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Pen and Picture Pointers

"THAT mine enemy would write a book!" exclaimed the psalmist, probably in his exasperation, just as he on another occasion, in his heat he said, "All men are liars." It isn't recorded if David the king wanted the satisfaction of reviewing his enemy's effort, or if he was merely anxious that the offender should exhibit his own shortcomings in his own way. Giving David the benefit of the doubt, it is to be admitted that he would have passed on his enemy's book with no less of satisfaction than is the lot of the modern who is called upon to sit in judgment on the spirit in which the task is approached. In the modern instance the critic is not prejudiced by any feeling of friendship or enmity for the writer; merely deals with the book itself, allowing no thought of the individual to shade his judgment. To be sure, the author is frequently of deep interest to the reader, but this interest generally comes after the book, and when the critic has pronounced on its merits, good or bad. It not infrequently happens, public opinion to the contrary, that the critic gets as much genuine pleasure out of the book as anyone.

Alas, for the critic. Too often the public refuses to heed him, and insists on seeing for itself, and it is not a rare instance that the critic has pronounced the book bad, and the public has taken it to its heart and pronounced it blessed. Only the more sober and sedate of the people pay a great deal of attention to the critic, and the result has been that the reviewer has come to take very largely the place of the individual who formerly sat in solemn judgment on the work of the writer. And the reviewer has learned from experience, more or less sad, that the part of wisdom lies in merely pointing out the text of the book, its central thought, if it have any, commenting indifferently on its makeup, and letting the reader decide for himself. Book reviewing is not lightly to be undertaken, though for the reason that if "of the making of books there is no end" was true when first said, how much more true today, in these times of fast presses and binding machines that turn out books at a rate that astonishes even those who are in the trade. And each turn of the press means more work for the book reviewer. This multiplicity of production has one decided advantage, and that is it enables everybody to have a fine collection of books, for even the "standards" are now produced at a cost that allows them to be easily owned by the humblest, and great works that once were out of reach of any but the wealthy are now within the reach of all.

Other features of book making have kept pace with the merely mechanical, and the artistic side has developed as rapidly as any. So that nowadays the text is not only embellished, but is truly illuminated by the illustrations that accompany, and the idea of the author is supplemented by the idea of the artist, the two combining to impress on the reader just what the concept of the situation is or might be. And instead of being bound in somber black or sober drab, the book of today comes out tricked out in colors and designs that lend a marvellous beauty to its exterior, a pressing and irresistible invitation to enter and feast on the good things prepared and waiting within.

And in other ways has the progress of the world in general contributed to the making of books, for each move in advance has opened a new vista for exploration, and as fast as the horizon of human view has expanded the book writer has gone forward. New realms of thought, new fields of activity, new avenues of industry, have all required the pen and pencil for their exploitation, for their justification, or for their illustration that the people may know. Today is the theme, but the yesterday is not forgotten, and out of the records of its dead and gone business and concerns come themes for novelist and moralist, for historian and essayist, for the serious and the gay, and all are garnered home in the harvest of books.

Best of all, the book of today is for the people of today, and comes to each and every one a welcome guest. It matters not what the taste is, the book has been written to supply it. Literature has spread a bountiful banquet and invites you all.

What Makes the Popularity of a Book

IF I could tell what causes the popularity of a book I should not give away my secret to the public, but exploit my discovery for a money consideration, and I apprehend that the income from the sale of this information would enable me to become a formidable rival of Andrew Carnegie in erecting library buildings to house these favorites of the public.

It is a topic of never-ending discussion among librarians as to what causes the popularity of a book and the answers are varied and conflicting. The oldest and most experienced librarian is apt to be the least arrogant in the statement of the reasons for his belief. From the librarian's point of view it is desirable to anticipate the popularity of a book just issued in order to wisely spend the fund set aside for the purchase of books, always too limited, and to avoid stocking the shelves with dead literature on the one hand and on the other hand to provide a sufficient number of copies of the popular books to serve the public.

All librarians learn from their experience to prophecy to a limited extent along certain well defined lines. For instance, it is not hard to foretell that Christmas stories will be in steady demand during the month of December, as each season of the year has its peculiar literature. One need not be a prophet or the son of a prophet to predict the demand for literature on Panama and everything connected with the proposed canal. It is reasonable to expect a call for books pertaining to the Suez canal, Ferdinand de Lesseps, historical and political works dealing with the various grants made by the Central American republic to the French and other foreign nations, works on the Monroe doctrine, geographical works, books on physical geography and the effects of volcanic eruptions and earthquakes, and an increased demand for fiction dealing with political revolution and stories with scenes laid in tropical countries. The popularity of many books depends upon the interest evoked by stirring events taking place in different parts of the world. For instance, the demand for books on Africa during the Boer war extended from the travels of Livingston to the memoirs of Oom Paul.

