

## BOOK XVII.

### YOUNG AMERICA IN LITERATURE.

#### I.

Among the various conflicting modes of writing history, there would seem to be two grand practical distinctions, under which all the rest must subordinately range. By the one mode, all contemporaneous circumstances, facts, and events must be set down contemporaneously; by the other, they are only to be set down as the general stream of the narrative shall dictate; for matters which are kindred in time, may be very irrelative in themselves. I elect neither of these; I am careless of either; both are well enough in their way; I write precisely as I please.

In the earlier chapters of this volume, it has somewhere been passingly intimated, that Pierre was not only a reader of the poets and other fine writers, but likewise--and what is a very different thing from the other--a thorough allegorical understander of them, a profound emotional sympathizer with them; in other words, Pierre himself possessed the poetic nature; in himself absolutely, though but latently and floatingly, possessed every whit of the imaginative wealth which he so admired, when by vast pains-takings, and all manner of unrecompensed agonies, systematized on the printed page. Not that as yet his young and immature soul had been accosted by the Wonderful Mutes, and through the

vast halls of Silent Truth, had been ushered into the full, secret, eternally inviolable Sanhedrim, where the Poetic Magi discuss, in glorious gibberish, the Alpha and Omega of the Universe. But among the beautiful imaginings of the second and third degree of poets, he freely and comprehendingly ranged.

But it still remains to be said, that Pierre himself had written many a fugitive thing, which had brought him, not only vast credit and compliments from his more immediate acquaintances, but the less partial applauses of the always intelligent, and extremely discriminating public. In short, Pierre had frequently done that, which many other boys have done--published. Not in the imposing form of a book, but in the more modest and becoming way of occasional contributions to magazines and other polite periodicals. His magnificent and victorious debut had been made in that delightful love-sonnet, entitled "The Tropical Summer." Not only the public had applauded his gemmed little sketches of thought and fancy, whether in poetry or prose; but the high and mighty Campbell clan of editors of all sorts had bestowed upon him those generous commendations, which, with one instantaneous glance, they had immediately perceived was his due. They spoke in high terms of his surprising command of language; they begged to express their wonder at his euphonious construction of sentences; they regarded with reverence the pervading symmetry of his general style. But transcending even this profound insight into the deep merits of Pierre, they looked infinitely beyond, and confessed their complete inability to restrain their unqualified admiration for the highly judicious smoothness and

genteelness of the sentiments and fancies expressed. "This writer," said one,--in an ungovernable burst of admiring fury--"is characterized throughout by Perfect Taste." Another, after endorsingly quoting that sapient, suppressed maxim of Dr. Goldsmith's, which asserts that whatever is new is false, went on to apply it to the excellent productions before him; concluding with this: "He has translated the unruffled gentleman from the drawing-room into the general levee of letters; he never permits himself to astonish; is never betrayed into any thing coarse or new; as assured that whatever astonishes is vulgar, and whatever is new must be crude. Yes, it is the glory of this admirable young author, that vulgarity and vigor--two inseparable adjuncts--are equally removed from him."

A third, perorated a long and beautifully written review, by the bold and startling announcement--"This writer is unquestionably a highly respectable youth."

Nor had the editors of various moral and religious periodicals failed to render the tribute of their severer appreciation, and more enviable, because more chary applause. A renowned clerical and philological conductor of a weekly publication of this kind, whose surprising proficiency in the Greek, Hebrew, and Chaldaic, to which he had devoted by far the greater part of his life, peculiarly fitted him to pronounce unerring judgment upon works of taste in the English, had unhesitatingly delivered himself thus:--"He is blameless in morals, and harmless throughout." Another, had unhesitatingly recommended his effusions to

the family-circle. A third, had no reserve in saying, that the predominant end and aim of this author was evangelical piety.

