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## “Literature in New England”

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### I. Introduction

### During its early history, America was a series of British colonies on the eastern coast of the present-day United States. Therefore, its literary tradition begins as linked to the broader tradition of English literature. The problem is that unique American characteristics and the breadth of its production usually now cause it to be considered a separate path and tradition.And the aim of the work is to search deeply each step of these periods.

### 1.1 The English in Virginia: Captain John Smith, William Strachey, George Sandy

The story of a nation's literature ordinarily has its beginning far back in the remoter history of that nation, obscured by the uncertainties of an age of which no trustworthy records have been preserved. The earliest writings of a people are usually the first efforts at literary production of a race in its childhood; and as these compositions develop they record the intellectual and artistic growth of the race. The conditions which attended the development of literature in America, therefore, are peculiar. At the very time when Sir Walter Raleigh -- a type of the great and splendid men of action who made such glorious history for England in the days of Elizabeth -- was organizing the first futile efforts to colonize the new world, English Literature, which is the joint possession of the whole English-speaking race, was rapidly developing. Sir Philip Sidney had written his Arcadia, first of the great prose romances, and enriched English poetry with his sonnets; Edmund Spenser had composed The Shepherd's Calendar; Christopher Marlowe had established the drama upon heroic lines; and Shakespeare had just entered on the first flights of his fancy. When, in 1606, King James granted to a company of London merchants the first charter of Virginia, Sidney and Spenser and Marlowe were dead, Shakespeare had produced some of his greatest plays, the name of Ben Jonson, along with other notable names, had been added to the list of our great dramatists, and the philosopher, Francis Bacon, had published the first of his essays. These are the familiar names which represent the climax of literary achievement in the Elizabethan age; and this brilliant epoch had reached its full height when the first permanent English settlement in America was made at Jamestown in 1607. On New Year's day, the little fleet commanded by Captain Newport sailed forth on its venturesome and romantic enterprise, the significance of which was not altogether unsuspected by those who saw it depart. Michael Drayton, one of the most popular poets of his day, later poet laureate of the kingdom, sang in quaint, prophetic verses a cheery farewell: --

"You brave heroic minds,

Worthy your country's name,

That honor still pursue,

Go and subdue,

Whilst loitering hinds

Lurk here at home with shame.

"And in regions farre,

Such heroes bring ye forth

As those from whom we came;

And plant our name

Under that star

Not known unto our north.

"And as there plenty grows

Of laurel everywhere,

Apollo's sacred tree,

You it may see,A poet's brows

To crown, that may sing there."[[1]](#footnote-1)

#### The Virginia Colony.

This little band of adventurers "in regions farre" disembarked from the ships Discovery, Good Speed, and Susan Constant upon the site of a town yet to be built, fifty miles inland, on the shore of a stream as yet unexplored, in the heart of a vast green wilderness the home of savage tribes who were none too friendly. It was hardly to be expected that the ripe seeds of literary culture should be found in such a company, or should germinate under such conditions in any notable luxuriance. The surprising fact, however, is that in this group of gentlemen adventurers there was one man of some literary craft, who, while leading the most strenuous life of all, efficiently protecting and heartening his less courageous comrades in all manner of perilous experiences, compiled and wrote with much literary skill the picturesque chronicles of the settlement.

#### John Smith, 1580-1631.

Captain John Smith, the mainstay of the Jamestown colony in the critical period of its early existence, was a true soldier of fortune, venturesome, resolute, self-reliant, resourceful; withal a man of great good sense, and with the grasp on circumstances which belongs to the man of power. His life since leaving his home on a Lincolnshire farm at sixteen years of age, had been replete with romantic adventure. He had been a soldier in the French army and had served in that of Holland. He had wandered through Italy and Greece into the countries of eastern Europe, and had lived for a year in Turkey and Tartary.

### II. Main part

### 2.1 Pilgrims and puritans in new England: historical and descriptive writers

In the northern settlements, conditions socially and intellectually were very different from those existing in the South. The men who colonized New England represented a unique type; their ideals, their purpose, were essentially other than those which inspired the settlers at Jamestown and the later colonizers of Virginia. The band of Pilgrims who landed from the Mayflower at Plymouth in December, 1620, were not bent on mere commercial adventure, lured to the shores of the New World by tales of its fabulous wealth. They were not in search of gold; they were looking for a permanent home, and had brought their wives and children with them. Their ideals were of the most serious sort; their deep religious feeling colored all their plans and habits of life.

#### 2.1.1 The Pilgrims

The Pilgrims were a congregation of l"Separatists" or non-conformists who had already endured hardness for conscience' sake before they had ever left the old home. Under the leadership of the Rev. John Robinson and Elder William Brewster, they had fled to Holland in 1608. For ten years, this community of Englishmen had lived peacefully in the Dutch city of Leyden, earning their own living and enjoying the religious liberty they craved; but they felt themselves aliens in a foreign land, and saw that their children were destined to lose their English birthright. After long deliberation, they determined "as pilgrims" to seek in the new continent a home where they might still possess their cherished freedom of worship, while living under English laws and following the customs and traditions of their mother-land.

#### 2.1.2 The plymouth colony

This company of men obtained a grant from the London Company under the sane charter as that which had been given to the Virginia Colony. They finally set sail from Plymouth, in England, September 16, 1620. It was in the early winter when the Mayflower sighted the shores of Cape Cod. The story of "New England's trails," first told in the narrative of Captain John Smith,[[2]](#footnote-2) is as romantic as that of the Jamestown Colony and even more impressive.

Of the forty-one adult males who signed the famous compact on board the Mayflower, only twelve bore the title of "Gentlemen." They were a sober-minded, sturdy band of true colonizers, familiar with labor and inspired with the conviction that God was leading them in their difficult way. Although half the colony perished in the rigor of that first winter, for which they had been wholly unprepared, the spirit of the Pilgrims spoke in the remarkable words of their leader, Brewster: --

"It is not with us as with men whom small things can discourage or small discontentments cause to wish themselves at home again." 2

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#### 2.1.3 Puritan Colonies in New England

The companies of settlers who followed the Pilgrims within the next few years were composed of the same sturdy, independent class of thoughtful, high-minded men. They were Puritans, -- for the most part well-to-do, prosperous people; many of them had been educated in the universities, and brought the reverence for education with them. "If God make thee a good Christian and a good scholar, thou hast all that thy mother ever asked for thee," said a Puritan matron to her son. The colonists who within the next fifty years dotted the New England coast-line with their thrifty settlements were idealists. As Professor Tyler puts it, they established "not an agricultural community, nor a manufacturing community, nor a trading community; it was a thinking community." Moral earnestness characterized every action. In 1636, the General Court of Massachusetts voted to establish a college at Newtown; John Harvard, dying two years later, bequeathed his library and half his estate to the school, which was then named

### 2.2 The new England clergy: Theology in New England

Among a people constituted in temper like the Puritans, a people with whom religion was life and whose life even on its temporal side was closely identified with religion, it was natural that religious ideas should find constant expression in literature. This we have seen to be true in the historical narratives of Bradford and Winthrop. The Puritan writers are always impressed with the spiritual significance of their conquest in this new Canaan. Even the most casual accidents of pioneer experience are interpreted as filled with divine purpose. John Winthrop soberly records the fact that in his son's library of a thousand volumes, one, which contained the Greek Testament, the Psalms, and the Book of Common Prayer bound up together, was found injured by mice. Every leaf of the Common Prayer was eaten through; not a leaf of the other portions was touched, nor one of the other volumes injured. A marvelous providence this, clear enough in its indications. So Edward Johnson, not an educated man, but a farmer and a ship carpenter, who had been active in the founding of Woburn, in 1640, wrote his Wonder-Working Providence of Zion's Saviour in New England (1654). "For the Lord Christ intends to achieve greater matters by this little handful than the world is aware of."

