

WE AND OUR NEIGHBORS

The new type that the Century company has been using has excited much comment among people who read and make books. Theodore L. De Vinne in the March Century has the following to say of the quotation marks the company has adopted. "The so called new quotation marks are not at all new. They may be noticed, in almost the same form as they now appear in this magazine, in the books of those excellent printers, the Didots of Paris, at the close of the last century, and they have ever since been used by all French printers. When British publishers decided to use quotation-marks their type-founders had no characters for the purpose, and did not make them. Whether this refusal was due to the unwillingness of the British printer to pay for a new character, or to the prevalent dislike of everything French, cannot be decided; all we know is that they decided to imitate them with the unfit characters in stock. These characters were two inverted commas and two conjoined apostrophes — characters never intended, and not at all fitted, for the purpose. Imperfect as they were, habit has kept them in use for about a century. There are serious mechanical objections to these makeshift devices. The apostrophes and commas are not mates; the apostrophes at the end of the quotation are thinner and closer to-

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gether than the commas at its beginning; the round bodies of these marks are not in line,—low at the beginning and high at the end,—putting them askew in an unsightly manner. They are the only characters in ordinary use that are thrust up at the top of the line. It follows that they leave an ungainly blotch of white below, and so produce an appearance of uneven and unworkmanlike spacing. For this reason, if for no other, the form should be altered. The German method of marking quotations with special characters is but a trifle more uncouth, viz: „ “. The simplicity of the French quotes have led to their general adoption in Spain and Italy; their adoption by American and English printers is only a question of time."

The March Century contains an unusual number of plums. "On the Track of the Arkansas Traveler," is an inquiry into the origin of that song and dance and dialogue, with the result that scholars reach who try to discover the author of the Homeric tales. "Sometime about the year 1850 the American musical myth, known as "The Arkansas Traveler" came into vogue among fiddlers. It is a quick reel tune, with a backwoods story talked to it while played, that caught the ear at the side shows and circuses and sounded over the trodden turf of fair grounds. Bands and foreign-bred musicians were above noticing it, but the people loved it and kept time to it." I know of no other reel and dialogue with the music and words on the same body. It is more American than "Yankee Doodle." It smells of western soil as moist earth just turned by the spade. "When we seek to trace back the legend to its own country a surprise is in store for us. To learn from certain authorities in Kansas that the myth is discountenanced there by a strong state feeling argues ill for our enterprise; and it throws an unexpected seriousness over the situation to be told that the dialogue at the cabin is "a misrepresentation and a slur," and that the hero of the story has "checked

immigration" and done "incalculable injury to the state." To get at the bottom of the matter involves a discussion as to what induces settlers to settle, what people generally do with their ballads and myths, and what the Californian meant who recently declared that the demise of Bret Harte would be an event of the highest possible advantage to California." The western states are children of a large growth. They have wits, enterprise, ingenuity and some money. They have not age, and nothing but age will ripen knowledge into culture. Hence there is no use denying that yesterday we were pioneers and started a folk lore that will confront the children of yesterday when they claim a savant pedigree. "Tom Grogan," by F. Hopkinson Smith, is concluded in this number. It is a story of village politics and street contracts and the dominant Irish pull, the same thing whether in New York city or in a village microcosm. Mr. Smith's style is familiar to everyone. Anything he writes and illustrates is sure of readers. In "Colonel Carter of Cartersville" he is the American Du Maurier of good fellowship and camaraderie. "Colonel Carter," whose hand, heart and house were never shut to his friends, has done much in the way of introducing the north to the south. A sympathetic medium is all they need and with F. Hopkinson Smith and railroads terminating in southern export depots the two parts of the country seem to be on the point of acquiring it. "Tom Grogan," the contractor is a woman who takes her husband's name when he dies and figures and hauls and builds as he did. Her work is honest and "the union" conspires to drive her out of competition with it. When various methods, such as proposing marriage and intimidation fail, emissaries of "the union" set fire to her barn, and finally beat "Tom Grogan" herself on the head till they suppose her dead. It is hard to beat the sense out of an Irish head and Tom rises up, confronts her enemies and secures the contract they want. The best of men are not fair to a woman in the same business. Education has mitigated man's cruelty but not destroyed it. When the laboring classes encounter a feminine opponent shrewder, and abler than they are the men combine against her and no weapon is too primitive, no means too cowardly to use against her. A writer's sympathies must be broad and quick and in the case of Mr. Smith they are enough so to have overcome his blind masculinity. "Tom Grogan" is an Irish Joan of Arc as pure, as heroic, as faithful as she. The other stories are of slight importance. The sketch of John Randolph of Roanoke and of the Elder Dumas are interesting and in the best biographical style.

Speaking of optimism and its medicinal effect on all who must live or commit suicide La Revue of Paris prints for the first time a statement from "George Sands" when she was seventy-one years old concerning her views of novel writing and her views of life in general. "Though she was looking forward to death at the time, it expresses only the most cheerful sentiments, for there was a stubbornness about her optimism as about her idealism. She has been charged with idealizing her personages. Well, she meant them to be as they are, and—which is not the same thing—she saw them so, and often met people like them in the world. But if she had only met one such noble personage, that same would have been real, and she would be within her rights in depicting him. She is aware the present temper of the world

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