

INITIAL STUDIES IN AMERICAN LETTERS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649171200

Initial studies in American letters by Henry A. Beers

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

HENRY A. BEERS

**INITIAL STUDIES IN
AMERICAN LETTERS**

INITIAL STUDIES

IN

AMERICAN LETTERS

BY

HENRY A. BEERS



NEW YORK
CHAUTAUQUA PRESS
C. L. S. C. Department, 150 Fifth Avenue
1891

The required books of the C. L. S. C. are recommended by a Council of Six. It must, however, be understood that recommendation does not involve an approval by the Council, or by any member of it, of every principle or doctrine contained in the book recommended.

913
B42
1891

P R E F A C E.

This volume is intended as a companion to the historical sketch of English literature, entitled *From Chaucer to Tennyson*, published last year for the Chautauqua Circle. In writing it I have followed the same plan, aiming to present the subject in a sort of continuous essay rather than in the form of a "primer" or elementary manual. I have not undertaken to describe, or even to mention, every American author or book of importance, but only those which seemed to me of most significance. Nevertheless I believe that the sketch contains enough detail to make it of some use as a guide-book to our literature. Though meant to be mainly a history of American *belles-lettres*, it makes some mention of historical and political writings, but hardly any of philosophical, scientific, and technical works.

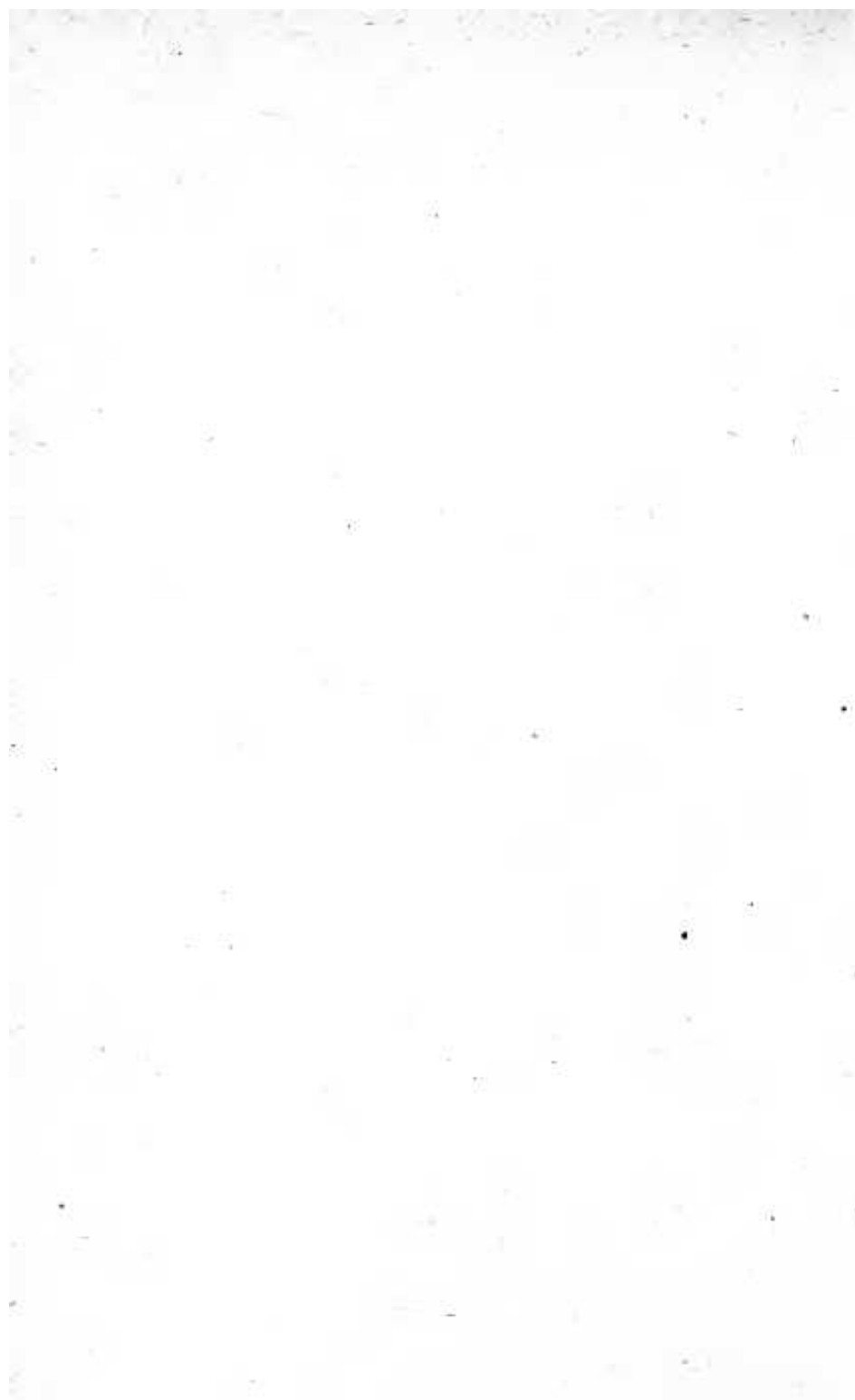
A chronological rather than a topical order has been followed, although the fact that our best literature is of recent growth has made it impossible to adhere as closely to a chronological plan as in the English sketch. In the reading courses appended to the different chapters I have named a few of the most important authorities in American literary history, such as Daykinck, Tyler, Stedman, and Richardson. My thanks are due to the authors and publishers who have kindly allowed me the use of copyrighted matter for the

appendix; especially to Mr. Park Godwin and Messrs. D. Appleton & Co. for the passages from Bryant; to Messrs. A. C. Armstrong & Son for the selections from Poe; to the Rev. E. E. Hale and Messrs. Roberts Brothers for the extract from *The Man Without a Country*; to Walt Whitman for his two poems; and to Mr. Clemens and the American Publishing Co. for the passage from *The Jumping Frog*.

HENRY A. BEERS.

CONTENTS.

	PAGE
CHAPTER I.	
THE COLONIAL PERIOD, 1607-1765.....	9
CHAPTER II.	
THE REVOLUTIONARY PERIOD, 1765-1815.....	42
CHAPTER III.	
THE ERA OF NATIONAL EXPANSION, 1815-1837.....	68
CHAPTER IV.	
THE CONCORD WRITERS, 1837-1861.....	93
CHAPTER V.	
THE CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS, 1837-1861.....	121
CHAPTER VI.	
LITERATURE IN THE CITIES, 1837-1861.....	151
CHAPTER VII.	
LITERATURE SINCE 1861.....	182
APPENDIX.....	213



INITIAL STUDIES
IN
AMERICAN LETTERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE COLONIAL PERIOD.

1607-1765

THE writings of our colonial era have a much greater importance as history than as literature. It would be unfair to judge of the intellectual vigor of the English colonists in America by the books that they wrote; those "stern men with empires in their brains" had more pressing work to do than the making of books. The first settlers, indeed, were brought face to face with strange and exciting conditions—the sea, the wilderness, the Indians, the flora and fauna of a new world—things which seem stimulating to the imagination, and incidents and experiences which might have lent themselves easily to poetry or romance. Of all these they wrote back to England reports which were faithful and sometimes vivid, but which, upon the whole, hardly rise into the region of literature. "New England," said Hawthorne, "was then in a state incomparably more picturesque than at present." But to a contemporary that old New England of the seventeenth century doubtless seemed any thing but picturesque, filled with grim, hard, work-day realities. The planters both of Virginia and Massachusetts were decimated by sickness and starvation, constantly threatened by Indian wars, and troubled by quarrels among themselves and fears