

THE COURIER

LINCOLN, NEB., SATURDAY, MAY 15, 1897.



ENTERED IN THE POST OFFICE AT LINCOLN AS SECOND-CLASS MATTER

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

THE COURIER PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO.

Office 1132 N street, Up Stairs.

Telephone 384.

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Subscription Rates—In Advance.

Per annum.....	\$2 00
Six months.....	1 00
Three months.....	50
One month.....	20
Single copies.....	05

OBSERVATIONS.

On another page of this issue of THE COURIER, readers of the paper will find an article on Nebraska birds by Mr. August Eiche. From his childhood Mr. Eiche has made the study of birds his recreation. He knows the habits of the different species, their nesting time, the architectural characteristics of their nests, the calls to their mates, to signal danger or food found or of pure lyrical gladness. As a boy, he crawled on his hands and knees through the underbrush, or stole with red Indian instinct to a place of hiding to learn the secrets of the birds. Since he became a man, no other pursuit has charmed him from that which claimed the whole attention of the boy. His valuable collection of game birds has but just been removed from a store window, where they have been on exhibition for several weeks. For he is an expert taxidermist. He has a valuable collection of birds, most of them natives of Nebraska. Without striving for it, and without caring for it, Mr. Eiche has become an authority on Nebraska birds, their habits, diet, plumage in honeymoon season and at other times, their haunts and hejiras, their enemies and their friends. He has promised THE COURIER a series of articles on Nebraska birds, beginning with the common ones we see every day and ending with the rare visitors from the south who leave before the first frost and do not arrive till the tulips and crocuses have gone to seed. Mr. Eiche has the patience and zeal of a born natural-

ist. All the days of his life he has watched the birds. In spite of themselves he has caught them off their guard, without the manners that even birds put on "before folks." His bird stories from first hand have the charm of the returned traveler from unknown lands. He moves in a most exclusive circle. To get in which takes time, that we have not, birth-gift, that we have not, scholarly patience, that we have not. All this summer when the boarders are here Mr. Eiche can tell us of their history, their tricks and manners and it will be very much worth our while to listen.

The requests for free advertising of one kind and another, which publishers of papers are constantly receiving, is discouraging to the dealer in news, publicity or fame, who has only that one commodity to sell and can not make up his gift of space by an overcharge in some other department. Yet all subscribers to a newspaper feel that the publishers of the paper they consent to "take" should write a flattering notice of whatever event occurs in their business—for nothing. Whether it is an opening, a banquet, a handsome display in the windows or a church fair or concert, the givers and committee want a write up for nothing. When the publishers explain that the road to which the something-for-nothing finger points, leads to penury and want, the old subscriber or advertiser goes away with convictions of the publisher's miserliness to which his christian training does not prevent from whispering to the town. Daily requests for free advertising come through the mails—they would reach their destination, the waste basket, no quicker if they were directed—waste basket, south side desk, etc. But because they are persistent and from all points of the compass they mean that the public considers a newspaper as much its legitimate prey as a railroad or anything which has once given its valuable wares away. This mistaken means of making and keeping friends, once used, thereafter there is nothing but vexation on one side and enmity and jealousy on the other. There is no reason why, if write ups are wanted from a business point of view they should not be paid for as much as any other commodity. If editor's had the courage of their rights in this respect, instead of being characterized by a timidity which makes them the football of rival tradesmen, their bearing would have the bluff pride of the butcher, the "merchant prince" or the "carriage repository" man. Newspaper notoriety is said to be cheap. It is. Too cheap. But the latest quotations of notoriety are two points higher. There is reasonable hope that the debonaire gait of a hardware dealer may be not unworthily imitated, in the near future, as the essayists remark, by the heretofore abused newspaper man.

