

writers of those books are almost all living, I abstain from alluding particularly to any of them. Those have been (with a few honourable exceptions) our first efforts, and yet the colonial spirit which has borne so long upon us, is not quite extinguished. We have still to prove to foreigners that we are in every respect an independent people.

It is not only unjust; it is cruel, in the traveller of whom I have been speaking, to ascribe the little progress that our literature has made in twenty years, compared with that of Great Britain in three centuries, to the want of *mental powers*, and to stigmatize us as a degenerate race. He turns our libraries into ridicule, because they are not so large as those which have been for ages collecting in Europe. "If a man," says he, "were to read all the books that exist within the limits of the United States, there could not be enough to make him a truly learned man." This is bitter sarcasm; but I would hardly take any notice of it, if it were not connected with the object of our institution. Permit me, therefore, to say a few words upon this subject.

That our public libraries are not to be compared with those of Europe for the number of books that they contain, is what cannot be denied. At the same time it is right that I should say that any one who will take the trouble to cast his eye over our catalogues, will convince himself that their contents are well chosen. It is true that we do not possess all that useless multitude of books with which the great European libraries are encumbered. We do not possess that immense number of volumes of polemic divinity which during so many centuries deluged Europe with blood, nor the enormous mass of commentaries on the civil law that appeared after the discovery of the Pandects at Amalfi. Our libraries do not contain the controversial writings between the nominalists and realists, the Scottists and the Thomists, at one period, and the Jansenists and Molinists at another. We have enough of our own *ists*, about whom the Europeans care as little as we do about theirs. I admit that we have not sixty or a hundred editions of the same work; that we do not abound in Aldis and in Elzeviers; that our collections of the *Cinquecentisti* are not considerable, and that we have but few of those manuscript missals, rituals, Homilies and Theological works with-