The colonists are soldiers under the divine leader; they must not tolerate the existence among them of a single disbeliever; they must take up their arms and march manfully on till all opposers of Christ's kingly power be abolished. Thus spake Puritanism on the side of its austerity and fanaticism.

#### 2.2.1 The Clergy

There was in New England one class of men who by natural aptitude and by training were well fitted to be heard from on religious topics. These were the ministers. As the village church, or meeting-house, was the centre geographically, morally, and socially, of every New England community, so the minister was, usually, the dominating force among his townspeople, maintaining the high dignity of the sacred calling with a manner which commanded a deference amounting to awe. Not only was his authority recognized on the purely religious questions of daily life, not only was his voice reverently heard as he preached for hours from the high pulpit on Sunday, but the New England minister was the natural leader of his flock in every field. He gave counsel in town affairs, he directed the political policy of his people. In cases of disagreement, the minister was usually the mediator and the final court of appeal. The greater part of the New England ministry were educated men of noteworthy gifts. The majority were graduates of the English universities; many of them had been distinguished for their eloquence and piety before the religious persecution of Charles and his ministers had driven them forth to find religious liberty elsewhere.[[3]](#footnote-3)

Three strong thinkers and eloquent preachers are usually mentioned as conspicuous among these early colonial ministers: Thomas Hooker, Thomas Shepard, and John Cotton. All three were graduates of the same college at Cambridge; all were Puritan preachers in England until compelled to flee for their lives because of the hostility of Bishop Laud.

#### Thomas Hooker, 1586-1647.

Hooker had escaped into Holland, and in 1633 followed in the track of those who had crossed the ocean before him. He became the minister at Cambridge. Three years later he led a colony of one hundred families through the wilderness into the beautiful Connecticut valley and founded the town of Hartford (1636). Here until his death, in 1647, Hooker wrote and preached and moulded the life of his parish. His power in the pulpit is said to have been wonderful. Many of his sermons were published; he wrote numerous treatises on theological and spiritual themes. It is significant of the impression left by Hooker on his contemporaries that an English clergyman affirmed that "to praise the writings of Hooker would be to lay paint upon burnished marble, or add light unto the sun."

### 2.3 Puritan poetry in new England

#### 2.3.1 Early Puritan Poetry.9

The Puritans were not susceptible to the charms of poetry. The strenuous life of the pioneer left little time for cultivating any of the arts, and the spirit of New England was too serious and too stern to permit indulgence in what was merely pleasant or beautiful. Even after the first critical years of danger and struggle were past, the intellectual life of the people was bounded by the narrow limits of religious discussion and theological debate. That the Puritan was not without imagination, however, is abundantly proved by the forceful figures and impassioned rhetoric of the prose writers whom we have been considering. Moreover, some of these same men did occasionally slip into rhyme. William Wood has been quoted. 1 Even John Cotton was the author of verses, halting and rough-hewn, and full of the queer conceits which were common at the time. It is significant that this pious man wrote much of his verse in the pages of the household almanac, where it remained hidden from the public eye; and sometimes he disguised its metrical character by inscribing it in Greek.

Much ingenuity was expended upon epitaphs and obituary tributes -- so solemn a theme as that of death justifying poetical expression. If there were any opportunity to play upon the name of the deceased, the opportunity was gracefully seized. When the Rev. Samuel Stone, the successor of Thomas Hooker at Hartford, died in 1663, his colleagues vied with one another in their fervid appreciations of his virtues. He was compared to the stone which Jacob set up and called Ebenezer, and also to the stone with which David slew Goliath; he was termed

"Whetstone, that edgefy'd th' obtusest mind:

Loadstone, that drew the iron heart unkind."

- and this within the compass of a single epitaph.

One quotation will serve to show the skill with which these versifiers were sometimes able to conquer the difficulties of rhyme:--

"Here lies the darling of his time,

Mitchell expirëd in his prime;

Was four years short of forty-seven,

Was found full ripe and plucked for heaven." [[4]](#footnote-4)

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#### 2.3.2 The Bay Psalm Book

If poetry be rare among our forefathers, it is nevertheless true that the first English book printed in America passed for poetry with them, and for poetry of an edifying and noble type. The Whole Booke of Psalmes, commonly known as the Bay Psalm Book, was printed on the new press at Cambridge in 1640. 2 This work, designed to provide a metrical version of the Psalms of David, to be used in the churches, contains the joint efforts of three New England ministers -- "the chief divines in the country," -- Richard Mather of Dorchester, Thomas Welde, and John Eliot, of Roxbury. The preface, written by Mather, declares that

"It hath been one part of our religious care and faithful endeavor to keep close to the original text. . . . If, therefore, the verses are not always so smooth and elegant as some may desire or expect, let them consider that God's altar needs not our polishings, for we have respected rather a plain translation than to smooth our verses with the sweetness of any paraphrase; and so have attended Conscience rather than Elegance, fidelity rather than poetry."

In illustration of the art displayed by these divines in their paraphrase, historians have invariably cited some of the most atrocious of the compositions. This seems hardly fair. The following examples are sufficient to show the average result of "the sad, mechanic exercise" of these godly men:--

"I in the Lord do trust; how then

to my soul do ye say,

As doth a little bird, unto

your mountain fly away?

"For lo the wicked bend their bow,

their arrows they prepare

On string; to shoot in dark at them

in heart that upright are."

From paraphrase of Psalm xi.

"Praise ye the Lord, praise God

in's place of holiness;

O praise

### 2.4 The first half of the century, the personal touch

In the study of literature, there is nothing more gratifying than the discovery of an author who has unconsciously put himself visibly into his book. Two or three American writers wrote thus amiably at this period of our colonial history, and their works form an interesting and welcome group.

The most prominent of these was Judge Samuel Sewall, who arrived in America in 1661 and settled at Newbury. He was a conspicuous man in the Massachusetts colony and became the Chief-justice of Massachusetts. Like his friend, Cotton Mather, he was involved in the witchcraft delusion and was one of the judges who condemned the victims to death. His repentance, his dramatic confession of error and his annual fast are familiar tradition. It should be remembered, also, that in a little book, The Selling of Joseph (1700), Judge Sewall wrote the first published argument against slavery. From 1673 to 1729, Samuel Sewall kept a diary -- and thereby left for generations of readers to come one of the most frank and unconventional records of the time. The publication of this journal 1 shows that it is worthy of a place with that of Samuel Pepys (pronounced Peps), of London, whose celebrated Diary covers the decade of 1659-69. The social life of colonial New England is most happily illustrated in Sewall's memoranda; and the stiff stateliness of the stern old Puritan type loses at least its solemnity when we read the Judge's record of his unavailing suit for the hand of Madam Winthrop.

