

RANDOM NOTES.

I observe from THE COURIER of May 8 that my whilom friend, Miss Fairbrother, is not disposed to cease those polite attentions that I learned to look forward to with genuine interest when I was in Nebraska. That she should remember me in the purlieus of New York is a kindness unexpected even from such a source. That she should seek to fasten on me the responsibility of "shaping the editorial policy of THE COURIER" is a compliment that would be most acceptable if it were in any wise merited. As the editor of THE COURIER has explained I have not had any more to do with shaping the editorial policy of this paper, since I left Nebraska in October, 1896, than has Miss Fairbrother herself, for instance. But I may be permitted to say that its "policy" seems to me the only correct one. Certain it is that I would not change it. As a matter of fact the COURIER, since a certain day in May, 1893, has had no policy. Prior to that time, when it was in other hands it had a policy, and I believe it was the most polite paper in the state. Its policy then was that of unctuous tribute to society. It had an eagle eye for functions and a facile pen for flattering. It was as harmless as soft soap and as interesting as one or two departments of that exciting publication the *Ladies Home Journal*. When a change of ownership was effected there came a conviction that Society, important as it is, and I can testify that in Lincoln it is more than usually varied and portentous, does not measure the length and breadth of human interest. So it was decided to drop policy, and conduct a journal that would, in a way, reflect the doings of current interest in the various broad fields of human activity, and thereafter THE COURIER has had, strictly speaking, no policy. If its independent attitude and unconventional method of treating those subjects in which its readers are interested in contradistinction to the course pursued by its contemporaries that run on ball bearings in deep grooves, have seemed to invest it with a definite policy that is not the concern of THE COURIER. There is no policy in fearlessness and independence and originality.

As I understand it Miss Fairbrother objects to THE COURIER because it does not give enough attention to Woman's clubs. Undoubtedly this majestic lady has other objections, but this is the chief one. A comparison between the COURIER and Miss Fairbrother's dainty publication will, I believe, show that the *Woman's Weekly* may have a greater proportion of matter devoted to woman's clubs than has THE COURIER. But there is no paper in the state that has a greater claim to the consideration of the women than THE COURIER. It is owned and conducted by women. It deals in a spirited manner with those subjects in which intelligent women are interested. It prints a large quantity of Woman's club news. Should the state federation make THE COURIER its organ the women of the state would have a journal that would contain all the news of their various organizations, at the same time presenting the woman's point of view on the broad subjects with which all persons, men and women are concerned.

I have not read Miss Alice French's "The Spellbinder," but it seems to me that the people of Nebraska allow themselves to be too much wrought up by publications of this sort. I have heard several persons here speak of the story and I have been asked about the country about Valentine; but no one has taken the story as reflecting on Nebraska as a whole and I do not think it has had the slightest effect in arousing prejudice against the

state. Nebraska is too big a state to be affected by such articles as this. As a matter of fact the people of Nebraska have an exaggerated idea of the importance of literary or journalistic praise or abuse. I shared in the popular view when I was in the state. But I can see now that after all it makes very little difference what people say. The thinking public somehow has an approximate idea of the real facts and if it refuses to be boomed by laudation it is equally slow to accept the statements of detractors. It seemed to me when I was west that the state of Kansas must be particularly bad odor in the east, for no state has been so persistently maligned and ridiculed. But it did not take me long to find that the people here know Kansas. They have no especial love for its politicians, but they know the state and its resources, its achievements and its possibilities.

The stories that are printed every day have no appreciable effect on intelligent persons. And so with Nebraska. The state must stand on its own bottom and be undismayed by puerile stories. Its prosperity must come from its soil and the industry of its people. Abuse cannot make its broad acres sterile or stay the industry of the people, and praise cannot give to the state any quality it does not possess or impart any success it does not deserve. So let the story writers spill their ink and scatter puny leaves broadcast over the land; let editors point their pitiful paragraphs with sickly lies; let them condemn and let them eulogize—Nebraska will go on just the same, and as the years go by it will become stronger and stronger and the people will learn that quips and coddlings do not make or unmake a state.

Squalor and luxury go hand in hand the world over. Misery and happiness, sorrow and joy have a common habitat. Drouth and famine are not the only local color in Nebraska. The sunshine and the blue sky and the pure air, the song of the harvesters and the glory of mountains of golden grain are just as much a part of the picture as the bits that such writers as Mrs. Peattie and Miss French have presented—aye they are, as the residents of the state know, by far the larger part of the picture. And other people—those outside of the state—know this too. They retain their knowledge of the proportions of things after all the kipping scribbles have had their say.

New York, May 17, 1897.

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