JAMES LANE ALLEN: THE MAN AND HIS WORKS.

by

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A.B., Southwestern College, 1909

Submitted to the Department of English and the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Kansas in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of A.M.

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Preface

Since the work of James Lane Allen is now finished and no complete study of it has been made, it has seemed worth while to give attention to his contributions to American literature and to make an attempt to estimate their permanent worth in so far as that may be possible of a contemporary writer. With that end in view the following paper has been prepared. It is based on a reading of all of Allen's works (with the exception of Chimney Corner Graduates), and of such of his contributions to periodicals and of such biographical and critical material concerning him as has been available in both the University of Kansas Library and in the Lawrence Public Library. Because of the intense subjectivity of the author more attention has been given to an account of his life and personality and their reaction upon his writing than would otherwise have been done.

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to Dr. J. H. Nelson for his helpful advice and guidance in the study and for his kindly criticism; I am also indebted to him for the use of books, for his biography of Allen in manuscript form (to be published in The Dictionary of American Biography), and for valuable correspondence concerning Allen. I am deeply grateful to other members of the English department for their kindly interest, and to Mrs. Clark and other librarians who have so generously given their assistance.

L. E. H.

Lawrence, Kansas,
June 10, 1927.

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CHAPTER I

Biographical Sketch

Few authors have avoided publicity as has James Lane Allen, and yet few have infused their own personality more completely into their writings. Many of his works, in fact, are so intensely personal that they seem autobiographical. From them alone a reader may come to know the author fairly well. On the other hand, if he has a background of actual facts by which he may interpret the knowledge of the author he thus gains, his works become more meaningful. Therefore, it seems advisable as a preliminary step to a study of Allen and to an understanding and appreciation of his works, to take into account the facts of his life, his inheritance, his achievement, his attitudes and his ideals.

As yet no complete biography of Allen has been published, although numerous sketches of his life have appeared from time to time. The present chapter represents an attempt to set forth such information as may be gathered from all available sources. Since the accessible facts about him are meager, even trivial incidents are considered in the hope that they may throw some light on the personality of

(1)
the man.

(2)
James Lane Allen was born on a farm near Lexington, Kentucky, December 21, 1849, the seventh and youngest child of Richard and Helen Foster Allen. On both sides of the family he came of Revolutionary and pioneer stock. On his father's side he was descended from Virginia pioneers who traced their ancestry back to the landed
(3)
gentry of England. His mother was Helen Foster, a native

(1) The best available accounts of Allen's life are found in J. B. Henneman's Shakespearean and Other Papers, 115-67; The Library of Southern Literature, I, 41-61, by I. F. Marcosson; The Dictionary of American Biography, I, (to be published soon); section on James Lane Allen, by J. H. Nelson; The Atlantic Monthly, 79: 104-110, by Edith Baker Brown; The Bookman, I, 303-5, by Nancy Huston Banks; and Current Literature, 22:35-7. Valuable material has also been found in a manuscript sketch of Allen by Mr. M. A. Cassidy, in several unpublished letters of Allen, and in personal letters belonging to Dr. J. H. Nelson from Mr. M. A. Cassidy and Mr. J. T. C. Noe of Lexington, Kentucky, from Mr. G. F. Granberry, Allen's literary executor, of New York City, and from others. In addition a few fragmentary facts have been gleaned from the prefaces and dedications of Allen's works, from the introductory paragraphs of his article on H. M. Alden in The Bookman, 50: 330-6, from autobiographical passages in The Blue Grass Region, and from notes and comments in various magazines, especially The Critic.

(2) The subject of this sketch is to be distinguished from his Chicago cousin James Lane Allen, a lawyer and a writer also, both of Kentucky and both namesakes of an uncle, Confusion of the two as authors gave rise to a curious squabble between them, not altogether friendly on the part of the Chicago Allen, who resented the fact that his cousin on entering the literary profession also signed his full name to his writings (The Critic, 10: 115, 155, 192).

(3) Proof of this fact is found in a recent reproduction of The London Times, according to a statement in The Bookman, 1: 303-5.

of Mississippi, who came from sturdy, Pennsylvania Scotch-Irish stock. She was a woman of culture and refinement and of an artistic temperament. She was married to Richard Allen at the age of fifteen and brought a fortune to add to the already great wealth of the Allen family. Much of this wealth, however, was lost through mismanagement before the birth of the author.

Allen prided himself upon his ancestry, especially that on his father's side. The Allens, moreover, were not only descended from Virginia stock but they were related by blood and marriage to many of the "first families of Virginia," people of distinction and historic fame. Among these were the Madisons, the Raynes, the Johnsons, the Lanes, the Conyers, the Clays, many of whom also migrated to Kentucky.(1) Thus his family represented the best blood of Kentucky--the gentleman-farmer class. He himself described them as the blue grass Kentuckians, "descendants of those hardy, high-spirited, picked Englishmen," whose absorbing passion was the ownership of land and the pursuits and pleasures of rural life close to the soil.(2)

(1) Colonel William Payne was the first of the family to emigrate to Kentucky. According to a tradition borne out by Collin's History, he once struck Washington in a quarrel and received an apology from him on the following day (The Bookman, 1: 303-5). Among the Johnsons was Richard Johnson, Vice President of the United States, 1837-1841. He was a Colonel in the War of 1812 and is said to have shot and killed Tecumseh in the Battle of the Thames. (Current Literature, 22:35). Allen refers to both incidents in The Blue Grass Region, 37-8, but makes no mention of names.

(2) The Blue Grass Region, p. 36.

It was doubtless this inherited passion that led Richard Allen, great grandfather to the author, to cross the Alleghanies and to brave the perils and hardships of pioneer life that he might establish a home in the beautiful blue grass region of Kentucky. Here for three generations before the author's time the Allens had been part of a landed aristocracy, if one may speak of such in America. Nor on his mother's side did Allen have any cause to be ashamed of his heritage. If her family was not so aristocratic, it represented at least a stout, industrious, independent people who had migrated from Pennsylvania to Mississippi.

Of the sturdy American spirit of these forefathers Allen was intensely proud. He was proud of the part they had taken in helping to found an independent government on this continent and in their pioneer efforts to extend civilization westward beyond the early frontiers. His own great grandfather had shown his independent spirit and his liberal views by being the first to establish a free church in America, donating the land and building the church which was dedicated to freedom of worship.(1)

The racial qualities of his ancestors may be seen also in Allen. He had the same sturdy seriousness, the

(1) The church called "Republican", is still used by all denominations (ms. article by M. A. Cassidy).

independent spirit, the grim determination to overcome obstacles, the love of the outdoors. Combined with these Anglo-Saxon traits was a Celtic inheritance from his mother's side--a love for the beautiful in art and life, a certain element of mysticism, and a delicacy of feeling. Thus there seemed to be happily blended in him the realistic and the ideal, the scientific and the artistic, the practical and the theoretical; and the stern ruggedness of his nature was somewhat tempered by a sensitiveness to beauty and spiritual values in life.

If Allen was fortunate in his ancestry, he was equally so in his environment. His home was located in the beautiful blue grass country, a region famous for its loveliness of scenery and its delightful harmonies of field and sky.(1) Not only was he surrounded by this beauty of outdoors but circumstances favored the development in him of a love for it. As a child he was thrown much on his own resources for amusement, since there were no congenial children in the neighborhood. Yet he was neither unhappy nor lonely. On the contrary, he learned to find companionship in the wild life about him. He

(1) Allen's home was located on the old Parker Mill Road five miles from Lexington. He vividly describes the house as the home of Adam Moss in A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath. The house still stands today, though Silvia's arbor has rotted away. Views of both may be found in The Bookman, 12: 154-62 and 32: 360-70. The former contains also a view of Allen's birthplace, later destroyed by fire.

He became familiar with the birds, the flowers, and all living things in wood and field. This intimate acquaintance was owing in part to his own inclination and in part to the influence of his mother, who was herself a lover of nature and had been from childhood.(1) She stimulated in him a love for the outdoors and encouraged him to train his powers of observation. She often accompanied him on long rambles over the beautiful woodland pastures and along the streams. Thus he came to know nature in all its phases; and more than that, he developed a deep love and reverence for it and a keen appreciation of its beauties. Being a somewhat meditative disposition, his isolation tended to develop in him a love for solitude and musing on nature. This fact, though it resulted in a shyness and reserve which remained with him, led to a deepening of his passion for nature and was an important factor in his preparation as a writer of fiction with a strong nature element.

His delight in the beauties of his surroundings and the lasting impression made upon his mind by them he revealed years later in a letter to a friend in Kentucky, in which he touches almost sentimentally upon the scenes

(1) Allen dedicated A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath to his mother, "who in childhood used to stand at the windows of her room and watch for the Cardinal among the snow-buried cedars."

of his childhood: "You speak of passing my old home, If you could have seen it when I was a boy! Wide, long porches nearly all round the house; benches, chairs, cedars, grapevines; all out-doors, yard, garden, lawn, orchard, vineyard, flowers, shrubs, and birds. O the birds that sang their delectable notes into my boyhood!" (1)

Again in another letter acknowledging the gift of a cane made from the limb of a tree whose top shaded a window of his boyhood room, he wrote: "That cane, that walking cane, that staff of living green! .....That spruce! and its fellow on the other side of the front porch! I saw them planted when I was just old enough to see and remember. I watched them, impatiently, grow year by year. And a thousand times I have thought of them in these absent days and wondered about them and their fate." (1) It is not strange that this joy in the birds and flowers and trees, and this sensitiveness to living things, awakened in youth, should grow into that deep and sympathetic love for nature which later so pervaded Allen's writings.

Another interest displayed early in his life was his great love for books. The story is told that his first acquaintanceship with them was with a case of old ones in the garret, among which was a Bible bound in faded

(1) Unpublished letters to M. A. Cassidy.

morocco and a small Testament, both filled with frightful pictures which held him by a sort of horrible fascination. Later he is said to have been introduced with dramatic intensity to Lalla Rookh by an "ancient cousin in spectacles and corkscrew curls, with flashing eyes, false teeth, and wrinkled face." This book became his favorite companion as a child and when he was old enough to be put on a bag of corn and sent to mill, he took it with him and begged that the bag should not be filled too full in order that he might be able to read without fear of sliding off.(1)

It was to his mother, however, that he was largely indebted both for his knowledge of books and for his love for them. He had but little formal instruction previous to his academic training--only a year or two at a country school before the opening of the Civil War. Yet his mother taught him at home and encouraged him to read poetry, legendary romance, and history. She had a love for the best in literature and often quoted to him her favorite passages from the English poets. Doubtless, many happy hours mother and son spent together with their reading, either from the new books in their own home or from the circulating library of Lexington, upon which they were largely dependent for their reading material; and

(1) Bookman, 1: 303-5.

doubtless, too, here were the beginnings of that taste for literature which led him later to adopt it as a profession.

As a youth his reading was confined largely to Milton, Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Thomson. He afterward said that the gloom and dignity of these contemplative poets, combined with his already intense seriousness, developed through his love of solitude and his brooding over nature, made him "of a severe and melancholy turn of mind," the impress of which is discernible in The White Cowl and Sister Dolorosa and others of his earlier works. It is worth noting that in youth he is said to have had a profound contempt for the novel and to have aspired to write poetry or to be a practical benefactor of some wonderful kind.(1)

To his mother also, who was almost his sole companion in these early years, he was much indebted for the development of his spiritual nature. Her gentle spirit and refinement, her high ideals, and her religious faith exerted a potent influence on him. She gave him religious training and cultivated in him those spiritual qualities which dominated his nature and his writings. It was her hope that he should choose a profession and play an honorable part in the world's progress. She

(1) Current Literature, 22:35-7.

early inspired him with an ambition to do something great, something of lasting benefit to his fellowmen.[1] It was her influence, doubtless, during those impressionable years, that was responsible for much of the seriousness found later in his writings, for the high ideals of conduct and living, for the sensitiveness to the finer things of life.

The quiet, happy, secluded life of Allen's boyhood was rudely interrupted by the coming of the war. To his family, as to others, it meant hardships and privations. The father and the two oldest sons enlisted in the Confederate army, and the second son and the father for a time suffered political banishment. Lane, as Allen was familiarly known, was only twelve years old at the opening of the war, and like other country boys, put in long hard days at work on the farm. What the war meant in a mental or spiritual way to one with as sensitive a nature as his he has never revealed directly. Perhaps he had some of his own experiences in mind when he drew the striking contrast in circumstances before and after the war in the life of Gabriella in The Reign of Law. Certainly he must have been much impressed by the changed conditions, the poverty, the hardships, the disorganization attendant upon the war and the years immediately following. He

(1) Current Literature, 22: 35-7.

was old enough to remember himself something of plantation life and social conditions before the war. During his most impressionable years he saw the changes come and realized personally the hardships that they brought. He doubtless heard from his elders of the better times of the "feudal South" until that period came to take on a certain fascination and glamor with the passing of the years. This probably accounts for the chivalrous spirit found later in much of his writing, for the gallantry of his men and the beauty and refinement of his women, and for the aristocratic atmosphere that invests much of the homelife in his fiction. It led him to over-idealize the past and to hold an exalted idea of its glories and grandeur.

With the opening of the schools after the war, Allen at the age of seventeen, entered the academy of Transylvania College[1] in Lexington. Two years later he entered

(1) Transylvania College, originally known as Transylvania University, was founded in Lexington in 1798, the first of the important colleges in the West. In 1865 when the Morrill Act was passed the legislature of Kentucky turned the state funds over to Transylvania University with the understanding that they were to be used for the departments of Agriculture and Engineering and that the name of the institution was to be changed to Kentucky University. This continued until 1878, when the state repealed the Act and established the State College of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts, out of which the present University of Kentucky emerged. Transylvania College continued under the name Kentucky University until 1908 when the name Transylvania was resumed. In 1915 the title was made Transylvania College, which is still retained. (Letters of Frank McVey, President of Univ. of Ken. and Clarence Freeman, Prof. of Eng., Transylvania College).

the college, then known as Kentucky University, walking the distance back and forth from his country home. Life during that period was a continuous struggle against poverty. Allen has since said that had he known the great sacrifice his father was making to send him to school he would have quit and gone to work. He himself suffered for lack of necessities. While he was a student in college he had no overcoat, and for warmth in winter wore an old shawl belonging to his mother, and one winter he had no hat except an old dilapidated straw one.(1) Yet in spite of all handicaps he was graduated with honors in 1872.

In the same year his father died, and he was left as the sole support of a family of three. He secured a country school at Fort Springs and began his teaching career. The next year he taught Greek in the high school at Richmond, Missouri, and a year later he established a private school at Lexington, Missouri. In 1876 he returned to Kentucky to become tutor to a private family near Lexington, a position he held until he was offered the principalship of the Academy of his Alma Mater. In 1881 he accepted the chair of Latin in Bethany College, Bethany, West Virginia, a position he held for nearly two years. As a college professor he was said to have been popular, and had after his connection with the college ceased often returned to

(1) Ms. article of M. A. Cassidy.

visit or to lecture.[1] He resigned in the spring of 1883 to establish once more a private school, this time at Lexington, Kentucky, in the old Masonic Temple.

This was his last experience as teacher. Perhaps school life grew irksome to him; perhaps he wished a broader field for the development of his powers; perhaps the lure of literature was greater than that of the school room. At any rate he closed the grammar school the next year and, declining the offer of other professorships, henceforth devoted his life to a literary career.

Yet these twelve years had been valuable to him as a part of his preparation for a writer. His scholastic training had from the first been largely classical and literary, and his teaching had led him into the same fields. He had continued his studies during the time, receiving the degree of A.M. from Transylvania College in 1877 and an honorary A.M. from Bethany College in 1880. He seems at one time to have been interested in comparative philology and to have

(1) The statement in the Bookman, 1:303-5, that Allen was asked to resign to give place to a clergyman is disproved by a letter from President Goodnight of Bethany College. He expresses surprise at the rumor. He states that Allen was succeeded by a minister, Mr. W. H. Woolery, who later became president. Yet his letter intimates that Allen was on friendly terms with the institution and on his return always stopped at the home of the daughter of President Pendleton, who was president during Allen's term of service, and that there had been a uniform note of pride in Allen and his work on the part of the alumni.

considered work in Johns Hopkins preparatory to study in Germany. But lack of funds and perhaps a keener interest in literature led him to give up the plan, which, nevertheless, is significant in that it shows his interest in language study and the influence it probably had on his diction. He is said to have been more or less thoroughly familiar with Greek, Latin, French, German, Italian, and Spanish. Moreover, he had become very much concerned with scientific studies during these years. His training in nature study from childhood had taught him to exercise his powers of observation and to look upon nature with the accuracy of a scientist as well as with the sensitiveness of an idealist. Now through the writings of Darwin, Huxley, and others he developed a keen interest in man's place in nature, in his origin, in the effect of heredity, and in other scientific theories, a fact which had an important bearing later on his writing, especially on his longer novels.