[Oct. 6, 1720.] "A little after 6 P.M. I went to Madam Winthrop's. She was not within. I gave Sarah Chickering the Maid 2s., Juno, who brought in wood 1s. Afterward the Nurse came in, I gave her 18d having no other small Bill. After a while Dr. Noyes came in with his Mother [Mrs. Winthrop]; and after his wife came in: They sat talking, I think, till eight a'clock. I said I fear'd I might be some interruption to their Business; Dr. Noyes reply'd pleasantly: He fear'd they might be an Interruption to me, and went away. Madam seemed to harp upon the same string [she had previously declared that she could not break up her present home]. Must take care of her children; could not leave that House and Neighborhood where she had dwelt so long. I told her she might doe her children as much or more good by bestowing what she laid out in House-keeping, upon them. Said her son would be of Age the 7th of August. I said it might be inconvenient for her to dwell with her Daughter-in-Law, who must be Mistress of the House. I gave her a piece of Mr. Belcher's Cake and Ginger-Bread wrapped up in a clean sheet of Paper; told her of her Father's kindness to me when Treasurer, and I Constable. My daughter Judith was gone from me and I was more lonesome -- might help to forward one another in our journey to Canaan. -- Mr. Eyre came within the door; I saluted him, ask'd how Mr. Clark did, and he went away. I took leave about 9 a'clock."

The Judge's suit did not prosper.

"8r, 21 [October 21.] Friday, My Son, the Minister, came to me p.m. by appointment and we pray one for another in the Old Chamber; more especially respecting my Courtship. About 6 a-clock I go to Madam Winthrop's. Sarah told me her Mistress was gone out, but did not tell me whither she went. She presently ordered me a Fire; so I went in, having Dr. Sibb's Bowells [[5]](#footnote-5)with me to read. I read the first two Sermons, still no body came in: at last about 9 a-clock Mr. Jn.o Eyre came in; I took the opportunity to say to him as I had done to Mrs. Noyes before, that I hoped my visiting his Mother would not be disagreeable to him; he answered me with much Respect. When it was after 9 a clock He of himself said he would go & call her, she was but at one of his Brothers: A while after I heard Madam Winthrop's voice enquiring something about John. After a good while and Clapping the Garden door twice or thrice, she came in. I mentioned something of the lateness; she bantered me, and said I was later. She received me Courteously.

### 2.5 The revolutionary period

In the second half of the eighteenth century, our literature presents the vivid reflection of that momentous struggle for independence upon which the American colonies had entered. Fiery speeches, able arguments set forth in newspapers and in pamphlets, sharp and bitter satire served to give utterance to the thought and passion of men's minds. One feature of this activity must be emphasized: geographical lines were now forgotten; the literature of this period is no longer local; essayists, versifiers, orators were inspired by a common purpose and by a devotion to the interests of the country at large.

#### James Otis, 1725-83.

Greatest of the Massachusetts orators and conspicuous at the beginning of the struggle was James Otis. He was a graduate of Harvard, and a prominent lawyer in Boston. In 1761, following the accession of George III, in the previous year, there arose in Massachusetts a debate over granting the new Writs of Assistance to officers of the customs in that colony. In February of that year, Otis, in the council chamber at Boston, delivered an argument against the legality of these writs which is sometimes described as the prologue of the Revolution. Of this passionate address, no complete record exists, but John Adams, who reported it, declares that American independence was then and there born. "Otis was a flame of fire," Adams declares. "Such a profusion of learning, such convincing argument, and such a torrent of sublime and pathetic eloquence -- that a great crowd of spectators and auditors went away absolutely electrified." Three years later, Otis published a pamphlet, The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved -- one of the most acute and powerful among the many political papers of these years.

#### Political Essayists.

The historic events of the period came in quick succession. The Stamp Act, passed in 1765, was repealed in the following year; but taxes on tea, paper, glass, paints, and other articles were levied in 1767. Petitions, appeals, and resolutions were numerous. Pamphlets and essays appeared in great numbers. To these years belong the political papers of Franklin, who contributed vigorously to these discussions. Samuel Adams (1722-1803), tax collector of the town of Boston, was a voluminous essayist -- of whom a tory governor declared "every dip of his pen stings like a horned snake."

Both sides participated in this fierce debate, for there were not a few in the colonies who remained loyal to England throughout the struggle. Following the assemblage of the first Continental Congress, in 1774, there appeared in New York a series of four pamphlets dealing with the great questions of the time from the tory standpoint. These were signed "Westchester Farmer"; they were incisive, picturesque, witty, and readable. "If I must be devoured, let me be devoured by the jaws of a lion, and not gnawed to death by rats and vermin," declared the audacious pamphleteer. These papers aroused a storm of patriotic protest in the midst of which it is interesting to find a pamphlet entitled The Farmer Refuted, the essay of a youth of eighteen, young Alexander Hamilton, then a student in King's College. The "Farmer" was identified with the Rev. Samuel Seabury, and Episcopal clergyman of Westchester, New York, and was made to pay dearly for his bold utterances by some of the excitable patriots in his vicinity. He suffered many indignities, but after the close of the conflict resumed his position and ended his life in peace, honored by many of his former foes.

#### The Orators.

Chief among the orators of the South was Patrick Henry (1736-99), of whom Jefferson said: "He appeared to me to speak as Homer wrote." It was he who in the opening speech of the first Congress uttered the ringing declaration, "I am not a Virginian but an American"; and he who in the Virginia Assembly, March 23, 1775, delivered the address which ranks as one of the classics of American eloquence. Along with Otis, in the North, stands the familiar figure of John Hancock (1737-93). In the speech which he delivered in 1774, on the anniversary of the Boston Massacre, he expressed in characteristic phrases the fervor of the time: "Burn Boston and make John Hancock a beggar, if the public good requires." Joseph Warren

### 2.6 Poetry of the revolution

The Revolutionary period was not without its poets. From the beginning of the conflict, in 1775, to the end, there was a copious flow of verse which sprang naturally enough from the turbulence of popular excitement and emotion. Here and there among the crude productions of these unschooled rhymers, one comes upon compositions which show an unexpected strength of feeling expressed with considerable literary art. This is especially true of the political satires and the ballads which are conspicuous in Revolutionary literature.

#### Jonathan Odell, 1737-1818.

Foremost among the tory versifiers -- for both parties in the contest had their literary champions in metre as in prose -- was Jonathan Odell, who invoked the muse thus: --

"Grant me for a time

Some deleterious powers of acrid rhyme,

Some ars'nic verse, to poison with the pen

These rats who nestle in the lion's den."

Odell came of pioneer Puritan stock and was himself a native of New Jersey. he was a graduate of Princeton, and became a surgeon in the British army. He later went to England, where he took orders for the Church.

Returning to New Jersey, he became rector of the parish in Burlington. With the outbreak of hostilities, and the development of violence against all suspected of royalist sympathies, the clergyman was forced to take flight; and as a refugee, he remained in New York until the evacuation of the British troops.

Odell's literary talent was soon engaged in the composition of satiric poems; modeled on the satires of Dryden and Pope, they show considerable merit. Odell wrote with a trenchant pen. There is no humor in his satire -- it is wit, caustic, biting; the tone of his verse is the tone of bitter, implacable invective. Four satires, all written in 1779, furnish the best examples of his verse: The Word of Congress, The Congratulation, The Feu de Joie, and The American Times. The following lines from the last of his satires are sufficient to exhibit his skill in satire and in verse:--

"What cannot ceaseless impudence produce?

Old Franklin knows its value and its use:

He caught at Paine, relieved his wretched plight,

And gave him notes, and set him down to write.

Fire from the Doctor's hints the miscreant took,

Discarded truth, and soon produced a book, --

A pamphlet which, without the least pretence

To reason, bore the name of Common Sense.

...............

The work like wildfire, through the country ran,

And Folly bowed the knee to Franklin's plan.

