Relation of Literature to Life

Charles Dudley Warner

Table of Contents

Relation of Literature to Life

Charles Dudley Warner

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

The county of Franklin in Northwestern Massachusetts, if not rivaling in certain ways the adjoining Berkshire, has still a romantic beauty of its own. In the former half of the nineteenth century its population was largely given up to the pursuit of agriculture, though not under altogether favorable conditions. Manufactures had not yet invaded the region either to add to its wealth or to defile its streams. The villages were small, the roads pretty generally wretched save in summer, and from many of the fields the most abundant crop that could be gathered was that of stones.

The character of the people conformed in many ways to that of the soil. The houses which lined the opposite sides of the single street, of which the petty places largely consisted, as well as the dwellings which dotted the country, were the homes of men who possessed in fullness many of the features, good and bad, that characterized the Puritan stock to which they belonged. There was a good deal of religion in these rural communities and occasionally some culture. Still, as a rule, it must be confessed, there would be found in them much more of plain living than of high thinking. Broad thinking could hardly be said to exist at all. By the dwellers in that region Easter had scarcely even been heard of; Christmas was tolerated after a fashion, but was nevertheless looked upon with a good deal of suspicion as a Popish invention. In the beliefs of these men several sins not mentioned in the decalogue took really, if unconsciously, precedence of those which chanced to be found in that list. Dancing was distinctly immoral; card−playing led directly to gambling with all its attendant evils; theatre−going characterized the conduct of the more disreputable denizens of great cities. Fiction was not absolutely forbidden; but the most lenient regarded it as a great waste of time, and the boy who desired its solace on any large scale was under the frequent necessity of seeking the seclusion of the haymow.

But however rigid and stern the beliefs of men might be, nature was there always charming, not only in her summer beauty, but even in her wildest winter moods. Narrow, too, as might be the views of the members of these communities about the conduct of life, there was ever before the minds of the best of them an ideal of devotion to duty, an earnest all−pervading moral purpose which implanted the feeling that neither personal success nor pleasure of any sort could ever afford even remotely compensation for the neglect of the least obligation which their situation imposed. It was no misfortune for any one, who was later to be transported to a broader horizon and more genial air, to have struck the roots of his being in a soil where men felt the full sense of moral responsibility for everything said or done, and where the conscience was almost as sensitive to the suggestion of sin as to its actual accomplishment.

It was amidst such surroundings that Charles Dudley Warner was born on the 12th of September, 1829. His birthplace was the hill town of Plainfield, over two thousand feet above the level of the sea. His father, a farmer, was a man of cultivation, though not college−bred. He died when his eldest son had reached the age of five, leaving to his widow the care of two children. Three years longer the family continued to remain on the farm. But however delightful the scenery of the country might be, its aesthetic attractions did not sufficiently counterbalance its agricultural disadvantages. Furthermore, while the summers were beautiful on this high table land, the winters were long and dreary in the enforced solitude of a thinly settled region. In consequence, the farm was sold after the death of the grandfather, and the home broken up. The mother with her two children, went to the neighboring village of Charlemont on the banks of the Deerfield. There the elder son took up his residence with his guardian and relative, a man of position and influence in the community, who was the owner of a large farm. With him he stayed until he was twelve years old, enjoying all the pleasures and doing all the miscellaneous jobs of the kind which fall to the lot of a boy brought up in an agricultural community.

The story of this particular period of his life was given by Warner in a work which was published about forty years later. It is the volume entitled "Being a Boy." Nowhere has there been drawn a truer or more vivid picture of rural New England. Nowhere else can there be found such a portrayal of the sights and sounds, the pains and pleasures of life on a farm as seen from the point of view of a boy. Here we have them all graphically represented: the daily "chores" that must be looked after; the driving of cows to and from the pasture; the clearing up of fields where vegetation struggled with difficulty against the prevailing stones; the climbing of lofty trees and the swaying back and forth in the wind on their topmost boughs; the hunting of woodchucks; the nutting excursions of November days, culminating in the glories of Thanksgiving; the romance of school life, over which vacations, far from being welcomed with delight, cast a gloom as involving extra work; the cold days of winter with its deep or drifting snows, the mercury of the thermometer clinging with fondness to zero, even when the sun was shining brilliantly; the long chilling nights in which the frost carved fantastic structures on the window−panes; the eager watching for the time when the sap would begin to run in the sugar−maples; the evenings given up to reading, with the inevitable inward discontent at being sent to bed too early; the longing for the mild days of spring to come, when the heavy cowhide boots could be discarded, and the boy could rejoice at last in the covering for his feet which the Lord had provided. These and scores of similar descriptions fill up the picture of the life furnished here. It was nature's own school wherein was to be gained the fullest intimacy with her spirit. While there was much which she could not teach, there was also much which she alone could teach. From his communion with her the boy learned lessons which the streets of crowded cities could never have imparted.

At the age of twelve this portion of his education came to an end. The family then moved to Cazenovia in Madison county in Central New York, from which place Warner's mother had come, and where her immediate relatives then resided. Until he went to college this was his home. There he attended a preparatory school under the direction of the Methodist Episcopal Church, which was styled the Oneida Conference Seminary. It was at this institution that he fitted mainly for college; for to college it had been his father's dying wish that he should go, and the boy himself did not need the spur of this parting injunction. A college near his home was the excellent one of Hamilton in the not distant town of Clinton in the adjoining county of Oneida. Thither he repaired in 1848, and as he had made the best use of his advantages, he was enabled to enter the sophomore class. He was graduated in 1851.

But while fond of study he had all these years been doing something besides studying. The means of the family were limited, and to secure the education he desired, not only was it necessary to husband the resources he possessed, but to increase them in every possible way. Warner had all the American boy's willingness to undertake any occupation not in itself discreditable. Hence to him fell a full share of those experiences which have diversified the early years of so many men who have achieved success. He set up type in a printing office; he acted as an assistant in a bookstore; he served as clerk in a post−office. He was thus early brought into direct contact with persons of all classes and conditions of life.

The experience gave to his keenly observant mind an insight into the nature of men which was to be of special service to him in later years. Further, it imparted to him a familiarity with their opinions and hopes and aspirations which enabled him to understand and sympathize with feelings in which he did not always share.

During the years which immediately followed his departure from college, Warner led the somewhat desultory and apparently aimless life of many American graduates whose future depends upon their own exertions and whose choice of a career is mainly determined by circumstances. From the very earliest period of his life he had been fond of reading. It was an inherited taste. The few books he found in his childhood's home would have been almost swept out of sight in the torrent, largely of trash, which pours now in a steady stream into the humblest household. But the books, though few, were of a high quality; and because they were few they were read much, and their contents became an integral part of his intellectual equipment. Furthermore, these works of the great masters, with which he became familiar, set for him a standard by which to test the value of whatever he read, and saved him even in his earliest years from having his taste impaired and his judgment misled by the vogue of meretricious productions which every now and then gain popularity for the time. They gave him also a distinct

bent towards making literature his profession. But literature, however pleasant and occasionally profitable as an avocation, was not to be thought of as a vocation. Few there are at any period who have succeeded in finding it a substantial and permanent support; at that time and in this country such a prospect was practically hopeless for any one. It is no matter of surprise, therefore, that Warner, though often deviating from the direct path, steadily gravitated toward the profession of law.

Still, even in those early days his natural inclination manifested itself. The Knickerbocker Magazine was then the chosen organ to which all young literary aspirants sent their productions. To it even in his college days Warner contributed to some extent, though it would doubtless be possible now to gather out of this collection but few pieces which, lacking his own identification, could be assigned to him positively. At a later period he contributed articles to Putnam's Magazine, which began its existence in 1853. Warner himself at one time, in that period of struggle and uncertainty, expected to become an editor of a monthly which was to be started in Detroit. But before the magazine was actually set on foot the inability of the person who projected it to supply the necessary means for carrying it on prevented the failure which would inevitably have befallen a venture of that sort, undertaken at that time and in that place. Yet he showed in a way the native bent of his mind by bringing out two years after his graduation from college a volume of selections from English and American authors entitled "The Book of Eloquence." This work a publisher many years afterward took advantage of his later reputation to reprint.

This unsettled period of his life lasted for several years. He was resident for a while in various places. Part of the time he seems to have been in Cazenovia; part of the time in New York; part of the time in the West. One thing in particular there was which stood in the way of fixing definitely his choice of a profession. This was the precarious state of his health, far poorer then than it was in subsequent years. Warner, however, was never at any period of his life what is called robust. It was his exceeding temperance in all things which enabled him to venture upon the assumption and succeed in the accomplishment of tasks which men, physically far stronger than he, would have shrunk from under− taking, even had they been possessed of the same abilities. But his condition, part of that time, was such that it led him to take a course of treatment at the sanatorium in Clifton Springs. It became apparent, however, that life in the open air, for a while at least, was the one thing essential. Under the pressure of this necessity he secured a position as one of an engineering party engaged in the survey of a railway in Missouri. In that occupation he spent a large part of 1853 and 1854. He came back from this expedition restored to health. With that result accomplished, the duty of settling definitely upon what he was to do became more urgent. Among other things he did, while living for a while with his uncle in Binghamton, N. Y., he studied law in the office of Daniel S. Dickinson.

In the Christmas season of 1854 he went with a friend on a visit to Philadelphia and stayed at the house of Philip M. Price, a prominent citizen of that place who was engaged, among other things, in the conveyancing of real estate. It will not be surprising to any one who knew the charm of his society in later life to be told that he became at once a favorite with the older man. The latter was advanced in years, he was anxious to retire from active business. Acting under his advice, Warner was induced to come to Philadelphia in 1855 and join him, and to form subsequently a partnership in legal conveyancing with another young man who had been employed in Mr. Price's office. Thus came into being the firm of Barton and Warner. Their headquarters were first in Spring Garden Street and later in Walnut Street. The future soon became sufficiently assured to justify Warner in marriage, and in October, 1856, he was wedded to Susan Lee, daughter of William Elliott Lee of New York City.