His reading of literature, begun in childhood and much extended now in scope, was also an important factor in his apprenticeship. From his youth up it had constituted a background for his thinking, it had given him inspiration, and, though he later asserted that he had always been independent in his writing,[1] it must have had an influence upon his style and diction. His constant allusions in his writings suggest

(1) Preface to The Landmark.

a thorough acquaintance with classical literature, English and American authors, as well as with the French and German writers of the nineteenth century. Mention has already been made of his love for the contemplative poets. Shakespeare was also a favorite, as were Tennyson, Keats, and the Victorian novelists,(1) especially George Eliot and Hardy; and among the French, Balzac and George Sand. American authors who seemed to interest him most belong to the early part of the century--Irving, Hawthorne, and Thoreau. Not only was he familiar with literature itself, but he also knew the critics of the time. That he was now reading with discrimination is shown by the fact that many of his early contributions to the magazines were of a critical nature. Doubtless too he was doing much practice work during his teaching years, writing and destroying, with an occasional contribution to the periodicals. Hence, he came to his profession with mature powers and an intellectual training

(1) When asked by the New York Times in 1914 for a list of six best novels, Allen expressed his inability to give an opinion, but gave the following list as one that would naturally come to one's mind: Vanity Fair, David Copperfield, The Heart of Midlothian, Adam Bede, Tess of the D'Urbervilles, and The Scarlet Letter. He speaks of them all as Victorian, "Hardy the last peak of the Victorian mountain range" and "Hawthorne a solitary, distant, New World spur of the same range". Scott, though pre-Victorian, he calls a true Victorian, whose peasants and plain folk are Hardy's peasants and plain folk and whose landscape is a forecast of Hardy's use of it. Thus, he says, his group is a Victorian group and he is glad because of the disparagement dealt out to the great Victorians by some "lesser living novelists and critics both in America and in England." (New York Times, Sept. 5, 1914).

and background at least equal, if not superior, to that of most of his contemporaries.

The next few years saw the beginnings of his literary efforts. From 1884 on, he contributed letters and articles of various kinds to The New York Evening Post, The Critic, Harper's, The Atlantic Monthly, The Century, Lippincott's, and The Forum. Among them were critical sketches on Hawthorne, Keats, Pepys, Heine, and Balzac; humorous essays, such as A New Year Act for the Benefit of Authors, written somewhat in the vein of Irving; three poems, Midwinter in Harper's for March, 1884, The Rifled Hive in Lippincott's for September, 1884, and Beneath the Veil in The Atlantic Monthly for September, 1885; his first story, Too Much Momentum, in Harper's for April, 1885, and a second, Part of an Old Story, in imitation of Hawthorne's style, in The Century for February, 1887. A significant article on Local Color, appearing in The Critic for January 9, 1886, gave him some recognition in the literary world and is suggestive of the serious way in which he was making a study of his chosen art.

During the years from 1884 to 1893 very little is known of Allen's life. He evidently resided in Lexington most of that time, with occasional sojourns in Cincinnati, Washington, and New York City, and one trip abroad in 1885. According to some accounts he reached New York City with a lead pencil and a hundred dollars in his pocket, with no letter

of introduction, and with almost no experience as an author.[1] Doubtless this is an exaggeration, yet Allen himself later made reference to the time when "I, an empty-handed stranger from the green Kentucky pastures, arrived in New York on my life's adventure into literature."[2] How he supported himself during this period can only be conjectured, for certainly his signed contributions to periodicals were not sufficient. Perhaps he wrote many unsigned. During those "first groping and rather baffled years," as he called them, he must have known a struggle for success even more serious than he had known before. Perhaps it was his own experiences then that suggested to him the whimsical essay, A New Year Act for the Benefit of Authors.[3] At least his patience and spirit of determination must have been tried many times.

Though he had not settled in New York City permanently, he was more and more looking to it as the literary center where he would eventually find his place. Having gone there a stranger, he soon gained friends. Among the first of these was Henry Mills Alden, editor of Harper's, to whom Allen paid a belated tribute in The Bookman for November-December, 1919.[4] "I see him as the one," said

(1) Bookman, 1:303-5 and Current Literature, 22:35.
(2) Henry Mills Alden, Bookman, 50:330-6.
(3) Critic, 11:13.
(4) At the request of the editor of The Bookman, Allen wrote this tribute to Henry Mills Alden, editor of Harper's whose death had occurred in October.

Allen, looking back upon those who had influenced his course, "who, with a sign to me, walked to an unseen gate, pushed it open, and pointed to the onward road." This act did have great significance in Allen's future career, for Alden showed him his lack of a definite field and gave him a commission for some articles on the blue grass region. Accordingly, in Harper's for February, 1886, appeared the first sketch, The Blue Grass Region of Kentucky, and for the next few years similar sketches on kindred themes were published either in Harper's or in The Century. At intervals during the same years there appeared in the same magazines the six short stories, later collected and published as Flute and Violin, and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances. From this time on Allen had a definite field--his own native state. He continued to use it as the scene of most of his stories and became widely known as its chief interpreter.

With the publication in 1891 of Flute and Violin, and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances, and in 1892 of The Blue Grass Region of Kentucky, and Other Kentucky Articles his success was assured and his reputation as an author established. He now settled permanently in New York City, and with the confidence his success had brought him he became more ambitious and centered his attention upon novel writing, not returning to the short story again until later in life.

In the next year, 1893, appeared John Gray, his first novel, itself little more than a short story. Following it in 1894 was A Kentucky Cardinal and in 1896 both Aftermath and Summer in Arcady. Then came the period of his more ambitious novels: The Choir Invisible, an expansion of John Gray, in 1897, The Reign of Law in 1900, and The Mettle of the Pasture in 1903.(1) After an interval of six years there appeared the first two parts of a trilogy he had planned: The Bride of the Mistletoe in 1909 and The Doctor's Christmas Eve in 1910; the third part was never written. This was followed by The Heroine in Bronze in 1912, The Last Christmas Tree in 1914, The Sword of Youth in 1915, A Cathedral Singer in 1916, The Kentucky Warbler in 1918, The Emblems of Fidelity in 1919, The Alabaster Box in 1923, and The Landmark in 1925, published posthumously. With the publication of his early novels his financial struggles were over, and he gained recognition as an author both in this country and in France and England. Three of his novels--A Kentucky Cardinal, The Choir Invisible, and The Reign of Law--became "best sellers." As a recognition of his success in the literary world Transylvania College conferred upon him the degree of LL.D. in 1898 and Tulane University did the same in 1899.

(1) In 1900 Allen published one other work, Chimney Corner Graduates, but the present writer has been unable to see a copy.

In addition to his novels, many of which first ran serially in the magazines, he still continued to make occasional contributions to periodicals. Among these were articles on his art--Two Principles in Recent American Fiction in The Atlantic Monthly for October, 1897, and The Gentleman in American Fiction in The Bookman for November, 1910; a poem written in free verse, On the Mantelpiece, in The Bookman for September, 1919; and another group of short stories found in The Century, Harper's and The Bookman, some of which were included in his last volume, The Landmark.

Allen evidently lived a quiet, secluded, uneventful life in New York City. He avoided publicity in every way. In the early days of his success he lectured and gave readings from his works, but it was most distasteful to him, and later he constantly refused to do it. He devoted the hours from nine to one each day to writing--a practice he is said to have continued almost to the very end of his life. He wrote deliberately, and with infinite patience and care, often rewriting and rereading. He never dictated fiction. "There is a close relation," he said, "between an author and his manuscript, and in passing through the mind of a third party the thought and relation seem to be separated from one. When an author reaches the end of his story he is often confronted by two ideas. He wavers and weighs, and there is

nothing like a pencil and paper to aid in making the proper selection."[1]

A part of each day he spent with an invalid sister, who also lived in New York and to whom he gave his devoted attention. This partly explains why he remained much at home. He made one trip abroad again in 1895. He never returned to Kentucky, a fact which seems strange, considering his intense love for his native state and his loyalty to it in his writing. His reason he gave in a letter to a friend: "Think how many years have passed since I was there and what changes have taken place. My returning now would be like vainly attempting to pass over into a vanished land; around me there would be the desolation of perished things--this alone has kept me from even thinking of coming back. Here I feel young; if once I went back I should realize how old I am. And, then too I am perpetually busy in an effort to get something done. I am always feeling like the Irishman who said that if he did not do something great before he died, it would be the death of him. Not many writing years remain for me."[2] The latter statement indicates again the seriousness with which he looked upon his work. He was invited to return to speak at the unveiling of the King Solomon monument erected in Lexington, but was not present

(1) Current Literature, 20:106-7.
(2) Letter to M. A. Cassidy.

to deliver the address which he prepared.(1)

His modesty and reserve and the circumstances of his life kept him to a large extent out of public activities. Yet among his circle of intimate friends he seems to have held a place of high esteem and regard. He and his close friend, Mr. G. F. Granberry, director of the Granberry Piano School, New York City, for the last twenty years of Allen's life spent at least one evening together each week, discussing contemporary politics, music, literature, and especially Allen's plans for his books, and reading aloud to each other all of his works written during that time. Another diversion he permitted himself was a regular seat at the Metropolitan Opera each season, for he was a great lover of music and had been from childhood. In public affairs, though he took no active part, he was always interested. His personal correspondence contained allusions to many nationally prominent men and many observations on public questions, and an occasional newspaper article or letter revealed his opinions.

(1) The monument erected to immortalize the self-sacrifice of an obscure hero was the result of Allen's literary commemoration in the story, King Solomon of Kentucky. The address, with the omission of the opening paragraphs referring to the occasion, is printed in The Outlook, 90:884-6. In the editorial note introducing the address is the following ambiguous statement which might lead the reader to think that Allen was present: "The most interesting feature of the occasion was the reading of an address by Mr. Allen." However, both his friends, Mr. Cassidy and Mr. Noe, of Lexington, state that he not only was not present on that occasion but never returned to Kentucky after settling permanently in New York City in 1892.

During his later years Allen suffered much from ill health, another excuse he gave his friends for not returning to Lexington. His death occurred February 18, 1925, at the Roosevelt hospital, New York City, from collapse resulting from chronic insomnia. Had he lived until December 21, he would have been seventy-six years old. His body was taken to Lexington for burial in the Allen plot. His sister, Mrs. Annie Adams Reed, his only near relative, survived him but two weeks. Allen was never married.

Desiring that his wealth should go to some worthy cause and probably recalling his own struggles of his own youth for an education, he had provided in his will that the bulk of his estate should be given to a Foundation of Youth for the benefit of the children of Lexington.

For some years the Lexington public schools have honored him by celebrating his birthday, December twenty-first, with appropriate ceremonies. At the same time the James Lane Allen corner of the Lexington public library is made attractive for the occasion. In the corner hangs a life-size portrait of the author painted in 1912 by Orlando Rouland and presented to the library in February, 1916, by the Lexington Chapter of the United Daughters of the Confederacy. Underneath this is a glass case containing letters and relics from Allen. On his birthday his

(1) Ms. article of M. A. Cassidy.

books are put here on display, as are also specimens of nature, such as flowers and birds, which are mentioned in the books. In this way the city of Lexington honors the man who more than any other writer has made Kentucky famous.

In appearance Allen was taller than the average with something of a soldierly bearing, formal in his dress and immaculate in his appearance. He had dignity and poise combined with a shy reserve and kindliness of manner. To his friends he was always the knightly gentleman, "the soul of chivalry." He is described by John Fox, jr., who was once his pupil, as "Saxon in type, tall, splendidly proportioned, with a magnificent head and a strong, kindly face." "I know not," says Fox, "whether I admire him most for his brain or for his heart, his exquisite cultivation or his greatness of soul. His manner is what all Southerners like to believe was the manner of the typical Southern gentleman of the old school."(1) More than thirty years later, Mr. Granberry, friend of his New York days, paid tribute to his character in similar terms, saying that Allen was "most dignified, formal, adhering strictly to the highest ideals of personal conduct, extremely kind-hearted; inaccessible to 'lion-hunters,' and entirely devoid of any feeling for personal display."(2)

(1) J. B. Henneman: Shakespearean and Other Papers, p. 125.
(2) Letter of G. F. Granberry.

CHAPTER II

Personality and Cast of Mind

Allen, the literary artist, capitalized to an unusual degree his own life and tastes. The reserve in manner, conspicuous in his association with people, contrasts strikingly with his freedom in projecting his personality into his writings. Here even in his most ambitious and apparently objective fiction he reflected himself far more than most authors do. He is like a lyric poet whose interests, moods, and thought may be indirectly discovered through a study of his works. This quality of subjectivity permeates all of his writings to a greater or less extent and gives distinction to their character and style. This being so, it seems worth while here to discuss his cast of mind, his tastes, his personality.

A simple example of this revelation of himself in his writings is seen in his passionate love of nature. The pervading beauty and charm and the pastoral quality that characterizes much of his work are the direct result of this. It has already been noted how his early training and surroundings, combined with his inherent love of the outdoors, were conducive to an intimate acquaintanceship with nature and to a development of a sincere love and sympathy for it. Hence, it is only natural to find in his

writings, not a broad, sweeping, affected love of nature, but a genuine love based on a personal knowledge, which he reveals in a careful, discriminating use of detail, given in discussing the landscape, individual birds and flowers, and the various changes of nature's moods and seasons.

Nor is this sensuous appeal of beauty to the eye only. In the words of Adam Moss in A Kentucky Cardinal Allen shows the nature lover's delight in the coming of spring with its appeal to all senses. "Not the eyes alone love Nature in March. Every other sense hies abroad. My tongue hunts for the last morsel of wet snow on the northern root of some aged oak. As one goes early to a concert hall with a passion even for the preliminary tuning of the musicians, so my ear sits alone in the vast amphitheatre of Nature and waits for the earliest warble of the blue-bird, which seems to start up somewhere behind the heavenly curtains. And the scent of spring, is it not the first lyric of the nose--that despised poet of the senses?" (1)

This sensuousness gives to Allen a keen joy, a joy in which all may share, rich and poor alike. Again in the words of Adam Moss in describing his solitary walks, he says: "Sometimes it is through the aftermath of fat wheat fields, where float like myriad little nets of silver gauze the webs of the crafty weavers, and where a whole

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, pp. 21-22. (All references to A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath are to The Modern Readers' Series).

world of winged small folk flit from tree top to tree top of the low weeds. They are all mine--these Kentucky wheat fields. After the owner has taken his last sheaf I come in and gather my harvest also--one that he did not see, and doubtless would not begrudge me--the harvest of beauty."[1]

But there is more than joy in this; there is the delicate sensitiveness of the poet or artist. That Allen himself was conscious of this quality in his writings is shown by his rather apologetic statement in the description of the blue grass region in which he expresses the fear that others, seeing the country which he describes so ardently, may be disappointed. "What one sees may be only what one feels--only intricate affinities between nature and self that were developed long ago." It is this tender delicacy of feeling that underlies much of his work. It is seen in his description of the blue grass: "One thinks of it not as some heavy velvet-like carpet spread over the earth, but as some light, seamless veil that has fallen delicately around it, and that might be blown away by a passing breeze." It is revealed in his love of the woodland pastures, "full of tenderness and repose," and of the trees, "always the most truly human object is still, voiceless nature."

This sensitiveness is found also in his sympathy with

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, p. 68.

the wild life of the woods and fields. With what tenderness he speaks of a pioneer lawn as a "spot lately loved of quiet-eyed wilderness deer;" or with what feeling tinged with a slight melancholy he describes a walk under the cedars on a winter night, "listening to that music which is at once so cheery and so sad--the low chirping of birds at dark winter twilights as they gather in from the frozen fields, from snow-buried shrubbery and hedge-rows, and settle down for the night in the depths of the evergreens, the only refuge from their enemies and shelter from the blast."

