

COMMENT AND COMMENTARY.

WILLA SIBERT CATHER.
For The Courier.

There is no experience of travel quite like the feeling of relaxation and comfort with which a western bred man or woman steps into his home bound Pullman or any one of the great western railroads running out of Chicago. When he settles himself in a Burlington or Rock Island train he is half way home already. There are several words on American travel that have never been written, you can only pick them up from tourists or prove them in your own experience. American travel has so far surpassed in comfort anything to be found in Europe that word of it has gone back to the old world and, in Russia at least, has been productive of many reforms. Only a few years ago Prince Hilkoﬀ, the Russian minister of transportation, spent a week in Pittsburg when he was investigating American railroad improvements in behalf of the Trans-Siberian railway,—then incomplete. His investigation covered almost every department of the railroad business, but the Prince himself was chiefly interested in the superior passenger service afforded by American roads. He admitted that while in Europe railway travel was a necessity, in America it is a recreation. Much of the disparity in the class of passenger accommodations furnished in the two continents, however, was, he said, directly due to the difference in governmental policy. In America, he said, everything proceeds from the average man and is made for his comfort; even luxury is provided at prices which the average man can occasionally meet. In Europe, that portion of the population which demands luxury is so small that, as the minister expressed it, "It would be impossible to get a rate on these superior comforts, and even unnecessary, according to our notions of the needs of the people."

The Trans-Siberian railway, however, opened a new problem. The length of the journey and the costliness of operating the road at all made comforts to the passengers and the additional revenue therefrom equally necessary. The Russian government wanted models for drawingroom cars, dining cars, observation and sleeping cars, and Prince Hilkoﬀ knew where to find them.

Unfortunately for the Trans-Siberian road, however, the Minister confined his tour of inspection to the great railroad systems of the eastern part of the United States, and, as every American knows, the real comforts of travel are to be found between Chicago and the Pacific coast. I remember hearing this matter discussed at a dinner given to one of the officials of the Pennsylvania road. One of the guests present, a member of the governing board of an eastern railway, told most picturesquely the story of his first trip west of Chicago. The gentleman is an Englishman who was a man of affairs before he came to the United States and whose active and successful business life had kept him closely tied down to the territory between Pittsburg and New York. He admitted very candidly that it was quite impossible for any eastern road to offer its patrons the same class of accommodations provided by the great systems of the west. One of the guests told a story of her first experience in the sage bush country of northern Colorado. After five weeks in the monotonous gray of the sheep country, barren and bloomless enough in August, she boarded a through Burlington train at Holdredge and stepped into the dining car to find the white tables, clean table linen, and competent service of a New York hotel. After weeks of roughing it and wagon travel the sudden transition seemed to have something of the black

art about it and seemed altogether unnatural. There were fresh white-fish hundreds of miles from water and on the tables great bunches of La France roses, gathered from no man knew where in this brown windy sweep of blossomless land.

I heard many of these same opinions voiced most heartily by Mr. Ernest Seton-Thompson during his stay in Washington last winter. Mr. Thompson, however, is so confirmed a lover of the Bad Lands and the Black Hills for their own sakes that he would be loyal to any road that brought him into that region. His enthusiasm for that country is at once that of an artist and a boy. I shall never forget the picture of the Bad Lands he conjured up before us at a dinner party one night in that deliberate white-and-gold southern city. At a single gesture of his long nervous hand over the table linen you could see the heat waves dancing above the sand. The candlesticks became granite boulders and the flowers gray sage brush bushes and the soft lamp light the glaring splendor of a Dakota noon. He declared that there is no spot left in the world where nature is so willing to be seen and pursued and loved. Surely no class of thinkers or writers differ from each other so widely as naturalists. Nature seems to present absolutely different sides to different men; to some she is the pale nun and to some the red and brown gypsy. All that the green hills and willow-grown brooklands of New England are to John Burroughs the Bad Lands are to Mr. Thompson. "There," he says, "is every imaginable effect of color and contrast, there is the last stand of the Old West, there nature has paused to breathe a moment before she takes flight and leaves us to our own devices, like the Moorish king when he paused to look back over lost Grenada; there, as Balzac said of the desert, one has everything and nothing, God without mankind."

AT EVENING.

Dear heart, life is not long—
The shadows deepen,
and the waning light
Drifts to the music of the evensong,
And then—Good night!

Dear heart, though Love may live
In loftier realms,
through God's eternal years,
'Tis here we need the joy that it can give—
Its tenderness, its tears.

And yet, such barriers rise
To keep the outstretched,
sundered hands apart!
What is fulfillment in the far, faint skies
When earth is dumb, dear heart?

—Atlanta Constitution.

To think that, far across
the gloom of night,
Thou, too, dost watch
within this silvery light!
Dost scan these self same stars,
this very sea
That calls across the moon-lit
sands to me!
And yet—such waste of dark
doth hold me here,
I may not reach thee, touch thee,
dear,—my dear!