A mind less naturally strong than Pierre's might well have been hurried into vast self-complacency, by such eulogy as this, especially as there could be no possible doubt, that the primitive verdict pronounced by the editors was irreversible, except in the highly improbable event of the near approach of the Millennium, which might establish a different dynasty of taste, and possibly eject the editors. It is true, that in view of the general practical vagueness of these panegyrics, and the circumstance that, in essence, they were all somehow of the prudently indecisive sort; and, considering that they were panegyrics, and nothing but panegyrics, without any thing analytical about them; an elderly friend of a literary turn, had made bold to say to our hero--"Pierre, this is very high praise, I grant, and you are a surprisingly young author to receive it; but I do not see any criticisms as yet."

"Criticisms?" cried Pierre, in amazement; "why, sir, they are all criticisms! I am the idol of the critics!"

"Ah!" sighed the elderly friend, as if suddenly reminded that that was true after all--"Ah!" and went on with his inoffensive, non-committal cigar.

Nevertheless, thanks to the editors, such at last became the popular literary enthusiasm in behalf of Pierre, that two young men, recently

abandoning the ignoble pursuit of tailoring for the more honorable trade of the publisher (probably with an economical view of working up in books, the linen and cotton shreds of the cutter's counter, after having been subjected to the action of the paper-mill), had on the daintiest scolloped-edged paper, and in the neatest possible, and fine-needle-work hand, addressed him a letter, couched in the following terms; the general style of which letter will sufficiently evince that, though--thanks to the manufacturer--their linen and cotton shreds may have been very completely transmuted into paper, yet the cutters themselves were not yet entirely out of the metamorphosing mill.

"Hon. Pierre Glendinning,

"Revered Sir,

"The fine cut, the judicious fit of your productions fill us with amazement. The fabric is excellent--the finest broadcloth of genius. We have just started in business. Your pantaloons--productions, we mean--have never yet been collected. They should be published in the Library form. The tailors--we mean the librarians, demand it. Your fame is now in its finest nap. Now--before the gloss is off--now is the time for the library form. We have recently received an invoice of Chamois---- Russia leather. The library form should be a durable form. We respectfully offer to dress your amazing productions in the library form. If you please, we will transmit you a sample of the cloth---- we mean a

sample-page, with a pattern of the leather. We are ready to give you one tenth of the profits (less discount) for the privilege of arraying your wonderful productions in the library form:--you cashing the seamstresses'---- printer's and binder's bills on the day of publication. An answer at your earliest convenience will greatly oblige,--

"Sir, your most obsequious servants,

"WONDER & WEN."

"P. S.--We respectfully submit the enclosed block---- sheet, as some earnest of our intentions to do every thing in your behalf possible to any firm in the trade.

"N. B.--If the list does not comprise all your illustrious wardrobe---- works, we mean----, we shall exceedingly regret it. We have hunted through all the drawers---- magazines.

"Sample of a coat---- title for the works of Glendinning:

THE  
COMPLETE WORKS  
OF  
GLENDINNING,

AUTHOR OF

That world-famed production, "The Tropical Summer: a Sonnet."

"The Weather: a Thought." "Life: an Impromptu." "The

late Reverend Mark Graceman: an Obituary." "Honor:

a Stanza." "Beauty: an Acrostic." "Edgar:

an Anagram." "The Pippin: a Paragraph."

&c. &c. &c. &c.

&c. &c. &c.

&c. &c.

&c."

P

From a designer, Pierre had received the following:

"Sir: I approach you with unfeigned trepidation. For though you are young in age, you are old in fame and ability. I can not express to you my ardent admiration of your works; nor can I but deeply regret that the productions of such graphic descriptive power, should be unaccompanied by the humbler illustrative labors of the designer. My services in this line are entirely at your command. I need not say how proud I should be, if this hint, on my part, however presuming, should induce you to reply in terms upon which I could found the hope of honoring myself and my profession by a few designs for the works of the illustrious Glendinning. But the cursory mention of your name here fills me with such swelling

emotions, that I can say nothing more. I would only add, however, that not being at all connected with the Trade, my business situation unpleasantly forces me to make cash down on delivery of each design, the basis of all my professional arrangements. Your noble soul, however, would disdain to suppose, that this sordid necessity, in my merely business concerns, could ever impair----

"That profound private veneration and admiration

With which I unmercenarily am,

Great and good Glendinning,

Yours most humbly,

PETER PENCE."

II.