This appreciation for nature remained with Allen, even though he lived in New York during most of his literary career. The scenes of his boyhood had been so indelibly imprinted on his mind in his most impressionable years, and his observation had been so accurate and his feeling so keen that they lived vividly in his memory. Moreover, his introspective and retrospective frame of mind contributed much toward keeping fresh in his mind the scenes he had known personally. Thus the landscapes of most of his fiction is that of the Kentucky blue grass region. Even in his stories with settings in New York City, such as The Heroine in Bronze or The Emblems of Fidelity, there is a suggestion of the Kentucky atmosphere through the frequent allusions to Kentucky by the characters who formerly lived there. In this way Allen has made Kentucky live

through his writings just as Thomas Nelson Page did Virginia or Miss Murfree the mountains of Tennessee.

Moreover, his reflective habits led him to draw parallelisms between nature and human life. He constantly associated the two ideas in his thinking, a fact which accounts for the nature symbolism which distinguishes much of his work. In a preface to a revised edition of A Kentucky Cardinal he himself makes this explanation: "In so far as literature is concerned, the same experiences have taught me, and have always compelled me, to see human life as set in Nature, finding its explanation in soil and sky and season: merely one of the wild growths that spring up on the surface of the earth amid ten thousand others. I hold this to be the only true way in which to write of Man in fiction, as it is in science."(1) Thus through his use of scenery Allen capitalized his knowledge of nature and his love for it in all his writings.

Closely akin to his enthusiasm for nature and equally dominant, then, in his writings is his love for humanity. Again, as with nature, it is a genuine, sincere passion. He is interested in man--in his ideals, his motives, his weaknesses, his latent possibilities. Aristocrat though he was by nature, he was democratic at least in theory,

(1) Quoted in introduction to King Solomon, by H. W. Mabie, Outlook, 85:466.

and his writings reveal a sympathy and kindliness toward all mankind. He is never cynical in his attitude, but, on the contrary, he shows a most tender regard for the frailties of humanity. His interest in science and especially in evolution seems to have made him unusually sympathetic rather than cold and dispassionate as one might expect. In his address prepared for the unveiling of the King Solomon monument he speaks of a new spirit of charity which has developed since Darwin, with whom, he says, satire ceases. He calls Thackeray the last of the great satirists, and George Eliot, who loved perfection as much as he did, the first of England's great imaginative writers to look with compassion on man as a developing animal, crawling slowly out of utter darkness toward the light. He concludes with the idea that one cannot satirize an animal developing through millions of years.(1) Whatever of truth there may or may not be in this opinion, it is indicative of his charitable attitude toward people. This is further evidenced by his frequent use of the alabaster box as a symbol of appreciation of one's fellowman, or by the prayer of Adam Moss for forgiveness for "the blindness, the weakness, and the cruelty with which we judge each other."

Nor was his understanding of people a superficial or theoretical one. To his interpretation of humanity he brought the same keen powers of observation that he used in

(1) Outlook, 90:884-6.

nature, and in his writings he displays shrewdness in judging character and a deep insight into human motives and actions. Sometimes these are mere observations on humanity, as in The Reign of Law, the storm "drew the members of the household more closely together, as any unusual event--danger, disaster--generally does." Or in The Doctor's Christmas Eve, "A child resents injustice with a blow or rage or tears: the old have learned to endure without a sign--waiting God's day of Judgment (or their first good opportunity!)." "Childhood wants all of whatever it craves; its desire is as single as its eye. Only in later life we come to know--or had better know--that we may have the whole of very little."

Often such observations are tinged with philosophical reflections, as in the description of Georgiana in A Kentucky Cardinal: "Any one would have to admit, however, that there is no sharpness in Georgiana's pleasantry. The child nature in her is so sunny, sportive, so bent on harmless mischief. She still plays with life as a kitten with a ball of yarn. Some day Kitty will fall asleep with the ball poised in the cup of one foot. Then, waking, when her dream is over, she will find that her plaything has become a rocky, thorny, storm-swept, immeasurable world, and that she, a woman, stands holding out towards it her imploring arms, and asking only for some littlest part in

its infinite destinies."[1]

Allen's aristocratic tendencies and his exalted conception of the grandeur of plantation life led him to place great emphasis on refinement and culture. His main characters are drawn largely from the educated class and are either a part of the landed aristocracy of the "old South" or descendants of it. Yet he recognizes real worth wherever it is found, whether in the devotion of the former slave, Peter Cotton, in the heroism of the vagrant, King Solomon, "with an almost royal look in his unconcern," or in the sincerity with which David revolted against creeds and dogmas which he could not honestly accept. He has respect for the plain farmer folk to which David belonged. This respect is also revealed in The Mettle of the Pasture in the description of Pansy Vaughan, who came of farmer folk, unlettered, lacking in physical beauty, but "marking the track of their generation by a path lustrous with right doing." It is the plain people, says Allen, by whom the aristocracy is replenished when it decays, as it does in time. His idea of genuine worth blended with gentility may also be seen in his favorite quotation from Shakespeare:

> "This was the noblest Roman of them all;
>
> ------
>
> His life was gentle, and the elements
> So mixed in him that Nature might stand up
> And say to all the world, 'This was a man.'"

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, pp. 58-59.

In giving this quotation Allen confesses to a growing habit of pondering the great men of the nation and measuring them with those of other nations and ages, always with the wish that there were more of the type of Caesar and Brutus and less of that of Casca and Cassius.(1)

In his attitude toward women Allen shows the spirit of chivalry characteristic of the "old South." His heroines are almost all aristocratic Kentucky women whose chief charms are beauty and refinement. Intellectually they are man's inferior and must be protected from the hard things of life. They have fulfilled their destiny when they have "married well and adorned a home." Perhaps Isabel Conyers in The Mettle of the Pasture best represents the author's idea of beauty with her perfection of features, grace, bearing--all evidences of noble descent of the highest type. In Gabriella in The Reign of Law is exemplified woman's simple faith in spiritual matters. She is never annoyed by doubts and fears but "understands Him better through emotions and deeds," a characteristic of women as contrasted with men, says Allen. Mrs. Falconer is superior to either of these in her innate spiritual beauty and refinement from which even the rough work of pioneer life cannot detract. She rises above the author's usual conception of women in her loftiness and strength of character,

(1) New York Times, April 19, 1914.

traits Allen usually reserves for men. To Georgiana also he ascribes a masculine trait, that of honor. "Honor in what are called the little things of life, honor not as women commonly understand it, but as the best of men understand it." These four represent his most outstanding women characters and probably illustrate in composite form his ideal of woman. Doubtless his own mother, to whom he was especially devoted, formed in a large measure the inspiration for these.

Though Allen's power of discernment led him to understand the mature mind, he was less familiar with child nature. His own isolation from the companionship of other children and the circumstances of war prevented his knowing the happy, carefree abandon of childhood. Hence, when he does use children as characters they are too grave and often are concerned with the destinies of man. But with youth Allen shows more sympathy and understanding, a quality especially noticeable in Summer in Arcady and The Sword of Youth in which he definitely puts himself on the side of youth in the misunderstandings existing between them and an older generation. In The Landmark, his last story, he is less tolerant, even austere in his attitude, but this harshness was undoubtedly the result of ill health and the impatience of old age and is strangely at variance with his customary attitude. His sympathy with childhood and youth is revealed,

however, by the practical interest displayed in his gift to the children of Lexington, Kentucky, through his will mentioned in the biographical skethh.

Allen's enthusiasm for nature and his interest in humanity resulted at once in a peculiar mixture in him of the romantic and the realistic. His deep feeling for nature, his delight in its beauties and his reflective applications to life, his love for the beautiful, his tendency to idealize the past--all suggest his romantic qualities. On the other hand, his habits of accurate observation, whether in the realm of nature or of human problems and his scientific, analytical treatment of his observations give evidence of the realist. These opposing tendencies in his nature are clearly seen in a comparison of his early works, which are chiefly romantic, with his later and longer novels, in which he deals with some of the significant problems of life from a scientific standpoint. Yet in all of these there is a happy blending of the two qualities.

He called himself a realist. In his opinion, however, realism included idealism, since the human race is constantly striving toward that which it is not but which it may become. His scientific theories of evolution he brought over into the spiritual world, and he saw man not only in a process of physical and mental change but also

in a process of spiritual development. Hence, life to him was a process by which the ideal was always passing into the real. It was his hope to portray in his writings this constant struggle upward which man engages in and to show in the struggle life not only as it is but as it may be.(1)

In his selection of material, therefore, and in his treatment of it he was influenced by this idea. He did not deny the ugly and sordid in life, but passed it by as only a part of the real and chose instead lighter and happier material as equally a part of life's realism. He seems to have had the happy faculty of seeing the lovely in life rather than the unlovely. "How exquisite in life," he says in A Kentucky Cardinal, "is the art of not seeing many things and of forgetting many things that have been seen!" This principle seems to have guided him often, especially in his earlier days of writing, and to account for the romantic charm of such works as Flute and Violin, A Kentucky Cardinal, and Aftermath. Yet even in his more realistic fiction, such as The Choir Invisible, The Reign of Law, and The Mettle of the Pasture, where he treats of the serious problems of life, his realism is softened by a poetic delicacy of treatment. As one critic says, he "transmutes

(1) Critic, 19:200.

the rough fragments, the mud and dust of life into a new thing, a beautiful thing complete in itself, as the plant transforms the soil and water in which it is set to the blossom that is its crown."[1] Thus even in his treatment of the darker aspects of life at times, he finds in the end an optimistic conclusion, which though not ideal--too ideal the realists would say--brings satisfaction if not happiness. Moreover, in adversity and suffering he sees an ennobling and refining power which brings compensating virtues to the individual.

This optimism might be taken as characteristic of his whole philosophy of life. It appears not only in the action and characters of his books but in little comments on life scattered through the story, sometimes in the words of a character, sometimes a short digression or remarks of the author after the manner of George Eliot. Accustomed as he was as a scholar to ponder over the questions of life--of the race, Allen was not a morbid, gloomy brooder. Rather he was a scientific theorizer who marshalled his facts and drew his conclusions from a scientific basis. He saw the inexorable laws of nature, but he saw also a divine pity which recognized the weakness of mankind. For example, Adam Moss, observing the birds, makes the following comment:

(1) Bookman, 29: 539.

"The birds are moulting. If man could only moult also--his mind once a year its errors, his heart once a year its useless passions!.....But we have one set of feathers, which we are told to keep spotless through all our lives in a dirty world. If one gets broken, broken it stays; if one gets blackened, nothing will cleanse it. No doubt we shall all fly home at last, like a flock of pigeons that were once turned loose snow-white from the sky, and made to descend and fight one another and fight everything else for a poor living amid soot and mire. If then the hand of the unseen Fancier is stretched forth to draw us in, how can he possibly smite any of use, or cast us away, because we came back to him black and blue with bruises and besmudged and bedraggled past all recognition."(1)

Allen looked with favor on whatever fostered the finer senses in man--on books, music, art--the beautiful in any form. To him beauty seemed to concern itself with more than mere externals of sense. It had a positive, spiritual value in cultivating the soul of man and developing right attitudes in him. The high ideals instilled in him as a youth remained as the ideals of his books--right living, loyalty to duty, honesty, sincerity, charity toward one's fellowman. Lack of genuineness in any form was odious to him. Even

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, pp. 71-2.

the veneer of weather board often used to cover the old stone houses of Kentucky excites his scorn. This desire for utter sincerity becomes a sort of passion with him when in The Mettle of the Pasture he expresses the wish that America might become known for some virtue--"say truthfulness." In fact, so deeply underlying all his writings is this characteristic that The Critic, commenting on his personality as revealed in his work, says that he might say as did Tolstoi in Sebastopol Sketches: "The hero of my tale, whom I love with all my strength of soul, whom I have tried to set forth in all his beauty, and who has always been, is, and always will be most beautiful is--Truth."(1)

This same sincerity and optimism characterize Allen's religion. It is a positive force pervading his works, yet never intrusive. Though his scientific studies led him to oppose dogmatism, he never opposes religion. Even here he is tolerant in his judgment of others, a fact which may be seen in his reference to David's books in The Reign of Law, which he says were "the making or undoing of him according as one may have enough of God's wisdom and mercy to decide." With him there was no conflict between science and religion. He is said to have frequently expressed himself to his friends as "wondering that any one could see

(1) Critic, 19:200.

evolution as in any way lessening the glory and power of God."[1] In the words of David we may see Allen's opinion expressed: "Science! There is the fresh path for the faith of the race! For the race henceforth must get its idea of God, and build its religion to Him, for its knowledge of the laws of his Universe. A million years from now! Where will our dark theological dogmas be in that radiant time? The Creater of all life, in all life He must be studied! And in the study of science there is least tyranny, least bigotry, no persecution. It teaches charity, it teaches a well-ordered life, it teaches the world to be more kind."[2]

Thus Allen rarely leaves his reader uncertain concerning his outlook on life, his optimism, or his faith. He may show that he is sifting his evidence, searching for the truth, but when that search is over the reader is in full possession of whatever conclusions have been drawn either directly or by inference. Perhaps his whole philosophy may be found in the words of John Gray in The Choir Invisible: "To lose faith in man, not in humanity; to see justice go down and not to believe in the triumph of injustice; for every wrong that you weakly deal another or another deals you to love more and more the fairness and beauty of what is right, and so to turn the ever-increasing love from the imperfection that is in us all to the perfection that is above us all--the perfection that is God."[3]

(1) Letter of G. F. Granberry.
(2) The Reign of Law, p. 381.
(3) The Choir Invisible, p. 360.

CHAPTER III

Favorite Themes

Allen's themes are definitely the outgrowth of his cast of mind, tastes and theories. In his earlier works he began with Kentucky scenery and life connected with it. Yet even here he anticipated in a measure a larger interest developed in his later works in the concern for humanity. In Flute and Violin he emphasizes loyalty to duty; in King Solomon and Two Gentlemen from Kentucky the spirit of charity and sympathy; in The White Cowl and Sister Dolorosa, rebellion against asceticism. In the blue grass sketches, which are primarily descriptions of scenery, he makes prominent the types of people and their customs. Even in John Gray, A Kentucky Cardinal, and Aftermath, where the nature element most abounds, the final emphasis is on personality and sentiment.

His chief interest, beginning with his novels, may be found in human problems such as vitally affect man's life and destiny. Though he continues to use Kentucky backgrounds because those were the colors he was sure of and could combine most skillfully to throw into stronger relief the larger ideas that he was now treating, his themes are not limited to Kentucky or to America. They belong to no special locality, but are rather in the realm of human nature and are universal in scope. Mr. Henneman in

discussing this change in Allen says: "He is a product of the soil, but his branches tower into the air and welcome all the winds of the heavens, the rain, and the sunshine."(1) Though setting had a strong appeal for Allen and constitutes one of the sources of charm in his books, he looked upon it only as an aid and except in his early works made a deliberate effort to be cosmopolitan in his writing. In the preface to The Landmark he bemoans the emphasis American literature puts on local background.

This attempt at universality in attitude and in themes was the direct result of his wide reading, and especially of his scientific studies, which led to a broader interest in humanity. His theories of evolution furnish him a basis for much of his thinking. In heredity he finds an explanation for motives, actions, and for much of the tragedy of human life. Thus Rowan Meredith, the hero of The Mettle of the Pasture, is a victim of an unceasing warfare between the stern Puritanism of his ancestors on one side and the gay epicureanism on the other. In his brother this ancestral antagonism is neutralized through blending. In The Reign of Law, a study of evolution and science, Allen again relates the career of his hero with the past history of his race through inherited traits three generations back.

(1) J. B. Henneman: Shakespearean and Other Papers, p. 180.

In Summer in Arcady the same force, combined with environment, affected the destinies of life. In fact there is hardly one of his books in which the idea is not found in some form. If in no other way he takes opportunity to make reference to the Anglo-Saxon inheritance of the Kentuckians and to the ensuing influences on their lives, good or bad.