But though in a business allied to the law, Warner was not yet a lawyer. His occupation indeed was only in his eyes a temporary makeshift while he was preparing himself for what was to be his real work in life. Therefore, while supporting himself by carrying on the business of conveyancing, he attended the courses of study at the law department of the University of Pennsylvania, during the academic years of 1856−57 and 1857−58. From that institution he received the degree of bachelor of law in 1858−−often misstated 1856−−and was ready to begin the practice of his, profession.

In those days every young man of ability and ambition was counseled to go West and grow up with the country, and was not unfrequently disposed to take that course of his own accord. Warner felt the general impulse. He had contemplated entering, in fact had pretty definitely made up his mind to enter, into a law partnership with a friend in one of the smaller places in that region. But on a tour, somewhat of exploration, he stopped at Chicago. There he met another friend, and after talking over the situation with him he decided to take up his residence in that city. So in 1858 the law−firm of Davenport and Warner came into being. It lasted until 1860. It was not exactly a favorable time for young men to enter upon the practice of this profession. The country was just beginning to recover from the depression which had followed the disastrous panic of 1857; but confidence was as yet far from being restored. The new firm did a fairly good business; but while there was sufficient work to do, there was but little money to pay for it. Still Warner would doubtless have continued in the profession had he not received an offer, the acceptance of which determined his future and changed entirely his career.

Hawley, now United States Senator from Connecticut, was Warner's senior by a few years. He had preceded him as a student at the Oneida Conference Seminary and at Hamilton College. Practicing law in Hartford, he had started in 1857, in conjunction with other leading citizens, a paper called the Evening Press. It was devoted to the advocacy of the principles of the Republican party, which was at that time still in what may be called the formative state of its existence. This was a period in which for some years the dissolution had been going on of the two old parties which had divided the country. Men were changing sides and were aligning themselves anew according to their views on questions which were every day assuming greater prominence in the minds of all. There was really but one great subject talked about or thought about. It split into opposing sections the whole land over which was lowering the grim, though as yet unrecognizable, shadow of civil war. The Republican party had been in existence but a very few years, but in that short time it had attracted to its ranks the young and enthusiastic spirits of the North, just as to the other side were impelled the members of the same class in the South. The intellectual contest which preceded the physical was stirring the hearts of all men. Hawley, who was well aware of Warner's peculiar ability, was anxious to secure his co−operation and assistance. He urged him to come East and join him in the conduct of the new enterprise he had undertaken.

Warner always considered that he derived great benefit from his comparatively limited study and practice of law; and that the little time he had given up to it had been far from being misspent. But the opening which now presented itself introduced him to a field of activity much more suited to his talents and his tastes. He liked the study of law better than its practice; for his early training had not been of a kind to reconcile him to standing up strongly for clients and causes that he honestly believed to be in the wrong. Furthermore, his heart, as has been said, had always been in literature; and though journalism could hardly be called much more than a half−sister, the one could provide the support which the other could never promise with certainty. So in 1860 Warner removed to Hartford and joined his friend as associate editor of the newspaper he had founded. The next year the war broke out. Hawley at once entered the army and took part in the four years' struggle. His departure left Warner in editorial charge of the paper, into the conduct of which he threw himself with all the earnestness and energy of his nature, and the ability, both political and literary, displayed in its columns gave it at once a high position which it never lost.

At this point it may be well to give briefly the few further salient facts of Warner's connection with journalism proper. In 1867 the owners of the Press purchased the Courant, the well−known morning paper which had been founded more than a century before, and consolidated the Press with it. Of this journal, Hawley and Warner, now in part proprietors, were the editorial writers. The former, who had been mustered out of the army with the rank of brevet Major−General, was soon diverted from journalism by other employments. He was elected Governor, he became a member of Congress, serving successively in both branches. The main editorial responsibility for the conduct of the paper devolved in consequence upon Warner, and to it he gave up for years nearly all his thought and attention. Once only during that early period was his labor interrupted for any considerable length of time. In May, 1868, he set out on the first of his five trips across the Atlantic. He was absent nearly a year. Yet even then he cannot be said to have neglected his special work. Articles were sent weekly from the other side, describing what he saw and experienced abroad. His active connection with the paper he never gave up absolutely, nor did

his interest in it ever cease. But after he became connected with the editorial staff of Harpers Magazine the contributions he made to his journal were only occasional and what may be called accidental.

When 1870 came, forty years of Warner's life had gone by, and nearly twenty years since he had left college. During the latter ten years of this period he had been a most effective and forcible leader−writer on political and social questions, never more so than during the storm and stress of the Civil War. Outside of these topics he had devoted a great deal of attention to matters connected with literature and art. His varied abilities were fully recognized by the readers of the journal he edited.

But as yet there was little or no recognition outside. It is no easy matter to tell what are the influences, what the circumstances, which determine the success of a particular writer or of a particular work. Hitherto Warner's repute was mainly confined to the inhabitants of a provincial capital and its outlying and dependent towns. However cultivated the class to which his writings appealed−−and as a class it was distinctly cultivated−−their number was necessarily not great. To the country at large what he did or what he was capable of doing was not known at all. Some slight efforts he had occasionally put forth to secure the publication of matter he had prepared. He experienced the usual fate of authors who seek to introduce into the market literary wares of a new and better sort. His productions did not follow conventional lines. Publishers were ready to examine what he offered, and were just as ready to declare that these new wares were of a nature in which they were not inclined to deal.

But during 1870 a series of humorous articles appeared in the Hartford Courant, detailing his experiences in the cultivation of a garden. Warner had become the owner of a small place then almost on the outskirts of the city. With the dwelling−house went the possession of three acres of land. The opportunity thus presented itself of turning into a blessing the primeval curse of tilling the soil, in this instance not with a hoe, but with a pen. These articles detailing his experiences excited so much amusement and so much admiration that a general desire was manifested that they should receive a more permanent life than that accorded to articles appearing in the columns of newspapers, and should reach a circle larger than that to be found in the society of the Connecticut capital. Warner's previous experience had not disposed him to try his fortunes with the members of the publishing fraternity. In fact he did not lay so much stress upon the articles as did his readers and friends. He always insisted that he had previously written other articles which in his eyes certainly were just as good as they, if not better.

It so chanced that about this time Henry Ward Beecher came to Hartford to visit his sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe. Warner was invited to meet him. In the course of the conversation the articles just mentioned were referred to by some one of those present. Beecher's curiosity was aroused and he expressed a desire to see them. To him they were accordingly sent for perusal. No sooner had he run through them than he recognized in them the presence of a rare and delicate humor which struck a distinctly new note in American literature. It was something he felt which should not be confined to the knowledge of any limited circle. He wrote at once to the publisher James T. Fields, urging the production of these articles in book form. Beecher's recommendation in those days was sufficient to insure the acceptance of any book by any publisher. Mr. Fields agreed to bring out the work, provided the great preacher would prefix an introduction. This he promised to do and did; though in place of the somewhat more formal piece he was asked to write, he sent what he called an introductory letter.

The series of papers published under the title of "My Summer in a Garden" came out at the very end of 1870, with the date of 1871 on the title− page. The volume met with instantaneous success. It was the subject of comment and conversation everywhere and passed rapidly through several editions. There was a general feeling that a new writer had suddenly appeared, with a wit and wisdom peculiarly his own, precisely like which nothing had previously existed in our literature. To the later editions of the work was added an account of a cat which had been presented to the author by the Stowes. For that reason it was given from the Christian name of the husband of the novelist the title of Calvin. To this John was sometimes prefixed, as betokening from the purely animal point of view a certain resemblance to the imputed grimness and earnestness of the great reformer. There was nothing in the least exaggerated in the account which Warner gave of the character and conduct of this really remarkable member of the feline race. No biography was ever truer; no appreciation was ever more sympathetic;

and in the long line of cats none was ever more worthy to have his story truly and sympathetically told. All who had the fortune to see Calvin in the flesh will recognize the accuracy with which his portrait was drawn. All who read the account of him, though not having seen him, will find it one of the most charming of descriptions. It has the fullest right to be termed a cat classic.

With the publication of "My Summer in a Garden" Warner was launched upon a career of authorship which lasted without cessation during the thirty years that remained of his life. It covered a wide field. His interests were varied and his activity was unremitting. Literature, art, and that vast diversity of topics which are loosely embraced under the general name of social science−−upon all these he had something fresh to say, and he said it invariably with attractiveness and effect. It mattered little what he set out to talk about, the talk was sure to be full both of instruction and entertainment. No sooner had the unequivocal success of his first published work brought his name before the public than he was besieged for contributions by conductors of periodicals of all sorts; and as he had ideas of his own upon all sorts of subjects, he was constantly furnishing matter of the most diverse kind for the most diverse audiences.

As a result, the volumes here gathered together represent but a limited portion of the work he accomplished. All his life, indeed, Warner was not only an omnivorous consumer of the writings of others, but a constant producer. The manifestation of it took place in ways frequently known to but few. It was not merely the fact that as an editor of a daily paper he wrote regularly articles on topics of current interest to which he never expected to pay any further attention; but after his name became widely known and his services were in request everywhere, he produced scores of articles, some long, some short, some signed, some unsigned, of which he made no account whatever. One looking through the pages of contemporary periodical literature is apt at any moment to light upon pieces, and sometimes upon series of them, which the author never took the trouble to collect. Many of those to which his name was not attached can no longer be identified with any approach to certainty. About the preservation of much that he did−−and some of it belonged distinctly to his best and most characteristic work−−he was singularly careless, or it may be better to say, singularly indifferent.

