



# LITERARY.

## SOUTHERN LITERATURE.

**A**T THE Sixteenth Annual meeting of the Texas State Teachers' Association, held at Dallas June 26, 27, 28 and 29, 1895, a splendid paper entitled "Southern Literature," by Mr. T. S. Minter, the able superintendent of public schools in Bryan City, Texas, was prepared, and was the first number on the programme. This magnificent address will repay you a hundred times for the time spent in reading and considering the many suggestive and instructive thoughts contained in it.

I know but little about Southern literature, and have learned that since I quit school. All the schools I attended, and most of my teachers, were intensely Southern, but Southern literature had no place in the curriculum, and Southern authors had no expounders. They were not mentioned except, perhaps, incidentally. My readers, histories, and in fact all my books, came from the North; they were full of good and wholesome thought from classic Greece and Rome, from modern continental Europe, the isles of Great Britain, from the Northern States, but there was seldom a poem, a story, or an oration, from a Southern author.

Why was it that the South did not have its ratio of representation in the school books and other publications in this country? Was it because the South was financially unable? Fertile soil, bounteous harvests, and vast wealth of slaves answer no. Nor was it for want of culture, for the Southern gentleman was a classical scholar, the

Southern lady a queen of grace and refinement. Was it for want of intellectual vigor? The Gladstones and Bismarcks of this century have saluted the vigorous thinkers of the South. Was it because the South was wanting in deeds of heroism? The South was the first to defy England, and furnished more soldiers according to military population than the North; South Carolina alone furnished twice as many men as New Hampshire, though she had a smaller military population. The South was the first to cross the mountains and attack the Indians; she was the aggressive element in the war of 1812, and in the war with Mexico there were forty-five thousand volunteers from the South, and only twenty-three thousand from the North. Why was it that the South, rich in materials for an abundant and valuable literature, was so barren in literary production?

The answer is an easy one. The South was strictly agricultural; the farms very large. There were no literary centers; the cities few and far apart. The South was indifferent to popular education. Home talent was not encouraged by the many, and those that read much preferred the classics. Authorship, before the civil war, meant poverty and self-sacrifice. Such, in brief, is the history of our literary environments in the ante-bellum days.

But the war practically removed these obstacles, and as our social compact began to adjust itself to the new order of things, authors received en-