Heredity leads to the moral questions of responsibility for sin, another favorite subject with Allen. In The Mettle of the Pasture Rowan questions his ancestors--the ones who had conscience and no temptation and the others who had temptation and no conscience--to find an answer for his own responsibility for sin. Yet he finally reaches the conclusion that he must accept his share, for if responsibility can be so rolled back on the past there is no place for it. In the same book is Judge Morris who never prosecutes but only defends, on the ground that the accused is not the only criminal.

Another theme that interested Allen was the mystery of life and death. This led to a study of elemental instincts and matters of sex, over-emphasized at times in his writings. In his treatment of this he has been much criticized, especially in Summer in Arcady and the so-called "trilogy", but at least it can be said that he was honest and sincere in his purpose. He speaks with frankness but with delicacy. Perhaps his best defense for this manner is found again in

the words of Adam Moss in Aftermath. "Nature is the only thing that is perrectly natural with me. When I study nature there are no delicate or dangerous or forbidden subjects. The trees have no evasions. The weeds are honest. Running water is not trying to escape. The sunsets are not colored with hypocrisy. The lightning is not revenge. Everything stands forth in the sincerity of its being, and nature invites me to exercise the absolute liberty of my mind upon all life."(1) This same attitude he attempted to apply to human life.

Reflection on the mystery of life led him also to think on the brevity of life, on death, and immortality as discussed in The Last Christmas Tree. Closely associated with this reflection on life was his conception of human relationships. In this as in all of his works it is a matter of the inner life, of ideals and attitudes and their application to living. He is never concerned with social problems such as capital and labor, or political or industrial questions. His are purely ethical and moral problems as developed through scientific and psychological studies.

He does reveal an interest in history, but he uses it chiefly as background, much idealized, as in The Choir Invisible. Unlike his contemporaries he has little to say

(1) Aftermath, pp. 212-215.

about the war or slavery. The Reign of Law presents some of the bitter after affects of the war and describes the blending of classes following it. The Sword of Youth is a war story, but the incidents and background serve merely to set forth the real theme, the lack of understanding between age and youth. In Two Gentlemen of Kentucky the negro enters as a leading character and speaks his own dialect, and Uncle Tom at Home is an attempt to memorialize a fast disappearing type. With these exceptions, however, there are few references to the war in Allen's writings.

Only rarely in his longer and later works does he treat of the lighter themes. Emblems of Fidelity and The Heroine in Bronze show what he was still capable of doing with the simple love story, but they lack the spontaneity of his earlier works. Usually in his later years he was concerned with the more serious affairs of life, with matters of right and wrong, and with the spiritual self-struggles of the race.

CHAPTER IV

Style and Literary Workmanship

Allen was a literary artist, a stylist of most careful and conscientious workmanship. He had high ideals for writing as well as for living, and with the same intensity with which he sought beauty and perfection in life he sought it in writing. As the artist skillfully wields his brush to produce the colors and lights and shadows with which he wishes to portray his idea on the canvas, or the sculptor with his chisel seeks to produce a piece of work perfect in form, so Allen with his mastery of language and his poetic temperament sought beauty and finish in thought and expression. He consciously worked for these effects and as a result produced a style distinctive in its grace and beauty, often spoken of in his best works as classic.

His highly individualized style, therefore, was not the result of mere chance but of deliberate effort. During his apprenticeship years he had studied the masters and had himself practiced with infinite patience the art of writing. Yet he was not an imitator only; he set his own standards and worked toward them. Those qualities which he is said to have esteemed most and to have held up before him were simplicity, sincerity, vividness, strength, and beauty.(1)

(1) Critic, 19:200.

With these as ideals and with his slow, deliberate method and infinite capacity for care and revision, he evolved a style of his own distinguished for its precision, ornamentation, grace, and melody. This conscious effort sometimes led him to a too serious sense of his art, resulting at times in a self-conscious and a somewhat stilted style, but it is always polished, dignified, and refined. So distinctive is it in this respect, compared with other writers of the period, that critics have compared him with Hawthorne as the "patient, gifted devotee of his art," the searcher after exquisite form and finish in expression. "Hardly since Hawthorne," says Mr. Payne in The Dial in discussing The Choir Invisible, "have we had such pages as the best of these....so spiritual in essence and adorned with such lovely embroiderings of the imagination."(1) Mr. Marcosson calls him "the rarest influence in all American literature since Hawthorne."(2)

His style, like his thought, reflects his personality. His constant pursuit for artistic finish, mentioned above, is only another indication of his love for the beautiful and the ideal in life. It suggests his patient determination through effort to acquire this craftsmanship. There are found also in his style the same quiet dignity and seriousness which characterized him as a man and which are never

(1) Dial, 22:310.
(2) The Library of Southern Literature, p. 42.

lost entirely in his writings even when he grows somewhat fanciful as in Flute and Violin or half whimsical as he is at times in A Kentucky Cardinal or Emblems of Fidelity. Likewise the reflective quality so habitual with him pervades his writings and produces a quiet repose and tranquility. There is present the same honesty of purpose; one feels that he believed what he said. So marked is this sincerity and genuiness in his manner that one critic says it is hard to find an author with fewer traces of affectation.(1) Closely associated with this quality is that of sympathy. He wrote as one sensitive to the beauties and moods of nature and to the emotions of the human heart, but he is most tender in his treatment when those emotions are due to the weaknesses of humanity, to life's tragedies.

As one comes to study Allen's style in detail, he is impressed by his mastery of construction and organization. It is apparent in the mere mechanics of writing, in his ability to construct sentences and paragraphs, and in his effective use of transitions. He knew how to write smoothly flowing sentences, flexible, varied in structure and melodious. Likewise he was skillful in his organization of paragraphs and in the use of smooth transitions. The latter were of especial concern to him, whether between paragraphs, longer

(1) Academy, 76:800.

passages, or chapters. "Hinges must be there," he says, "but they must be concealed and must not squeak." He adds that he spent days upon them, often leaving the page blank and continuing with the story, returning later to the "sticking point."[1] Always before he regarded a piece of work completed, he is said to have rewritten and for many days reread to see that the meaning was "cloudless and the melody guaranteed."[2] As a result there is clearness, ease, and melody in the mere sentence structure of his pages. Sometimes this becomes too studied and self-conscious, a natural weakness in one who paid such supreme attention to the expression, yet on the whole it makes the reading of his pages a delight.

With the handling of incidents and plots, Allen was less skillful. This is not unnatural when one considers that his chief concern, especially in his long novels, was the dramatic presentation of some spiritual struggle in the life of his main characters. The incidents of the story were significant only as they served to bring into relief or heighten the effect of the spiritual conflict. Hence his plots are simple, with only a few dramatic incidents and those loosely connected. The movement is leisurely and the incidents often interspersed with long stretches of

(1) Current Literature, 20:106-7.
(2) Critic, 19:200.

description or explanation, or the discussion of some moral point. For example, in The Choir Invisible the reader is breathless to know the fate of John Gray in the cougar attack; yet the author stops for several pages of description of the cougar and its habits. The Reign of Law begins with a chapter on the history and growth of hemp, a sort of expositional essay and a prose-poem combined. In The Mettle of the Pasture the main action is held in suspense again and again by episodes involving the action of minor characters. While occasionally this habit seems a fault, some of the digressions with their exquisite descriptive and reflective passages are among the most delightful parts of his books. For example, note the description of the coming of fall or the storm in The Reign of Law, of New York City in the summer in The Heroine in Bronze, or the discussion of ideals in The Choir Invisible.

In the short story, however, where the plot is simple, Allen shows genuine skill. Even here his method is deliberate, but he had ability to organize the details of an incident. He could successfully make vivid a scene for the moment. Perhaps King Solomon of Kentucky best illustrates his power in centering attention upon a single impression and in strength of characterization. Contrasted with this is Two Gentlemen of Kentucky, which is little more than a human nature sketch. Here he rambles on in leisurely fashion

telling detail after detail in the lives of these "two gentlemen" as proof of their love and devotion for each other, and the characterization is suggested rather than directly drawn. Yet for its type, despite its elaborate background, it shows genuine skill. Thus, though Allen lacked the sustained power to handle large masses of material, he could handle successfully simple plots and a small number of characters. "By no other writer of the period," says Mr. Pattee,"was the short story worked out with more care or with more knowledge of its requirements."(1)

In both short story and novel Allen shows unusual ability to present dramatically a mental conflict. This is well illustrated in the way in which he makes clear to the reader the steps by which David in The Reign of Law loses his faith, or the tragedy of his trial or his return home. He does this chiefly by an analytical and expository method with added touches of conversation and description. He does not seem to be successful in the use of long conversations; they lack life and naturalness, a fact especially noticeable in the dialogues of the children in The Doctor's Christmas Eve. Yet bits of conversation he could use to advantage. In this analysis he gives the reader a realization of the inner thoughts and feelings of his character, of his struggle, of his fears and his ambitions.

(1) F. L. Pattee: A History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 366.

In the dramatic presentation of such a scene Allen knew how to use to advantage the power of suggestion. He uses it in Flute and Violin when the parson silently hangs the loved instruments up on the wall; nor does the author make any comments on the act. Yet how much is suggested of the parson's feelings and of the influence on his future. Or in The Choir Invisible how much is left to the reader's imagination in the quiet words of Mrs. Falconer after she has read John Gray's letter telling of his marriage. "I shall go softly all my years," and yet how full of restrained grief and resignation. Allen uses the same method with equal effectiveness in Aftermath in telling of the death of Georgiana. Often this suggestiveness does not involve such important events in the story, but may be found in a look or a flush of the face. Such trivial things may assume significance just as the flush on King Solomon's face indicated the latent spark of manhood yet in him.

This use of suggestion and his power of discriminating analysis Allen uses again and again in the delineation of his characters. He is not greatly concerned with external features, but with the inner life and character, with motives and ideals. Nor is he content with merely presenting the thoughts, emotions, and actions of the character himself, but seeks for explanation of them in his racial history. The reader's conception of a character is built up, then,

gradually, not only by what he says and does but by what he thinks and feels, by the author's own explanations, and by suggestive details.

Allen's real forte, however, was his ability to write description. His keen observation both in nature and in life about him and his ability to express accurately and vividly what he saw and felt accounts for the predominance of this quality in his style. It aided him in his presentation of a dramatic situation and in the portrayal of character. It made possible the harmonious backgrounds for his stories, elaborate in his early works and to a greater or less extent giving atmosphere to all of his writings. Through it also he was able to revive in his historical romances the scenes of earlier days with definite details of dress, customs, and life of pioneer times.

In much of his description of a scene he relies on a literal portrayal, using vivid, precise words to produce the effect he wished. His diction, as would be expected from one so versed in language as he was, is rich and varied with an unusual number of colorful adjectives and adverbs. For example, note the following description of the sky: "During the greater part of the year the cloud-sky is one of strongly outlined forms; the great white cumuli drift over, with every majesty of design and grace of grouping; but

there come, in milder seasons, many days when one may see three cloud belts in the heavens at the same time, the lowest, far, far away, and the highest brushing softly, as it were, past the very dome of the inviolable blue. You turn your eye downward to see the light wandering wistfully among the low distant hills, and the sweet tremulous shadows crossing the meadows with timid cadences."(1)

A reader is impressed with such dignity and exactness in his choice of words. In his first writing he sometimes suggests an over-meticulous care as seen in the following sentence from his first story, Too Much Momentum: "The gate swung with unction on its hinge."(2) Only rarely, however, does there seem to be a strained effort for the right word; on the contrary, he shows unusual facility and ease in his choice. He uses little dialect and seldom drops into the colloquial. He seems to have had a special fondness for hyphenated epithets. He describes the Kentuckians as possessing the "old land-loving, land-holding, home-staying, home-defending disposition." Fifth Avenue is "that long, stately, palace-crowded, diamond-bedusted, world-weary road--the Via Dolorosa of great cities." The latter also suggests his occasional use of foreign terms and his more frequent allusions to the literature of the past, sacred and secular.

(1) The Blue Grass Region, pp. 17-18.
(2) Harper's, 70:702.

The allusions are brought in most casually and illustrate his familiarity with literature, such as "my few Sabine acres," Zaccheus-like, or "that Pandora's box of information." He was skillful in making apt applications of whole phrases or sentences to suit his purpose, as in the comment of Adam Moss on his neighbors; "But let me except always the few steadily luminous spirits I know, with whom there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning."

His descriptions are also rich in imagery. He had great facility in the use of simile and metaphor and his writings abound in them. In some of the earlier works they become over-elaborated conceits, but as he gained deftness in his style they become more appropriate. For beauty of imagination and expression one might note the following from The Last Christmas Tree: "The rose is a perfumed lamp and when its bowl is without oil, that inimitable lamp so silently built to give off for a little while a few serene rays of vestal beauty as silently falls to pieces." In contrast to this poetic fancy is a more homely but vivid comparison in the comment on Mrs. Walters in A Kentucky Cardinal: "To tell her and not expect her to tell would be like giving a thump to the dry head of a thistle on a breezy day and not expecting the seed to go flying off in a hundred directions."

A conspicuous quality of Allen's style is the preponderance of the nature element and his characteristic

treatment of it. His use of it was guided by some very definite theories on local color, which he himself evolved. These prevented him from using scenery except as a means to an end. Hence in all his use of nature, much as it may seem to constitute a separate charm, he subordinated it to the real purpose of his story. According to his opinion, expressed in an essay on local color,(1) it took more than a novelist to be able to relate nature to life; it took novelist, artist, scientist, and stylist combined. Success in the use of local color, says Allen, comes only when from an artistic point of view the writer chooses colors that are suitable to the picture of human life which the special character of the theme may demand, and when from the scientific point of view he makes the picture of human life natural and intelligible by portraying those "picturable potencies" in nature which made it what it was and must go with it to explain it. Then the happiest use of local color will test the writer's tastes and attainments as a language-colorist. Hence, the personal traits of the author will to a large extent determine the success with which he describes any given locality. It is worth noting that Allen had in his own personality all the requisites for this felicitous use of natural scenery. Moreover, in addition he had another

(1) Local Color, Critic, 5:13.

theory that an author's knowledge of a country which was to appear later in his work as local color, must have been gathered in his childhood when the imagination was active. This is doubtless the chief explanation why Allen used the blue grass region as the scene of most of his fiction.

Thus it was the nature which he had learned to know and love as a child that he consciously put to artistic use in his writings. In his earlier stories he uses it chiefly as background, closely related and harmonized, however, with the theme and events of the story. For example, in Two Gentlemen of Kentucky he opens the story with a picture of still life, with motionless clouds, unstirred waters--everything so quiet that "the Eternal Power seemed to have quitted the universe and all nature was folded in the calm of Eternal Peace." From this description of the surroundings the author leads naturally to the silent figure in the scene--one of the "two gentlemen" of the story. In The White Cowl the beauty and warmth of the surroundings and the sunny skies by their sharp contrast with the cold, barren atmosphere of the abbey make the reader feel its chill, while in Sister Dolorosa the vast loneliness of the scene is emphasized. In John Gray the pioneer background with the wild elemental forces of nature reaching to the very edges of the village lends charm and romantic glamor to the life there.

In A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath nature not only forms the background but it is so closely interwoven into the

life of the characters and the events that it becomes an integral part of the story. It is the first bond of friendship between the lovers and it is the innocent cause of misunderstanding between them. It is largely the means of by which the author interprets his characters. It furnishes consolation for grief, bringing peace "like a soft, quiet, cloudless twilight." In Summer in Arcady it becomes the motivating force in the story, working in harmony with human instincts to affect the destinies of the characters. In The Kentucky Warbler also it is a dominant power in awakening ambition in the youthful hero of the story.

Allen also uses nature as a symbolism by which he interprets life. His two most striking examples of it are found in Summer in Arcady and The Reign of Law. In Summer in Arcady he sees in the field of butterflies a symbol of the "blindly wandering, blindly loving, quickly passing human race." He likens the two young people of the story "at play on the meadows of Life and Love" to two brief moths of the sun. In The Reign of Law he finds an analogy between the growth of hemp and the processes by which it is prepared for use and the life of man with his struggles. "Type, too, of our life, which is also earth-sown, earth-rooted; which must struggle upward, be cut down, rooted and broken, ere the separation take place between our dross and our worth--poor perishable shard and immortal fiber. Oh, the mystery, the mystery of that growth

from the casting of the soul as a seed into the dark earth, until the time when, led through all natural changes and cleansed of weakness, it is borne from the field of its nativity for the long service."[1] Throughout both these novels the symbolism runs like a motif, recalling to the reader's mind over and over its suggestiveness in interpreting human nature.

