

arrives, pick up the country paper in the hope of finding out what the world is doing and for the recreation of the stories and anecdotes. In a recent examination of the literary part of the patent insides of Nebraska papers, I find that stories of cannibal feasts, of poisonous insects and reptiles, of tortures inflicted by Indians and of retaliatory tortures inflicted by white men upon them; stories of outlawry and of strange murders, and serial stories of adventure make up these inside pages which are the only fresh reading matter offered from week to week to the wives and children of the farmers of Nebraska. The inferior and unwholesome character of the patent inside matter supplied Nebraska publishers is, of course, corrupting the taste of the rising Nebraska generation. But the publishers are not to blame. It is not a money-making business, publishing a country paper in this state, and the patent insides are an economical necessity; but if the syndicate which supplies the newspapers with matter would employ men and women of discrimination and taste to select the stories which the patent publishers give to their compositors to be set up and printed on the insides of papers which are sent with blank outsides to their country patrons, the taste of the advancing generation might be perceptibly affected by the change in literary diet. But the price of discrimination is high, and it is not likely that the publishers of the patent insides stuff will incur any expense to improve their product when it sells well enough as it is.

Suits of Woe.

The sight of a long black box drawn by black horses and driven by a man in black with a chalk white face, depresses every one whose vision it crosses. Undertakers are pleasant men. There is one in Lincoln who is a thoroughly good fellow. He goes about chuckling to himself over some choice bit of humour he has discovered but does not venture to communicate for fear of displeasing his patrons, who are so accustomed to seeing an undertaker look solemn, that any other expression seems a ghastly lack of sympathy. The death of a beloved friend is bad enough. Why should the undertaker who takes charge of the body attempt to deepen the shock and frighten the children of the neighborhood by driving up in a vehicle which looks like a coffin on wheels with a buggy top fastened to it? The most sympathetic undertaker cannot sympathize with the friends of the people he buries. If he did he would not last long, sympathy is such a draught on the system. If he does not sympathize why should he pretend to by driving about in a ghastly, ghastly vehicle that frightens every little child who meets it? The undertaker can make our woe no sharper, but the hypocrisy of his expression and of his rig, frequently irritates the mourners. Then, besides, the extra blackness of his trappings and expression sometimes appear in the bill, and the chief mourner lacks the audacity to remonstrate with one who seemed so genuinely broken-hearted in the hours of death and burial. Undertaking is an honest and very useful business; but the merchants who are engaged in it afflict the community by insisting on so many and such conspicuous funeral trappings. They intrude by many signs and symbols of woe upon the natural, unpremeditated grief of the mourners, and they scare children. If the men engaged in this legitimate business drove about in inconspicuous vehicles, cheerful looking

buggies of brown, striped in red, they would be more acceptable to the community. The conspicuousness of black in their garb and expression is what I object to, and the hypocrisy of all their customs. There is no reason why an undertaker should not wear just as cheerful clothes and drive as cheerful a buggy as any other man. He has no grief to express, and he should not attempt to express it. If he would lay aside his lugubrious attire, expression, manner and vehicles, we might the sooner give up some of our absurd funeral customs which serve to harrow the feelings rather than to soothe them. The plumed, urred hearse, that ostentatious relic of a grief worn upon the sleeve, is a vulgarity which will be longer disappearing than all the rest. From the custom of carrying the body of a dead friend upon a bier to the grave, we have come to the glass hearse framed in black, and it is not an evolution.

A Real Woman's Club.

Listening to other women read papers on the culture that was Greece, on the dimensions of the parthenon, or on the causes of the dissolution of the Roman empire, is the devoted club woman's idea of a good time. Men will occasionally listen to one of their fellows read a paper, especially if they know the time is coming when they will have an opportunity to criticize it. Some men, mostly lawyers, ministers and professors, belong to a debating club; but the large majority believes that ten hours of labor is enough exercise for the mind, and they prefer the clubs where they can get something eatable and drinkable, can talk and tell very stale stories that were not funny even when they were new, to other good-natured and unexacting men who have not donned their overcoats and faced a storm to hear about what ailed Rome or to listen to an exposition of the beauties of Greece.

Some college women of New York city have decided to have a real club, too; a club whose reason for being is not to cultivate but comfort, and a cup of tea together and perhaps a game of cards; a club where man cometh not. Although she prefers man to any thing else the world contains, woman does enjoy a retreat whence she is assured man cannot arrive. Although men love women, they do not want them in the club. I think each sex desires a place from which the other is forever and finally excluded. There is no such place unless it is the club. When men and women mingle in society there are always a few who feel slighted because wherever and whenever they are together the question of attractiveness is settled over again. The men pay the attentions and the women receive them. And it is the most difficult task in the world to maintain these several attitudes without offense to some one who has been given an altar promise of absolute devotion, a devotion that may be measured with a jeweler's scale and not found to dip on the wrong side. Such a constant keeping in mind of a solemn promise is embarrassing at times, to attractive members of either sex. It is a strain, and if it were not for the absolute seclusion of the club it would be harder than it is now to get men out to parties and routs. Women cannot forget their appearance when men are about. They are careful not to excite the disapproval of women, but there is not so much anxiety about the latter's opinion. Some women go through life hated by all other women and they know it; but the detested are rather flattered

than otherwise. It is, in a way, a tribute to superior fascinations.

