

**Fiction a Favorite:
History a Hoodoo**

"Fiction in unlimited quantities is what the people want from this library. And just at present the crying demand is for 'The Crisis' and 'The Right o' Way.'"

It was a busy assistant at the city library who answered the inquiry of a Courier representative concerning the popular books of the hour. And she volunteered the information that it would be utterly impossible to get one of the volumes specified without leaving a postal card with name and address. After that one would have to hurry to the scene and claim the volume, returning it promptly in seven days.

Books are popular today; tomorrow the dust gathers on them for some unaccountable reason. Frequently there is a second season of public favor and then again there isn't.

"A novel nowadays is generally fleeting in gaining the favor of the reading public. A cursory examination, a crying demand for a few months and the volume is succeeded by another favorite. If the work is dramatized and the title adorns the billboards there is always another season of popularity. Otherwise there is danger of speedy oblivion.

"Such books as 'Richard Carvel' and 'Janice Meredith' keep on the go and never remain very long on the shelves. Time was when these volumes took first place.

"After the latest works of fiction, the strongest demand seems to be for the works of President Roosevelt. In all parts of the city there appears to be a desire to read what he has written. The books are carefully perused, too, as is shown by the length of time they are kept and their condition when returned.

"But the people of Lincoln are not reading history. With but two excep-

tions all the historical works either remain on the shelves or go to high school students who have to look up references. Indeed the special cases are students who are making a specialty of religious history.

"Of course we have many books on history that have never been off the shelves. The same is true of many biographies, volumes on travel, dissertations on philosophy and similar works. The reading public of Lincoln does not seem to fancy this sort of reading.

"Three very expensive volumes in history have never been drawn out. It's truly disappointing. We all thought we were getting a rare bargain when three volumes of Massachusetts state history were purchased for \$16.50. Two of the books were so rare that they were perfect prizes. There has not been a single call for them.

"'American Engineers in China' is a volume that is frequently demanded. African travels interest many readers. So do the writings of Booker T. Washington. French history no longer seems to be attractive except works on the life and career of Napoleon. These are always in circulation.

"Such works as 'Social England,' 'Life and Speeches of John Adams,' and the works of Calhoun have never been drawn out of the library. Dust has to be frequently removed from Gibbon and Macaulay in these days.

"Strange as it may seem authors on literary criticism have a large number of readers. In Lincoln there are several women who have read everything obtainable on the technique of authorship. Along with this they read book reviews and the latest works of fiction. Then, too, they keep a close tab on periodical and magazine articles.

"Generally speaking, the books that start in with a steady demand are the ones longest sought by the public. Take for instance 'Monsieur Beaucaire,' 'Via Crucis' and 'Tommy and Grizzel.' An examination of the records shows that these volumes will almost equal the circulation of the more hotly demanded works. They stay by the populace and when the prime favorites are not to be had, they are called for.

"Louisa M. Alcott is still the favorite juvenile author. Of course there are others widely read, but with the children of this city she has first place. 'Lincoln authors are widely read.

Professors Sherman and Caldwell have their readers, although the strongest contingent find solace in the state university library. The same is true of Chancellor Andrews. William Reed Dunroy, Miss Flora Bullock, H. G.

Shedd, Miss Morton, George Shedd, Mrs. Sewell and Mrs. Woods are kindly remembered by local readers. During the last few days the latest books of Professor Sherman and ex-Chancellor Canfield have been purchased."



ALTON D. BENWAY.

Alton D. Benway, president of the Lincoln Shade company, was born in Cordova, Illinois, thirty-seven years ago. His early days were spent on the farm but he managed to receive a fair common school education.

For a time he was a clerk on a Mississippi river steamboat. After this he entered a business college at Davenport, Iowa, and then began a business career. In 1887 he came to Lincoln where he has since remained.

For fourteen years he was connected with the firm of Rudge & Guenzel, four years as bookkeeper and ten years as secretary and treasurer. Close confinement affected his health and caused his retirement. Several months ago he became one of the largest owners of the Lincoln Shade company and was made president.

The concern is purely a local enterprise, backed by Lincoln money and energy. Window shades of all sorts are manufactured. Both retail and wholesale orders are filled. The prices are quoted in competition with Chicago and the firm offers the customer the difference in freight. The company was organized fifteen months ago.

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