Allen does not limit his use of symbolism to nature, however. One glance over the titles of his works will show how large a part it plays in his writing--The Mettle of the Pasture, The Choir Invisible, Emblems of Fidelity, The Alabaster Box. In others, such as Summer in Arcady, A Kentucky Cardinal, and Aftermath, it is not so evident without an understanding of the story. His imagination was rich in finding means for the interpretation of life and destiny. Among his favorite symbols are the alabaster box for appreciation and charity toward one's fellowman, evergreens for immortality, and the candle with a variety of meanings. He also drew analogies from music and painting, two arts which he considered useful to the novelist. Music, he says, can teach the novelist how to manage major and minor motives and suggests treatment of spiritual discords and harmonies, and painting can teach the grouping of form and the use of color in language.[2]

Whether Allen derived his delicacy of touch from the application to his writings of the likenesses he found in the

(1) The Reign of Law, p. 23.
(2) Bookman, 1:303-5.

other arts or whether it was the result of that innate delicacy of his own personality, it is one of the characteristic qualities of his style. It is seen in his use of humor, which is never of a boisterous type and which only rarely depends upon the situation. Though not abundant in his writings since his themes are often of a serious nature, yet it is present in an underlying spirit, more genial in A Kentucky Cardinal and a few of his other works, revealing itself usually in little touches here and there. It is gentle, sly, and often mingled with pathos. It is found in much of his work in the form of little comments on life. Sometimes it is in a gentle, good-natured sarcasm directed against himself or his profession, or such as the following, satirizing the impatience of the American people and the Kentuckians especially: "It is generally too much to expect of an American, even though he he a Kentuckian, to wait for a hedge to grow and make him a fence. When he takes a notion to have a fence, he wants it put up before Saturday night."(1)

His delicacy of feeling is even more apparent in his tender pathos, which runs through his work as a melancholy strain, at times only a sweet, plaintive note, again developing into tragedy but never into bitterness. His susceptibility to the use of pathos accounts for much of the sentiment in his writings, which, though usually restrained, at times borders

(1) The Blue Grass Region, p. 28.

on sentimentality and even degenerates into it. To what extent it degenerates is a point on which his critics differ greatly. Mr. Van Doren perhaps represents the most extreme view when he asserts that his sentimentality forces him to become melodramatic, a fact often over-looked, he point out, because of Allen's diction and pictures. Yet he adds: "Though he tends to the mellifluous and the saccharine he has in his better pages a dewy, luminous style, with words choicely picked out and cadences delicately manipulated. By contrast most of the local colorists of his period seem homespun and most of the romancers a little tawdry."(1)

Perhaps it is in this inherent susceptibility to beauty, combined with his mastery of diction and the ability to write cadenced sentences, that the delicacy of his touch rests. By one critic he is compared with Corot, who transfusing "a commonplace landscape with silver dreams as the light transfuses a pearl, has the haunting, elusive, abiding charm of twilight and dawn."(2) To another his work is suggestive of mignonette, the trailing arbutus, and the creeping fern of the "garden of literature."(3) Allen himself says that a writer stands to his work as a mason to his wall; they keep the same level; they rise together.(4) Just as his poetic temperament,

(1) Carl Van Doren: Contemporary American Novelists, p. 26.
(2) Outlook, 74:955-5.
(3) Book Buyer, 20:374-7.
(4) Gentleman in American Fiction, Bookman, 4:118-121.

then, is reflected in his love for beauty and perfection and in the idealism with which he softened his realistic material and made it beautiful, so it also found expression in the beauty of language and the delicate sensitiveness underlying it.

CHAPTER V

Early Works

The works of Allen published in book form extend over a period of thirty-four years of his life and consist of twenty volumes. They fall naturally into three groups: first, his earlier writings composed of short stories, sketches, and novelettes, all which he regarded as apprentice work, but part of which, at least, seem destined to outlive his other works; second, the major novels revealing his concern with some of the serious problems of life which form the underlying thesis and reflect his scientific and psychological thinking; and last, the novels and stories of his later years, more varied in character but less distinctive in quality and style than his other writing.

The first group, including Flute and Violin, The Blue Grass Region of Kentucky, John Gray,[1] The Kentucky Cardinal, and Aftermath, in many ways represent him at his best. They reveal his romantic interest in the early days of Kentucky and show his abundant knowledge of local history and his tendency to idealize it through his sympathetic touch in re-creating scenes and characters. They possess a beauty and charm which he failed to attain in his later works, and more than any of his other fiction, they show him to have been a devotee of art, a seeker after perfection, with a Keats-like

(1) Discussed in next chapter with The Choir Invisible.

sensitiveness for beauty. The beauties of nature abound in them, giving a background of "orchestral harmonies," now gay and sprightly, now touched with plaintive minors. The stories reflect the purity of sentiment of the author with his aesthetic sense, his gentle humor, his tender pathos, and his poetic delicacy of treatment. "Nowhere else in the period," says Mr. Pattee, "such distinction of expression, such charm of literary atmosphere, combined with such deep soundings into the heart of human life."(1)

Flute and Violin, and Other Kentucky Tales and Romances, Allen's first book, was published in 1891--in a "pleasant autumn of fruitfulness to me," he wrote reminiscently years later.(2) It was dedicated to his mother and included the six stories which had appeared in Harper's and The Century at intervals contemporaneously with the blue grass sketches. It had been Allen's original intention that with each descriptive article should go a story dealing with the same subject. Thus, Two Gentlemen of Kentucky would accompany Uncle Tom at Home and The White Cowl the sketch of the Trappist monastery. The plan, after having been carried out in part, was abandoned, however, on account of other work crowding in. The volume appeared at an auspicious time when collections of short stories were becoming a popular form of literature, rivaling even the novel, and in the beginning of the decade in which

(1) F. L. Pattee: A History of American Literature Since 1870, p. 367.
(2) Preface to The Landmark.

the short story reached its highest level.

As a collection Flute and Violin reveals well the author's literary craftsmanship and his high regard for form and precision, touched with poetic beauty. Though at times there is an excess of rhetoric, too fine-spun and painstaking, an over-elaborate use of background, and an evidence of a too conscious effort on the author's part to reach his ideal of beauty, yet as a whole there is harmony in thought and expression. Through all the stories is a feeling of remoteness due to the strong historical atmosphere in the setting, to a slightly archaic treatment of the material, and to an idealization of the past and of the types represented. In this respect the stories form a striking contrast to the grim realism of Garland's Main-Traveled Roads, which appeared in the same year. Yet in Flute and Violin, despite its idealism and remoteness, there is present a human element, a strain of sadness in all the beauty that invests the book, passion, pathos, and even tragedy.

The story, Flute and Violin, which gives title to the volume, is perhaps the finest of the collection. It has a very slight historical basis in that it grew out of an old memorial tablet in a church in Lexington, Kentucky. The story is told with grace and simplicity and with a genuine sympathetic understanding of human nature. The reader's interest is aroused at the first in the flute-playing, bachelor parson with a "conscience

burning like a planet;" and then again by his gay, whimsical manner when, dressed in the costume of a Virginia gentleman of olden times, he plays and dances the minuet, prompted possibly by the fact that on that day he "had driven his ancient, rusty, creaky, chariot of his faculties too near the sun of love."

It is the reader's sympathy, however, that is stirred by the pathos of the crippled boy--not because of his affliction, but because of his intense longing for a violin, which in his imagination he plays, ecstatically, passionately; because of his eager desire to see the pictures, so easy for everyone else, so impossible for him; because of the lump in his throat, the numb pain about his heart, the burdened conscience; because of the gift of the violin, so long hoped for, but now so tragic in its circumstances that it seems almost a mockery. Perhaps nowhere else has Allen been so successful in his treatment of child life as in the inner struggles of little David. The reader's sympathy is further aroused for the parson as he hangs the flute and violin up together never to be used again, a symbol of the tragedy of his own life and that of his little friend.

To relieve this pathos there is a gentle humor in the story found chiefly in the two devoted, conscientious souls, Widow Spurlock and Arsena Furnace, who conspire "to provide the parson unawares with a sufficiency of air and light" and in the widow's

deep concern over the logs on his fire in August! The story concludes with a pathetic touch when again the parson plays his loved flute, but this time only in imagination, "to sound the final roll-call of his wandering faculties and to blow a last good-night to his tired spirit."

King Solomon of Kentucky is based on a historical incident occurring during the time of the cholera devastation in Kentucky in 1833. Many of the people mentioned were real people, and the ball, the sale of King Solomon, the coming of the plague--all were actual happenings. One of the costumes which Allen describes as having been worn at the ball preceding the coming of the epidemic was the wedding dress of Allen's mother, "a white satin, with ethereal silk overdress embroidered in an oak leaf of green."(1) The revelry at the ball at the opening of the story contrasts sharply with the horrors of death in the latter part.

The chief interest centers in King Solomon who at the beginning is sold for vagrancy. He is portrayed as a man who has drained his cup of human life; yet a kindling light in his eye and a passing flush of his face as the figure of Mr. Clay is pointed out across the street suggest a spark of manhood yet remaining in him. It is, however, during the ravages of the plague that he rises above the wreck of his former

(1) Bookman, 12:161.

self and by heroic efforts retrieves the past, and renders a service for which he wins the expression of appreciation at his "coronation scene." The picture is a pathetic one throughout, unrelieved by humor. The character portrayal is more direct than that in Flute and Violin, both in the presentation of King Solomon and also of the old negress who through her kindness to him proves her devotion to the friend of her master. As a hero story it is unusual, and Allen treats it with corresponding sympathy, dignity and restraint.

Two Gentlemen of Kentucky portrays with kindly sympathy and tenderness the devotion existing between master and slave. Both the Colonel and Peter are "gentlemen of the old school," unable to adjust themselves to the new regime. Through the Colonel's reflections over the former days and through hints brought out in bits of conversation the author suggests the vast changes caused by the war. Humor is present but is always mingled with pathos, as may be seen in the naive simplicity with which the Colonel enters into the business and political life of the town, in Peter's inability to satisfy the fashionable church of his brethren, and in the retirement of the two to the shadowy quiet of their retreat, "in which the old master without a slave and the old slave without a master still kept up a brave pantomime of their obsolete relation." Sympathetically, almost affectionately, Allen describes their life together, giving such delightful details as

their walk in the garden, Peter "just a year and a half behind in dress and a yard and a half behind in space," or Peter's polishing the Colonel's shoes with too much blacking, "perhaps thinking that the more blacking the greater the proof of love." The fine courtesy, the delicate consideration for each other, the unselfishness and genuine devotion are all portrayed, much idealized, but suggestive of the finest relation between master and slave, both gentlemen and at "heart brothers and equals."

The White Cowl has for its setting the Trappist monastery, so over-shadowed with its atmosphere of gray antiquity that the incongruity makes the beauty of the surroundings seem but mockery. Skillfully, though perhaps too elaborately, Allen has emphasized the contrast. "The pale-gleaming cross of the spire looks as though it would fall to the earth, weary of its aged unchangeableness." "While Nature everywhere was clothing itself in living green....he [Father Palemon] had wrapped the dead white cowl of centuries gone as the winding-sheet of his humanity." The theme of the story is the rebellion of the soul against the unnatural bonds of asceticism and the contrast between the mediaeval idea of attaining personal holiness by living apart from the world and a higher type attained in the thick of the world's temptation. The story is full of deep passion. Father Palemon, disturbed by a life and duty he had never before thought of, is led to renounce his priestly vows.

"Love-duty--the world; in those three words lie all the human, all the Divine tragedy." In the spiritual conflict Allen shows his concern for human problems and anticipates the soul struggles of his chief novels.

In Sister Dolorosa, a story of the Convent of the Stricken Heart, is again found revolt against asceticism and again the very landscape becomes symbolic of the soul struggle. The haunting atmosphere of dead autumn fields, the spirit of vast loneliness, the yearning for fireside contrasts largely with the momentary splendor of the sunset and the rapt and radiant expression of Sister Dolorosa. The sweet sad beauty of her soul is tenderly suggested in its cloud-built realm of her fantasies before her "blithe aspirations" had yet "felt the weight of the clod it soars within." The tragedy of her life is foreshadowed in the suggestions of coming reality, of her last look at the gorgeous clouds from the hill-top of her dreams, of her premonition of coming evil, and perhaps even in the wounded bird which aroused her sympathy.

Again as in The White Cowl, the awakening from dreams comes through chance, first in the disquieting conversations of the elderly couple she visited and then through the accidental meeting with Gordon Helm. "Their meeting was as unforeseen as another far overhead, where two white clouds, long shepherded aimlessly and from opposite directions across the boundless pastures by the unreasoning winds, touched and melted into one." The whole scene of her renunciation of her

love, her yielding to it, and her remorse and final expiation of her seeming sin are depicted with intensity and feeling. Perhaps in this story the style best illustrates Allen's tendency to "fine writing," rhetorical flourish, and sensuous imagery, yet much of the beauty in expression is in harmony with the beauty of the soul of Sister Dolorosa.

Posthumous Fame: or a Legend of the Beautiful is a contrast to the other stories in the collection from the standpoint of material and method of treatment. The others all represent Kentucky life in some way while here the story is unlocalized. The others are all closely related to life; this is lacking in the human touch. It is an allegory, artistically worked out and suggestive of Hawthorne, on the theme of man's desire to be remembered after death. The poet, the soldier, the minister, not content that they should be remembered in their works, seek monuments to perpetuate their memory; yet the monuments are powerless to render them immortal. The artist himself rears a monument to his love and by concealing the epitaph, symbolic of her perfect heart, hopes to make her immortal. But he is entirely misunderstood and the beautiful exterior is considered only a masterpiece of mockery. This leads to the conclusion that the only earthly immortality is to be found not in beautiful monuments but in words and deeds which pass into the long history of the race.

The Blue Grass Region of Kentucky, and Other Kentucky

Articles, (1892), a collection of descriptive sketches published first in Harper's and The Century, was the result of the suggestion made by H. M. Alden already referred to in the biographical sketch. Allen looked upon it and Flute and Violin as mere apprentice work and said his aim in them was "to train my eye to see, my hand to report things as they were, as a preparation for imaginative work, which I hoped in time would follow."(1)

The sketches reveal Allen's power of description. They show abundant local knowledge, the result of accurate and intimate observation. Though they are written with the sympathetic hand of a Kentuckian, they suggest an attempt to be impartial and unprejudiced. The descriptions are clear, vivid, and often rich in imagery, but as in Flute and Violin, only rarely are the figures over-exaggerated. They reveal much of the author's love for nature and people, his pride in his English ancestry, his interest in tradition, and his love for the picturesque and beautiful. There are many autobiographical suggestions which become meaningful after a study of Allen's life.

The Blue Grass Region, the first of the collection, seems most personal and is written with greater poetic fancy than the others. It begins with a description of the blue grass, the Saxon grass, in which he finds many likenesses to the Saxon people. He seems to give it personality, if grass may be said

(1) Lippincott's, 49(50):776.

to have such. Fondly he describes the beauty of the region with its graceful slopes, its woodland pastures, its harmony of atmosphere and cloud and sky. He speaks with pride of the Anglo-Saxon ancestry of the people, and he characterizes them as rural gentlemen whose "ideal in life is neither vast wealth nor personal distinction, but solid comfort," and whose ideal of a gentleman is elegant living. He finds opportunity occasionally to bring in humor in the form of mild sarcasm directed against the Kentuckians, such as a contrast between their speed and that of their race horses. With a characteristic desire to be honest in his writing he reminds the reader that Kentucky is not always as he has pictured it, and he frankly acknowledges that his observations may be influenced by his intimate associations with the region from childhood.

Uncle Tom at Home is an attempt to memorialize the type of "colored gentleman" which he represents. The sketch portrays vividly the picturesque settlements in town where the negro population has packed itself since the war. It emphasizes the sharp contrast between the old and the younger generations. It shows the tender association between the typical Kentucky boy and his black "Mammy", the cook, the overseer, and points with pride to the mild form of slavery found in Kentucky.