Sense, reason, judgment were abashed and fled,

And Congress reigned triumphant in their stead."[[6]](#footnote-6)

Persistent in his attitude, irreconcilable and belligerent still, Jonathan Odell forsook the colonies at the close of the contest and migrated to Nova Scotia, where he lived to old age, unconvinced and unrelenting to the last.

#### The Hartford Wits.

Three Revolutionary poets of large and serious purpose, and widely famed in their generation, may be grouped together, not only because of some similarity in their verse, but also because they were all Connecticut men; two were conspicuous members of a coterie noted as "the Hartford Wits." That Connecticut town, indeed, enjoyed a reputation as a literary centre through the exploits of this group. The two Hartford poets were John Trumbull and Joel Barlow; the third of this group was Timothy Dwight.

### 2.6.1 The close of eighteen century. Transition

Coincidentally with the satires, the epics, the songs and ballads, which owed their measure of inspiration immediately to the spirit of that strenuous time, we note also the appearance of a different school of verse which meant infinitely more in the development of our literary art.

#### Philip Freneau, 1752-1832.

Among the satirists of the Revolutionary epoch, there was none whose pen was readier or sharper in its thrusts than Philip Freneau; and among the poems of the war itself, none holds a firmer place in our literature than Freneau's brief elegy on the valiant who died at Eutaw Springs. One line of this poem was thought worthy of adaptation by the author of Marmion. But Freneau's strongest claim for remembrance lies in a few compositions which mark the beginning of nature poetry in America.

Philip Freneau owed his foreign name to Huguenot ancestry, but he was born in New York and was graduated, in 1771, at Princeton, where he had been a classmate and room-mate with James Madison. In the early part of his career Freneau engaged in commercial ventures in the West Indies and made frequent voyages, commanding his own vessel. Once (in 1780) he was captured by the British and was for several weeks confined in an English prison ship in New York harbor. The hardships of this experience are rehearsed in a poem entitled The British Prison Ship, filled to the brim with the horror and rancor of his suffering. Many another fierce broadside did he hurl at the nation's foe, until hostilities ceased. After the war, Freneau entered journalism, but his later years were comparatively inactive. Near the close of his eightieth year, on a December night, returning to his home from a gathering with friends, he lost his way in the snow and fell by the road-side; the next morning he was found dead.

#### The Nature Poems.

The compositions which have done most for Freneau's fame as a poet belong to his earlier years. In these productions, we find the beginning of genuine nature poetry in America. Here we have Freneau's opening lines on The Wild Honeysuckle:--

"Fair flower, that dost so comely grow,

Hid in this silent, dull retreat,

Untouched thy honied blossoms blow,

Unseen thy little branches greet;

No roving foot shall crush thee here,

No busy hand provoke a tear."

Of a different tenor are two poems in pensive key: The Indian Student and The Indian Burying-ground. In all these compositions, we feel the spirit of a true poet who loves Nature and responds to her appeals spontaneously and without artifice. There had been a few previous attempts at this form of treatment in American verse, but they had been isolated instances and had failed of the excellence attained by Freneau. These poems are therefore the more worthy of note. The volume which contains these productions appeared in 1786 -- the same year in which the first volume of the poems of Robert Burns was published; and twelve years before the Lyrical Ballads introduced William Wordsworth as the first recognized champion of simplicity and naturalness in English verse.

### 2.6.2 The new literature

With the turn of the century, our young republic entered upon an era of expansion and development which can be described only as marvelous. The rapid progress in the settlement of the West, the influx of foreign immigration, the growth of the larger cities, extension of transportation systems by construction of canals and government roads, application of the new inventions employing the power of steam in river navigation and on railroads, -- these features of American progress during the first fifty years in our first completed century of national existence can be here but thus briefly summarized. It is unnecessary to attempt a full historical outline of that period of growth and change except to note that coincidentally with this expansive period of material prosperity and growth, our national literature entered upon what we may not inaptly term its golden age -- the age of its best essayists, novelists and poets, our real American men of letters.

#### Birth of the New Literature.

We have traced the slow steps of literary effort recorded in the several colonies to the close of their existence as colonies; and, immediately after the period of revolution, we have recognized the new and fresh impulse of creative imagination in the little group of simple nature-poems by Philip Freneau, and imaginative power of somewhat differing type in the sombre but not altogether unreal romances of Charles Brockden Brown. But Freneau and Brown are only heralds of coming achievements; of the appearance of a literature national in scope and of importance sufficient to command recognition by the people of England and the Continent, and possessed of an artistic excellence felt and enjoyed by all.

#### New York.

There were evidences of literary activity in Boston, in Philadelphia, and in New York. Little groups of literati, as they liked to call themselves, mightily interested in the development of a national literature, gave an atmosphere that was helpful to literary effort; and they themselves accomplished what could be accomplished by interest, patriotism, and industry when joined with talent, modest if not mediocre. For some reason, New York took precedence over Boston and Philadelphia in these first decades of the nineteenth century and not only sheltered a coterie of enthusiastic, congenial comrades of the pen, whose lively essays in both prose and verse provoked the humor of the town, but pushed into the light of more than local fame the names of Paulding, Halleck, Drake, and Dana; and before the quarter mark in the century was reached had produced two of the century's greatest writers, Irving and Cooper. These are the Knickerbocker writers, so called in deference to the old Dutch traditions of Manhattan, the spirit of which was directly inherited by most of them, and the influence of which appeared to some extent in their work. In 1825, the poet Bryant came to live in New York, and his name is therefore grouped with those already mentioned, although not a native of the state. He was, however, of their generation and, like Halleck and Dana, an adopted son of New York.

#### Family and Birth.

Washington Irving was born in the city of New York, April 3, 1783. It was the year which marked the end of the long struggle for liberty and the beginning of peace. The British troops evacuated the city and the Continental forces assumed possession. "Washington's work is ended," said Mrs. Irving, "and the child shall be named after him." Some six years later, we are told, when the first president returned to New York, then the seat of government, a Scotch maid-servant of the family finding herself and the child by chance in the presence of Washington, presented the lad to him. "Please, your honor," said Lizzie, all aglow, "here's a bairn was named after you." And the Father of his Country gravely laid his hand upon the head of his future biographer and blessed him.

The household in William Street was comfortably well-to-do. The father, William Irving, a Scotchman, born in the Orkney Islands, and until his marriage an officer upon a vessel plying between Falmouth and New York, was now engaged in the hardware trade. He was a man of strict integrity, rather severe in his attitude toward life, with a good deal of the old strict Covenanter spirit in his make-up. He took little interest in amusements, required that at least one of the half-holidays in every week should be piously employed with the catechism, and saw to it that his children were well grounded in sound Presbyterian doctrine. The mother, daughter of an English curate, was far less rigid in her views and more vivacious in temperament. Needless is it to say that the future chronicler of the Knickerbocker legends resembled the mother more closely than the father in his inheritance of spirits. Full of drollery and mischief, the boy ran merry riot, sometimes a source of perplexity even to the more indulgent parent, who once was heard to exclaim: "O Washington, if you were only good!" He loved music and delighted in the theatre, whither, in spite of his father's prejudices, the boy often betook himself, secretly, in company with his young comrade, Paulding.

#### Education.

Irving's training was desultory, and his schooling ended at sixteen. This cutting short of the school-days was due to the state of his health in these early years, which forbade confinement or close association with books. Yet he read, and read intelligently, becoming familiar with the best, especially books of travel, voyages, and adventure. In his rambles about the city -- for he lived much out of doors -- he oftenest turned toward the docks, dreamily wandering among the piers and along the waterside with mind apparently stirred by the sight of the shipping and the romantic suggestions of foreign lands. Up the Hudson, also, he wandered -- into the Highlands and over all the country-side, until the suburbs of Manhattan and the picturesque region of the Catskills were familiar ground.