If I may be permitted to indulge in the recital of a personal experience, there is one incident I recall which will bring out this trait in a marked manner. Once on a visit to him I accompanied him to the office of his paper. While waiting for him to discharge certain duties there, and employing myself in looking over the exchanges, I chanced to light upon a leading article on the editorial page of one of the most prominent of the New York dailies. It was devoted to the consideration of some recent utterances of a noted orator who, after the actual mission of his life had been accomplished, was employing the decline of it in the exploitation of every political and economic vagary which it had entered into the addled brains of men to evolve. The article struck me as one of the most brilliant and entertaining of its kind I had ever read; it was not long indeed before it appeared that the same view of it was taken by many others throughout the country. The peculiar wit of the comment, the keenness of the satire made so much of an impression upon me that I called Warner away from his work to look at it. At my request he hastily glanced over it, but somewhat to my chagrin failed to evince any enthusiasm about it. On our way home I again spoke of it and was a good deal nettled at the indifference towards it which he manifested. It seemed to imply that my critical judgment was of little value; and however true might be his conclusion on that point, one does not enjoy having the fact thrust too forcibly upon the attention in the familiarity of conversation. Resenting therefore the tone he had assumed, I took occasion not only to reiterate my previously expressed opinion somewhat more aggressively, but also went on to insinuate that he was himself distinctly lacking in any real appreciation of what was excellent. He bore with me patiently for a while. "Well, sonny," he said at last, "since you seem to take the matter so much to heart, I will tell you in confidence that I wrote the piece myself." I found that this was not only true in the case just specified, but that while engaged in preparing articles for his own paper he occasionally prepared them for other journals. No one besides himself and those immediately concerned, ever knew anything about the matter. He never asserted any right to these pieces, he never sought to collect them, though some of them exhibited his happiest vein of humor. Unclaimed, unidentified, they are swept into that wallet of oblivion in which time stows the best as well as the worst of newspaper production.

The next volume of Warner's writings that made its appearance was entitled "Saunterings." It was the first and, though good of its kind, was by no means the best of a class of productions in which he was to exhibit signal excellence. It will be observed that of the various works comprised in this collective edition, no small number consist of what by a wide extension of the phrase may be termed books of travel. There are two or three which fall strictly under that designation. Most of them, however, can be more properly called records of personal experience and adventure in different places and regions, with the comments on life and character to which they gave rise.

Books of travel, if they are expected to live, are peculiarly hard to write. If they come out at a period when curiosity about the region described is predominant, they are fairly certain, no matter how wretched, to achieve temporary success. But there is no kind of literary production to which, by the very law of its being, it is more difficult to impart vitality. Paradoxical as it may seem, it is perfectly true that the greatest hinderance to their permanent interest is the information they furnish. The more full, specific and even accurate that is, the more rapidly does the work containing it lose its value. The fresher knowledge conveyed by a new, and it may be much inferior book, crowds out of circulation those which have gone before. The changed or changing conditions in the region traversed renders the information previously furnished out of date and even misleading. Hence the older works come in time to have only an antiquarian interest. Their pages are consulted only by that very limited number of persons who are anxious to learn what has been and view with stolid indifference what actually is. Something of this transitory nature belongs to all sketches of travel. It is the one great reason why so very few of the countless number of such works, written, and sometimes written by men of highest ability, are hardly heard of a few years after publication. Travels form a species of literary production in which great classics are exceedingly rare.

From this fatal characteristic, threatening the enduring life of such works, most of Warner's writings of this sort were saved by the method of procedure he followed. He made it his main object not to give facts but impressions. All details of exact information, everything calculated to gratify the statistical mind or to quench the thirst of the seeker for purely useful information, he was careful, whether consciously or unconsciously, to banish from those volumes of his in which he followed his own bent and felt himself under no obligation to say anything but what he chose. Hence these books are mainly a record of views of men and manners made by an acute observer on the spot, and put down at the moment when the impression created was most vivid, not deferred till familiarity had dulled the sense of it or custom had caused it to be disregarded. Take as an illustration the little book entitled "Baddeck," one of the slightest of his productions in this field. It purports to be and is nothing more than an account of a two weeks' tour made to a Cape Breton locality in company with the delightful companion to whom it was dedicated. You take it up with the notion that you are going to acquire information about the whole country journeyed over, you are beguiled at times with the fancy that you are getting it. In the best sense it may be said that you do get it; for it is the general impression of the various scenes through which the expedition leads the travelers that is left upon the mind, not those accurate details of a single one of them which the lapse of a year might render inaccurate. It is to the credit of the work therefore than one gains from it little specific knowledge. In its place are the reflections both wise and witty upon life, upon the characters of the men that are met, upon the nature of the sights that are seen.

This is what constitutes the enduring charm of the best of these pictures of travel which Warner produced. It is perhaps misleading to assert that they do not furnish a good deal of information. Still it is not the sort of information which the ordinary tourist gives and which the cultivated reader resents and is careful not to remember. Their dominant note is rather the quiet humor of a delightful story−teller, who cannot fail to say something of interest because he has seen so much; and who out of his wide and varied observation selects for recital certain sights he has witnessed, certain experiences he has gone through, and so relates them that the way the thing is told is even more interesting than the thing told. The chief value of these works does not accordingly depend upon the accidental, which passes. Inns change and become better or worse. Facilities for transportation increase or decrease. Scenery itself alters to some extent under the operation of agencies brought to bear upon it for its own improvement or for the improvement of something else. But man's nature remains a constant quantity.

Traits seen here and now are sure to be met with somewhere else, and even in ages to come. Hence works of this nature, embodying descriptions of men and manners, always retain something of the freshness which characterized them on the day of their appearance.

Of these productions in which the personal element predominates, and where the necessity of intruding information is not felt as a burden, those of Warner's works which deal with the Orient take the first rank. The two−−"My Winter on the Nile" and "In the Levant"−−constitute the record of a visit to the East during the years 1875 and 1876.

They would naturally have of themselves the most permanent value, inasmuch as the countries described have for most educated men an abiding interest. The lifelike representation and graphic characterization which Warner was apt to display in his traveling sketches were here seen at their best, because nowhere else did he find the task of description more congenial. Alike the gorgeousness and the squalor of the Orient appealed to his artistic sympathies. Egypt in particular had for him always a special fascination. Twice he visited it−−at the time just mentioned and again in the winter of 1881−82. He rejoiced in every effort made to dispel the obscurity which hung over its early history. No one, outside of the men most immediately concerned, took a deeper interest than he in the work of the Egyptian Exploration Society, of which he was one of the American vice−presidents. To promoting its success he gave no small share of time and attention. Everything connected with either the past or the present of the country had for him an attraction. A civilization which had been flourishing for centuries, when the founder of Israel was a wandering sheik on the Syrian plains or in the hill−country of Canaan; the slow unraveling of records of dynasties of forgotten kings; the memorials of Egypt's vanished greatness and the vision of her future prosperity these and things similar to these made this country, so peculiarly the gift of the Nile, of fascinating interest to the modern traveler who saw the same sights which had met the eyes of Herodotus nearly twenty−five hundred years before.

To the general public the volume which followed−−"In the Levant"−−was perhaps of even deeper interest. At all events it dealt with scenes and memories with which every reader, educated or uneducated, had associations. The region through which the founder of Christianity wandered, the places he visited, the words he said in them, the acts he did, have never lost their hold over the hearts of men, not even during the periods when the precepts of Christianity have had the least influence over the conduct of those who professed to it their allegiance. In the Levant, too, were seen the beginnings of commerce, of art, of letters, in the forms in which the modern world best knows them. These, therefore, have always made the lands about the eastern Mediterranean an attraction to cultivated men and the interest of the subject accordingly reinforced the skill of the writer.

There are two or three of these works which can not be included in the class just described. They were written for the specific purpose of giving exact information at the time. Of these the most noticeable are the volumes entitled "South and West" and the account of Southern California which goes under the name of "Our Italy." They are the outcome of journeys made expressly with the intent of investigating and reporting upon the actual situation and apparent prospects of the places and regions described. As they were written to serve an immediate purpose, much of the information contained in them tends to grow more and more out of date as time goes on; and though of value to the student of history, these volumes must necessarily become of steadily diminishing interest to the ordinary reader. Yet it is to be said of them that while the pill of useful information is there, it has at least been sugar− coated. Nor can we afford to lose sight of the fact that the widely− circulated articles, collected under the title of "South and West," by the spirit pervading them as well as by the information they gave, had a marked effect in bringing the various sections of the country into a better understanding of one another, and in imparting to all a fuller sense of the community they possessed in profit and loss, in honor and dishonor.

It is a somewhat singular fact that these sketches of travel led Warner incidentally to enter into an entirely new field of literary exertion. This was novel−writing. Something of this nature he had attempted in conjunction with Mark Twain in the composition of "The Gilded Age," which appeared in 1873. The result, however, was unsatisfactory to both the collaborators. Each had humor, but the humor of each was fundamentally different. But

the magazine with which Warner had become connected was desirous that he should prepare for it an account of some of the principal watering−places and summer resorts of the country. Each was to be visited in turn and its salient features were to be described. It was finally suggested that this could be done most effectively by weaving into a love story occurrences that might happen at a number of these places which were made the subjects of description. The principal characters were to take their tours under the personal conduct of the novelist. They were to go to the particular spots selected North and South, according to the varying seasons of the year. It was a somewhat novel way of, visiting resorts of this nature; there are those to whom it will seem altogether more agreeable than would be the visiting of them in person. Hence appeared in 1886 the articles which were collected later in the volume entitled "Their Pilgrimage."

Warner executed the task which had been assigned him with his wonted skill. The completed work met with success−−with so much success indeed that he was led later to try his fortune further in the same field and bring out the trilogy of novels which go under the names respectively of "A Little Journey in the World," "The Golden House," and "That Fortune." Each of these is complete in itself, each can be read by itself; but the effect of each and of the whole series can be best secured by reading them in succession. In the first it is the story of how a great fortune was made in the stock market; in the second, how it was fraudulently diverted from the object for which it was intended; and in the third, how it was most beneficially and satisfactorily lost. The scene of the last novel was laid in part in Warner's early home in Charlemont. These works were produced with considerable intervals of time between their respective appearances, the first coming out in 1889 and the third ten years later. This detracted to some extent from the popularity which they would have attained had the different members followed one another rapidly. Still, they met with distinct success, though it has always been a question whether this success was due so much to the story as to the shrewd observation and caustic wit which were brought to bear upon what was essentially a serious study of one side of American social life.