County Court Day in Kentucky and Kentucky Fairs indicate Allen's skill in the study of people. In the establishment of both institutions he sees the racial traits of the Anglo-Saxons: court day, a demand for civil justice and the athletic games accompanying it and the fairs, an outgrowth of the Kentuckians'

love for large gatherings, especially out of doors. Graphically Allen describes these festivities and shows how they mirror the life and spirit of the times. His love for ancestral tradition and his regret at the crumbling of the structure of the old social ideals and fine manners with the coming of the war are also suggested.

A striking contrast to the gayety and social life found in these gatherings is the life described in the next sketch, A Home of the Silent Brotherhood. Here is especially apparent Allen's ability to make the reader not only see this abbey, with so little about it pleasing to the aesthetic sense, but to feel the sacred silence, and the pervasive hush that "falls like leaden pall on a stranger who has rushed in from the talking universe." He secures the impression of stillness and separation from the world through the accumulation of effective details. Deep respect and reverence for the monks and their religious ideals pervade the whole sketch.

Homesteads of the Blue Grass is another of the more personal type. It again emphasizes the hereditary love of land as the magnet drawing the pioneers across the mountains, the love of rural homes, the homogeneity of manners, dress, ideals, tastes due to the lack of distinction between urban and rural society. The various types of homesteads, the English love for family seclusion through vines and shrubbery, the rich, massive furniture, the portraits, the family graveyards with

their fast fading violets and perennial myrtle--all are vividly and sympathetically described.

The last two sketches, Through Cumberland Gap on Horseback and Mountain Passes of the Cumberland, though Kentucky descriptions, lack the personal tone found in the blue grass sketches. The first is an account of a trip and shows Allen's interest in the beautiful scenery, the character of the mountaineers, their customs, language, and civilization. The latter article deals with the coming of civilization and the changes brought about through commercial and industrial activities.

The most delightful of all of Allen's works is found in A Kentucky Cardinal, by many considered with Aftermath as his masterpiece. It has all the marks of perfection to be found in Flute and Violin with the added quality of freedom from any self-consciousness or artificiality. It is fresh, spontaneous, full of wit and wisdom, humor and tenderness. Told in the first person, it gives to the reader such a feeling of reality, such a human personal touch that it seems like a chapter out of the author's own life. One feels that it is Allen himself in the person of Adam Moss with his enthusiasm for nature and his understanding of humanity. Moreover, it is graceful and lyric in quality, a charming pastoral, idyllic prose-poem, with a universal appeal despite its Kentucky atmosphere.

The setting is Allen's own home in the beautiful blue grass region and the time is that of the mid-century. The

slight plot has to do with the wooing of Adam Moss, a nature recluse, who tells the story, delighting the reader with his naive comments on the stages of development in his love making and with his hints suggestive of his attitude toward Georgiana even when he is feigning indifference toward her. The acquaintance begins most informally in a conversation over the strawberry bed, and here Allen shows greater skill than usual in the gay repartee which ends most abruptly with the announcement, "I am Adam Moss." With this delightful beginning the friendship gradually ripens into love.

Charming as the love story is, it does not surpass in its fascination the nature element and general human interest of the story as a whole. In this respect the book well illustrates the author's revelation of himself in his works. The nature descriptions have all the accuracy of a disciple of Thoreau or Audobon, which Adam purports to be, but they have also Allen's deep appreciation and understanding of it, a glad, personal intimacy. The nature tone is suggested at the beginning in the words of Adam: "The longer I live here, the better satisfied I am in having pitched my earthly camp fire, gypsy-like, on the edge of a town, keeping it on one side and the green fields, lanes, and woods on the other. Each, in turn, is to me as a magnet to the needle. At times the needle of my nature points towards the country. On

that side everything is poetry. I wander over field and forest and through me runs a glad current of feeling that is like a clear brook across the meadows of May. At others the needle veers round, and I go to town--to the massed haunts of the highest animal and cannibal. That way nearly everything is prose."(1)

Thus, as in the previous stories, nature furnishes the background, but here it does much more than present external forms. There is a susceptibility to the various moods--in winter when at low tide, in the wakening out of winter sleep, in the enticing beauty of May, in the universal brooding stillness of August when the eagerness of spring is gone. Nature is the underlying passion interwoven into the life and thought of the characters and into the plot. It suggests the supremacy of human love, compared with love for nature, and conspires with the fascination of Georgiana to make Adam realize his need of human companionship: "This year as never before I have felt the beauty of the world. And with the new brightness in which every common scene has been apparelled there has stirred within me a need of human companionship unknown in the past. It is as if Nature had spread out her last loveliness and said: 'See! You have before you now all that you can ever get from me! It is not enough. Realize this in time. I am

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, pp. 6-7.

your mother. Love me as a child. But remember! Such love can only be a little part of your life."[1]

The cardinal itself, which gives title to the book, has a special significance in the story. It becomes at once symbolic of the character of Georgiana and an important factor in the development of the love story. With feeling Adam describes him near the beginning as he tells of his concern for the birds that remain in Kentucky for the winter, and how those that do wear the hues of the season. "Save only him--proud stranger in our unfriendly land--the fiery grosbeak. Nature has no harmonies for him."[2] Again in reference to winter he says, "It is then that his beauty is most conspicuous, and that Death, lover of the peerless, strikes at him from afar.... What wonder if he is so shy, so rare, so secluded, this flame-colored prisoner in dark green chambers, who has only to be seen or heard and Death adjusts an arrow."[3] There seems almost a foreshadowing of the events in Aftermath in the conclusion that "could the first male of the species have foreseen how, through the generations of his race to come, both their beauty and their song, which were meant to announce them to Love, would also announce them to Death, he must have blanched snow-white with despair and turned as mute as a stone."[4]

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, p. 69.
(2) Ibid., p. 14.
(3) Ibid., p. 16.
(4) Ibid., p. 17.

It must have been the cardinal that Adam had in mind in his description of Georgiana, when he says of her: "Georgiana, then, is a rather elusive character. The more I see of her, the less I understand her. If your nature draws near hers, it retreats. If you pursue, it flies--a little frightened perhaps. If then you keep still and look perfectly safe, she will return, but remain at a fixed distance, like a bird that will stay in your yard, but will not enter your house."[1] It is the cardinal also that plays a most innocent part in the misunderstanding between the lovers when Adam fancies that Georgiana asks him to cage the redbird for her as a test of his love.

Not only is the story vibrant with the life of the out-doors, but it also reveals the author's wholesome view of life. His genial humor is all-pervading. It is seen in the playful mood in which Adam describes Nature doing her house cleaning with rain clouds for her water buckets and the winds for her brooms. It reveals itself in the fond, indulgent interest Adam takes in Sylvia, Georgiana's sister, whose gay, sprightly nature he is better able to understand. Of her he says, "Little half-fledged spirit, to whom the yard is the earth and June eternity, but who peeps over the edge of the nest at the chivalry of the ages, and fancies that she knows the world." It is seen in the good-natured satire with which he looks on the foibles

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal. pp. 53-4.

of humanity--his characterization of his "rain crow" and his "mocking bird," his raillery directed against the visitors who show him favor in the season when roses and lilies are in bloom or strawberries ripe. Humor permeates every page with its warmth and its kindliness toward the world.

Yet there is a recognition of the sadness of life as seen in the description of twilight: "The last hour of light touches the birds as it touches us. When they sing in the morning, it is with happiness of the earth; but as the shadows fall strangely about them, and the helplessness of the night comes on, their voices seem to be lifted up like the loftiest poetry of the human spirit, with sympathy for realities and mysteries past all understanding."(1) This habit of seeing both the sadness and the joy of life and of feeling that on the whole life is good is characteristic of Allen's philosophy and accounts for the optimism found in all his works.

Though A Kentucky Cardinal is not conceived on the large scale that Allen attempted in his longer novels, it has exquisite delicacy in its very simplicity, in its deep, wholesome sentiment, and in it Allen achieved that classic perfection of beauty and finish which he sought so ardently. It was a favorite with him also, at least among his earlier books. During

(1) A Kentucky Cardinal, p. 150.

the time that Summer in Arcady was appearing in The Cosmopolitan he was asked which was his favorite among his writings and this was his reply: "I think on the whole I like A Kentucky Cardinal because I believe it is truer to nature, closer to humanity and a better reflection on the life it portrays than any other work I can call my own."(1) The thirty years that have passed since then have shown that the general reader concurs with him in that remark, for A Kentucky Cardinal is still favorite reading, rivaled only among his works perhaps by The Choir Invisible.

Aftermath, the sequel to A Kentucky Cardinal, continues in a similar vein with the same characters. It has the same lyrical qualities, lightness and delicacy of shading, the same genial humor, the same half whimsical fancy. But with all this gayety there is a growing earnestness, a plaintiveness which drops into a reminiscent, wistful, yearning mood at the last.

Georgiana is still the elusive character whom Adam tries to follow as suggested in his reflection on her: "During a walk across the summer fields my foot has sometimes paused at the brink of a silvery runlet, and I have followed it backward in search of the spring. It may lead to the edge of a dark wood; thence inward deeper and deeper; disappearing at last in a nook of coolness and shadow, green leaves and mystery. The overheard rill of Georgiana's voice issues from inner depths of being that no human soul has ever visited,

(1) Current Literature, 20:106-7.

or perhaps will ever visit. What would I not give to thread my way, bidden and alone, to that far region of uncaptured loveliness?"[1] Nor does this yearning cease with marriage; always there is the effort of one soul to reach the other. The home life is ideal with its genuine love and harmony and with the kindly attitude toward mankind as suggested in the "room of charity and kindness to all creatures."

Love for nature is still evident, but it is abandoned temporarily for the human love. Though Adam gladly gives up the one for the other, the "business in town," which he has adopted to gratify Georgiana, brings no "intellectual satisfaction" as contrasted with the study of nature which always outreaches his powers.

Humor is still present but more and more mingled with pathos. The seriousness of the story is suggested in the discussions on the concerns of life, the high ideal of the soldier, the bravery of a people as evidenced in the spirit of the forefathers rather than in feuds and duels, the naturalness with which one looks upon nature and speaks of it as contrasted with the reticence in talking of life.

In all this Adam is strongly suggestive of the author himself. They have the same sober attitude toward life blended with a keen sense of humor, the same high ideals and conscientiousness, the same calm, restrained manner, the

(1) Aftermath, p. 167.

same love for nature and the sensitiveness to the finer things of life. Like Adam, Allen also was more of an observer of mankind than a participant in the affairs of life. Yet there was a sterner, strong side to Allen's character which perhaps is more fully realized in John Gray in The Choir Invisible than in Adam.

The seriousness of the story becomes tender pathos in the latter part. The pride of Adam as hinted in the statement, "I have been a sire for half a day," is blended with the heart-ache over the meditation on the necessity of his son's meeting with the realities of life "when he shall have become a man and have grown less wise." There is an added strain of pathos in the gentle, playful spirit of the young mother with which she recalls their first conversation in the words, "Old man, are you a gardener?" and in the strawberry blossoms whose chill becomes symbolic of the chill of death.

With rare delicacy of feeling the author passes over the harrowing events of death, but how poignantly is suggested the real grief in the simple words: "A month has gone by since Georgiana passed away. Today for the first time, I went back to the woods."(1) With the return to nature comes the healing qualities derived from it. "As I approached the edge of the forest," says Adam, "it was as though an invisible company of influences came gently forth to meet me and sought to draw me

(1) Aftermath, p. 258.

back to into their old friendship. I found myself stroking the trunk of trees as I would throw my arms around the shoulders of a tried comrade; I drew down the branches and plunged my face into the new leaves as into a tonic stream."[1] The mournful note of the bird calling for its dead mate and the feeling of sadness due to the death of Mr. Clay--a historical touch in the story--mingled with his own grief, leads Adam to reflect on the "wastage of the divine, the law of loss, whose right to reign no creature, brute or human, ever acknowledges."

Despite the minor key of the latter part of the book, the story concludes with peace, serenity, restrained emotion. The beautiful aftermath becomes symbolic of his resignation. "I can match the aftermath of nature, "says Adam," with the aftermath of my life. The Harvester passed over my fields leaving them bare; they are green again up to the winter's edge."[2]

Thus the story is delightful from its playful beginning in A Kentucky Cardinal to the wistful sweet melancholy of the end in Aftermath. It contains pure, wholesome sentiment which is saved from sentimentality by quiet restraint and calm. So rare and ethereal is the beauty of these two little volumes that the reader agrees with Miss Brown in The Atlantic

(1) Aftermath, pp. 252-3.
(2) Ibid., pp. 259-60.

Monthly, who says that criticising them gives one the feeling of Wordsworth's little sister who feared to brush the dust from the wings of the butterfly;[1] or like Mr. Van Doren, who says that the Kentucky Cardinal-Aftermath story has all the quaint grace of pressed flowers and remembered valentines.[2] Perhaps these comments express the attitude of the average reader concerning the books and explain in a measure why they are considered Allen's masterpieces.

(1) Atlantic Monthly, 79:104-110.
(2) Carl Van Doren: Contemporary American Novelists, p. 27.

CHAPTER VI

Major Novels

The period including his four major novels, Summer in Arcady, The Choir Invisible, The Reign of Law and The Mettle of the Pasture, marks a decided change in Allen's work. It shows definitely the influence of his reading of French and English realists, especially Hardy, of his scientific and psychological studies, and his application of them to the serious problems of humanity. His scientific attitude led him away from the field of romance into that of realism, away from the merely poetic and spiritual to an objective study of the physical and material. Yet his romantic nature and his idealism, as has already been pointed out, tempered this realism and touched it with a poetic and spiritual beauty that made of it a far different thing from that of the realists proper. His field is therefore an enlarged one. Kentucky is still the background and gives atmosphere to his stories, but the themes are universal, involving fundamental problems of life, the study of inheritance, of instincts and elemental forces, of sin and its responsibility.

An explanation of this change may be found in his own discussion in an article in The Atlantic Monthly of October, 1897, on Two Principles in Recent American Fiction.(1) In this

(1) Atlantic Monthly, 80:403-411.

he says that American fiction has been dominated for some years by what is known in the art of the world as the "Feminine Principle" whose essential characteristics are refinement, delicacy, and grace. He would not depreciate this principle and points to its real service in the establishment of good prose style with its standards of good taste, good thought and good breeding, which, he asserts, we can no more afford to do without in our novels than in our lives. Yet as a full portrayal of American civilization with its growth and change it is inadequate. There is also need, he says, of the "Masculine Principle" with its virility, strength, and massiveness, which he sees beginning to supplant the Feminine as a dominant force. "It is striking out boldly for large things in larger areas of adventure, larger spaces of history, with freer movements through both---it is the movement away from the summits of life to the primitive springs of action." He himself sees the happiest result in a proper balance of the two. In his writing of this period, therefore, is apparent an attempt to seek strength and virility in his work through the treatment of basic, fundamental problems of life. He never loses sight, however, of refinement, delicacy, and grace, those standards of the "Feminine Principle" which had dominated his earlier work, and as a result both principles find harmonious blending in these major novels.

Summer in Arcady (1896), though published the year preceding his article on Two Principles, gives evidence of the application of the ideas expressed in it. It might be said to mark the transition from the early works with their characteristics of charm, of beauty in expression, of delicacy of treatment to the chief novels of this period of more momentous import. It first appeared as a serial story in The Cosmopolitan beginning with the issue of November, 1895, under the title Butterflies: A Tale of Nature, and was published in book form with an explanatory preface the following year.

In this novel Allen had a very definite purpose in mind which he explains in the preface. It was a protest against the unwholesomeness of some of the new fiction in whose "black, chaotic" books, he says, there is "hardly a thing of value to the normal portion of the race, in its clean advance toward higher living, that they have not in effect belittled or insulted." With this charge against the new fiction he sets about to oppose it with a literature of more wholesome ideals, best expressed in his own words: "It is against the downward-moving fiction of manifold disorder that the writer has ventured to advance a protest under cover of a story--a story, he is too well aware, that could not possibly carry with it the weight and measure of an opposing argument, but that should at least contain the taste and quality of beautiful repudiation.