#### The Experiment.

James Fenimore Cooper was thirty years old when he began to write. He was then living in Westchester County, not far from the city of New York, on what was known as the Angevine Farm, a beautifully situated estate commanding an extended view of the Sound. His resignation from the Navy nine years before had been coincident with his marriage to a Miss De Lancey, whose father during the Revolutionary War had supported the cause of the Crown. Cooper himself had not settled down to any definite vocation -- least of all had any thought of a literary career entered his head.

#### The Naturalist.

"He knew the country like a fox or a bird and passed through it as freely by paths of his own. . . . Under his arm he carried an old music-book to press plants; in his pocket his diary and pencil, a spy-glass for birds, microscope, jack-knife and twine. He wore straw hat, stout shoes, strong gray trousers, to brave shrub-oaks and smilax, and to climb a tree for a hawk's or squirrel's nest. He waded into the pool for the water-plants, and his strong legs were no insignificant part of his armor. . . . His power of observation seemed to indicate additional senses. He saw as with microscope, heard as with ear-trumpet, and his memory was a photographic register of all he saw and heard. . . . Every fact lay in glory in his mind, a type of the order and beauty of the whole. His intimacy with animals suggested . . . that `either he had told the bees things, or the bees had told him.' Snakes coiled round his leg, the fishes swam into his hand, and he took them out of the water; he pulled the woodchuck out of its hole by the tail, and took the foxes under his protection from the hunters."

#### The Hermitage.

In 1845, Thoreau built for himself a cabin on the shore of Walden Pond, and here for two years he lived, cultivating potatoes, corn, and beans sufficient for his subsistence, recording his observations of all natural phenomena, and transcribing from his journal the narrative of an excursion taken with his brother in 1839. It is this experience in his life with its subsequent record which has more than anything else aroused interest in the personality of Thoreau. "My purpose in going to Walden Pond," he says, "was not to live cheaply nor to live dearly there, but to transact some private business with the fewest obstacles."

#### Parentage.

Edgar Allan Poe was born January 19, 1809. That his birth occurred in Boston was due to the fact that his parents, members of a theatrical company, were filling an engagement in that city when the event occurred. David Poe, the father of the child, was a Southerner, a native of Baltimore, where the Poes were people of character and standing. Connection with the parental home had ceased, however, when the young man had recklessly pushed his law-books aside for an uncertain career upon the stage. He was never a brilliant actor; the lady whom he married was by far his superior in their profession, and possessed the more vigorous personality of the two. It was from his mother that Edgar inherited his artistic temperament; while the prevailing weaknesses of the boy's later life, it is safe to assert, were a natural inheritance from his father. Within a year of Edgar's birth, his father died, and a year or two later Mrs. Poe also died, at Richmond, Virginia, in poverty, leaving three young children to the charity of friends. A Mrs. Allan, wife of a tobacco merchant of Richmond, had become interested in the suffering family, and took Edgar into her home.

#### Daniel Webster, 1782-1852.

#### His Life.

Among the men conspicuous in public life, who by reason of their argumentative skill and the power of their eloquence were the nation's leaders during the critical years of the century, the first to be mentioned is Daniel Webster. No more commanding personality has ever moved among American statesmen. His portrait -- after those of Washington and Lincoln -- is the most familiar of those in our national gallery. So impressive was he in presence, so leonine in feature, that his personal appearance struck every listener with awe. "That amorphous, crag-like

face; the dull black eyes under the precipice of brows, like dull anthracite furnaces needing only to be blown; the mastiff mouth, accurately closed" -- this is the way in which Carlyle described his picture. He was an acute reasoner as well as an eloquent speaker. His famous arguments in the Dartmouth College case (1818) and in the White murder case at Salem (1830) are models of logical structure. His orations at the two hundredth anniversary of the landing of the Pilgrims (1820), at the laying of the corner-stone of Bunker Hill Monument (1825), and at the completion of the monument (1843) are noted examples of his eloquence. It was his self-appointed task to guard the integrity of the Constitution; and it was this idea which inspired the best known of all his great addresses, the Reply to Hayne, delivered in the United States Senate in 1830. It was his devotion to the Union and the preservation of national unity which led to his support of compromise measures when the separation of South and North seemed imminent; and it was this which brought forth the speech on the seventh of March, 1850, -- the speech which aroused the indignation of the anti-slavery party in New England and drew from Whittier that scathing utterance of disappointment and grief, the poem Ichabod. Webster was born at Salisbury, New Hampshire. He studied at Phillips Academy, then recently founded at Exeter, and was graduated from Dartmouth College in 1801. He practiced law in Portsmouth and served for a term as a representative of New Hampshire in Congress. In 1816, he removed to Boston, again went to Congress, and then entered the Senate in 1827. He was Secretary of State (1841-1843), and returned to the Senate in 1845. His home was at Marshfield, Massachusetts, at the time of his death.

#### Representative Statesmen.

#### Lincoln

Representing the South in the arena of political debate were John C. Calhoun (1782-1850) and Henry Clay (1777-1852); while the names of Rufus Choate (1799-1859) and Edward Everett (1794-1865) are joined with that of Webster, as representative of the eloquence of New England. Foremost among the orators developed by anti-slavery sentiment in the North were Wendell Phillips (1811-1884) and Charles Sumner (1811-1874). The eloquent voice of Henry Ward Beecher (1813-1887) was raised in the same cause. Nor should the names of Stephen A. Douglas (1813-1861) and Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865) be omitted from this list. In a dramatic series of public debates conducted in 1858 upon the prairies of Illinois, Lincoln and Douglas contended over the great issue of the time, -- the institution of slavery and the momentous national problem to which it had given rise. While nominally a campaign for the Illinois senatorship, this remarkable discussion between the rival candidates -- Douglas, the national leader of the Democratic party, and Lincoln, the candidate of the recently organized Republicans -- aroused the interest of the entire country. Mr. Douglas was elected to the Senate; but the contest made Lincoln, two years later, the logical candidate of the Republican party for the presidency of the United States. It is not necessary here to discuss the genius of Abraham Lincoln. His lowly origin, his primitive surroundings, the scanty education, the unique personality, the lofty spirit in the awkward, almost grotesque frame, are all parts of a familiar story. He was yet another in the group of socalled self-made men in whom genius has triumphed over circumstances. It should not be forgotten that the opponent of the highly trained, debonair Douglas had had his forensic training during twenty years of practice before the Illinois bar, and that he was regarded as the best jury lawyer in the state; nor that theauthor of the speech at Gettysburg had steeped his mind in youth with the English of Shakespeare and the Bible -- almost his

### 2.7 Writers of new York and Pennsylvania

For some time, our attention has been centred for the most part in the work of our New England writers; but we must not think that the literary activity of this long period was confined to the immediate vicinity of Boston. The cities of Philadelphia and New York had each its coterie of literary workers. In the rapidly growing metropolis, the generation following that of Irving and his associates of the Knickerbocker group was not without its representatives of greater or less distinction, among whom at least two, Bayard Taylor and George William Curtis, deserve especial recognition. Both were men of letters in the broadest sense, versatile in talent and giving expression to that talent in varied literary forms.