The work with which Warner himself was least satisfied was his life of Captain John Smith, which came out in 18881. It was originally intended to be one of a series of biographies of noted men, which were to give the facts accurately but to treat them humorously. History and comedy, however, have never been blended successfully, though desperate attempts have occasionally been made to achieve that result. Warner had not long been engaged in the task before he recognized its hopelessness. For its preparation it required a special study of the man and the period, and the more time he spent upon the preliminary work, the more the humorous element tended to recede. Thus acted on by two impulses, one of a light and one of a grave nature, he moved for a while in a sort of diagonal between the two to nowhere in particular; but finally ended in treating the subject seriously.

In giving himself up to a biography in which he had no special interest, Warner felt conscious that he could not interest others. His forebodings were realized. The work, though made from a careful study of original sources, did not please him, nor did it attract the public. The attempt was all the more unfortunate because the time and toil he spent upon it diverted him from carrying out a scheme which had then taken full possession of his thoughts. This was the production of a series of essays to be entitled "Conversations on Horseback." Had it been worked up as he sketched it in his mind, it would have been the outdoor counterpart of his "Backlog Studies." Though in a measure based upon a horseback ride which he took in Pennsylvania in 1880, the incidents of travel as he outlined its intended treatment would have barely furnished the slightest of backgrounds. Captain John Smith, however, interfered with a project specially suited to his abilities and congenial to his tastes. That he did so possibly led the author of his life to exhibit a somewhat hostile attitude towards his hero. When the biography was finished, other engagements were pressing upon his attention. The opportunity of taking up and completing the projected series of essays never presented itself, though the subject lay in his mind for a long time and he himself believed that it would have turned out one of the best pieces of work he ever did.

It was unfortunate. For to me−−and very likely to many others if not to most−−Warner's strength lay above all in essay−writing. What he accomplished in this line was almost invariably pervaded by that genial grace which makes work of the kind attractive, and he exhibited everywhere in it the delicate but sure touch which preserves the just mean between saying too much and too little. The essay was in his nature, and his occupation as a

journalist had developed the tendency towards this form of literary activity, as well as skill in its manipulation. Whether he wrote sketches of travel, or whether he wrote fiction, the scene depicted was from the point of view of the essayist rather than from that of the tourist or of the novelist. It is this characteristic which gives to his work in the former field its enduring interest. Again in his novels, it was not so much the story that was in his thoughts as the opportunity the varying scenes afforded for amusing observations upon manners, for comments upon life, sometimes good− natured, sometimes severe, but always entertaining, and above all, for serious study of the social problems which present themselves on every side for examination. This is distinctly the province of the essayist, and in it Warner always displayed his fullest strength.

We have seen that his first purely humorous publication of this nature was the one which made him known to the general public. It was speedily followed, however, by one of a somewhat graver character, which became at the time and has since remained a special favorite of cultivated readers. This is the volume entitled "Backlog Studies." The attractiveness of this work is as much due to the suggestive social and literary discussions with which it abounds as to the delicate and refined humor with which the ideas are expressed. Something of the same characteristics was displayed in the two little volumes of short pieces dealing with social topics, which came out later under the respective titles of "As We Were Saying," and "As We Go." But there was a deeper and more serious side of his nature which found utterance in several of his essays, particularly in some which were given in the form of addresses delivered at various institutions of learning. They exhibit the charm which belongs to all his writings; but his feelings were too profoundly interested in the subjects considered to allow him to give more than occasional play to his humor. Essays contained in such a volume, for instance, as "The Relation of Literature to Life" will not appeal to him whose main object in reading is amusement. Into them Warner put his deepest and most earnest convictions. The subject from which the book just mentioned derived its title lay near to his heart. No one felt more strongly than he the importance of art of all kinds, but especially of literary art, for the uplifting of a nation. No one saw more distinctly the absolute necessity of its fullest recognition in a moneymaking age and in a money−making land, if the spread of the dry rot of moral deterioration were to be prevented. The ampler horizon it presented, the loftier ideals it set up, the counteracting agency it supplied to the sordidness of motive and act which, left unchecked, was certain to overwhelm the national spirit−−all these were enforced by him again and again with clearness and effectiveness. His essays of this kind will never be popular in the sense in which are his other writings. But no thoughtful man will rise up from reading them without having gained a vivid conception of the part which literature plays in the life of even the humblest, and without a deeper conviction of its necessity to any healthy development of the character of a people.

During the early part of his purely literary career a large proportion of Warner's collected writings, which then appeared, were first published in the Atlantic Monthly. But about fourteen years before his death he became closely connected with Harper's Magazine. From May, 1886, to March, 1892, he conducted the Editor's Drawer of that periodical. The month following this last date he succeeded William Dean Howells as the contributor of the Editor's Study. This position he held until July, 1898. The scope of this department was largely expanded after the death of George William Curtis in the summer of 1892, and the consequent discontinuance of the Editor's Easy Chair. Comments upon other topics than those to which his department was originally devoted, especially upon social questions, were made a distinct feature. His editorial connection with the magazine naturally led to his contributing to it numerous articles besides those which were demanded by the requirements of the position he held. Nearly all these, as well as those which appeared in the Atlantic Monthly, are indicated in the bibliographical notes prefixed to the separate works.

There were, however, other literary enterprises in which he was concerned; for the calls upon him were numerous, his own appetite for work was insatiable, and his activity was indefatigable. In 1881 he assumed the editorship of the American Men of Letters series. This he opened with his own biography of Washington Irving, the resemblance between whom and himself has been made the subject of frequent remark. Later he became the editor−in−chief of the thirty odd volumes which make up the collection entitled "The World's Best Literature." To this he contributed several articles of his own and carefully allotted and supervised the preparation of a large number of others. The labor he put upon the editing of this collection occupied him a great deal of the time from

1895 to 1898.

But literature, though in it lay his chief interest, was but one of the subjects which employed his many−sided activity. He was constantly called upon for the discharge of civic duties. The confidence felt by his fellow−citizens in his judgment and taste was almost equal to the absolute trust reposed in his integrity. The man who establishes a reputation for the possession of these qualities can never escape from bearing the burdens which a good character always imposes. If any work of art was ordered by the state, Warner was fairly certain to be chosen a member of the commission selected to decide upon the person who was to do it and upon the way it was to be done. By his fellow−townsmen he was made a member of the Park Commission. Such were some of the duties imposed; there were others voluntarily undertaken. During the latter years of his life he became increasingly interested in social questions, some of which partook of a semi−political character. One of the subjects which engaged his attention was the best method to be adopted for elevating the character and conduct of the negro population of the country. He recognized the gravity of the problem with which the nation had to deal and the difficulties attending its solution. One essay on the subject was prepared for the meeting held at Washington in May, 1900, of the American Social Science Association, of which he was president. He was not able to be there in person. The disease which was ultimately to strike him down had already made its preliminary attack. His address was accordingly read for him. It was a subject of special regret that he could not be present to set forth more fully his views; for the debate, which followed the presentation of his paper, was by no means confined to the meeting, but extended to the press of the whole country. Whether the conclusions he reached were right or wrong, they were in no case adopted hastily nor indeed without the fullest consideration.

But a more special interest of his lay in prison reform. The subject had engaged his attention long before he published anything in connection with it. Later one of the earliest articles he wrote for Harper's Magazine was devoted to it. It was in his thoughts just before his death. He was a member of the Connecticut commission on prisons, of the National Prison Association, and a vice−president of the New York Association for Prison Reform. A strong advocate of the doctrine of the indeterminate sentence, he had little patience with many of the judicial outgivings on that subject. To him they seemed opinions inherited, not formed, and in most cases were nothing more than the result of prejudice working upon ignorance. This particular question was one which he purposed to make the subject of his address as president of the Social Science Association, at its annual meeting in 1901. He never lived to complete what he had in mind.

During his later years the rigor of the Northern winter had been too severe for Warner's health. He had accordingly found it advisable to spend as much of this season as he could in warmer regions. He visited at various times parts of the South, Mexico, and California. He passed the winter of 1892−93 at Florence; but he found the air of the valley of the Arno no perceptible improvement upon that of the valley of the Connecticut. In truth, neither disease nor death entertains a prejudice against any particular locality. This fact he was to learn by personal experience. In the spring of 1899, while at New Orleans, he was stricken by pneumonia which nearly brought him to the grave. He recovered, but it is probable that the strength of his system was permanently impaired, and with it his power of resisting disease. Still his condition was not such as to prevent him from going on with various projects he had been contemplating or from forming new ones. The first distinct warning of the approaching end was the facial paralysis which suddenly attacked him in April, 1900, while on a visit to Norfolk, Va. Yet even from that he seemed to be apparently on the full road to recovery during the following summer.

It was in the second week of October, 1900, that Warner paid me a visit of two or three days. He was purposing to spend the winter in Southern California, coming back to the East in ample time to attend the annual meeting of the Social Science Association. His thoughts were even then busy with the subject of the address which, as president, he was to deliver on that occasion. It seemed to me that I had never seen him when his mind was more active or more vigorous. I was not only struck by the clearness of his views−−some of which were distinctly novel, at least to me−−but by the felicity and effectiveness with which they were put.

Never, too, had I been more impressed with the suavity, the agreeableness, the general charm of his manner. He had determined during the coming winter to learn to ride the wheel, and we then and there planned to take a bicycle trip during the following summer, as we had previously made excursions together on horseback. When we parted, it was with the agreement that we should meet the next spring in Washington and fix definitely upon the time and region of our intended ride. It was on a Saturday morning that I bade him good−by, apparently in the best of health and spirits. It was on the evening of the following Saturday−− October 20th−−that the condensed, passionless, relentless message which the telegraph transmits, informed me that he had died that afternoon.