To this end, and with the use of the weapons put into his hands, he has taken two robust young people in the crimson flush of the earliest summer of life; they are dangerously forefathered; they are carelessly reared; they are temptingly environed; they are alone with one another and with nature; and Nature intent on a single aim directs all her power against their weakness."(1) Thus, meeting his opponents on their own ground of "naturalness," he ventures to charge his story with as much peril, but yet, as he says, to wrest a moral victory for each of his characters and for the old established order of civilized society.

As in A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath nature is still a predominant element. It gives a charming pastoral, idyllic setting for the events of the story. It finds a sympathetic expression in the beauty of its minute descriptive details. It furnishes the fanciful symbolism in which human life is likened to the field of gay flitting butterflies, suggested first in the prelude and recurring again and again throughout the story. The author's love for nature is evident also in the beautiful description of June days in Kentucky, the season for picnics in the woodland pastures, when the skies are fairest, the beauty of the young summer perfect, the breezes sweet with the scent of the fields, the odor of crushed grass--the Arcady of that passionate land and people.

Yet nature is more than a lovely background, or a fanciful

(1) Quoted in The Dial, 21:19-20.

interpretation of life; it is an impelling force, a dominant personality driving the characters on to their destiny. It not only has its beauties, its sympathetic moods, but it has also its merciless laws which govern the laws of life. As the gay creatures of the field are whirled about by elemental forces, so youth is hurled on involuntarily by the same. Nature is a driving power. She "really issued the invitations to the picnics." She "is lashing everything--grass, fruit, insects, cattle, human creatures--more fiercely onward to the fulfillment of her ends." So Daphne, restless, discontented, lonely, and Hilary, inconstant, wild, are hurled onward by the forces of nature. The story is thus one of passion, of love springing up fiercely, yet in the end becoming controlled through a growing sense of right and a desire to do it. Closely associated with this theme is that of heredity. Neither Daphne nor Hilary could see the faulty generations behind them that had made them what they were.

In structure Summer in Arcady is freer from faults of digression than the other novels of the group. There is a fitness of detail and incident to the main motive and a close relation existing between them, due perhaps to the symbolism running through the plot. Yet from the standpoint of strength it stands to The Choir Invisible, its successor, as youth to maturity.

It reveals much of the author's idealism and spiritual quality and of his application of them to life. This is apparent especially in the following: "Nature had been having her way with him as an animal during those days of waiting; but something else had begun to have its way also--something that we satisfy ourselves by calling not earthly and of the body, but unearthly and of the soul--something that is not pursuit and enjoyment of another, but self-sacrifice for another's sake, that does not bring satiety but ever-growing dearness onward through youth, and joy into old age and sorrow-----that asks, as its utmost desire, for a life throughout eternity, spirit with spirit."(1)

Allen's Summer in Arcady was criticised both bitterly and favorably. From a structural point of view it was artistic--Mr. Van Doren calls it his masterpiece--yet its moral tone was questioned even by his friends. No one can doubt his sincerity of purpose, however. He speaks frankly but delicately.(2) If Allen has shown, says Mr. MacArthur in The Bookman, that passion in fiction can be made to serve a nobler ethical purpose by use of the same weapons viciously used by other writers, and that imaginative realism, transfigured by idealism, is nearer to the truth, in life than a sordid realism, then Summer in Arcady was not in vain.

(1) Cosmopolitan, 20;400.
(2) Bookman, 5:347-9.

The Choir Invisible (1897) is an expansion of John Gray (1893), Allen's first attempt at novel writing, which appeared in Lippincott's for June, 1892, and was published in book form the following year. John Gray is a slight but charming novel with a background of the pioneer days of Kentucky immediately following the Revolution. Its charm lies chiefly in the romantic atmosphere and glamor of frontier life, in its nearness to nature, its simplicity, and in its pervading spirit of gentle humor. The interest centers chiefly, as the title indicates, in the character of John Gray, a young Scotch-Irish school teacher from Pennsylvania, who has been attracted to Kentucky by the primitive wilderness struggle in which he sees the old drama of the race reenacted. His infatuation for Amy Falconer and his rejection by her form the basis for the plot.

In The Choir Invisible Allen uses this love story as an introduction to the real plot. With the same characters, much more carefully and subtly drawn, and with additional episodes he builds up a literary structure of more serious conception. The changes are indicative both of Allen's thinking and of his style. The Choir Invisible reveals his concern with spiritual problems, with the study of the inner life, with soul conflicts, with a delicate analysis of feeling and emotion. In its literary form it shows his careful methods of revision. Though

perhaps two-thirds of John Gray is used at the beginning, there are slight changes in the wording of sentences, and substitution of more exact or more colorful expressions; there are frequent additions of importance and omissions of idle or irrelevant material, especially extravagant conceits. The historical background is made more significant, revealing the dangers and hardships of pioneer life. This added seriousness in The Choir Invisible, perhaps, accounts for the loss of the genial spirit of good-natured humor that is one of the charms of John Gray.

The most significant change, however, comes in the characterization and in the analysis of the feelings and emotions as portrayed in the gradual development of the unconfessed love of John Gray and Mrs. Falconer for each other and in their renunciation of each other for the sake of right and established custom. Amy Falconer remains much the same in both stories, a gay, shallow, flippant creature, whose rejection of John Gray in no way disappoints the reader, who feels almost from the first that the lightness of her nature would be incompatible with the sober depths of his character. In striking contrast to her is her aunt, Mrs. Falconer, who in John Gray is described as "one of the first of those remarkable gentlewomen who followed their husbands into the wilderness, and there in time laid an impress so strong and fine upon the local civilization that its traditions are lustrous still." Her

refinement and culture are in no measure lessened by the rude work she must do or by the surroundings of pioneer life. Her absolute loyalty to Major Falconer and her respect for him, though the marriage is an uncongenial one, her understanding of people, her wonderful self-control, her dignity and grace distinguish her as a person of unusual character. Never for a moment until she is free does she reveal that her feelings for John Gray are more than those for a dear friend. Her personality with its high ideals, which include the life of the spirit as well as that of the body and mind, dominate the whole story. Her moral strength and stability are delicately and pertinently suggested by her quiet remarks in times of stress, as "I don't understand," or "I shall go softly all my years." They are also revealed in the parson's comment: "She holds in quietness her land of the spirit; but there are battle-fields in her nature that fill me with awe by their silence."(1) Altogether, she represents the finest character Allen has drawn not only in The Choir Invisible but anywhere in his writings.

John Gray is a strong character also. He is a young man of sincere soul, of intellectual power and moral worth, a man of passion, yet of marked self-control, calm and resolute. In the early part of the story he is unduly independent and overconfident of his own success. Only gradually does he discover that it is Mrs. Falconer rather than Amy who is the object of his affection. His real strength of character is apparent in

(1) The Choir Invisible, pp. 283-4.

his struggle to betray in no way his passion and finally in his complete renunciation of it. Malory's La Morte D'Arthur plays an important part in bringing him to a realization of his better self, to an acknowledgement of the power that comes through suffering, and to his ability to reach the "high table land" in the "Country of the Spirit." Thus in the end, though missing ideal happiness, he is able to look back on prosperity, honor, content without losing faith in mankind or aspiration toward perfection.

The books reveals much of the author's idealism. It is evident in the high ideals of John Gray and Mrs. Falconer, and in the lessons drawn from the days of chivalry. It is seen also in Mrs. Falconer's discussion of the two sets of ideals; the one, like lighthouses which from afar point the way to perfection; the other, like candles in the hand, the ideals of what will be possible of attainment if one makes the best use of the world and of himself.

The significance of the title of the book which is based on George Eliot's poem of the same title, is first alluded to in the author's reference to the school-house of a hundred years ago and to the young schoolmaster who has long since joined the "choir invisible of the immortal dead. But there is something left of him though more than a century has passed away: something that has wandered far down the course of time to us.....like

an old melody, surviving on and on in the air without any instrument, without any strings." These frequent allusions to music and the flute playing of the parson give added charm to the story.

The Choir Invisible is often classed as a historical novel. Yet the historical element merely furnishes background for the events of the story and makes pertinent much of the action of the characters. One feels that the author's real purpose is the portrayal of character through the spiritual struggles of John Gray and Mrs. Falconer. These are of universal interest and linger in the memory after the details of setting and action are forgotten.

The Reign of Law (1900) is a reflection of Allen's interest in science and its relation to religion. Though in no wise autobiographical, it contains many personal touches which are suggestive of Allen's own experiences and history. The dedication also lends a feeling of reality--"To the memory of a father and mother whose self-sacrifice, high sympathy, and devotion the writing of this story has caused to live afresh in the evergrowing, never-aging gratitude of their son." The book was published also in England under the title, The Increasing Purpose.

From the standpoint of structure the story is unusual in two ways. It is composed of two parts as definitely as A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath, the first part presenting in

a few strong dramatic situations the spiritual struggle of the hero and his consequent loss of faith, the latter part containing the love story and David's restoration to a wholesome view of life and religion. It is peculiar also in its prelude which traces the history and growth of hemp. The latter especially is told with a poetic fancy and a delicacy of feeling for the beauty of the hemp fields and for its fragrance, "once known in childhood, ever in the memory afterward." It is suggestive of the author's keen susceptibility to the delights of the various seasons particularly noticeable in his description of the coming of fall.

The prelude, however, has a distinct structural purpose in the story. It furnishes the background and suggests the atmosphere and the symbolism by which life is interpreted. It reflects the author's characteristic habit of brooding over nature and relating it to human life. Here he sees the shaping influences of nature on the intellectual and spiritual life. In the growth of the hemp and in the processes of its care he sees a likeness to the soul's struggle upward and to the refining and ennobling influence of adversity. The symbolism continues throughout the story with its frequent references to the hemp and its mystical application to life's preparation for immortality. "O Mystery Immortal! which is in the hemp and in our souls, in its bloom and in our passions;

by which our poor brief lives are led upward out of the earth for a season, then cut down, rotted and broken--for Thy long service!"[1]

The underlying idea of harmony between science and religion the author expresses in David's discussion of his scientific reading: "The universe--it is the expression of Law. Our sun--the driving force of law has made it. Our earth--Law has shaped that; brought Life out of it; evolved Life on it from the lowest to the highest; lifted primeval Man to modern Man; out of barbarism developed civilization; out of prehistoric religion, historic religion. And this one order--method--purpose--ever running and unfolding through the universe, is all that we know of Him whom we call Creator, God, our Father. So that His reign is the Reign of Law. He, Himself, is the author of the Law that we should seek Him. We obey, and our seekings are our religions."[2] The whole story is an appeal for openness of mind to Truth through the findings of science and for toleration in judging others in matters of faith.

The first chapter with its vivid picture of pioneer days has a special significance in introducing another theme closely related to the mental conflict of David--that of inheritance. His independence, his courage, his honesty, his desire to hear

(1) The Reign of Law, p. 385.
(2) The Reign of Law, pp. 294-5.

both sides, to "see truth whole" are a part of his racial inheritance from three generations back, though his own parents fail to realize this and as a consequence misunderstand him entirely.

The first part of the story is much stronger in construction and presentation. The reader's interest is aroused at once in this country lad with his discontent in the surroundings which he had outgrown, in his day dreaming of college, in the simplicity of his religion, and in his earnestness of purpose. Skillfully the author portrays the beginning of his questioning of religious matters, his extreme sensitiveness so "that he shrank from these critical analyses as he would from dissecting the body of the crucified Redeemer," and his gradual loss of faith. The most vivid scenes are his conversation with his pastor, his trial scene, and his return home. The lack of sympathy and understanding of David's pastor and professors is doubtless overdrawn for the purpose of crystallizing David's experiences. Perhaps most tragic of all is his return home where he could expect only misunderstanding and disappointment. With deep poignancy the author makes the reader feel David's loneliness and his intense yearning for response and sympathy.

Gabriella, the heroine who appears only in the latter part of the story, represents the aristocratic type of southern woman whose social order was completely changed by

the war. Her memories of that old life, her return to it through her reading and day dreams, her love for refinement and culture, her love for the beautiful--all are told with vividness and feeling. She, too, was a product of her ancestral inheritance, with her happy disposition and temperamental gayety, which, combined with her religious faith, kept her spirits alive during those years when she was reduced from the position of heiress to that of wage-earner.

In her David found sympathy and understanding. Both were the children of revolution: she of a social, he of an intellectual one. "Through her fall and his rise," they were thus brought to a common level. She had patience to listen to David's tedious discussion of science and theology, or as one critic expresses it, she had "infinite capacity for being bored." Yet through her sympathy and deep religious conviction she was the means of restoring David to his faith. The conclusion is thus typical of the author with his idealism and hopefulness which would have made impossible his closing the story with David's return home.

Other interesting and vividly portrayed passages are those describing the blending of the classes following the war, the description of the sleet storm with its beauties of scenery, its "wastage of nature," and its effect on animal life. These are discriminating studies in a close and careful

observation. There are also many realistic pictures of life in the farmhouse, both at David's home and at Gabriella's, and in the descriptions of the fields.

In The Mettle of the Pasture (1903) Allen again deals with an ethical problem, the double standard of purity. Closely associated with it is his favorite one of inheritance involving the placing of responsibility for sin. Hence the book is a serious one and is again reflective of the author's puzzling over life's problems.

In structure the plot has greater complexity of incident than those of his other novels. The action moves steadily forward, though held in suspense often by episodes with no great loss of interest to the reader. Likewise the author uses a greater number of characters than in any of his other works, some drawn with skill. There is less of the nature element, probably because of the greater emphasis on the study of human motives and actions.

The introduction with its beautiful description of a southern aristocratic home and of the lovely Isabel Conyers, filled with joy in expectation of the coming of her lover, Rowan Meredith, and with the mystic feeling of the eternal guardianship of the world is a sort of evening reverie and gives the reader the anticipation of a romance rich in sentiment. The picturesque and harmonious setting emphasizes

by contrast, however, the tragedy of their meeting, his confession, and her consequent rejection of him. Again the aspect of nature is blended into the tragic feeling as the owl flies viciously at Isabel when she picks up her shawl, and the sinking of the moon leaves everything in a pall of darkness, symbolic of her mood.

In her appearance Isabel bears all the evidence of noble descent with her beauty and perfection of features, her bearing, and her honesty of soul. Her own high standards lead her to condemn Rowan as a man would condemn a woman under like circumstances. Her ideal of him is so completely shattered that in a later scene where she bids him farewell, she is most harsh and cruel in her bitterness toward him. Yet her recoil is no less intense than her affection had been.

Rowan, the hero, is not a conspicuous figure in the story. One critic calls him a principle rather than a personality.(1) He is a product of his inheritance, which in his case meant a clashing of elements within him. His father's line was composed of ministers, lawyers, theological professors, narrow-minded, strong-minded, upright, unbending. His mother's line was different--congressmen, soldiers, country gentlemen, sowing their wild oats early, men with large open frailties, but without crime or cowardice. Perhaps the most tragic scene

(1) Independent, 55:1808-10.

of the whole story is Rowan's study of those ancestors one midnight. There torn by remorse, he attempts to place the responsibility for his sin and comes to the bitter realization that he must accept his share of it. The better side of his nature is usually dominant. His very confession to Isabel of his past is a proof of his high sense of honor and fair dealing.

Though Allen presents his problem with power and skill, he seems to reach no real solution. Isabel finds girls everywhere sacrificing their ideals for the sake of their love, and influenced by this discovery she returns not through duty but love. Mercy rather than justice seems to be the author's solution, if he has one, and it is at least characteristic of his sympathy for the weak. This seems to be the only possible optimistic conclusion, but even it can be considered so only in Rowan's finding satisfaction through the life and happiness of his son--a forward looking conclusion in keeping with Allen's conception of life and man's part in it. There is genuine pathos, though not quite tragedy, in his last words: "I'm tired of it all. I want rest. Love has been more cruel to me than death."

Among the other characters who are of interest is Mrs. Conyers, Isabel's grandmother, whom Allen draws most vividly by the use of parallelism in nature. In her he sees the liveness to a beast of the jungle: "She awoke--uncoiling her

figure--stretched like some drowsy feline of the jungle--sitting up with lithe grace, deftly smoothed out the print of her pillow.....The action was characteristic; she was careful to hide the traces of her behavior, and the habit was so strong that it extended to things as innocent as slumber." The reader has the feeling, however, of an overplay of details.