The interest in the development of gold mining in the Klondike accounts for the popularity of Harriman's "Alaska." Another cause for popularity is due to local allusion as in the case of "The Crisis" by Churchill, where the scene is laid in St. Louis. It required over 300 copies in the

St. Louis public library to supply the home demand. An example in our own city is that of the "Main Chance," by Meredith Nicholson, which combines a local acquaintance with the author and his subject. But to diagnose the symptoms which produce fevers of excitement in the public such as to demand editions of hundreds of thousands, as in the case of "Trilby" is something apparently beyond the ken of mortal to know.

Styles of novels have their day like styles of women's hats. There was the period of the problem novel, the dialect story, the historical novel, and the series of "Letters to—" But the old standards like "Vanity Fair," the "Scarlet Letter," "John Halifax, Gentleman," "David Copperfield," and the "Three Musketeers" retain the permanent affections of the reading public.

One of the unsolved mysteries of the demand for books is the unusual and sudden popularity of some book which has had its decline and fall years ago, as Helen Hunt Jackson's "Century of Dishonor," which is now being more generally read than at any time since its publication. And there are cases of arrested development, as with "The Honorable Peter Stirling" which created but little interest when first published, but became after several years suddenly immensely popular. And who can tell why "Lady Rose's Daughter," by Mrs. Humphrey Ward has reached such unparalleled success when her works following "Robert Elsmere" have with a few exceptions remained unknown to the general reader.

But it is safe to say that one essential to the popular novel is that it shall be based on the story of the development and happy fruition of love. Contrary to the opinions of many of the story writers of today a love story to live must be wholesome, clean and rational. As an example we have "Paul and Virginia." In comparison with this such stories as "The Call of the Wild" by Jack London, have very little chance with the people, even though they may appeal to some of us as being among the best books of the year.

But the people who draw books from the libraries, the regular, persistent readers, refuse to be guided by what is written about books. They seem to be a class apart from the book buyers. They wish to judge of the literature for themselves, just as the public will judge of a new play regardless of the opinions of paid critics. This difference between the library reader and the book buyer may be recognized by the fact

that often books which are almost unknown at the book stores have a large popularity at the libraries.

The reading of books has become a popular amusement. It is a form of recreation unknown in its present development to our grandparents. The busy brain worker finds his recreation in the reading of a light and pleasing story between Saturday night and Monday morning. He wants something of a romantic, pleasing and interesting nature in contrast with the dull monotony of his daily life. He has learned that a change is rest. This accounts for the laudens reading with avidity the works of the "Duchess" living for the time being a great lady in her castles in Spain. To criticize these people for their lack of taste in their selection of literature is presumptuous. For however unreal and insane the characters may seem to the critical taste, they are to the reader live heroes and heroines, embodiments of honor, courage, tenderness and truth. "As the reader thinketh so is the book."

The highest compliment a writer can achieve is to be a favorite author of children. Their prime favorites are few and they stand the most severe test of the mature critic. A child seems to intuitively know that which is good and true and unaffected in man and in man's creations. The child's mind is unbiassed by the prejudice of reputation, nationality, religion or politics, which so warp the mind of the adult. Children never grow tired of Miss Alcott's "Little Men" and "Little Women," of the old folk tales which have stood the test of ages, and the fairy tales of Grimm and Andersen.

What makes a book popular? The same thing that makes a song popular, that makes a picture popular, that makes a man or woman popular. Popularity is not achieved by rule or regulation. It will grow in Mrs. Wiggs' cabbage patch when it refuses to grow in specially prepared soil. The reading public forms a true democracy and its allegiance to a popular book is not to be bought, allured or coerced. The verdict of popularity is the result of countless subtle influences of the time, the occasion and the sentiment of the hour. The question, "What makes a book popular?" has not yet been answered, will not be answered, should not be answered. If answered it would be like the discovery of how to make gold in the laboratory, its intrinsic value would be lost.

EDITH TORRITT,
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Books in Which Omaha Has a Part

OMAHA'S fame has been spread in song and story, poetry and prose, blank verse and blank without verse. No history of the west is complete without some reference to Omaha, and the older editions of picturesque America, while with vivid imagery portraying in art and photography many impossible scenes of the early days, did Omaha the justice of picturing the old Union Pacific depot, the then gateway of the west, with all its homely elegance and Omaha's humiliation.

Books have been written of Omaha, and the city has always been a favorite theme of the magazine essayist and the western novelist.

Look, perchance, at Owen Wister's "The Virginian" and his unkind references to Omaha's cafes and restaurants and the entrees of phraseology that accompanied the serving of the substantial. Meredith Nicholson in his "Main Chance" was more kind, and being an Omaha product did better by Omaha.

The irascible and dyspeptic John G. Saxe many years ago gave vent to his poetic fancy in a virile effusion entitled, "Then." It was a bitter arraignment of the young metropolis, and called forth a few years ago a poetic reply from Robert F. Williams, a loyal friend of Omaha, entitled "Now." The two poems should be read the latter following the first to enjoy the full merits of both.