That very day he had lunched at a friend's, where were gathered several of his special associates who had chanced to come together at the same house, and then had gone to the office of the Hartford Courant. There was not the slightest indication apparent of the end that was so near. After the company broke up, he started out to pay a visit to one of the city parks, of which he was a commissioner. On his way thither, feeling a certain faintness, he turned aside into a small house whose occupants he knew, and asked to sit down for a brief rest, and then, as the faintness increased, to lie undisturbed on the lounge for a few minutes. The few minutes passed, and with them his life. In the strictest sense of the words, he had fallen asleep. From one point of view it was an ideal way to die. To the individual, death coming so gently, so suddenly, is shorn of all its terrors. It is only those who live to remember and to lament that the suffering comes which has been spared the victim. Even to them, however, is the consolation that though they may have been fully prepared for the coming of the inevitable event, it would have been none the less painful when it actually came.

Warner as a writer we all know. The various and varying opinions entertained about the quality and value of his work do not require notice here. Future times will assign him his exact position in the roll of American authors, and we need not trouble ourselves to anticipate, as we shall certainly not be able to influence, its verdict. But to only a comparatively few of those who knew him as a writer was it given to know him as a man; to still fewer to know him in that familiarity of intimacy which reveals all that is fine or ignoble in a man's personality. Scanty is the number of those who will come out of that severest of ordeals so successfully as he. The same conclusion would be reached, whether we were to consider him in his private relations or in his career as a man of letters. Among the irritable race of authors no one was freer from petty envy or jealousy. During many years of close intercourse, in which he constantly gave utterance to his views both of men and things with absolute unreserve, I recall no disparaging opinion ever expressed of any writer with whom he had been compared either for praise or blame. He had unquestionably definite and decided opinions. He would point out that such or such a work was above or below its author's ordinary level; but there was never any ill−nature in his comment, no depreciation for depreciation's sake. Never in truth was any one more loyal to his friends. If his literary conscience would not permit him to say anything in favor of something which they had done, he usually contented himself with saying nothing. Whatever failing there was on his critical side was due to this somewhat uncritical attitude; for it is from his particular friends that the writer is apt to get the most dispassionate consideration and sometimes the coldest commendation. It was a part of Warner's generous recognition of others that he was in all sincerity disposed to attribute to those he admired and to whom he was attached an ability of which some of them at least were much inclined to doubt their own possession.

Were I indeed compelled to select any one word which would best give the impression, both social and literary, of Warner's personality, I should be disposed to designate it as urbanity. That seems to indicate best the one trait which most distinguished him either in conversation or writing. Whatever it was, it was innate, not assumed. It was the genuine outcome of the kindliness and broad−mindedness of his nature and led him to sympathize with men of all positions in life and of all kinds of ability. It manifested itself in his attitude towards every one with whom he came in contact. It led him to treat with fullest consideration all who were in the least degree under his direction, and converted in consequence the toil of subordinates into a pleasure. It impelled him to do unsought everything which lay in his power for the success of those in whom he felt interest. Many a young writer will recall his words of encouragement at some period in his own career when the quiet appreciation of one meant more to him than did later the loud applause of many. As it was in public, so it was in private life. The generosity of his spirit, the geniality and high−bred courtesy of his manner, rendered a visit to his home as much a social

delight as his wide knowledge of literature and his appreciation of what was best in it made it an intellectual entertainment.

THOMAS R. LOUNSBURY.

THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO LIFE

PRELIMINARY

This paper was prepared and delivered at several of our universities as introductory to a course of five lectures which insisted on the value of literature in common life−−some hearers thought with an exaggerated emphasis−−and attempted to maintain the thesis that all genuine, enduring literature is the outcome of the time that produces it, is responsive to the general sentiment of its time; that this close relation to human life insures its welcome ever after as a true representation of human nature; and that consequently the most remunerative method of studying a literature is to study the people for whom it was produced. Illustrations of this were drawn from the Greek, the French, and the English literatures. This study always throws a flood of light upon the meaning of the text of an old author, the same light that the reader unconsciously has upon contemporary pages dealing with the life with which he is familiar. The reader can test this by taking up his Shakespeare after a thorough investigation of the customs, manners, and popular life of the Elizabethan period. Of course the converse is true that good literature is an open door into the life and mode of thought of the time and place where it originated.

THE RELATION OF LITERATURE TO LIFE

I hade a vision once−−you may all have had a like one−−of the stream of time flowing through a limitless land. Along its banks sprang up in succession the generations of man. They did not move with the stream− they lived their lives and sank away; and always below them new generations appeared, to play their brief parts in what is called history−−the sequence of human actions. The stream flowed on, opening for itself forever a way through the land. I saw that these successive dwellers on the stream were busy in constructing and setting afloat vessels of various size and form and rig−−arks, galleys, galleons, sloops, brigs, boats propelled by oars, by sails, by steam. I saw the anxiety with which each builder launched his venture, and watched its performance and progress. The anxiety was to invent and launch something that should float on to the generations to come, and carry the name of the builder and the fame of his generation. It was almost pathetic, these puny efforts, because faith always sprang afresh in the success of each new venture. Many of the vessels could scarcely be said to be launched at all; they sank like lead, close to the shore. Others floated out for a time, and then, struck by a flaw in the wind, heeled over and disappeared. Some, not well put together, broke into fragments in the bufleting of the waves. Others danced on the flood, taking the sun on their sails, and went away with good promise of a long voyage. But only a few floated for any length of time, and still fewer were ever seen by the generation succeeding that which launched them. The shores of the stream were strewn with wrecks; there lay bleaching in the sand the ribs of many a once gallant craft.

Innumerable were the devices of the builders to keep their inventions afloat. Some paid great attention to the form of the hull, others to the kind of cargo and the loading of it, while others−−and these seemed the majority−−trusted more to some new sort of sail, or new fashion of rudder, or new application of propelling power. And it was wonderful to see what these new ingenuities did for a time, and how each generation was deceived into the belief that its products would sail on forever. But one fate practically came to the most of them. They were too heavy, they were too light, they were built of old material, and they went to the bottom, they went ashore, they broke up and floated in fragments. And especially did the crafts built in imitation of something that had floated down from a previous generation come to quick disaster. I saw only here and there a vessel, beaten by weather and blackened by time −−so old, perhaps, that the name of the maker was no longer legible; or some fragments of antique wood that had evidently come from far up the stream. When such a vessel appeared there

was sure to arise great dispute about it, and from time to time expeditions were organized to ascend the river and discover the place and circumstances of its origin. Along the banks, at intervals, whole fleets of boats and fragments had gone ashore, and were piled up in bays, like the driftwood of a subsided freshet. Efforts were made to dislodge these from time to time and set them afloat again, newly christened, with fresh paint and sails, as if they stood a better chance of the voyage than any new ones. Indeed, I saw that a large part of the commerce of this river was, in fact, the old hulks and stranded wrecks that each generation had set afloat again. As I saw it in this foolish vision, how pathetic this labor was from generation to generation; so many vessels launched; so few making a voyage even for a lifetime; so many builders confident of immortality; so many lives outlasting this coveted reputation! And still the generations, each with touching hopefulness, busied themselves with this child's play on the banks of the stream; and still the river flowed on, whelming and wrecking the most of that so confidently committed to it, and bearing only here and there, on its swift, wide tide, a ship, a boat, a shingle.

These hosts of men whom I saw thus occupied since history began were authors; these vessels were books; these heaps of refuse in the bays were great libraries. The allegory admits of any amount of ingenious parallelism. It is nevertheless misleading; it is the illusion of an idle fancy. I have introduced it because it expresses, with some whimsical exaggeration−−not much more than that of "The Vision of Mirza" −−the popular notion about literature and its relation to human life. In the popular conception, literature is as much a thing apart from life as these boats on the stream of time were from the existence, the struggle, the decay of the generations along the shore. I say in the popular conception, for literature is wholly different from this, not only in its effect upon individual lives, but upon the procession of lives upon this earth; it is not only an integral part of all of them, but, with its sister arts, it is the one unceasing continuity in history. Literature and art are not only the records and monuments made by the successive races of men, not only the local expressions of thought and emotion, but they are, to change the figure, the streams that flow on, enduring, amid the passing show of men, reviving, transforming, ennobling the fleeting generations. Without this continuity of thought and emotion, history would present us only a succession of meaningless experiments. The experiments fail, the experiments succeed−−at any rate, they end−−and what remains for transmission, for the sustenance of succeeding peoples? Nothing but the thought and emotion evolved and expressed. It is true that every era, each generation, seems to have its peculiar work to do; it is to subdue the intractable earth, to repel or to civilize the barbarians, to settle society in order, to build cities, to amass wealth in centres, to make deserts bloom, to construct edifices such as were never made before, to bring all men within speaking distance of each other−−lucky if they have anything to say when that is accomplished−−to extend the information of the few among the many, or to multiply the means of easy and luxurious living. Age after age the world labors for these things with the busy absorption of a colony of ants in its castle of sand. And we must confess that the process, such, for instance, as that now going on here−−this onset of many peoples, which is transforming the continent of America−−is a spectacle to excite the imagination in the highest degree. If there were any poet capable of putting into an epic the spirit of this achievement, what an epic would be his! Can it be that there is anything of more consequence in life than the great business in hand, which absorbs the vitality and genius of this age? Surely, we say, it is better to go by steam than to go afoot, because we reach our destination sooner−−getting there quickly being a supreme object. It is well to force the soil to yield a hundred−fold, to congregate men in masses so that all their energies shall be taxed to bring food to themselves, to stimulate industries, drag coal and metal from the bowels of the earth, cover its surface with rails for swift− running carriages, to build ever larger palaces, warehouses, ships. This gigantic achievement strikes the imagination.

