

# THE COURIER

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## OBSERVATIONS.

### Skirts and Superintendents.

A superintendent of city schools in Kansas City has issued an edict that he disapproves of short skirts and that the teachers must not wear them. He likes better the long skirts that the teacher with her arms full of books can not hold up, a skirt that as the teacher walks across the room leaves a cloud of dust collected in her walk to school. The short skirt leaves the teacher's arms free and is a relief inexpressible.

No man whether school superintendent or not, would to save his position, for vanity or any other reason wear a garment at once so uncomfortable so heavy, so untidy and so unhealthful as the long skirt. The Kansas City superintendent is doubtless one of those superintendents of whom we have had examples in Lincoln, men grown petty tyrants from having exercised authority over several hundred women who had to obey him or lose their positions. This man in Kansas City says his grandmother and his mother wore long skirts, and what they wore is good enough for the teachers in Kansas City whose destinies he controls.

The short skirt which clears the mud and filth of the street is a sensible sanitary fashion, one which doctors have been urging women to adopt for many years. Now that they have finally accepted it, it is not likely that an obstructionist school superintendent will be able to control fashion.

School superintendents are in a class

by themselves, apart from other men. Occasionally a scholarly, generous man is elected to that position and the city he serves, and the teachers he inspires are especially happy. The superintendent has authority so absolute and so extended that unless he is generous enough and wise enough to allow each teacher to be guided by her own inspiration the school teaching in the city he supervises will be come mechanical and formal. The Lincoln school administration has changed and there is every indication that a man of rare scholarship, a man ambitious for the excellence of the school system entrusted to him, is by our good fortune at the head of the schools. Superintendent Gordon has been here too short a time to demonstrate to the people the integrity of his ambition, but his methods are scholarly and his suggestions sound and for the health of the schools and the encouragement of the teachers may his efforts meet with no prejudice or treachery.

### Train Theology

A carload of people hurrying into Kansas was edified a few days ago by a discussion between two ministers. One said that the indiscriminate selection by the chairman in a lodge meeting of any one in the audience to read prayers was highly improper and calculated to cast a reproach on true religion. The other minister was doubtful if any man were competent to call his fellow unworthy. The disputants grew so interested in the theme that their voices rang through the car and were perfectly audible over the rumble of the train. And every passenger listened. At last the little man, the stickler for form and propriety said, with clenched fist, that if any lodge member were permitted to read prayers that some man who swore and drank might chance to be called upon to read the evening prayer to his brethren. At this point a man from Kansas with long whiskers tanned by the Kansas sun to the color of hay roared from his end of the car: "Brother, that is just the sort of man that had ort to pray." And he closed the discussion as effectually as a keen witted gallery god sometimes rings down the curtain.

### The Christian.

To Hall Caine, a hypochondriacal litterateur living among a primitive people in the Isle of Man, John Storm is an ideal of a Christian. To American men and women, accustomed to meeting their fellows on a level, to forgiving, and being forgiven, by them, to doing and being done by them, the melodramatic, insincere poseur of Caine's hero is absurd. John Storm is a fanatic and then a lunatic. In the first scene in the presence of strangers he insults his father who has educated him in preparation for the life of an English statesman. Like the Byronic sophomore he never

ceases to affect, he stands aloof and gloomy from the innocent gay little picnic which Glory organizes. He will not eat any pie, he scorns it and thinks cruel, hard things of it when Glory offers it to him. Wherever he appears he is a wet blanket and a wet blanket that enjoys its misery and the discomfort its application causes. His philanthropy is of the detestable self-exploiting kind. He says: "Now watch me while I administer first aid to the broken-hearted," and his platitudes comfort only because he is on a stage or in a book. The villain calls him a poseur and a fraud and although he is a villain his opinion of John Storm does not lack instant confirmation from a bored audience.

It is a well known tendency of new art students to reproduce their own features in the classic Greek and Roman casts they must all draw. Not intentionally, the art student with the pug nose turns up the nose of the genius of the Vatican or the Venus of Milo. But the pug nose is in his temperament and unconsciously his fingers draw the type he is most familiar with. Criticism and demonstration of his fault correct it, but even the full fledged distinguished artist exhibits this peculiar phenomenon. See Gibson's pictures and compare them with photographs of Gibson. See Peter Newell's pictures and compare them with pictures of Peter Newell. See Raphael's madonnas and Raphael's portrait. The best picture Whistler ever painted was that one of his mother, and the distinguished calm old lady is a picture of Whistler as he would like to be and as he thinks he is. In painting that picture he was not fighting against his temperament but working with it and the result is, consequently, a marvelous harmony of line and color.

John Storm is Hall Caine's idea of a Christian hero, therefore Hall Caine is a poseur, and should be warned by the fate of his puppet to leave off subjective writing. For before him as before all his heroes lies madness. About him and about his heroes there is something insistently unhealthful, insane, and impertinent. His books have only the vogue of an epidemic which better literary sanitation will certainly cure.

Let alone being a Christian John Storm is not a gentleman. For types of the Christian gentleman Mr. Caine should study the life of Sir Philip Sydney, of St. Francis of Assisi, of Bishop Phillips Brooks, of the lowly Nazarene Himself.

The effect of a play or a book like The Christian can not be salutary. Hypocritical goodness seems to set a good example and testifies the worth of holiness only as a counterfeit proclaims the credit of gold or the nation's promise to pay. Eventually a play or a book like The Christian increases the number of cynics and develops suspicion. The man whom his creator called a Christian was a selfish, a murderously selfish poseur,

quite innocent of all but a nominal likeness to the Galilean. Whenever he was tried he rang false. The next advertisement of a Christian will be scrutinized with a wholly irreligious keenness. Cant, ostentatious charity or even concealed charity will not deceive anybody after a course of Hall Caine. But it is questionable if this is just the result Mr. Caine intended to produce.

### Woman's Sphere—Bixby.

"Excited by the discussion of problems they (women) can never understand." What problems? and how does Mr. Bixby know that women will never understand them? Woman shares in the development of the race and those subjects that Mr. Bixby analyses with so much self-satisfaction and so little lucidity to others may be clear to woman, say in a thousand years. Never is a long time, longer than the time between Mr. Bixby's era and the creation of the first man with just sense enough to snatch the food which the female had collected away from her. It has been long enough for the education of both sexes, but still not long enough to learn the truth that there is nothing we can not or may not figure out. The woman question worries Mr. Bixby. He is one of those belated, tenacious little men not quite sure of his own inspiration but anxious and worried for fear that the world will progress without his consent and in spite of his dissent.

It is only occasionally that some woman thinks it worth while to reply to Mr. Bixby's jibes at her sex. Over and over again he tells the club women of Nebraska that their house is on fire and their children will burn while they are at their clubs, that their husbands are eating soggy bread and cursing because the cook, chambermaid, and seamstress wife has taken her afternoon out according to the habit of all domestic servants. No club woman in Nebraska who does not know that these charges are silly and that Mr. Bixby knows nothing at all about women's clubs or club women. The ridicule especially of club women in "Driftwood" is objectionable, not so much because it constantly asserts what is not true, but it is offensive to me and it must be to all women because of the contemptuous unbelief in anything but the physical woman expressed there.

In all the coeducational schools of this country women take the same course as men and receive equally high credits. At Oxford a woman in the mathematics examination took a higher grade than either man or woman ever earned before. In mental capacity the century has demonstrated by all kinds of intellectual tests that woman is man's equal. The result of the tests and the fact that woman has accepted their terms without consideration on account of sex should influence all those who do not prefer