers were extremely popular at the time. Some of them were afterwards published in book form, but had only an ephemeral existence.

I presume that the great mass of people in the early fifties, as now, read more novels than anything else. They had grown tired of reading many of the old books, particularly the old theological discourses and discussions that formed so large a part of the literature of the preceding century. I began at an early age by reading *Robinson Crusoe* and followed it with good old Peter Parley's *Captive of Nootka Sound*. Some French novels were well known in this country when I was a young man. One of them, Le Sage's *Gil Blas*, was known, but I think little read, although in its day it enjoyed extraordinary popularity and was translated into many languages. Probably the most popular of the French novels were Dumas's *Monte Christo* and Sue's *Mysteries of Paris* and *Wandering Jew*. The last I read in 1864 with intense interest, enhanced probably by the fact that I was then lying helpless on a cot in an army hospital upon the top of Look-out Mountain, where there was nothing to do but to read, and with not another book for miles around. Under such circumstances a man who has been used to reading finds that he has a ravenous appetite for something—anything—to read, and even an almanac is entertaining. Once in my army life, when on the march through the mountains of East Tennessee, and in a state of mental starvation for something to read, I accidentally got hold of Blair's *Rhetoric*, a very ancient and very dry old-timer, and devoured every word of it while on picket. Victor Hugo's great novel, *Les Misérables*, was not published until 1862, but at once became immensely popular everywhere.

One old novel maintained its standing and still holds its place, and probably always will, *The Vicar of Wakefield*. The English novels most generally read in this country about the middle of the last century were those of Scott and Dickens. Scott published *Waverley* in 1814, and other novels followed in rapid suc-

cession. Scott was a prodigious and rapid worker. His *Guy Mannering* was written, so it has been said, in six weeks. No English novelist has ever supplanted him in his field. The chapters of *Ivanhoe*, describing the journey of Richard the lion-hearted through the Sherwood Forest, including the chapters describing the night with Friar Tuck, the tournament, the siege of the Castle of Torquilstone, and the rescue by Robin Hood, are unsurpassed in English literature in romantic interest and thrilling adventure. *Guy Mannering* is equally fascinating. With some, *Old Mortality* was the favorite. The enduring popularity of Scott's novels is manifest in the new editions that come every year from the English and American press.

Dickens divided honors with Scott, although Dickens's novels covered an entirely different field and were written in an entirely different style. I am myself an enthusiastic admirer of Dickens. I regard him as, next to Shakespeare, the greatest character painter in the English language. Many of his characters are as familiar as are those of Shakespeare. His novels are pure. He sometimes shows us the slums, but he does not pick from them his chief heroes and heroines and portray them in alluring garb. His *Christmas Carol* is a better sermon on charity than most of the sermons that are preached from the pulpit. Jane Austen's novels were still popular in the early fifties. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* was published in 1848. It created a great sensation both in England and in America. My mother and I sat up one night until nearly two o'clock in the morning to finish reading it, and then we were both almost afraid to retire lest we might be frightened in the night by the apparition of Rochester's wife rending her wedding veil over our beds. Thackeray's *Vanity Fair* was published in 1847, and by 1850 he was well and favorably known in America. Mrs. Craik, who wrote under the name of Dinah Maria Muloch, published her first novel in 1849, but the novel that made her famous in America was *John Halifax, Gentleman*, published in 1857. It does not rank with the greatest English novels, but it is a delightful book. The heroine's love is neither pedantic, nor platonic, nor spectacular, but sweet and womanly. Not an impure thought is suggested in the book, which appeals to the best and not to that which is worst in us. In these respects it is in striking contrast with some of the latest best-sellers. Charles Reade published his *Peg Woffington* in 1852 and this was followed by many others. I never

read any of his novels except *Griffith Gaunt*, published in 1866. I did not like it; it was a marked advance in the direction of novels of the sensational type that have since become so popular and, as I think, so demoralizing. George Eliot's *Adam Bede*, a very popular English novel, widely read in America, was not published until 1859. After 1850 Wilkie Collins and many other English novelists appeared and later had many readers in America. My step-father's edition of Tupper's *Crock of Gold* and other novels was an American reprint published in 1851, but Tupper's novels have long since been forgotten. There were some American novels widely read in this country in the early fifties. Cooper's novels, especially his *Leather Stocking Tales*, five in all, were very popular. So were Hawthorne's novels, especially his *Scarlet Letter*. Mrs. Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* came out first as a serial in the *National Era*. It was published in book form in 1852 and created a tremendous sensation, not only in America, but all over the world. No American book ever published has been translated into so many languages or has had such an enormous sale. Mrs. Stowe essayed some other novels, among them the *Minister's Wooing*, but they did not achieve a great success, and I think that they are not often read now. Bayard Taylor also wrote some novels. *John Godfrey's Fortune* and *Hannah Thurston* were for a time talked about, but I presume that they are no longer read. There were also some other American novels of lesser note that I suppose have been forgotten by most people of this day, such as *Horse-shoe Robinson* and *Nick of the Woods, or the Jibbenainosay*. I have omitted many novels that were read when I was a young man, some perhaps unintentionally, but many because I have not the space in which to enumerate them. Of course, there were a great many of the kind humorously described by Lowell as "suitable only to a desolate island."