These were stirring letters. The Library Form! an Illustrated Edition! His whole heart swelled.

But unfortunately it occurred to Pierre, that as all his writings were not only fugitive, but if put together could not possibly fill more than a very small duodecimo; therefore the Library Edition seemed a little premature, perhaps; possibly, in a slight degree, preposterous. Then, as they were chiefly made up of little sonnets, brief meditative poems, and moral essays, the matter for the designer ran some small risk of being but meager. In his inexperience, he did not know that such was the great



height of invention to which the designer's art had been carried, that certain gentlemen of that profession had gone to an eminent publishing-house with overtures for an illustrated edition of "Coke upon Lyttleton." Even the City Directory was beautifully illustrated with exquisite engravings of bricks, tongs, and flat-irons.

Concerning the draught for the title-page, it must be confessed, that on seeing the imposing enumeration of his titles--long and magnificent as those preceding the proclamations of some German Prince ("Hereditary Lord of the back-yard of Crantz Jacobi; Undoubted Proprietor by Seizure of the bedstead of the late Widow Van Lorn; Heir Apparent to the Bankrupt Bakery of Fletz and Flitz; Residuary Legatee of the Confiscated Pin-Money of the Late Dowager Dunker; &c. &c. &c.") Pierre could not entirely repress a momentary feeling of elation. Yet did he also bow low under the weight of his own ponderosity, as the author of such a vast load of literature. It occasioned him some slight misgivings, however, when he considered, that already in his eighteenth year, his title-page should so immensely surpass in voluminous statisticals the simple page, which in his father's edition prefixed the vast speculations of Plato. Still, he comforted himself with the thought, that as he could not presume to interfere with the bill-stickers of the Gazelle Magazine, who every month covered the walls of the city with gigantic announcements of his name among the other contributors; so neither could he now--in the highly improbable event of closing with the offer of Messrs. Wonder and Wen--presume to interfere with the bill-sticking department of their business concern; for it was plain that they esteemed one's title-page

but another unwindowed wall, infinitely more available than most walls, since here was at least one spot in the city where no rival bill-stickers dared to encroach. Nevertheless, resolved as he was to let all such bill-sticking matters take care of themselves, he was sensible of some coy inclination toward that modest method of certain kid-gloved and dainty authors, who scorning the vulgarity of a sounding parade, contented themselves with simply subscribing their name to the title-page; as confident, that that was sufficient guarantee to the notice of all true gentlemen of taste. It was for petty German princes to sound their prolonged titular flourishes. The Czar of Russia contented himself with putting the simple word "NICHOLAS" to his loftiest decrees.

This train of thought terminated at last in various considerations upon the subject of anonymousness in authorship. He regretted that he had not started his literary career under that mask. At present, it might be too late; already the whole universe knew him, and it was in vain at this late day to attempt to hood himself. But when he considered the essential dignity and propriety at all points, of the inviolably anonymous method, he could not but feel the sincerest sympathy for those unfortunate fellows, who, not only naturally averse to any sort of publicity, but progressively ashamed of their own successive productions--written chiefly for the merest cash--were yet cruelly coerced into sounding title-pages by sundry baker's and butcher's bills, and other financial considerations; inasmuch as the placard of the title-page indubitably must assist the publisher in his sales.

But perhaps the ruling, though not altogether conscious motive of Pierre in finally declining--as he did--the services of Messrs. Wonder and Wen, those eager applicants for the privilege of extending and solidifying his fame, arose from the idea that being at this time not very far advanced in years, the probability was, that his future productions might at least equal, if not surpass, in some small degree, those already given to the world. He resolved to wait for his literary canonization until he should at least have outgrown the sophomorean insinuation of the Law; which, with a singular affectation of benignity, pronounced him an "infant." His modesty obscured from him the circumstance, that the greatest lettered celebrities of the time, had, by the divine power of genius, become full graduates in the University of Fame, while yet as legal minors forced to go to their mammas for pennies wherewith to keep them in peanuts.