But since the establishment of girls' colleges and the assured entry of young girls into the joys of college life, when grown into womanhood they like each other better than they used to a decade ago when woman's love for woman was measured by the attentions or snubs of men. In the girls' schools a thoroughly wholesome and enthusiastic liking for women in groups is developed, not at all like the unwholesome, feverish devotion of couples developed in the old-fashioned female seminary; not, however, that this latter phase of adolescent femininity has altogether disappeared. Girls pass through stages of devotion to this woman or that one, and the spasms can only be mitigated. The contemporary girls' college teaches girls esprit du corps and they need it. Largeness, the pleasure and wholesomeness of associating with a large number of one's peers who are engaged in a similar occupation with ourselves, stimulates the social sense and is retarding the development of those pitifully narrow women who cannot comprehend the use of any institution outside of their set.

Girls in good girls' schools do not miss young men. They talk about them and weave pleasant romances about them, but the girls would resent the intrusion of men into their games, dramas and classes more decidedly than would their teachers. In a co-educational institution, girls' fraternities are introducing young women to each other and teaching them the charms of purely feminine society.

At last the college women of New York are to have a real club house, containing a restaurant, library, bed rooms and every thing that a woman's club should have. The women who are going to start it and have charge of it are college bred. It is to be called the Woman's University club, and 482 women have signified their intention of joining. To be eligible to membership a woman must belong to one of the colleges included in the Association of Collegiate Alumnae, which includes Nebraska university, Vassar, Bryn Mawr, Smith, Wellesley, Radcliff, Barnard, Cornell, Oberlin, Wesleyan, Syracuse, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Leland Stanford, Northwestern, Western Reserve, and the universities of Michigan, Wisconsin, Kansas and Chicago. It is announced that the annual dues of this club are ten dollars for resident members and five for non-resident members, and that members who join now will have no initiation fees to pay. It is not possible to run much of a club in New York on ten dollars a year. The club may, however, receive so many five dollar subscriptions from college women settled in different parts of the country that it may continue its existence and be comfortable and comforting to the college women of New York. The club has the best wishes of *The Courier*. The women who are founding it have kept alive in their hearts the glowing memories of the companionship and society of their college days, and their desire is to light a fire that will warm others so haunted and like-minded.

Eben Holden.

A story of an old man who carried an orphan boy in a basket on his back from northern Vermont to New York state in the forties. When the boy was left an orphan by the drowning of his mother, father and elder brother, the town authorities found that the boy was penniless, and decided to put him in the poor-house, until the

bogy uncle appeared and claimed him. Uncle Eb. Holden was only a farm hand with no visible property, and the town council had no more eye then for character than town councils have now. So Uncle Eb., who foresaw the ruin of the boy's soul, if he were committed to the care of a man like the Uncle, kidnapped the boy when he was only six years old. He started out in the night carrying the little boy as a squaw carries her papoose, only strapped into a basket instead of on a board. They traveled by night through cornfields and forests and although the wicked uncle was often on their track, he never caught them. The journey is unique in literature. The rest of the story does not quite equal, in the open-air effects, the first chapters, where the old man who was a boy in heart and had a boy in a basket on his back journeyed through Vermont from north to south and landed in a farmhouse in northern New York. Uncle Eb. is a shrewd naturalist. He is a poet, a lover and servant of all youth and innocence. He serves the boy as the lion served Una, to frighten wickedness and corruption from his path. The atmosphere is out doors from the beginning to the end.

Mr. Irving Bacheller, the author of the book, is the organizer of the Bacheller syndicate which supplies papers of the better class with excellent reading matter. In consequence of a long trial of what the public likes to read, he has acquired a discriminating taste. He knows, far better than the writer who continues to write historical novels about obscure personages very little of whose history has been preserved, that we who read novels like the plain air, and simplicity, and that we do not care to rack our brains in the effort to remember which Louis it was who said "After me the deluge" and which Louis' head was cut off and to identify and date many harder speeches and acts. The novelist who has spent years studying the costumes, conduct, manners and morals of the seventeenth century and writes a novel thereof is like the club woman who prepares a paper to deliver in one hour which could not be read in five hours. Both waste the good-will and impose upon the patience of their audiences.

The novel is not a medium for teaching history. It is not an example of anything except literature. The tiresome efforts of the historical novelists whose books are bought by hundreds are rebuked by the sales of "Eben Holden" and others somewhat like it. Books containing a hero, wholesome, tender, possessing homely common sense and a quality of virility are what all men and some women dote upon. Abraham Lincoln possessed the quality which is not humour, it is not common sense, it is not ability, it is not sentiment or a love for children and the weak, it is not shrewdness, and it is not strength, it is not camaraderie, but it is a loveableness which is a combination of all eight and something else added inherent in the person. This quality has not yet been named in English. The French have a word which expresses it better, but the kind of a hero I mean, of whom Abraham Lincoln is the prototype, is so entirely American that no foreign word can characterize him satisfactorily.

Eben Holden has the middle of the stage all the time. The little basket boy grown to a man, tries to divert attention to the distinction of his own school and college performances but does not succeed. The little boy grown a man, is a prig, and the recital of his virtues is tiresome, especially as he tells the story himself.