

### Literary.

We Americans, Englishmen say, like our meat overdone. We overdo a great many other things as much as our meat. If a certain style of shoes is introduced and strikes the popular eye everybody is wearing them in a few weeks. A new flavor is discovered for that national curse soda-water. In two days every fountain in the state advertises it in large letters. Our democratic zeal makes every man want to have just what every other man has. In most things this competitive spirit is probably beneficial. In literary styles it is of doubtful utility. Some time or other in the past five years some magazine or newspaper published two or three good dialect stories. Its immediate rival at once decided that in order to keep even it must publish dialect stories also. Then the rush began. The type founders who had an oversupply of dashes and apostrophes became suddenly rich. The deluge shows as yet no signs of letting up. The dialect story has taken its place with the mother-in-law and the plumber's bill as a standard recourse for the comic papers. All this is unfortunate. A dialect story in which the dialect is only an adjunct to the main idea is, as an occasional article, excellent. The original intention was, I think, that dialect should be used to give the required local flavor and to intensify the vividness of the general description. It was a means to an end, now the story itself is likely to be an adjunct to the dialect. If the latter can be given in sufficient quantity without the appearance of any plot or the intrusion of any character the writer is well pleased. What so often happens in religious worship has happened in this case. The means has become the end. If the article had kept up to its original standard the steady diet of mangled words which has been forced upon us would have been disagreeable enough, but such has not been the case. Just as it would have happened with calico or crackers over-competition and consequent overproduction

have caused the quality of the product to deteriorate. An apparent love for venture in unknown fields has assisted this process. The New Englander is not content to reproduce the musical nasal drawl of the Yankee, but must try to represent the Creole *patois* to the eye of readers who never heard it spoken. The ambitious young Georgian author will not content himself with the "poor white" talk which he has heard all his life, but persists in trying to put a suitable "lingo" into the mouths of Nebraska cowboys and Colorado miners. The result is that the average dialect story is as incomprehensible to the average reader as Prof. Sherman's Analytic of Literature seems to be to the editorial board of the Hesperian. How long will the muse of fiction (she is not one of the original nine) permit her devotees to be thus tortured?

The Hebrews did not believe that anything good would come out of Nazareth. A great many people are of somewhat the same opinion in regard to French literature. To say that a novel is French is enough to condemn it in the eyes of many over-moral people. That this is just in the large majority of cases cannot be denied. The average French writer seems to degrade whatever he touches and to see only the low and disagreeable side of life. There are, however, exceptions to every rule. It is unfair to condemn all novels that have been written by Frenchmen and all French novelists because most French novels and novelists are worthy of condemnation. Yet this is what a great many people unwittingly do. How often have we seen people's eyebrows go up deprecatingly at the mention of Balzac. It is largely to this prejudice of French novels in general, that his unpopularity or lack of popularity is due. He can hardly be called unpopular, for the average novel reader does not know enough about him to like or dislike him. Those who read him are of one opinion and give him the place he deserves among the foremost novelists of his own country and of the world. He is never