If the world in which you live happens to be the world of books, if your pursuit is to know what has been done and said in the world, to the end that your own conception of the value of life may be enlarged, and that better things may be done and said hereafter, this world and this pursuit assume supreme importance in your mind. But you can in a moment place yourself in relations−−you have not to go far, perhaps only to speak to your next neighbor−−where the very existence of your world is scarcely recognized. All that has seemed to you of supreme importance is ignored. You have entered a world that is called practical, where the things that we have been speaking of are done; you have interest in it and sympathy with it, because your scheme of life embraces the development of ideas into actions; but these men of realities have only the smallest conception of the world that seems to you of the highest importance; and, further, they have no idea that they owe anything to it, that it has

ever influenced their lives or can add anything to them. And it may chance that you have, for the moment, a sense of insignificance in the small part you are playing in the drama going forward. Go out of your library, out of the small circle of people who talk of books, who are engaged in research, whose liveliest interest is in the progress of ideas, in the expression of thought and emotion that is in literature; go out of this atmosphere into a region where it does not exist, it may be into a place given up to commerce and exchange, or to manufacturing, or to the development of certain other industries, such as mining, or the pursuit of office−−which is sometimes called politics. You will speedily be aware how completely apart from human life literature is held to be, how few people regard it seriously as a necessary element in life, as anything more than an amusement or a vexation. I have in mind a mountain district, stripped, scarred, and blackened by the ruthless lumbermen, ravished of its forest wealth; divested of its beauty, which has recently become the field of vast coal−mining operations. Remote from communication, it was yesterday an exhausted, wounded, deserted country. Today audacious railways are entering it, crawling up its mountain slopes, rounding its dizzy precipices, spanning its valleys on iron cobwebs, piercing its hills with tunnels. Drifts are opened in its coal seams, to which iron tracks shoot away from the main line; in the woods is seen the gleam of the engineer's level, is heard the rattle of heavily−laden wagons on the newly−made roads; tents are pitched, uncouth shanties have sprung up, great stables, boarding−houses, stores, workshops; the miner, the blacksmith, the mason, the carpenter have arrived; households have been set up in temporary barracks, children are already there who need a school, women who must have a church and society; the stagnation has given place to excitement, money has flowed in, and everywhere are the hum of industry and the swish of the goad of American life. On this hillside, which in June was covered with oaks, is already in October a town; the stately trees have been felled; streets are laid out and graded and named; there are a hundred dwellings, there are a store, a post−office, an inn; the telegraph has reached it, and the telephone and the electric light; in a few weeks more it will be in size a city, with thousands of people−−a town made out of hand by drawing men and women from other towns, civilized men and women, who have voluntarily put themselves in a position where they must be civilized over again.

This is a marvelous exhibition of what energy and capital can do. You acknowledge as much to the creators of it. You remember that not far back in history such a transformation as this could not have been wrought in a hundred years. This is really life, this is doing something in the world, and in the presence of it you can see why the creators of it regard your world, which seemed to you so important, the world whose business is the evolution and expression of thought and emotion, as insignificant. Here is a material addition to the business and wealth of the race, here employment for men who need it, here is industry replacing stagnation, here is the pleasure of overcoming difficulties and conquering obstacles. Why encounter these difficulties? In order that more coal may be procured to operate more railway trains at higher speed, to supply more factories, to add to the industrial stir of modern life. The men who projected and are pushing on this enterprise, with an executive ability that would maintain and manoeuvre an army in a campaign, are not, however, consciously philanthropists, moved by the charitable purpose of giving employment to men, or finding satisfaction in making two blades of grass grow where one grew before. They enjoy no doubt the sense of power in bringing things to pass, the feeling of leadership and the consequence derived from its recognition; but they embark in this enterprise in order that they may have the position and the luxury that increased wealth will bring, the object being, in most cases, simply material advantages−−sumptuous houses, furnished with all the luxuries which are the signs of wealth, including, of course, libraries and pictures and statuary and curiosities, the most showy equipages and troops of servants; the object being that their wives shall dress magnificently, glitter in diamonds and velvets, and never need to put their feet to the ground; that they may command the best stalls in the church, the best pews in the theatre, the choicest rooms in the inn, and−−a consideration that Plato does not mention, because his world was not our world−−that they may impress and reduce to obsequious deference the hotel clerk.

This life−−for this enterprise and its objects are types of a considerable portion of life−−is not without its ideal, its hero, its highest expression, its consummate flower. It is expressed in a word which I use without any sense of its personality, as the French use the word Barnum−−for our crude young nation has the distinction of adding a verb to the French language, the verb to barnum−−it is expressed in the well−known name Croesus. This is a standard−−impossible to be reached perhaps, but a standard. If one may say so, the country is sown with seeds of

Croesus, and the crop is forward and promising. The interest to us now in the observation of this phase of modern life is not in the least for purposes of satire or of reform. We are inquiring how wholly this conception of life is divomore railway trains at higher speed, to supply more factories, to add to the industrial stir of modern life. The men who projected and are pushing on this enterprise, with an executive ability that would maintain and manoeuvre an army in a campaign, are not, however, consciously philanthropists, moved by the charitable purpose of giving employment to men, or finding satisfaction in making two blades of grass grow where one grew before. They enjoy no doubt the sense of power in bringing things to pass, the feeling of leadership and the consequence derived from its recognition; but they embark in this enterprise in order that they may have the position and the luxury that increased wealth will bring, the object being, in most cases, simply material advantages−−sumptuous houses, furnished with all the luxuries which are the signs of wealth, including, of course, libraries and pictures and statuary and curiosities, the most showy equipages and troops of servants; the object being that their wives shall dress magnificently, glitter in diamonds and velvets, and never need to put their feet to the ground; that they may command the best stalls in the church, the best pews in the theatre, the choicest rooms in the inn, and−−a consideration that Plato does not mention, because his world was not our world−−that they may impress and reduce to obsequious deference the hotel clerk.

This life−−for this enterprise and its objects are types of a considerable portion of life−−is not without its ideal, its hero, its highest expression, its consummate flower. It is expressed in a word which I use without any sense of its personality, as the French use the word Barnum−−for our crude young nation has the distinction of adding a verb to the French language, the verb to barnum−−it is expressed in the well−known name Croesus. This is a standard−−impossible to be reached perhaps, but a standard. If one may say so, the country is sown with seeds of Croesus, and the crop is forward and promising. The interest to us now in the observation of this phase of modern life is not in the least for purposes of satire or of reform. We are inquiring how wholly this conception of life is divorced from the desire to learn what has been done and said to the end that better things may be done and said hereafter, in order that we may understand the popular conception of the insignificant value of literature in human affairs. But it is not aside from our subject, rather right in its path, to take heed of what the philosophers say of the effect in other respects of the pursuit of wealth.

One cause of the decay of the power of defense in a state, says the Athenian Stranger in Plato's Laws−−one cause is the love of wealth, which wholly absorbs men and never for a moment allows them to think of anything but their private possessions; on this the soul of every citizen hangs suspended, and can attend to nothing but his daily gain; mankind are ready to learn any branch of knowledge and to follow any pursuit which tends to this end, and they laugh at any other; that is the reason why a city will not be in earnest about war or any other good and honorable pursuit.

The accumulation of gold in the treasury of private individuals, says Socrates, in the Republic, is the ruin of democracy. They invent illegal modes of expenditure; and what do they or their wives care about the law?

"And then one, seeing another's display, proposes to rival him, and thus the whole body of citizens acquires a similar character.

"After that they get on in a trade, and the more they think of making a fortune, the less they think of virtue; for when riches and virtue are placed together in the balance, the one always rises as the other falls.

"And in proportion as riches and rich men are honored in the state, virtue and the virtuous are dishonored.

"And what is honored is cultivated, and that which has no honor is neglected.

"And so at last, instead of loving contention and glory, men become lovers of trade and money, and they honor and reverence the rich man and make a ruler of him, and dishonor the poor man.

"They do so."

The object of a reasonable statesman (it is Plato who is really speaking in the Laws) is not that the state should be as great and rich as possible, should possess gold and silver, and have the greatest empire by sea and land.

The citizen must, indeed, be happy and good, and the legislator will seek to make him so; but very rich and very good at the same time he cannot be; not at least in the sense in which many speak of riches. For they describe by the term "rich" the few who have the most valuable possessions, though the owner of them be a rogue. And if this is true, I can never assent to the doctrine that the rich man will be happy: he must be good as well as rich. And good in a high degree and rich in a high degree at the same time he cannot be. Some one will ask, Why not? And we shall answer, Because acquisitions which come from sources which are just and unjust indifferently are more

than double those which come from just sources only; and the sums which are expended neither honorably nor disgracefully are only half as great as those which are expended honorably and on honorable purposes. Thus if one acquires double and spends half, the other, who is in the opposite case and is a good man, cannot possibly be wealthier than he. The first (I am speaking of the saver, and not of the spender) is not always bad; he may indeed in some cases be utterly bad, but as I was saying, a good man he never is. For he who receives money unjustly as well as justly, and spends neither justly nor unjustly, will be a rich man if he be also thrifty. On the other hand, the utterly bad man is generally profligate, and therefore poor; while he who spends on noble objects, and acquires wealth by just means only, can hardly be remarkable for riches any more than he can be very poor. The argument, then, is right in declaring that the very rich are not good, and if they are not good they are not happy.

And the conclusion of Plato is that we ought not to pursue any occupation to the neglect of that for which riches exist−−"I mean," he says, "soul and body, which without gymnastics and without education will never be worth anything; and therefore, as we have said not once but many times, the care of riches should have the last place in our thoughts."

Men cannot be happy unless they are good, and they cannot be good unless the care of the soul occupies the first place in their thoughts. That is the first interest of man; the interest in the body is midway; and last of all, when rightly regarded, is the interest about money.