#### Bayard Taylor, 1825-1878.

Taylor was born in a Quaker household upon a Pennsylvania farm, and as a child was conscious of two ambitions: to travel and to become a poet. His literary ambition was gratified prematurely by the publication of a volume of verse, Ximena, -- afterward regretted, -- in 1844. In the same year, his twentieth, he sailed for England, having arranged with several editors to print the letters which he purposed to write while on his travels. For nearly two years, he tramped about over Europe enduring much hardship; his letters were published in 1846, under the title of Views Afoot, or Europe seen with the Knapsack and Staff. An editorial connection with the New York Tribune followed; and in 1849, Taylor was sent to California to report upon the fortunes of the gold-seekers. The next year his letters to the Tribune appeared in the volume Eldorado. A trip to the far East in 1851 resulted not only in more correspondence but also in a volume of verse, Poems of the Orient (1854), containing some of his best compositions, including the Bedouin Song. Bayard Taylor's fame as a traveler and an entertaining descriptive writer was extended by successive volumes recounting his experiences in Africa, in Spain, in India, China, and Japan, and in the northern countries of Europe. But he was ambitious to fill a higher place in literature.

#### Novels and Poems.

In 1863, he produced his first novel, Hannah Thurston, and the next year, his second, John Godfrey's Fortunes, which is to some extent autobiographical. The Story of Kennett (1866), a semi-historical romance, is his most successful work of fiction. A long and elaborate narrative poem, The Picture of St. John (1866), was followed by The Masque of the Gods (1872), and Lars: a Pastoral of Norway (1873). Other volumes of verse were published in the latter years of his life, including The National Ode, written for the Centennial at Philadelphia in 1876; but no one of Taylor's original efforts resulted in any enduring success. He wrote tirelessly and unceasingly, yet without that inspiration which gives immortality to the works of genius. His one achievement which will most certainly endure is the translation of Goethe's Faust, the two parts of which were published in 1870 and 1871. This altogether admirable version of the German poet's masterpiece ranks with Bryant's Homer and Longfellow's Dante, if it does not surpass them in this delicately difficult field of poetical translation.

Only a portion of Taylor's literary labor is recorded here; he was an indefatigable worker, and his health broke down under the steady strain. In 1878, he was appointed minister to Germany; and it seemed peculiarly appropriate that the translator of Germany's great classic should be thus honored. His appointment was universally approved, for the poet was widely respected and, in the circle of his literary associates, greatly beloved. He was welcomed at Berlin, as Irving had been at the court of Spain; but his diplomatic career was pathetically brief. Death came upon him suddenly as he sat in his library at the German capital in December of the year of his appointment.

### 2.7.1 Novelists and humorists

#### Southern Romancers.

Writers of fiction were numerous during the first half of the century, in the South as well as in the North. While Cooper and Poe were the only ones who attained eminence in this field, there was no lack of story-telling, and in several instances a wide local reputation was built upon the success of a single book. The influence of Cooper is strongly felt in the work of three Southern novelists, Kennedy, Bird, and Simms, of whom the last-named deserves a wider fame. John P. Kennedy (1795-1870), a native of Baltimore and a successful lawyer who represented his state in Congress and was also Secretary of the Navy under President Fillmore, is chiefly remembered as the author of Horse-Shoe Robinson (1835), his best work; a capital romance of the Revolution in the South. The Indian novel, Nick of the Woods (1837), constitutes the principal claim of Dr. Robert M. Bird (1803-1854) to recognition in this group. He was, however, the author of several romances dealing with the Spanish Conquest of Mexico, and also of two or three plays, among which The Gladiator holds the principal place.

#### W.G. Simms, 1806-1870.

William Gilmore Simms is, next to Poe, the most representative and most talented among the writers of the South previous to the Civil War. He was born in Charleston, South Carolina. As his family belonged to the poorer class, he received little in the way of formal education, but exhibited unusual energy in literary pursuits. At twenty-three, Simms had already published three volumes of youthful verse. His first novel, Martin Faber (1833), reflects the influence of Charles Brockden Browne; but Guy Rivers (1834) was the first of a series of border romances in which the influence of Cooper is plainly seen. In 1835, Simms published The Partisan, one of his best stories, a vivid and entertaining narrative of the partisan warfare conducted in the South during the Revolutionary struggle. In Mellichampe (1836), The Kinsmen (1841), and Katharine Walton (1851), he continued the story of the characters thus introduced. His historical tales were as numerous as those of Cooper, and continued to appear down to the period of the Civil War. Although defective in technical construction and by no means comparable to Cooper's best novels, they nevertheless constitute a remarkable collection and are not unworthy the attention of the modern reader. A voluminous writer, Simms was the author of biographies, plays, and poems, in addition to the long list of romances, only the most important of which have been named.

A follower of Simms was John Esten Cooke (1830-1886), whose novels, The Virginia Comedians (1854), and Fairfax (1868), are representative of this author's work in the same historical field.

#### Fiction in the North.

Rev. William Ware (1797-1852), a Massachusetts clergyman, was the author of three sober narratives dealing with the persecution of the Christians at Rome. To some extent Zenobia (1837), Aurelian (1838), and Julian (1841) still maintain their place among popular religious romances. Rev. Sylvester Judd (1813-1853) is more dimly remembered as the author of a transcendental romance, Margaret (1845), which was admired by Lowell for its description of humble rural life. The fiction of adventure is represented at its best in the novels of Herman Melville (1819-1891), a native of New York City. His own experiences on land and sea supplied the material of his most successful books, Typee (1846), Omoo (1847), and Moby Dick, or the White Whale (1851). This last, a masterpiece, is one of the greatest sea stories ever written, a real epic. The tales of Catherine M. Sedgwick (1789-1867) employed an historical background; of these Hope Leslie, or Early Times in Massachusetts (1827), and The Linwoods, or Sixty Years Since in America (1835), were especially admired. Lydia Maria Child (1802-1880), whose philanthropic spirit brought her prominently into the anti-slavery agitation, began her modest literary career with the publication of two historical novels: Hobomok (1824), which depicted life in the colony at Salem, and The Rebels (1825), the scene of which is laid in Boston just previous to the Revolution.

### 2.7.2 Poetry, South and North

#### Minor Verse.

Among the minor poets whose songs have found recognition and whose names deserve some record in the history of our literature, the following at least should be included. William W. Story (1819-1895), the friend of Hawthorne and Lowell, was born in Salem. He resided for the larger part of his life in Italy, and attained considerable rank as a sculptor. He was a poet of more than ordinary gifts, and an author of several volumes, prose as well as verse, including the well-known Roba di Roma, or Walks and Talks about Rome (1862). Thomas William Parsons (1819-1892), born at Boston, is more widely known as a translator of Dante than as an original poet, although his lines On a Bust of Dante are greatly admired by scholars. Dr. Parsons, who was a dental surgeon, practiced his profession abroad, and it was during his residence in Italy that his interest in the Italian poet was aroused. His translation ranks with the best American renderings of the Commedia, although it is not complete. His version of the Inferno appeared in 1867; portions of the Purgatorio and Paradiso were published in 1893. Christopher Pearse Cranch (1813-1892), an artist living in Cambridge, a member of the transcendental group, published a translation of Virgil's AEneid in 1872. The modest verse of Alice and Phoebe Cary (Alice, 1820-71; Phoebe, 1824-71), natives of Ohio, serious in sentiment, was widely read.

