

generous, warm-hearted friend. It is a happy thought, to give it no better name, to introduce Lincoln in the story, and the incident of the almanac (an incident that really happened), but it is more than ability that shows him as he is there shown. Those who enjoy sentiment will enjoy "The Graysons;" those who enjoy sentimentality had better not read the story.

OPEN LETTERS.

One finds, in Boston, an extraordinary number of people who have a certain, indefinable air of always writing out their middle names in full. I am not sure that I do not like it, for there are few things more harmless than a harmless affectation, and in the West one meets scarcely any of these amiable characters whose mission in life seems to be nothing less than the visible manifestation of an erudition vaster and more obtrusive than that of their associates upon this pedantic little planet of ours. So here, upon the native heath of American learning, such as it is, one finds no slight amusement in viewing the intellectual faces as he passes by. Certainly there is here a greater apparent breadth of information and catholicity of opinion than one commonly meets with farther toward the setting sun. In the *Sunday Morning Herald* one finds notices of all imaginable societies—some religious, some irreligious and some ethical and some anarchical,—some rationalistic and some for the cultivation of Jacob Bohme and Paracelsus,—some acknowledging only Buddha and some offering incense at the shrine of Ingersoll. It is the women of Boston, I am told, who now rally with the greatest devotion and in largest numbers around the standard of *The Mind*. Here, as elsewhere, the men are busy laying snares for that benevolent sprite, the dollar, and to their wives and daughters is left the task of keeping swept and garnished the temple of Athena. At a Channing hall lecture, when Professor C. C. Everett, of Harvard, second only to Martineau as an ethical writer, was to speak on "Unitarianism and Philosophy," fully three hundred and fifty of the four hundred listeners interrupted conversations about passementeries and bonnets to listen to the profound exordium which came swelling over the tremolo of small-talk, like the dominant motive in the symphony: and at the churches, too, from three to four-fifths of the congregation are of the gentler sex. I have not yet fully decided whether the majority of women over men which, according to statisticians, exists in New England is a result of the New England culture and consequent good taste in population as in other matters, or this same culture and good taste is entirely due to the feminine majority. Either explanation is so reasonable that one must be careful about forming a judgment. At the cafes, too, one is constantly chancing upon little indicative trifles which point to a great, pulsating atmosphere of thought not far away. For example, three young men, with very wide trousers—nicely creased and irreproachable as to the knees—who sat at the table beyond me the other evening, spent the whole time between courses in discussing whether it should be pronounced Jahoch or Gahoch. They quoted copiously from Reran and Zupitza and showed a ready proficiency in advancing pernicious theories about life and morals, together with a fluent disregard for all existing theological systems, which was positively electrifying. An old gentleman, with a great deal of hair and beard and a stertorous breath, is nearly always in the hall of the public library when I go in, and he has a way of falling into a half-doze over his imposing folios which had led me to believe that he was reading bound vol-

umes of *Punch*. But no; upon glancing over his shoulder I found he was plodding through the philosophical works of Giordano Bruno, written in medieval Italian. My landlady paints quite in the style of Vedder (who had a passion for the mysteriously dreadful, or rather, for the dreadfully mysterious); the gentleman next door sings selections from *Parsifal*; a young woman, who has just sought other quarters on account of those *Parsifal* selections, I dare say, engages herself in sculpture, after the broad, modern style; the chambermaid clips reviews of Robert Elsmere and Dean Maitland out of my *Evening Post*, and even a horse-car conductor entered into a conversation with me concerning human traits, personal immortality and the growth of subjectivity. I found that his views were practically in accord with those of Helvetius and La Mettrie, but that his ancestry was probably Presbyterian. Indeed there is no little truth at the bottom of the thousand and one Arabian nights tales that we hear concerning the Boston individuality. There is an atmosphere about the town which is clearly distinctive. Whether one visits Washington street or Copley square he will find that, both in business and in leisure, the city is not without refinement. In one thing, however, Bostonians show that they are still what the *Saturday Review* called them, "American Provincials." This one failing is their over consciousness of their own cosmopolitanism. For one to be a true cosmopolitan, I suppose; he should at least take himself for granted. This the Bostonians, it would seem are unwilling to do; although many have arrived at the verge of the last dividing line between village and town. The Bostonian is aggressive, almost, in his acknowledgement of superiority to New York and the rest of mankind. He cannot forget that Emerson lived in the midst of his well beloved city; he cannot pardon less favored spots for pretending to the shadow of artistic or literary groves. And this unrestful, though admiring self-apotheosis of the Bostonian is all that I have against him.

CONWAY G. MACMILLAN.

CURRENT COMMENT.

The complicated state of the Samoan question shows some of the possibilities of modern diplomacy. The American people have no interests in Samoa except a coaling station that never has been established. The people do not visit us and we have no yearning desire to call on them. Some speculative Americans, trying to rob the natives of their land had a collision with some speculative Germans, who had the same object in view. The two nations have taken up the quarrel and are within thinking distance of a great war. It may be that the Germans have treated the natives selfishly and cruelly, but the United States has too many problems at home to solve, too much cruelty among its Americans to punish for us to have time to do the knight-errant act and range the South Seas for beauty in distress.

The fight between prohibition and high-license has commenced. No one can tell with any degree of certainty what the result will be, but the prohibitionists have an advantage in the fact that one system or the other will become a part of the constitution. The prohib takes a logical view of the question at the outset. He holds that in government, as in morals, every question is a question of absolute right or absolute wrong. The high-license advocate is all for policy.

Some men desire to take wealth that they have produced or acquired and make whiskey from it. Either they have a right to do this or they have not. If they have, then to