Then there are Rowan's mother, an ideal of her place and time, who is anxious to see Rowan become "lord of the manor"; Dent, his brother, one of those grave mental workers whose heritage never disturbs him; Pansy, of plain farm folk, to whom Dent is engaged. Harriet Crane, the daughter of Mrs. Conyers, whose failure to marry was almost unforgivable from her mother's viewpoint, is a weak, clinging creature who unloads all her troubles on good-natured Anna Hardage. Anna lives with her brother, the professor, who is in love with his books, with people, and with nature. To him Anna is the "Madonna of the Dishes" and the "Madonna of the Motherless". Some humor is brought into the story in the character of Ambrose Webb and his attentions to Anna and Harriet, the latter of whom he marries.

The finest of all the characters of the book, however, outside of the hero and heroine is the genial, old southern gentleman, Judge Morris. In many ways his attitudes and

habits are those of the author. Though the Judge has missed in his own life some of the greatest joys, he has preserved an appreciative, generous, hopeful spirit. He is kindly toward everyone and especially sympathetic toward youth. His habits of reflection have led him to ponder much over the discrepancies of man's life. As a lawyer he has made it a practice to defend cases only, because he feels that the accused is never the only criminal.

It is through the Judge that the author puts forth his wish that America might become famous for some virtue, such as truthfulness, and that this might be the mettle of the American's pasture. Rowan's confession is a step in that direction, though it did not bring to him the happiness he had anticipated. His punishment was an inevitable result of his own acts and those of his ancestors. Yet through his recognition of the laws of life and his effort to atone, he lifts the moral standards of man a little. In this Allen indicates his idealism, which is kept from pure fancy by stern realism, and his belief in evolutionary theories as applied to things of the spirit.

CHAPTER VII

Later Works

Allen's later writings reveal a decline in his art. For the most part they lack the substance and the significance of his long novels and the charm and spontaneity of his earlier works. They are entertaining for the time and are more varied in character, but they have not the distinction of his former work. In style they are more self-conscious and artificial, and while some are lighter in tone, others are shrouded in a misty symbolism.

In none of Allen's work did he carry this symbolism to the extreme that he did in an ambitious trilogy which engaged his attention for some years following the appearance of The Mettle of the Pasture. No other of his writings has called forth the bitter criticism that the two completed volumes of the series have, nor the varied interpretations of the meaning hidden beneath the symbolism. No one seems to know what the author really meant. Here again he deals with elemental motives, and again he relates his characters to their racial history. The books are evidences of his scientific study, and his pondering over life's problems and mysteries, especially questions of sex, becomes almost an obsession with him here; if ever he tends to grow morbid it would seem to be in these volumes.

The first volume of the trilogy, The Bride of the Mistletoe, appeared in 1909. In his preface Allen stated that it was not a novel. Indeed it seems more like the climax of a story with the details of plot left to be filled in by the reader. The setting is Kentucky, and the loveliness of scenery adds much to the beauty of the book. The poetic fancy of the author is strangely mingled with evolutionary theories of human life in his Sea and Forest Memories. The story itself is told largely through the symbolism of the Christmas tree, which with all its various decorations has specific significance in the Ancient Forest Memories of the race.

The second part, The Doctor's Christmas Eve (1910), is less mysterious and mystical than The Bride of the Mistletoe, but it is also less artistic in imaginative beauty. Here the doctor's love for the wife of his friend not only means an unhappy spiritual relation in the home but it brings even a deeper tragedy in the gradual dawning in the mind of the little son of the real situation. It is through the son that much of the tragic significance of the book is revealed. The four children of the story are exceedingly sophisticated and talk like adults. This book was to have been followed by a third, The Christmas Tree: An Interpretation, but it was never written, probably because of the severity of the criticism of these two parts.

Allen wrote no more novels; from now on his work consisted

of long and short stories and fantasies, most of them appearing first in magazines. The Heroine in Bronze (1912) is one of the longest of his later fiction and perhaps the most pleasing. It is like A Kentucky Cardinal in its autobiographical suggestion, though it lacks the delightful warmth and spontaneity of the earlier work. Its story of a young novelist who left the Kentucky blue grass region and came to New York City to begin his career, with his hardships, his determination to succeed, his interest in human nature, sounds much like Allen's own experience. Likewise, his love for nature is typical. "Often," he says, "as I looked at the solid blocks of houses, I twisted and writhed to get loose with sun and air and space for life, growth, independence." Or again, "I carried with me a pair of eyes which alighted gladly upon any verdure," even the boughs in the florist's window bringing "torturing memories of the native woods."

In this book Allen has got away largely from the scientific viewpoint of his major novels and has taken more strictly the novelist's art as his chief concern. The plot is very simple, involving two lovers whose happiness is marred by a misunderstanding. The chief interest centers in the young author's problem of pleasing his sweetheart or holding to his ideals as a writer, which would mean an arraignment of her conduct toward him and a possible separation. He remains true to

his art, and a happy ending is consummated through her change from a seemingly exacting, pitiless creature to one who shares his high ideals of a novelist's mission. The bronze statuette has a significance as a source of inspiration to the novelist, since it is a symbol to him of the ideal woman he believes his sweetheart to be.

The book is reflective of the author's love for the beautiful and the rare. There is also evident his love for the colors, white and silver, noticeable in all his writings and especially here. "She looked all white and silver as though the mists of night had just unrolled themselves from her." And again he says, "About her fell vestments of the softness and tint of woven ivory." The reader is less interested in the mere story than he is in the dainty and graceful style and in the charm of pastoral quality suggested in the nature touches even in the city.

The Last Christmas Tree (1914) is a slight fantasy presenting some of Allen's meditations on immortality. As such it is an expression of his faith, not exultant, but at least containing an optimistic note, as suggested in the dedication: "To those who know they have no solution for the universe yet hope for the best and live for it." The question of life after death, he says, has always been one of the greatest, and never more of a problem than now when we know so much about other things. Life implies warmth, and he likens everything

to candles--we human beings laughing and tear-dripping candles, descending swiftly to our sockets; and sun and stars whirling golden candles in the long, long night of the universe. "Beyond will have to be some kind of day, endless day." Man has always believed, continues Allen, that "after the last star has gone out in the night of Nature, the orb of his soul will have but begun to flash the immortality of its dawn."

With this as an introduction he then represents two fir trees, the last of the race of living things, surrounded by a world of white, discussing the earth and its former inhabitants. To all their questions comes the one answer--mystery. Finally the concluding speech of the solitary fir, the other now being covered with snow, shows not only faith but a willingness to accept the mystery: "I then close the train of earthly things.... Power, that put forth all things for a purpose, you have fulfilled, without explaining it, that purpose. I follow all things into their sleep." The whole is a highly fanciful prose-poem, revealing the author's power of imagination and his skillful use of language. The reader feels the intense whiteness, the stillness of the ocean, whose voice is hushed with all others, the slow, bitter, wind, the eternal silence.

The Sword of Youth (1915) is a story of the Civil War with an atmosphere of sentimental romance. The plot with its few dramatic incidents is only slight. The chief interest centers

in the mental conflict of the youth, Joseph Sumner, in his duty to his mother, a hard, embittered woman who almost scorns him because of his undersize and his seeming lack of heroic qualities, and what he regards as a higher duty to his country. Though he leaves her in anger he returns at the probable cost of both life and honor on account of her dying request to see him. Interwoven with this rather grim situation is an idyllic love story which lends brightness and some sentimentality. It reveals also the youth's high sense of honor in his refusal to accept any favor from his sweetheart until his honor had been fully vindicated. The artistic touches through the beauty of landscape add to the emotional element. The sentimental tone and the conscious workmanship of the author, however, prevent the book from taking a place by the side of the earlier works.

In The Cathedral Singer (1916) Allen treats the universal theme of a mother's love and self-sacrifice. The heroine, a southern lady of beauty and refinement, arouses the reader's sympathy at once with her shy, reticent manner as she offers herself for a model at the art school. The plot is very slight, but the scenes are tense and full of suspense and emotion, some perhaps too effusive. The story is full of the author's idealism. It is manifest in his comments on the music master whose work is to "rebuild for the world that ever-sinking bridge of sound over which Faith aids itself in walking toward

the eternal." It is evident also in the resignation of the mother over the loss of her child which changes the look of tenderness of the earth in her face to that of the expectation of eternity. Thus the author would suggest something even finer than happiness as a conclusion.

The Kentucky Warbler(1918) is a study in adolescence, an attempt to set forth the gropings of a boy's mind and spirit, and the awakening through an interest in nature. It is not a humorous treatment as Tarkington's Seventeen; indeed there is little humor except in a few feeble attempts at a play on words. It is rather a serious sketch, somewhat on the order of a parable, in which a youth, out of harmony with home and school and rebellious against the circumstances of life into which he feels that he is forced, is roused to an interest in nature and life and to an ambition to do something worth while through a lecture on the great ornithologist, Wilson. If the reader is expecting the charm and delight of A Kentucky Cardinal, he will be disappointed. Yet there is a simplicity in style, unusual for Allen in his later years, a sincere love for nature, and an earnestness of purpose.

The Emblems of Fidelity (1919) represents Allen in his most whimsical mood. Its sub-title, A Comedy in Letters, suggests both its character and its form. It is the author's one story in which the humor depends not merely on sly interspersions and touches here and there, but on the situation

itself. In it Allen makes use of an old form--that of letters, yet he does it with more than usual skill. The plot, though simple, is cleverly conceived and is based on the request of an eminent English novelist that a young American writer send him ferns which he had described in one of his novels. This simple request leads to serious entanglements involving the American novelist and his lawyer friend, and "loyal" Polly Boles and Tillie Snowden, who hestitates to marry because she resents the idea that "woman must be doomed to find her chief happiness in just one!" Though the difficulty between the novelists is straightened out to the satisfaction of both, the love tangle fails of solution, Nevertheless, the author concludes with the idea that after all, even in their irony, the ferns have been "emblems of Fidelity."

The story is characteristic of Allen in his observations on humanity. There is the "cocksure" lawyer, the spurious daughter of the Southland, the gossip, the "modern" woman. It contains also much mild sarcasm directed against the literary profession, though doubtless even in the egotism of the young American's words is hidden Allen's conception of his ideal as an author, "the shining thought that my life is destined to be more than mine, that my work will make its way into other minds and mingle with the better, happier impulses of other lives."

The Alabaster Box (1923) is a brief allegorical sketch

suggestive of the character of a kindly old southern gentleman. It is made up largely of the comments of the various people of the town as they follow the body of their fellow-townsman to his grave. Most of them are unfeeling and indifferent toward the dead, whose goodness seems to have been considered by many a sham and whose family were bored by it. Only a few appreciate his real worth and express it. Among them are two old comrades, one of whom sees in him the last of the old spirit of the old South and the other the spirit of older America. In either case he lived too late to be understood. His real character is perhaps best revealed in the last part in the description of his attitude toward his physician.

At the time of his death Allen was at work on a collection of stories which were later published under the title, The Landmark (1925). He was planning an autobiographical preface and an introduction discussing the short story, both of which were left as mere fragments. The latter is significant in suggesting the change in his attitude toward the use of background. In this he regrets the emphasis American writers and critics place on definite American background, and, though he still feels there is a place for that type of story, he believes that the short story that has a background of human nature only is a higher form of art.

Following such a discussion, one would expect to find stories with little background, and this is true for the most

part. The Landmark, the title story and the last written by Allen, is curiously local, however, both in time and setting; yet in the father and son the author seems to see not only a Kentucky father and son but youth in the thick of its mortal conflict with its passions and weaknesses and the temptations of life and father trying to accomplish a timeless, world-wide thing, to save a son from life's unworthiness. The Ash-Can has little of the element of the story, but is more the expression of the author's views on sharing one's troubles with other people. The theme in The Violet is jealousy and passion and the setting is Russian. Miss Locke is peculiar in that the slight basis upon which the plot is founded is a mere abstraction. A young man falls in love with the imagined personality of a lady whom he believes Miss Locke is imitating. This imagined personality is no less than Miss Locke's ideal of herself. La Tendresse, a brief fantasy in dramatic form, is a fitting conclusion to Allen's last volume since it is a return in thought to the characters of his best loved work, A Kentucky Cardinal and Aftermath. It represents Georgiana at the gathering place of those who have ceased to live on earth, no longer elusive, but waiting and longing for the coming of Adam Moss. Though highly fanciful, it is full of a plaintive, tender wistfulness and yearning, reminiscent of the former work.

Through these last works there runs a note of sadness. Though a melancholy strain is characteristic of all of Allen's writings, suggested even in A Kentucky Cardinal, perhaps his most joyous work, yet in his later fiction this sadness is not counterbalanced by that spontaneous geniality of his earlier works. Where humor is present it is more artificial. This note of sadness might be interpreted as merely the growing seriousness of advancing age. It might, however, be construed as a sense of failure on the part of the author. His inability to reach the standard he had himself set in his earlier writing and to attain to the classic height his early critics had predicted for him doubtless brought him disappointment. His characteristic determination would not permit him to give up, however. His use of more varied forms, as the novel in letters, the fantasy, the allegory, free verse, or the more conventional plot, all may be something of a concession on his part to the favor of the reading public. Perhaps his disappointment is suggested in the brief travesty, Heaven's Little Ironies,(1) with its mild sarcasm in the unhappiness of the heavenly spirit over his failure to produce the Great American Novel. Yet these last works have a measure of worth in them and show a certain versatility, though they lack the distinctiveness of his former work.

(1) Bookman, 51:616-19.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

Allen was not a voluminous writer. He averaged little more than a book in two years and some of his books were very short. His method of slow, careful revision and painstaking care did not permit of a great quantity of work; he was more concerned with its quality. He had a high, almost sacred conception of his art, and as a result his work even from the first published volumes is not amateurish or immature, but always of a high quality.

His early works met with decided favor at the hands of the critics. Almost without exception they praised Flute and Violin, A Kentucky Cardinal, and Aftermath. They looked on these as pointing toward the classic and predicted a promising career for Allen. Beginning with Summer in Arcady, however, the unanimity of praise ceased. His critics failed to agree on his major novels, some seeing nothing but beauty and strength, others pointing out weaknesses in structure as well as in thought. Yet on the whole, the general impression was still more favorable than otherwise. Of his later works the reviews were most conflicting. Though Allen's admirers still found delight in his writing both in beauty of thought and in expression, many of his critics found a misty symbolism,

a tendency toward sentimentalism, and a general failure to meet the standard he had set for himself in his earlier work.

As a representative author of American literature his most outstanding qualities are his romanticism, his idealistic attitude toward life, and his distinction as a stylist. As a romancer he made use of the alluring charms of Kentucky life and scenery. He made his reader feel their fascination and beauty. Over the "feudal South" he cast the glamor of romantic color and used traditional and historical background with effectiveness. His idealistic view of life forms a marked contrast to the realism of the materialistic age in which he lived, and investing all his work is an abiding spiritual quality which remains with the reader long after the events of the story are forgotten. He has few so-called happy endings; yet he finds compensation and hope in the suffering and self-sacrifice of the individual. He has a broad sympathy for humanity, especially for its weaknesses, and a wholesome attitude toward life which give his work a certain ethical value.

As a literary artist he holds a secure place. The exquisite finish of his works, their beauty of diction, melody of sentence, their artistic imagery and poetic delicacy delight his readers. Allen's was a most skillful craftsmanship, a consciously but thoroughly learned art. His use of nature with his deep understanding of its laws and forces and his appreciation of its beauties gives him a unique place

among American authors. Through it also he reaches many readers who have a kindred feeling for the fascination of the out-of-doors.

Like many other authors his best work was his earliest, before he had reached his most self-conscious stage. Here there is abundant spontaneity, freshness, charm, and beauty, combined with perfection of style and purity of sentiment. For such it is that A Kentucky Cardinal, Aftermath, and Flute and Violin will continue to be read when his later works have been long forgotten. Likewise his strongest novel, The Choir Invisible, and perhaps The Mettle of the Pasture and The Reign of Law, will hold a place as expressive of his philosophy. Thus in the best of his work he made a contribution to American literature of permanent worth. He represents a period of sweetness and repose in our literary development, says The Bookman in commenting on his death, of which we may well be proud and which we shall remember with kindliness and a measure of pride.(1)

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