

THE ENGLISH REVIEW

To ask a single question on the broadest lines was to court silence; in fact, it became the most useful method in my daily life and conversation.

The national American game is Poker; and as "calling," in artistic Jack-pots, costs nothing, it is a safe rule never to lay down your hand.

It is the same even with children. I once talked with a boy of thirteen years old, as bright and intelligent as I ever met. He knew no Latin or any modern language; he did not know where Berlin was; he knew the names of only eight of the States in his own country, although he was getting "a quarter" for every one he could name; he knew no arithmetic beyond the first four rules, and those he knew badly; his history was confined to George Washington and James G. Blaine, to the exclusion of such insignificant characters as Napoleon; and his other mental bunkers were equally empty of coal. He had excellent machinery; nothing for it to work with.

Now, one might expect a boy of this type—a type almost universal in America—to develop into an artist. He lived in Salt Lake City, but spent most of his year in California and Honolulu. Having nothing else to feed on, one would expect him to feed on his surroundings; and I cannot conceive of anything much more sublime. The Mormon adventure is one of the most romantic in the world's history; the ghastly grandeur of Utah is an epitome of death as Oahu and the Golden Gate are of life. The finest island in the world; the third finest harbour in the world; the most wonderful valley in the world; and the most admirable climate in the world; one of the most intoxicatingly varied populations in the world—what comes of it?

What do we know of the whole splendour of the people and the place? Just exactly what Robert Louis Stevenson has to tell us: "only that and nothing more!"*

This brings me back with a jerk to Edgar Allan Poe. He lives in a land whose every breath is lyric exaltation, and the only nature-poetry he gives us concerns Venice (in the "Assignment") and "the dark lake of Auber in the ghoul-haunted woodland of Weir," which is no more

* Lloyd Osbourne, however, is responsible for much of the best of my favourite novel *The Wrecker*.