William R. Lighton has during the present year, 1903, produced a very good book, in which many of the incidents are laid in Omaha, bearing the title of "The Ultimate Moment." It is a work of genuine excellence, but not better than a work by the same author entitled, "Sons of Strength," published in 1898.

It would be impossible to collate in one article a list of all the books containing references to Omaha, but books written exclusively about Omaha might merit a better fate.

The Omaha public library must naturally have the most complete collection of books about Omaha, and among them are many that are as valuable as they are rare. Among these latter may be included the "Ordinances of the City of Omaha, 1857," to be found in the Byron Reed collection. This book is peculiarly interesting from the fact that it is the earliest of the municipal records.

"The Early and Authentic History of Omaha, from 1857 to 1870," by J. A. Hall, publisher, is about the first attempt under-

taken to compile a corrected history of the city.

There is in the Byron Reed collection a "Record of Ordinances, the Charter, and Former Charter and Amendments, 1872-1880." Mr. W. J. Connell compiled a very complete and exhaustive work entitled "The Revised Ordinances of Omaha, of a General Nature, in Force April 1, 1889, with Charter for Metropolitan Cities, etc."

"Oo-Mah-Ha Ta, Wa, Tha, (Omaha City), with Illustrations, by Surette Le Flesche Tibbles ("Bright Eyes"), was published by F. R. Giffen of Lincoln in 1898, and is an interestingly written story of the genesis of Omaha.

"Anecdotes of Omaha" is an interesting work dealing in an attractive and unique way of many happenings in and about Omaha, from its earliest history to the date of its publication, in 1891, by M. B. Newton.

"Leading Industries of the West, Omaha," is the title of an anonymous publication, issued from Chicago in 1884, that is very creditable, coming, as it does, from a commercial rival.

In 1894 an excellent "History of Omaha" was issued by J. W. Savage and J. T. Bell.

"Omaha, Its Past, Present and Future" was produced in 1884 by C. R. Schaller. The work was in two parts and is a very interesting addition to the literature of and about Omaha.

In 1876 A. Sorenson produced an "Early History of Omaha, or Walks and Talks Among the Old Settlers." In 1889 there appeared from the same author a "History of Omaha from the Pioneer Days to the Present Time," and in 1888 he produced a work entitled "Omaha Illustrated." Copies of the two first named are to be found in the Byron Reed collection and in the general library.

"Omaha, the Trans-Continental Gateway," by Victor Rosewater (See Powell's Historic Towns of the Western States) ranks among the very best of articles yet produced on or about Omaha.

"Omaha, The Western Metropolis," was the title of a work issued by the Omaha Board of Trade in 1891.

"History of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Omaha and Suburbs" is the self-descriptive title of an interesting and elaborate work by J. Haynes in 1886.

In 1887 G. H. Brown produced a very valuable work under the title of "Industries of Omaha."

Nearly complete files of the Omaha city

directories from 1866 to 1903 are to be found in the general library, as well as in the Byron Reed collection. In the Byron Reed collection is to be found also business directories of Omaha for the years 1877-78-79, 1888-89.

There are also an infinite variety of municipal reports dating back for many years, that are especially valuable to the student of municipal affairs, and which comprise a comprehensive history of the municipality of Omaha. These include the reports of the city engineer, park commission, superintendent of education, etc.

There have been many guide books published for the benefit of visitors to Omaha, and probably the most elaborate is the "Official Guide Book to Omaha and the Trans-Mississippi and International Exposition," with maps, in 1898.

The annual recurrence of the Ak-Sar-Ben festivities has each year caused the production of illustrated literature pertaining to and of Omaha, showing the growth and progress of the city.

Among the miscellaneous literature pertaining to Omaha filed away in the public library shelves are "A Catalogue of the Art Loan Exhibition of 1879," "Catholic Album and Directory of Omaha and South Omaha," 1901, 1902, "The Clinic," 1888-95, "and files of The Omaha Daily Bee, morning edition from February, 1878, to June, 1903," also the issue of the "Women's Edition" of The Bee, May 1, 1895, and F. K. N. Orff's "Tri-City Directory, 1890-91" of the business and professional men of Omaha, South Omaha and Council Bluffs.

Nor does Omaha figure only in commercial, social and political history. In the archives of the government the name of Omaha appears very frequently connected with matter of national importance. As one of the greatest military departments of the country, there have been volumes and volumes of reports about Omaha, and in truth few cities have had more prominent mention in every variety of literature, in fancy as well as in fact.

Omaha has been the favorite theme of the great military novelist, General Charles King, and it was left to Fred Nye to perpetuate the city in comic opera in his production "Mr. Jones of Omaha."

Renew Copper War

Mr. F. Augustus Heinze announces that the copper war is about to be renewed. In all the intricate recesses of the Montana mountains, is there no place where Mr. Heinze can lose himself, and stay lost?