Not seldom Pierre's social placidity was ruffled by polite entreaties from the young ladies that he would be pleased to grace their Albums with some nice little song. We say that here his social placidity was ruffled; for the true charm of agreeable parlor society is, that there you lose your own sharp individuality and become delightfully merged in that soft social Pantheism, as it were, that rosy melting of all into one, ever prevailing in those drawing-rooms, which pacifically and deliciously belie their own name; inasmuch as there no one draws the sword of his own individuality, but all such ugly weapons are left--as of old--with your hat and cane in the hall. It was very awkward to

decline the albums; but somehow it was still worse, and peculiarly distasteful for Pierre to comply. With equal justice apparently, you might either have called this his weakness or his idiosyncrasy. He summoned all his suavity, and refused. And the refusal of Pierre--according to Miss Angelica Amabilia of Ambleside--was sweeter than the compliance of others. But then--prior to the proffer of her album--in a copse at Ambleside, Pierre in a gallant whim had in the lady's own presence voluntarily carved Miss Angelica's initials upon the bark of a beautiful maple. But all young ladies are not Miss Angelicas. Blandly denied in the parlor, they courted repulse in the study. In lovely envelopes they dispatched their albums to Pierre, not omitting to drop a little attar-of-rose in the palm of the domestic who carried them. While now Pierre--pushed to the wall in his gallantry--shilly-shallied as to what he must do, the awaiting albums multiplied upon him; and by-and-by monopolized an entire shelf in his chamber; so that while their combined ornate bindings fairly dazzled his eyes, their excessive redolence all but made him to faint, though indeed, in moderation, he was very partial to perfumes. So that of really chilly afternoons, he was still obliged to drop the upper sashes a few inches.

The simplest of all things it is to write in a lady's album. But Cui Bono? Is there such a dearth of printed reading, that the monkish times must be revived, and ladies books be in manuscript? What could Pierre write of his own on Love or any thing else, that would surpass what divine Hafiz wrote so many long centuries ago? Was there not Anacreon

too, and Catullus, and Ovid--all translated, and readily accessible? And then--bless all their souls!--had the dear creatures forgotten Tom Moore? But the handwriting, Pierre,--they want the sight of your hand. Well, thought Pierre, actual feeling is better than transmitted sight, any day. I will give them the actual feeling of my hand, as much as they want. And lips are still better than hands. Let them send their sweet faces to me, and I will kiss lipographs upon them forever and a day. This was a felicitous idea. He called Dates, and had the albums carried down by the basket-full into the dining-room. He opened and spread them all out upon the extension-table there; then, modeling himself by the Pope, when His Holiness collectively blesses long crates of rosaries--he waved one devout kiss to the albums; and summoning three servants sent the albums all home, with his best compliments, accompanied with a confectioner's kiss for each album, rolled up in the most ethereal tissue.

From various quarters of the land, both town and country, and especially during the preliminary season of autumn, Pierre received various pressing invitations to lecture before Lyceums, Young Men's Associations, and other Literary and Scientific Societies. The letters conveying these invitations possessed quite an imposing and most flattering aspect to the unsophisticated Pierre. One was as follows:--

"Urquhartian Club for the Immediate Extension of the Limits of all Knowledge, both Human and Divine.

"ZADOCKPRATTSVILLE,

"June 11th, 18--.

"Author of the 'Tropical Summer,' &c.

"HONORED AND DEAR SIR:--

"Official duty and private inclination in this present case most delightfully blend. What was the ardent desire of my heart, has now by the action of the Committee on Lectures become professionally obligatory upon me. As Chairman of our Committee on Lectures, I hereby beg the privilege of entreating that you will honor this Society by lecturing before it on any subject you may choose, and at any day most convenient to yourself. The subject of Human Destiny we would respectfully suggest, without however at all wishing to impede you in your own unbiased selection.

"If you honor us by complying with this invitation, be assured, sir, that the Committee on Lectures will take the best care of you throughout your stay, and endeavor to make Zadockprattsville agreeable to you. A carriage will be in attendance at the Stage-house to convey yourself and luggage to the Inn, under full escort of the Committee on Lectures, with the Chairman at their head.

"Permit me to join my private homage

To my high official consideration for you,

And to subscribe myself  
Very humbly your servant,  
DONALD DUNDONALD."