#### New England Women.

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe (1819-1910), a lecturer and leader in reform movements, will be remembered chiefly as the author of a great warpoem, The Battle Hymn of the Republic. Lucy Larcom (1826-1893), a worker in the mills at Lowell when her early songs attracted the notice of Whittier, and Mrs. Celia Laighton Thaxter (1836-1894), daughter of the lighthouse-keeper on the Isles of Shoals, were also typical New Englanders who found their inspiration in subjects close at hand. Of other New England women whose verse was notable for literary quality and popular appeal, the following should be mentioned: Mrs. Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), Mrs. Louise Chandler Moulton (1835-1908), Mrs. Julia C. R. Dorr (1825-1913), born in South Carolina, but making her home in Vermont, Mrs. Annie A. Fields (1834-1915), the wife of James T. Fields, and Edna Dean Proctor (1838- ). A larger distinction attends the literary career of Mrs. Helen Fiske Jackson (1831-1885), before her second marriage Helen Hunt, whose signature "H. H." was familiar to the readers of a generation ago. Mrs. jackson was born at Amherst, Massachusetts. Her poems, issued in 1870, placed her at the head of the women writers of verse in America. The last ten years of Mrs. Jackson's life were spent in Colorado and California. Her interest in the Indians and her intense sympathy with them in their wrongs led to the publication of her Century of Dishonor (1881), a book which bore fruit in the official appointment of Mrs. Jackson as special examiner to the mission Indians in California; and eventually in her striking novel, Ramona (1884). A group of rather remarkable short stories by "Saxe Holm," published in two series (1873, 1878), although unacknowledged, are usually attributed to Helen Hunt Jackson. The poems of Emily Dickinson (1830- 1886) are remarkable productions, which have commanded recognition by our highest literary critics. Miss Dickinson was a townswoman of Helen Fiske, and her life was spent at Amherst largely in seclusion. Only a few intimate friends were aware of her poetical gift, and her verses were not published until 1890, four years after her death.

#### The Middle West.

John Hay (1838-1905), distinguished as a diplomatist and statesman, was born in Indiana. He began the practice of law in Illinois in 1861, and became the private secretary of President Lincoln. In collaboration with John G. Nicolay he afterward wrote the authoritativeAbraham Lincoln; a History (1886-1890). His literary fame, however, is based upon a slender volume of Pike County Ballads (1871) which, strong in local color, portray the rough virtues of the Mississippi Valley in the early days. There is a finer quality of elegance and grace -- with less originality -- in the later verse of his Castilian Days (1871) and Poems (1890). A strong and successful novel, The Breadwinners (1884), attributed to John Hay, was never publicly acknowledged.

### 2.7.3 Scholars and essayists

#### Literary Critics.

In the field of literary criticism the work of Edwin Percy Whipple (1819-1886) was notable. He was the author of several volumes of scholarly essays including Literature and Life (1849), Literature of the Age of Elizabeth (1869), and American Literature, and Other Papers (1887). Horace E. Scudder (1838- 1902), long associated with the publication of the Atlantic Monthly, -- he succeeded Aldrich as its editor in 1890, -- was an indefatigable writer, the extent of whose service to American letters is hardly understood, since much of his work was anonymous. Henry N. Hudson (1814-1886), Richard Grant White (1821- 1885), William James Rolfe (1827-1910), and Horace Howard Furness (1833-1912) are to be remembered for their services in the criticism and interpretation of Shakespeare's dramas. Their scholarly editions of the plays are among the best that have been produced. The name of William Winter (1836-1917), author of Shakespeare's England (1886) and our foremost critic of the stage, may be mentioned in this connection. Personal Literary Recollections appeared in 1909.

#### Reminiscences.

Edward Everett Hale (1822-1909), the distinguished Boston clergyman and philanthropist, long survived the generation which read his earlier works. His literary career was remarkably versatile and productive. A New England Boyhood (1893) and Memories of a Hundred Years (1902) are pleasant sketch-books of past experience. Ralph Waldo Emerson (1902) and James Russell Lowell and his Friends (1899) are further contributions to this interesting series of reminiscent essays. Dr. Hale's work in fiction has been referred to earlier. 1 Thomas Wentworth Higginson (1823-1911), one of the Cambridge group, is the author of two volumes of reminiscence, Cheerful Yesterdays (1898) and Contemporaries (1899), which are of especial interest to literary students. He is also the biographer of Margaret Fuller Ossoli (1884), Longfellow (1903), and Whittier (1903). Yesterdays with Authors (1872), a volume written by James T. Fields (1817-1881), should be mentioned here. Mr. Fields, a partner in the famous publishing house of Ticknor and Fields, has a recognized standing among the men of letters. He followed Lowell as editor of the Atlantic Monthly, and was well known in his day as a lecturer and an essayist.

#### Nature Books.

John Burroughs (1837-1921) is, after Thoreau, our foremost writer on nature themes. He is not only a lover of the woods and fields, but he is a conscientious student of plant and animal life. He has no sympathy and scant patience with writers on these subjects whose imagination has interfered with their accuracy; he describes honestly what he observes. Wake-Robin (1871), Winter Sunshine (1875), Birds and Poets (1877), Locusts and Wild Honey (1879), Fresh Fields (1884), Signs and Seasons (1886), Ways of Nature (1905) -- these are some of his outdoor books; he has written also Literary Values (1904), a volume of critical essays, two books on Walt Whitman, and Bird and Bough (1906), a volume of poems. Harriet Mann Miller ("Olive Thorne Miller") (1831-1918) and Bradford Torrey (1843-1912) have written entertainingly of the ways and habits of birds; while Ernest Thompson Seton (born in England, 1860) has narrated with a somewhat freer imagination the biographies of various wild animals he has known.

American literature begins with the orally transmitted myths, legends, tales, and lyrics (always songs) of Indian cultures. There was no written literature among the more than 500 different Indian languages and tribal cultures that existed in North America before the first Europeans arrived. As a result, Native American oral literature is quite diverse. Narratives from quasi-nomadic hunting cultures like the Navajo are different from stories of settled agricultural tribes such as the pueblo-dwelling Acoma; the stories of northern lakeside dwellers such as the Ojibwa often differ radically from stories of desert tribes like the Hopi.

Tribes maintained their own religions -- worshipping gods, animals, plants, or sacred persons. Systems of government ranged from democracies to councils of elders to theocracies. These tribal variations enter into the oral literature as well.

Still, it is possible to make a few generalizations. Indian stories, for example, glow with reverence for nature as a spiritual as well as physical mother. Nature is alive and endowed with spiritual forces; main characters may be animals or plants, often totems associated with a tribe, group, or individual. The closest to the Indian sense of holiness in later American literature is Ralph Waldo Emerson's transcendental "Over-Soul," which pervades all of life.

The Mexican tribes revered the divine Quetzalcoatl, a god of the Toltecs and Aztecs, and some tales of a high god or culture were told elsewhere. However, there are no long, standardized religious cycles about one supreme divinity. The closest equivalents to Old World spiritual narratives are often accounts of shamans initiations and voyages. Apart from these, there are stories about culture heroes such as the Ojibwa tribe's Manabozho or the Navajo tribe's Coyote. These tricksters are treated with varying degrees of respect. In one tale they may act like heroes, while in another they may seem selfish or foolish. Although past authorities, such as the Swiss psychologist Carl Jung, have deprecated trickster tales as expressing the inferior, amoral side of the psyche, contemporary scholars -- some of them Native Americans -- point out that Odysseus and Prometheus, the revered Greek heroes, are essentially tricksters as well.