The majority of mankind reverses this order of interests, and therefore it sets literature to one side as of no practical account in human life. More than this, it not only drops it out of mind, but it has no conception of its influence and power in the very affairs from which it seems to be excluded. It is my purpose to show not only the close relation of literature to ordinary life, but its eminent position in life, and its saving power in lives which do not suspect its influence or value. Just as it is virtue that saves the state, if it be saved, although the majority do not recognize it and attribute the salvation of the state to energy, and to obedience to the laws of political economy, and to discoveries in science, and to financial contrivances; so it is that in the life of generations of men, considered from an ethical and not from a religious point of view, the most potent and lasting influence for a civilization that is worth anything, a civilization that does not by its own nature work its decay, is that which I call literature. It is time to define what we mean by literature. We may arrive at the meaning by the definition of exclusion. We do not mean all books, but some books; not all that is written and published, but only a small part of it. We do not mean books of law, of theology, of politics, of science, of medicine, and not necessarily books of travel, or adventure, or biography, or fiction even. These may all be ephemeral in their nature. The term belles−lettres does not fully express it, for it is too narrow. In books of law, theology, politics, medicine, science, travel, adventure, biography, philosophy, and fiction there may be passages that possess, or the whole contents may possess, that quality which comes within our meaning of literature. It must have in it something of the enduring and the universal. When we use the term art, we do not mean the arts; we are indicating a quality that may be in any of the arts. In art and literature we require not only an expression of the facts in nature and in human life, but of feeling, thought, emotion. There must be an appeal to the universal in the race. It is, for example, impossible for a Christian today to understand what the religious system of the Egyptians of three thousand years ago was to the Egyptian mind, or to grasp the idea conveyed to a Chinaman's thought in the phrase, "the worship of the principle of heaven"; but the Christian of today comprehends perfectly the letters of an Egyptian scribe in the time of Thotmes III., who described the comical miseries of his campaign with as clear an appeal to universal human nature as Horace used in his 'Iter Brundusium;' and the maxims of Confucius are as comprehensible as the bitter−sweetness of Thomas a Kempis. De Quincey distinguishes between the literature of knowledge and the literature of power. The definition is not exact; but we may say that the one is a statement of what is known, the other is an emanation from the man himself; or that one may add to the sum of human knowledge, and the other addresses itself to a higher want in human nature than the want of knowledge. We select and set aside as literature that which is original, the product of what we call genius. As I have said, the subject of a production does not always determine the desired quality which makes it literature. A biography may contain all the facts in regard to a man and his character, arranged in an orderly and comprehensible manner, and yet not be literature; but it may be so written, like Plutarch's Lives or Defoe's account of Robinson Crusoe, that it is literature, and of imperishable value as a picture of human life, as a satisfaction to the want of the human mind which is higher than the want of knowledge. And this contribution, which I desire to be understood to mean when I speak of literature, is precisely the thing of most value in the lives of the majority of men, whether they are

aware of it or not. It may be weighty and profound; it may be light, as light as the fall of a leaf or a bird's song on the shore; it may be the thought of Plato when he discourses of the character necessary in a perfect state, or of Socrates, who, out of the theorem of an absolute beauty, goodness, greatness, and the like, deduces the immortality of the soul; or it may be the lovesong of a Scotch plowman: but it has this one quality of answering to a need in human nature higher than a need for facts, for knowledge, for wealth.

In noticing the remoteness in the popular conception of the relation of literature to life, we must not neglect to take into account what may be called the arrogance of culture, an arrogance that has been emphasized, in these days of reaction from the old attitude of literary obsequiousness, by harsh distinctions and hard words, which are paid back by equally emphasized contempt. The apostles of light regard the rest of mankind as barbarians and Philistines, and the world retorts that these self−constituted apostles are idle word−mongers, without any sympathy with humanity, critics and jeerers who do nothing to make the conditions of life easier. It is natural that every man should magnify the circle of the world in which he is active and imagine that all outside of it is comparatively unimportant. Everybody who is not a drone has his sufficient world. To the lawyer it is his cases and the body of law, it is the legal relation of men that is of supreme importance; to the merchant and manufacturer all the world consists in buying and selling, in the production and exchange of products; to the physician all the world is diseased and in need of remedies; to the clergyman speculation and the discussion of dogmas and historical theology assume immense importance; the politician has his world, the artist his also, and the man of books and letters a realm still apart from all others. And to each of these persons what is outside of his world seems of secondary importance; he is absorbed in his own, which seems to him all−embracing. To the lawyer everybody is or ought to be a litigant; to the grocer the world is that which eats, and pays−−with more or less regularity; to the scholar the world is in books and ideas. One realizes how possessed he is with his own little world only when by chance he changes his profession or occupation and looks back upon the law, or politics, or journalism, and sees in its true proportion what it was that once absorbed him and seemed to him so large. When Socrates discusses with Gorgias the value of rhetoric, the use of which, the latter asserts, relates to the greatest and best of human things, Socrates says: I dare say you have heard men singing−−at feasts the old drinking−song, in which the singers enumerate the goods of life−first, health; beauty next; thirdly, wealth honestly acquired. The producers of these things−−the physician, the trainer, the money−maker−−each in turn contends that his art produces the greatest good. Surely, says the physician, health is the greatest good; there is more good in my art, says the trainer, for my business is to make men beautiful and strong in body; and consider, says the money−maker, whether any one can produce a greater good than wealth. But, insists Gorgias, the greatest good of men, of which I am the creator, is that which gives men freedom in their persons, and the power of ruling over others in their several states−−that is, the word which persuades the judge in the court, or the senators in the council, or the citizens in the assembly: if you have the power of uttering this word, you will have the physician your slave, and the trainer your slave, and the moneymaker of whom you talk will be found to gather treasures, not for himself, but for those who are able to speak and persuade the multitude.

What we call life is divided into occupations and interest, and the horizons of mankind are bounded by them. It happens naturally enough, therefore, that there should be a want of sympathy in regard to these pursuits among men, the politician despising the scholar, and the scholar looking down upon the politician, and the man of affairs, the man of industries, not caring to conceal his contempt for both the others. And still more reasonable does the division appear between all the world which is devoted to material life, and the few who live in and for the expression of thought and emotion. It is a pity that this should be so, for it can be shown that life would not be worth living divorced from the gracious and ennobling influence of literature, and that literature suffers atrophy when it does not concern itself with the facts and feelings of men.

If the poet lives in a world apart from the vulgar, the most lenient apprehension of him is that his is a sort of fool's paradise. One of the most curious features in the relation of literature to life is this, that while poetry, the production of the poet, is as necessary to universal man as the atmosphere, and as acceptable, the poet is regarded with that mingling of compassion and undervaluation, and perhaps awe, which once attached to the weak−minded and insane, and which is sometimes expressed by the term "inspired idiot." However the poet may have been petted and crowned, however his name may have been diffused among peoples, I doubt not that the popular estimate of him has always been substantially what it is today. And we all know that it is true, true in our individual consciousness, that if a man be known as a poet and nothing else, if his character is sustained by no

other achievement than the production of poetry, he suffers in our opinion a loss of respect. And this is only recovered for him after he is dead, and his poetry is left alone to speak for his name. However fond my lord and lady were of the ballad, the place of the minstrel was at the lower end of the hall. If we are pushed to say why this is, why this happens to the poet and not to the producers of anything else that excites the admiration of mankind, we are forced to admit that there is something in the poet to sustain the popular judgment of his in utility. In all the occupations and professions of life there is a sign put up, invisible−−but none the less real, and expressing an almost universal feeling−−"No poet need apply." And this is not because there are so many poor poets; for there are poor lawyers, poor soldiers, poor statesmen, incompetent business men; but none of the personal disparagement attaches to them that is affixed to the poet. This popular estimate of the poet extends also, possibly in less degree, to all the producers of the literature that does not concern itself with knowledge. It is not our care to inquire further why this is so, but to repeat that it is strange that it should be so when poetry is, and has been at all times, the universal solace of all peoples who have emerged out of barbarism, the one thing not supernatural and yet akin to the supernatural, that makes the world, in its hard and sordid conditions, tolerable to the race. For poetry is not merely the comfort of the refined and the delight of the educated; it is the alleviator of poverty, the pleasure−ground of the ignorant, the bright spot in the most dreary pilgrimage. We cannot conceive the abject animal condition of our race were poetry abstracted; and we do not wonder that this should be so when we reflect that it supplies a want higher than the need for food, for raiment, or ease of living, and that the mind needs support as much as the body. The majority of mankind live largely in the imagination, the office or use of which is to lift them in spirit out of the bare physical conditions in which the majority exist. There are races, which we may call the poetical races, in which this is strikingly exemplified. It would be difficult to find poverty more complete, physical wants less gratified, the conditions of life more bare than among the Oriental peoples from the Nile to the Ganges and from the Indian Ocean to the steppes of Siberia. But there are perhaps none among the more favored races who live so much in the world of imagination fed by poetry and romance. Watch the throng seated about an Arab or Indian or Persian story−teller and poet, men and women with all the marks of want, hungry, almost naked, without any prospect in life of ever bettering their sordid condition; see their eyes kindle, their breathing suspended, their tense absorption; see their tears, hear their laughter, note their excitement as the magician unfolds to them a realm of the imagination in which they are free for the hour to wander, tasting a keen and deep enjoyment that all the wealth of Croesus cannot purchase for his disciples. Measure, if you can, what poetry is to them, what their lives would be without it. To the millions and millions of men who are in this condition, the bard, the story−teller, the creator of what we are considering as literature, comes with the one thing that can lift them out of poverty, suffering−− all the woe of which nature is so heedless.