III.

But it was more especially the Lecture invitations coming from venerable, gray-headed metropolitan Societies, and indited by venerable gray-headed Secretaries, which far from elating filled the youthful Pierre with the sincerest sense of humility. Lecture? lecture? such a stripling as I lecture to fifty benches, with ten gray heads on each? five hundred gray heads in all! Shall my one, poor, inexperienced brain presume to lay down the law in a lecture to five hundred life-ripened understandings? It seemed too absurd for thought. Yet the five hundred, through their spokesman, had voluntarily extended this identical invitation to him. Then how could it be otherwise, than that an incipient Timonism should slide into Pierre, when he considered all the disgraceful inferences to be derived from such a fact. He called to mind, how that once upon a time, during a visit of his to the city, the police were called out to quell a portentous riot, occasioned by the vast press and contention for seats at the first lecture of an illustrious lad of nineteen, the author of "A Week at Coney Island."

It is needless to say that Pierre most conscientiously and respectfully declined all polite overtures of this sort.

Similar disenchantments of his cooler judgment did likewise deprive of their full lusciousness several other equally marked demonstrations of his literary celebrity. Applications for autographs showered in upon him; but in sometimes humorously gratifying the more urgent requests of these singular people Pierre could not but feel a pang of regret, that owing to the very youthful and quite unformed character of his handwriting, his signature did not possess that inflexible uniformity, which--for mere prudential reasons, if nothing more--should always mark the hand of illustrious men. His heart thrilled with sympathetic anguish for posterity, which would be certain to stand hopelessly perplexed before so many contradictory signatures of one supereminent name. Alas! posterity would be sure to conclude that they were forgeries all; that no chirographic relic of the sublime poet Glendinning survived to their miserable times.

From the proprietors of the Magazines whose pages were honored by his effusions, he received very pressing epistolary solicitations for the loan of his portrait in oil, in order to take an engraving therefrom, for a frontispiece to their periodicals. But here again the most melancholy considerations obtruded. It had always been one of the lesser ambitions of Pierre, to sport a flowing beard, which he deemed the most noble corporeal badge of the man, not to speak of the illustrious author. But as yet he was beardless; and no cunning compound of Rowland and Son could force a beard which should arrive at maturity in any reasonable time for the frontispiece. Besides, his boyish features and



whole expression were daily changing. Would he lend his authority to this unprincipled imposture upon Posterity? Honor forbade.

These epistolary petitions were generally couched in an elaborately respectful style; thereby intimating with what deep reverence his portrait would be handled, while unavoidably subjected to the discipline indispensable to obtain from it the engraved copy they prayed for. But one or two of the persons who made occasional oral requisitions upon him in this matter of his engraved portrait, seemed less regardful of the inherent respect due to every man's portrait, much more, to that of a genius so celebrated as Pierre. They did not even seem to remember that the portrait of any man generally receives, and indeed is entitled to more reverence than the original man himself; since one may freely clap a celebrated friend on the shoulder, yet would by no means tweak his nose in his portrait. The reason whereof may be this: that the portrait is better entitled to reverence than the man; inasmuch as nothing belittling can be imagined concerning the portrait, whereas many unavoidably belittling things can be fancied as touching the man.

Upon one occasion, happening suddenly to encounter a literary acquaintance--a joint editor of the "Captain Kidd Monthly"--who suddenly popped upon him round a corner, Pierre was startled by a rapid--"Good-morning, good-morning;--just the man I wanted:--come, step round now with me, and have your Daguerreotype taken;--get it engraved then in no time;--want it for the next issue."