Examples of almost every oral genre can be found in American Indian literature: lyrics, chants, myths, fairy tales, humorous anecdotes, incantations, riddles, proverbs, epics, and legendary histories. Accounts of migrations and ancestors abound, as do vision or healing songs and tricksters' tales. Certain creation stories are particularly popular. In one well-known creation story, told with variations among many tribes, a turtle holds up the world. In a Cheyenne version, the creator, Maheo, has four chances to fashion the world from a watery universe. He sends four water birds diving to try to bring up earth from the bottom. The snow goose, loon, and mallard soar high into the sky and sweep down in a dive, but cannot reach bottom; but the little coot, who cannot fly, succeeds in bringing up some mud in his bill. Only one creature, humble Grandmother Turtle, is the right shape to support the mud world Maheo shapes on her shell -- hence the Indian name for America, "Turtle Island."

The songs or poetry, like the narratives, range from the sacred to the light and humorous: There are lullabies, war chants, love songs, and special songs for children's games, gambling, various chores, magic, or dance ceremonials. Generally the songs are repetitive. Short poem-songs given in dreams sometimes have the clear imagery and subtle mood associated with Japanese haiku or Eastern-influenced imagistic poetry. A Chippewa song runs:

A loon I thought it was

But it was

My love's

splashing oar.

Vision songs, often very short, are another distinctive form. Appearing in dreams or visions, sometimes with no warning, they may be healing, hunting, or love songs.

Indian oral tradition and its relation to American literature as a whole is one of the richest and least explored topics in American studies. The Indian contribution to America is greater than is often believed. The hundreds of Indian words in everyday American English include "canoe," "tobacco," "potato," "moccasin," "moose," "persimmon," "raccoon," "tomahawk," and "totem." Contemporary Native American writing, discussed in chapter 8, also contains works of great beauty.

Had history taken a different turn, the United States easily could have been a part of the great Spanish or French overseas empires. Its present inhabitants might speak Spanish and form one nation with Mexico, or speak French and be joined with Canadian Francophone Quebec and Montreal.

Yet the earliest explorers of America were not English, Spanish, or French. The first European record of exploration in America is in a Scandinavian language. The Old Norse Vinland Saga recounts how the adventurous Leif Eriksson and a band of wandering Norsemen settled briefly somewhere on the northeast coast of America -- probably Nova Scotia, in Canada -- in the first decade of the 11th century, almost 400 years before the next recorded European discovery of the New World.

**III. Conclusion**

The first known and sustained contact between the Americas and the rest of the world, however, began with the famous voyage of an Italian explorer, Christopher Columbus, funded by the Spanish rulers Ferdinand and Isabella. Columbus's journal in his "Epistola," printed in 1493, recounts the trip's drama -- the terror of the men, who feared monsters and thought they might fall off the edge of the world; the near-mutiny; how Columbus faked the ships' logs so the men would not know how much farther they had travelled than anyone had gone before; and the first sighting of land as they neared America.

Bartolomé de las Casas is the richest source of information about the early contact between American Indians and Europeans. As a young priest he helped conquer Cuba. He transcribed Columbus's journal, and late in life wrote a long, vivid History of the Indians criticizing their enslavement by the Spanish.

Initial English attempts at colonization were disasters. The first colony was set up in 1585 at Roanoke, off the coast of North Carolina; all its colonists disappeared, and to this day legends are told about blue-eyed Croatan Indians of the area. The second colony was more permanent: Jamestown, established in 1607. It endured starvation, brutality, and misrule. However, the literature of the period paints America in glowing colors as the land of riches and opportunity. Accounts of the colonizations became world-renowned. The exploration of Roanoke was carefully recorded by Thomas Hariot in A Briefe and True Report of the New-Found Land of Virginia (1588). Hariot's book was quickly translated into Latin, French, and German; the text and pictures were made into engravings and widely republished for over 200 years.

The Jamestown colony's main record, the writings of Captain John Smith, one of its leaders, is the exact opposite of Hariot's accurate, scientific account. Smith was an incurable romantic, and he seems to have embroidered his adventures. To him we owe the famous story of the Indian maiden, Pocahontas. Whether fact or fiction, the tale is ingrained in the American historical imagination. The story recounts how Pocahontas, favorite daughter of Chief Powhatan, saved Captain Smith's life when he was a prisoner of the chief. Later, when the English persuaded Powhatan to give Pocahontas to them as a hostage, her gentleness, intelligence, and beauty impressed the English, and, in 1614, she married John Rolfe, an English gentleman. The marriage initiated an eight-year peace between the colonists and the Indians, ensuring the survival of the struggling new colony.

In the 17th century, pirates, adventurers, and explorers opened the way to a second wave of permanent colonists, bringing their wives, children, farm implements, and craftsmen's tools. The early literature of exploration, made up of diaries, letters, travel journals, ships' logs, and reports to the explorers' financial backers -- European rulers or, in mercantile England and Holland, joint stock companies -- gradually was supplanted by records of the settled colonies. Because England eventually took possession of the North American colonies, the best-known and most-anthologized colonial literature is English. As American minority literature continues to flower in the 20th century and American life becomes increasingly multicultural, scholars are rediscovering the importance of the continent's mixed ethnic heritage. Although the story of literature now turns to the English accounts, it is important to recognize its richly cosmopolitan beginnings.

It is likely that no other colonists in the history of the world were as intellectual as the Puritans. Between 1630 and 1690, there were as many university graduates in the northeastern section of the United States, known as New England, as in the mother country -- an astounding fact when one considers that most educated people of the time were aristocrats who were unwilling to risk their lives in wilderness conditions. The self-made and often self-educated Puritans were notable exceptions. They wanted education to understand and execute God's will as they established their colonies throughout New England.

The Puritan definition of good writing was that which brought home a full awareness of the importance of worshipping God and of the spiritual dangers that the soul faced on Earth. Puritan style varied enormously -- from complex metaphysical poetry to homely journals and crushingly pedantic religious history. Whatever the style or genre, certain themes remained constant. Life was seen as a test; failure led to eternal damnation and hellfire, and success to heavenly bliss. This world was an arena of constant battle between the forces of God and the forces of Satan, a formidable enemy with many disguises. Many Puritans excitedly awaited the "millennium," when Jesus would return to Earth, end human misery, and inaugurate 1,000 years of peace and prosperity.

Scholars have long pointed out the link between Puritanism and capitalism: Both rest on ambition, hard work, and an intense striving for success. Although individual Puritans could not know, in strict theological terms, whether they were "saved" and among the elect who would go to heaven, Puritans tended to feel that earthly success was a sign of election. Wealth and status were sought not only for themselves, but as welcome reassurances of spiritual health and promises of eternal life.

Moreover, the concept of stewardship encouraged success. The Puritans interpreted all things and events as symbols with deeper spiritual meanings, and felt that in advancing their own profit and their community's well-being, they were also furthering God's plans. They did not draw lines of distinction between the secular and religious spheres: All of life was an expression of the divine will -- a belief that later resurfaces in Transcendentalism.

In recording ordinary events to reveal their spiritual meaning, Puritan authors commonly cited the Bible, chapter and verse. History was a symbolic religious panorama leading to the Puritan triumph over the New World and to God's kingdom on Earth.

The first Puritan colonists who settled New England exemplified the seriousness of Reformation Christianity. Known as the "Pilgrims," they were a small group of believers who had migrated from England to Holland -- even then known for its religious tolerance -- in 1608, during a time of persecutions.

Like most Puritans, they interpreted the Bible literally. They read and acted on the text of the Second Book of Corinthians -- "Come out from among them and be ye separate, saith the Lord." Despairing of purifying the Church of England from within, "Separatists" formed underground "covenanted" churches that swore loyalty to the group instead of the king. Seen as traitors to the king as well as heretics damned to hell, they were often persecuted. Their separation took them ultimately to the New World.

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