No one old enough to remember fifty years back can have failed to notice the great increase during that period in the reading of magazines, newspapers and fiction. This was noted by Doctor Noah Porter, president of Yale, more than thirty years ago in his *Books and Reading*. The increase is much more manifest today. Doctor Porter thinks that too much desultory reading, even of magazines and newspapers, impairs the memory and gives only a smattering of many matters, leaving us an imperfect knowledge of others of which we should be more thoroughly

informed. Of the excessive reading of novels, particularly novels of the sensational class, Doctor Porter says:

"The reader of novels only, especially if he reads many, becomes very soon an intellectual voluptuary, with feeble judgment, a vague memory, and an incessant craving for some new excitement. It is rare that a reader of this class studies novels which he seems to read. He knows and cares little for the novel of character as contrasted with the novel of incident. He reads for the story as he says, and it usually happens that the sensational and extravagant, the piquant and equivocal stories are those which please him best. Exclusive and excessive novel reading is to the mind as a kind of intellectual opium eating in its stimulant effects upon the phantasy and its stupefying and bewildering influence on the judgment. An inveterate novel-reader speedily becomes a literary *roue*, and this is possible at a very early period of life."

Since Doctor Porter wrote his *Books and Reading*; since Howells wrote his delightful and pure story of *Silas Lapham*, American novels have poured from the press in a vast and ever-increasing flood. Scarcely any one has time to read them all; it would be difficult to enumerate them, impossible to classify them.

Many of these novels are of a distinctly socialistic tone, and in them we have unfolded Utopian schemes of government and fantastic theories of religion and long discussions of the profoundest and most perplexing problems of government, religion, and society, all being resolved with ease; discussions in which philosophy is reeled out by the ream and plans for reforming the universe are tossed off with amazing rapidity.

In such novels nearly all the rich who figure as prominent characters are described as of the predatory kind and nearly all the sins and suffering of society are charged to them, ignoring the fact that much, if not most, of the misery of mankind originates in lust, hate, envy, pride, wicked thirst for power, depraved appetites and vicious desires, common to poor and rich alike.

Then we have another and far more demoralizing kind of novels; those of a purely sensational type, written with no other apparent object than that of appealing to a class of readers whose morbid and depraved appetites, already cloyed with sensational literature, is continually craving for something still more stimulating. They seethe and sizzle with exciting incidents. They portray impossible heroes and heroines, and give caricatures of society, the realities of which are not to be found anywhere, and

wholly false and distorted ideas of American life as a whole, especially as it is found in our smaller cities and towns and rural districts. In these novels frightful catastrophes and blood-curdling scenes follow one another in quick succession, the whole being highly seasoned with divorce, adultery, seduction, embezzlement, robbery, murder and other stimulating condiments thoroughly mixed so as to produce a steaming, red-hot literary pudding.

I quote from an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* for December, 1914, contributed by an eminent English critic, Mr. Edward Garnett:

"It may be added that a vital reason for the discouragement of crude, violent, and noisy art is that an audience which is habituated to being 'thrilled' will require coarser and coarser stimulants to excite its jaded mental palate. Sensational art is art in which everybody seems to be talking at the top of his voice to attract attention, till at last the hubbub becomes so deafening that people, still resolved on being heard, begin to howl and scream. So it is with 'best sellers' that are 'all outside' and no 'inside' and with 'New Fiction that People are Reading'; the publishers and authors seem to be conspiring to force the note of exaggeration till the typical 'best seller' works with automatic perversion in producing scenes of sweet sentimentalism or shock after shock of melodramatic incident. If I am in error in thinking that twenty years ago the American novel of sensation was a far soberer and more human affair than it is today, I should welcome evidence on the point."

Let us take, for comparison with *Silas Lapham*, an up-to-date American sensational novel, Harold Bell Wright's *In the Eyes of the World*. I have never read it myself but there is in the *Bookman* for January, 1915, a review of this novel by Mr. Fredric Taber Cooper, who pronounces it "an extraordinary hotch-potch of seduction, abduction, murder and other human foulness." Now the significant fact in this connection is, not that such novels are written and published and read by a few, but the fact that when we turn a few pages in the number of the *Bookman* containing this criticism we come to the page giving a list of the six "best sellers" and we find that this particular novel heads the list. I leave others to draw from these facts their own conclusions.

But I am digressing and I return to my subject. In late years I have not devoted much time to the reading of my old books, but occasionally, when I do not want to read on some special subject, I spend a few spare moments in "browsing around" in my library. Sometimes I read one of Plutarch's biographies, or some of the

essays of Bacon or Charles Lamb, or a page or two in some scrappy book that one can read without missing the connection with that which precedes or with that which follows it; or I read a striking passage from some prose collection, or a beautiful poem from some poetical collection, usually some short poem, such as some of those mentioned in this paper, poems that one can read and re-read a thousand times, poems that never lose their sweet fragrance. Often I read from some book of quotations containing short extracts from authors old and young.

Many of my old books recall the name of some loved one; some pleasant recollection of childhood; some delightful vision of by-gone days; some sweet spot in memory where our thoughts love to linger, as the tired traveler loves to linger in some beautiful oasis.

Some of these old relics I have stowed away in the attic, partly to save them from the clutches of the junk dealer, and partly, I must admit, to avoid the possibility of a threatened domestic insurrection against parading so many old frayed-out books in the best room in the house. Most of them are not worth mentioning. All are hoary with age; all are antiquated remains of antiquated ideas. Some still preserve a faint appearance of faded gentility, indicating that once they had mingled in good society; some are little better than literary ragamuffins that at some time and somehow—I don't know how—have crept into my library. They have no pecuniary value. The entire lot would not sell at auction for thirty cents. But some were the companions of my youth; we have all grown old together; and so I will give them shelter as long as I live. May they rest in peace.