It is not alone of the poetical nations of the East that this is true, nor is this desire for the higher enjoyment always wanting in the savage tribes of the West. When the Jesuit Fathers in 1768 landed upon the almost untouched and unexplored southern Pacific coast, they found in the San Gabriel Valley in Lower California that the Indians had games and feasts at which they decked themselves in flower garlands that reached to their feet, and that at these games there were song contests which sometimes lasted for three days. This contest of the poets was an old custom with them. And we remember how the ignorant Icelanders, who had never seen a written character, created the splendid Saga, and handed it down from father to son. We shall scarcely find in Europe a peasantry whose abject poverty is not in some measure alleviated by this power which literature gives them to live outside it. Through our sacred Scriptures, through the ancient storytellers, through the tradition which in literature made, as I said, the chief continuity in the stream of time, we all live a considerable, perhaps the better, portion of our lives in the Orient. But I am not sure that the Scotch peasant, the crofter in his Highland cabin, the operative in his squalid tenement− house, in the hopelessness of poverty, in the grime of a life made twice as hard as that of the Arab by an inimical climate, does not owe more to literature than the man of culture, whose material surroundings are heaven in the imagination of the poor. Think what his wretched life would be, in its naked deformity, without the popular ballads, without the romances of Scott, which have invested his land for him, as for us, with enduring charm; and especially without the songs of Burns, which keep alive in him the feeling that he is a man, which impart to his blunted sensibility the delicious throb of spring−songs that enable him to hear the birds, to see the bits of blue sky−songs that make him tender of the wee bit daisy at his feet−−songs that hearten him when his heart is fit to break with misery. Perhaps the English peasant, the English operative, is less susceptible to such influences than the Scotch or the Irish; but over him, sordid as his conditions are, close kin as

he is to the clod, the light of poetry is diffused; there filters into his life, also, something of that divine stream of which we have spoken, a dialect poem that touches him, the leaf of a psalm, some bit of imagination, some tale of pathos, set afloat by a poor writer so long ago that it has become the common stock of human tradition−maybe from Palestine, maybe from the Ganges, perhaps from Athens−−some expression of real emotion, some creation, we say, that makes for him a world, vague and dimly apprehended, that is not at all the actual world in which he sins and suffers. The poor woman, in a hut with an earth floor, a reeking roof, a smoky chimney, barren of comfort, so indecent that a gentleman would not stable his horse in it, sits and sews upon a coarse garment, while she rocks the cradle of an infant about whom she cherishes no illusions that his lot will be other than that of his father before him. As she sits forlorn, it is not the wretched hovel that she sees, nor other hovels like it−−rows of tenements of hopeless poverty, the ale−house, the gin− shop, the coal−pit, and the choking factory−−but:

"Sweet fields beyond the swelling flood Stand dressed in living green"

for her, thanks to the poet. But, alas for the poet there is not a peasant nor a wretched operative of them all who will not shake his head and tap his forehead with his forefinger when the poor poet chap passes by. The peasant has the same opinion of him that the physician, the trainer, and the money−lender had of the rhetorician.

The hard conditions of the lonely New England life, with its religious theories as sombre as its forests, its rigid notions of duty as difficult to make bloom into sweetness and beauty as the stony soil, would have been unendurable if they had not been touched with the ideal created by the poet. There was in creed and purpose the virility that creates a state, and, as Menander says, the country which is cultivated with difficulty produces brave men; but we leave out an important element in the lives of the Pilgrims if we overlook the means they had of living above their barren circumstances. I do not speak only of the culture which many of them brought from the universities, of the Greek and Roman classics, and what unworldly literature they could glean from the productive age of Elizabeth and James, but of another source, more universally resorted to, and more powerful in exciting imagination and emotion, and filling the want in human nature of which we have spoken. They had the Bible, and it was more to them, much more, than a book of religion, than a revelation of religious truth, a rule for the conduct of life, or a guide to heaven. It supplied the place to them of the Mahabharata to the Hindoo, of the story−teller to the Arab. It opened to them a boundless realm of poetry and imagination.

What is the Bible? It might have sufficed, accepted as a book of revelation, for all the purposes of moral guidance, spiritual consolation, and systematized authority, if it had been a collection of precepts, a dry code of morals, an arsenal of judgments, and a treasury of promises. We are accustomed to think of the Pilgrims as training their intellectual faculties in the knottiest problems of human responsibility and destiny, toughening their mental fibre in wrestling with dogmas and the decrees of Providence, forgetting what else they drew out of the Bible: what else it was to them in a degree it has been to few peoples many age. For the Bible is the unequaled record of thought and emotion, the reservoir of poetry, traditions, stories, parables, exaltations, consolations, great imaginative adventure, for which the spirit of man is always longing. It might have been, in warning examples and commands, all−sufficient to enable men to make a decent pilgrimage on earth and reach a better country; but it would have been a very different book to mankind if it had been only a volume of statutes, and if it lacked its wonderful literary quality. It might have enabled men to reach a better country, but not, while on earth, to rise into and live in that better country, or to live in a region above the sordidness of actual life. For, apart from its religious intention and sacred character, the book is so written that it has supremely in its history, poetry, prophecies, promises, stories, that clear literary quality that supplies, as certainly no other single book does, the want in the human mind which is higher than the want of facts or knowledge.

The Bible is the best illustration of the literature of power, for it always concerns itself with life, it touches it at all points. And this is the test of any piece of literature−−its universal appeal to human nature. When I consider the narrow limitations of the Pilgrim households, the absence of luxury, the presence of danger and hardship, the harsh laws−−only less severe than the contemporary laws of England and Virginia−−the weary drudgery, the few pleasures, the curb upon the expression of emotion and of tenderness, the ascetic repression of worldly thought, the absence of poetry in the routine occupations and conditions, I can feel what the Bible must have been to them. It was an open door into a world where emotion is expressed, where imagination can range, where love and longing find a language, where imagery is given to every noble and suppressed passion of the soul, where every aspiration finds wings. It was history, or, as Thucydides said, philosophy teaching by example; it was the romance of real life; it was entertainment unfailing; the wonder−book of childhood, the volume of sweet sentiment to the

shy maiden, the sword to the soldier, the inciter of the youth to heroic enduring of hardness, it was the refuge of the aged in failing activity. Perhaps we can nowhere find a better illustration of the true relation of literature to life than in this example.

Let us consider the comparative value of literature to mankind. By comparative value I mean its worth to men in comparison with other things of acknowledged importance, such as the creation of industries, the government of States, the manipulation of the politics of an age, the achievements in war and discovery, and the lives of admirable men. It needs a certain perspective to judge of this aright, for the near and the immediate always assume importance. The work that an age has on hand, whether it be discovery, conquest, the wars that determine boundaries or are fought for policies, the industries that develop a country or affect the character of a people, the wielding of power, the accumulation of fortunes, the various activities of any given civilization or period, assume such enormous proportions to those engaged in them that such a modest thing as the literary product seems insignificant in comparison; and hence it is that the man of action always holds in slight esteem the man of thought, and especially the expresser of feeling and emotion, the poet and the humorist. It is only when we look back over the ages, when civilizations have passed or changed, over the rivalries of States, the ambitions and enmities of men, the shining deeds and the base deeds that make up history, that we are enabled to see what remains, what is permanent. Perhaps the chief result left to the world out of a period of heroic exertion, of passion and struggle and accumulation, is a sheaf of poems, or the record by a man of letters of some admirable character. Spain filled a large place in the world in the sixteenth century, and its influence upon history is by no means spent yet; but we have inherited out of that period nothing, I dare say, that is of more value than the romance of Don Quixote. It is true that the best heritage of generation from generation is the character of great men; but we always owe its transmission to the poet and the writer. Without Plato there would be no Socrates. There is no influence comparable in human life to the personality of a powerful man, so long as he is present to his generation, or lives in the memory of those who felt his influence. But after time has passed, will the world, will human life, that is essentially the same in all changing conditions, be more affected by what Bismarck did or by what Goethe said?

We may without impropriety take for an illustration of the comparative value of literature to human needs the career of a man now living. In the opinion of many, Mr. Gladstone is the greatest Englishman of this age. What would be the position of the British empire, what would be the tendency of English politics and society without him, is a matter for speculation. He has not played such a role for England and its neighbors as Bismarck has played for Germany and the Continent, but he has been one of the most powerful influences in molding English action. He is the foremost teacher. Rarely in history has a nation depended more upon a single man, at times, than the English upon Gladstone, upon his will, his ability, and especially his character. In certain recent crises the thought of losing him produced something like a panic in the English mind, justifying in regard to him, the hyperbole of Choate upon the death of Webster, that the sailor on the distant sea would feel less safe−− as if a protecting providence had been withdrawn from the world. His mastery of finance and of economic problems, his skill in debate, his marvelous achievements in oratory, have extorted the admiration of his enemies. There is scarcely a province in government, letters, art, or research in which the mind can win triumphs that he has not invaded and displayed his power in; scarcely a question in politics, reform, letters, religion, archaeology, sociology, which he has not discussed with ability. He is a scholar, critic, parliamentarian, orator, voluminous writer. He seems equally at home in every field of human activity−−a man of prodigious capacity and enormous acquirements. He can take up, with a turn of the hand, and always with vigor, the cause of the Greeks, Papal power, education, theology, the influence of Egypt on Homer, the effect of English legislation on King O'Brien, contributing something noteworthy to all the discussions of the day. But I am not aware that he has ever produced a single page of literature. Whatever space he has filled in his own country, whatever and however enduring the impression he has made upon English life and society, does it seem likely that the sum total of his immense activity in so many fields, after the passage of so many years, will be worth to the world as much as the simple story of Rab and his Friends? Already in America I doubt if it is. The illustration might have more weight with some minds if I contrasted the work of this great man−−as to its answering to a deep want in human nature−−with a novel like 'Henry Esmond' or a poem like 'In Memoriam'; but I think it is sufficient to rest it upon so slight a performance as the sketch by Dr. John Brown, of Edinburgh. For the truth is that a little page of literature, nothing more than a sheet of paper with a poem written on it, may have that vitality, that enduring quality, that adaptation to life, that make it of more consequence to all who inherit it than every material achievement of the age that

produced it. It was nothing but a sheet of paper with a poem on it, carried to the door of his London patron, for which the poet received a guinea, and perhaps a seat at the foot of my lord's table. What was that scrap compared to my lord's business, his great establishment, his equipages in the Park, his position in society, his weight in the House of Lords, his influence in Europe? And yet that scrap of paper has gone the world over; it has been sung in the camp, wept over in the lonely cottage; it has gone with the marching regiments, with the explorers−−with mankind, in short, on its way down the ages, brightening, consoling, elevating life; and my lord, who regarded as scarcely above a menial the poet to whom he tossed the guinea−−my lord, with all his pageantry and power, has utterly gone and left no witness.