So saying, this chief mate of Captain Kidd seized Pierre's arm, and in the most vigorous manner was walking him off, like an officer a pickpocket, when Pierre civilly said--"Pray, sir, hold, if you please, I shall do no such thing."--"Pooh, pooh--must have it--public property--come along--only a door or two now."--"Public property!" rejoined Pierre, "that may do very well for the 'Captain Kidd Monthly;'--it's very Captain Kiddish to say so. But I beg to repeat that I do not intend to accede."--"Don't? Really?" cried the other, amazedly staring Pierre full in the countenance;--"why bless your soul, my portrait is published--long ago published!"--"Can't help that, sir"--said Pierre. "Oh! come along, come along," and the chief mate seized him again with the most uncompunctious familiarity by the arm. Though the sweetest-tempered youth in the world when but decently treated, Pierre had an ugly devil in him sometimes, very apt to be evoked by the personal profaneness of gentlemen of the Captain Kidd school of literature. "Look you, my good fellow," said he, submitting to his impartial inspection a determinately double fist,--"drop my arm now--or I'll drop you. To the devil with you and your Daguerreotype!"

This incident, suggestive as it was at the time, in the sequel had a surprising effect upon Pierre. For he considered with what infinite readiness now, the most faithful portrait of any one could be taken by the Daguerreotype, whereas in former times a faithful portrait was only within the power of the moneyed, or mental aristocrats of the earth. How natural then the inference, that instead, as in old times, immortalizing a genius, a portrait now only dayalized a dunce. Besides, when every

body has his portrait published, true distinction lies in not having yours published at all. For if you are published along with Tom, Dick, and Harry, and wear a coat of their cut, how then are you distinct from Tom, Dick, and Harry? Therefore, even so miserable a motive as downright personal vanity helped to operate in this matter with Pierre.

Some zealous lovers of the general literature of the age, as well as declared devotees to his own great genius, frequently petitioned him for the materials wherewith to frame his biography. They assured him, that life of all things was most insecure. He might feel many years in him yet; time might go lightly by him; but in any sudden and fatal sickness, how would his last hours be embittered by the thought, that he was about to depart forever, leaving the world utterly unprovided with the knowledge of what were the precise texture and hue of the first trowsers he wore. These representations did certainly touch him in a very tender spot, not previously unknown to the schoolmaster. But when Pierre considered, that owing to his extreme youth, his own recollections of the past soon merged into all manner of half-memories and a general vagueness, he could not find it in his conscience to present such materials to the impatient biographers, especially as his chief verifying authority in these matters of his past career, was now eternally departed beyond all human appeal. His excellent nurse Clarissa had been dead four years and more. In vain a young literary friend, the well-known author of two Indexes and one Epic, to whom the subject happened to be mentioned, warmly espoused the cause of the distressed biographers; saying that however unpleasant, one must needs pay the

penalty of celebrity; it was no use to stand back; and concluded by taking from the crown of his hat the proof-sheets of his own biography, which, with the most thoughtful consideration for the masses, was shortly to be published in the pamphlet form, price only a shilling.

It only the more bewildered and pained him, when still other and less delicate applicants sent him their regularly printed Biographico-Sollicito Circulars, with his name written in ink; begging him to honor them and the world with a neat draft of his life, including criticisms on his own writings; the printed circular indiscriminately protesting, that undoubtedly he knew more of his own life than any other living man; and that only he who had put together the great works of Glendinning could be fully qualified thoroughly to analyze them, and cast the ultimate judgment upon their remarkable construction.

Now, it was under the influence of the humiliating emotions engendered by things like the above; it was when thus haunted by publishers, engravers, editors, critics, autograph-collectors, portrait-fanciers, biographers, and petitioning and remonstrating literary friends of all sorts; it was then, that there stole into the youthful soul of Pierre, melancholy forebodings of the utter unsatisfactoriness of all human fame; since the most ardent profferings of the most martyring demonstrations in his behalf,--these he was sorrowfully obliged to turn away.

And it may well be believed, that after the wonderful vital

world-revelation so suddenly made to Pierre at the Meadows--a revelation which, at moments, in some certain things, fairly Timonized him--he had not failed to clutch with peculiar nervous detestation and contempt that ample parcel, containing the letters of his Biographico and other silly correspondents, which, in a less ferocious hour, he had filed away as curiosities. It was with an almost infernal grin, that he saw that particular heap of rubbish eternally quenched in the fire, and felt that as it was consumed before his eyes, so in his soul was forever killed the last and minutest undeveloped microscopic germ of that most despicable vanity to which those absurd correspondents thought to appeal.