Yet still I call on thee,
and still do plead.
Ah, canst not hear my heart's
cry of its need?
Perhaps beyond the silvery
mist—the sea—
My soul's great prayer shall
rise and reach to thee:
Perchance 'twill thrill the
midnight, soft and clear,
Till thou canst hear me.
Ah, my dear, my dear,—
Tho' 'twere a sob, yea,
but a very sigh,
"Dear, it is I that loves thee!
Lo, 'tis I!"

—Laura Simmons.

CLUBS.

Edited by Miss Helen G. Harwood.

The re-election at the recent conventions of the presidents of the New York, Michigan and Indiana Music Teachers' associations is more than a mere coincidence. It is significant of the fact that clubs and societies are beginning to realize that an organization is better served by an officer who has become familiar with the duties of his office through a year of practical experience, than by one whose ability and devotion, great though they may be, have yet to be brought into touch with the peculiar needs of the society.

And this can be effected only through months of faithful service. The length of time which it may be advisable to continue the same officers in authority is an open subject for discussion. When a competent officer has been secured, especially in cases where no financial reward is offered for service, there seems no good reason for making a change until the officer proves himself incapable of performing his duties, or until his influence and magnetism upon the members are perceptibly dulled. The sentimental idea that offices of honor should be passed around, is exploded. The welfare of an organization as a whole is shared by the members individually; hence the advisability of retaining those officers who are best fitted to fill their respective positions, and to change only when they are found lacking in this ability, without regard to personal considerations.

A most creditable work has been accomplished for the public library by the Syracuse Woman's club. When they took charge of the library it consisted of a limited number of books in an unfavorable location, and lacking the patronage of the citizens. The list of patrons now includes two hundred names; the number of volumes has been increased to six hundred and fifty, while the comfortably furnished library and reading room is supplied with the best newspapers and periodicals. On Friday, July 5, the woman's club transferred the management to a library board which will spare no effort to continue the work so successfully begun.

The Tekamah Woman's club cleared sixty dollars from the sale of soft drinks on July 4th. The money will be expended to improve the appearance of the public park.

The art committee of the General Federation of Women's Clubs desires, through its first publication in the new century, to present a concise report of what is being done by skilled women in certain defined lines of the fine and applied arts. When massed together, it presents a volume of actual accomplishments that has weight and dignity, and commands respectful attention. The accompanying reports were prepared by experts, in several cases by the most eminent women in the specified field, who may be addressed for further information and consultation.

In some instances the committee has waived its preferences, and has, when so requested, omitted names from a given report, and simply stated achievements.

Women as Architects.

Architecture as an occupation for women is in its infancy. Within the last few years only have architectural courses been open to women, and although during that time many women have been graduated, but few who entered the profession have really succeeded. There are various reasons for this failure. In

the first place, when women realize that architecture means far more than the drawing of artistic pictures and attractive plans, they are discouraged and decide to enter some other branch of art where there is less drudgery and where less mechanical knowledge and business ability are required. Then, too, women for generations have been trained in domestic occupations, and when they enter a profession which in the past has been monopolized by men, they find themselves handicapped in many ways.

I feel, however, that they have made a good beginning, and that in the near future we shall see women working in conjunction with their brothers in this calling.

The woman's building at the World's Fair did a great deal to encourage women to embrace architecture as a profession. Later the Atlantic exposition had a woman's building, and now a woman is to design and superintend the building which represents the six New England states at the Pan-American Exposition at Buffalo. That this New England building is not a woman's building, but one which was won by a woman in competition with men, shows not only the progress of woman, but the increasing confidence which is being placed in women in the profession.

Although there is still prejudice against women architects, all must admit that woman, with her natural housewifely instincts, is in many ways eminently fitted to plan the conveniences of a home. Therefore, it is as the builder of homes that woman has achieved the largest success in the profession. Still, it seems to me that women should not be satisfied with the building of houses, but should aim to do even greater things. There are a few women architects whose work has extended to more ambitious buildings. The New Century club in Philadelphia was designed by a woman, whose work includes also a house for a boys' private school in Cambridge. Another woman designed and superintended the erection of the largest dormitory for Harvard university students. This dormitory has its swimming tank connected by subways with the main building. This same woman has built a stone church seating over three thousand people, and she is now erecting a city club house and has designed several large fireproof, steel construction buildings.

A short time ago the contract for providing plans for a model city tenement house was awarded to a firm of two women. This firm has also erected a hospital building in San Francisco.

There is a southern woman who has designed a seminary in Washington, and several large buildings, including a church and chapel and college building in Philadelphia.

With the progress which we have made during the short time that architecture has been open to women, I believe that we can eventually make in this most interesting of all professions as great a success as have our sisters in law and medicine.

JOSEPHINE WRIGHT CHAPMAN,
9 Park Street, Boston.

Sculpture.

Sculpture is called a masculine art, but the American woman, with her fine physique and practical mind, has already achieved an honorable rank among sculptors.

French women have long had a recognized place in the French salon, a woman being on the jury last year.

In the middle of the past century Vinnie Ream did good work in sculpture, and gathered into her studio the great artists and thinkers of Rome. When the World's Fair was being built in Chicago, six girls went to work in one of the big studios on an equal footing with men, and equal pay, a fact remarkable in women's work. Some of