"Marm Lisa," by Kate Douglas Wiggin, is a story of a "settlement" of pretty young women of unearthly and incomprehensive goodness. They have established a free kindergarten in a ward of the city deserted by everybody who can afford to live elsewhere. The children of the poor worship mistress Mary—the unworldly one, as good catholics worship Mary the blessed one. She trains them to ways of neatness, purity and love as weak stemmed plants are trained to sturdy uprightness by use of a straight stick, sunshine and plenty of water. As a story the book is lacking in form and composition. Miss Wiggins' purpose was probably not story making or she would have more nearly accomplished her aim. The last one hundred pages is an undisguised effort to teach charity and the fate and development of "Marm Lisa," in whom Miss Wiggin has very unfairly interested us, is made to give way to the boarding school misses who assist Mistress Mary in her kindergarten work. The part of the book that records the workings of Marm Lisa's clouded mind and the intelligent efforts of the teachers to remove the clouds are of psychological interest, but, as I said, at the last, poor Marm Lisa, scarcely gets into the book at all. Therefore it should have been entitled, "Mistress Mary," "Free Kindergartens" or some generic title. *Les enfants terribles*, those diabolical twins, confirm the worst opinions enemies of children already hold concerning them. And in this respect the didactic purpose of the book, defeats itself. For who can love an organism with a large mouth for gorging and belching functions with two small cruel hands at the end of infant Hercules' arms, used principally for scratching, striking and grabbing, with two feet to run away with and kick when caught? Of course such examples of viciousness are rare, but one or two specimens of this kind is enough to prejudice the race against all juvenility. In introducing *ces enfants* into the pathetic tale of Marm Lisa, Miss Wiggins has succeeded in emphasizing the patience and love of her Hull House sisters of mercy, besides reviving the almost forgotten doctrine of original sin. Miss Wiggins' admirers think she can do almost anything in the way of story writing, and the critics think so too. But in this case, as I have said, she probably was not trying to write a story.

Interest in athletics in Lincoln is torpid, if not dead, though bicycling has arrived to a certain extent, the desire for pleasureable exertion in open air, which a summer or two ago was entirely satisfied in watching eighteen fans expend their blows on the circumambient air and by the lung exercise which was considered essential to the proper encouragement of a professional baseball

club, personal exertion has no pleasures. As for the amateur sport possible in a waterless plain, for instance, tennis, golf, cricket and football, outside of the university students, who are the only leisure class we of the west have the honor to know, there is very little interest in sports. The tennis club has a fine court and the club, among its members, numbers some very skillful players, but with the same material in another place there would be a waiting list of most respectable length. The apathy on athletic subjects is probably due to the swiftness and the exigencies of the race for money. To pay the rent and get three meals a day in 1895, 1896 and 1897 apparently took all the muscle and brain endowment a man or woman had. Apparently, because exercise in the open air for the sake of amusement and in congenial rivalry with friends, increases a man's earning capacity. He makes money, saves time, and staves off many a case of nervous prostration. New York society deserts ball room and auditorium for the country houses, hunting and all kinds of field sports, early in the spring. The society papers are filled with complaints that "everybody" is out of town, that there is nothing going on, that is, not in the city. But the country houses are full of sunbrowned and windblown belles and beaux, who have discovered at last that there is nothing better than the sun, the grass, brooks with fish in them and woods full of squirrel, with a sprinkling of fox. Here in the west where a horse can carry a rider for miles without feeling it, so easy are the grades, a party of equestrians would be considered part of a wild west show or a detached portion of a circus, while a man with golf stockings or riding gaiters is regarded as a hopeless and unmitigated top. Such sentiments do credit to our work-a-day life, and the costume of it, if not to our cosmopolitanism. A little sweetness and light in the form of athletics mixed with the essential ugliness of money getting and money making would keep Nebraskans young. The mad race, not for wealth, but for a living, is making bald heads and wrinkles faster than Xanttipian wives and a real lack of poetry in the daily lives. In Omaha now one of its citizens, Mr. Robert Patrick, has appreciated the fountain of youth properties of golf and has constructed a course of four miles on his demesne which he has invited players of all colors to use when not occupied by a club of twenty which he has organized and which meets on certain specified days. On the prairie that ripples and rolls on every side of Lincoln, golf links might be secured at small expense that would rival in point of excellence, those of Lenox. If a few of the bank presidents and cashiers whose heads are just beginning to