



THE COURIER

LINCOLN, NEBR., SATURDAY, OCTOBER 26, 1901.

THE COURIER,ENTERED IN THE POSTOFFICE AT LINCOLN AS
SECOND CLASS MATTER.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

—BY—

THE COURIER PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO

Office 1132 N street, Up Stairs.

Telephone 384.

SARAH B. HARRIS, : : : EDITOR

Subscription Rates.

Per annum..... \$1 50
 Six months..... 1 00
 Rebate of fifty cents on cash payments.
 Single copies..... 05

THE COURIER will not be responsible for vol-
 untary communications unless accompanied by
 return postage.

Communications, to receive attention, must
 be signed by the full name of the writer, not
 merely as a guarantee of good faith, but for
 publication if advisable.

OBSERVATIONS.**A Literary History of America.**

Since literature first accumulated there have been various histories written of it. Every period has its historian who sorts the heap over again and rearranges the material, frequently giving places of honor to works which preceding historians have slighted, and disregarding authors upon whom contemporary recording secretaries bestowed first rank. Anthony Trollope is an example of the latter, and Edgar Allen Poe of the former reclassification. Some rearrangements are allowed to remain, others are immediately disturbed by critics who follow hard upon each other's heels, or by the neglect of an author's author by the people themselves. The acclamations of a pleased people do not always last through an author's life.

Every ten years there is need for a new critic-historian; the large and growing heap of English and American literature needs frequent classifying and assorting. They teach students how to do this work more or less satisfactorily in most universities. Yet notwithstanding the thousands who have been taught, only a few historians of literature are confined by the readers of literature. When the historian Greene wrote a short history of the English people it was as if no other history of England had ever been written. When Stopford Brooke wrote his Primer of English literature it was received with the expectant joy that proclaimed the field, until his coming, empty.

There are dozens of histories of American literature but not one vital and convincing history like this "Literary History of America" by

Barrett Wendell, professor of English at Harvard college. For years professors of literature have been endeavoring to construct a satisfactory definition of literature. Mr. Wendell's definition is explicit and inclusive: "Literature is the lasting expression in words of the meaning of life." Therefore contemporaries cannot tell what is literature and what is not, for the lasting test has not yet been applied to it. The books that the people have handled, worn out and which are edited again and again in every generation, belong to literature. And the books like David Harum, which sell by the hundred thousand at first and are not called for by the children of the purchasers of the first five hundred thousand, are not literature.

Mr. Wendell's history is divided into seven periods or books. The earliest literary productions of America were directly influenced by the Elizabethan impulse and literature, and Elizabethan literature lasted in America long after English literature had assumed quite another character and was controlled by another inspiration. I know of no other literary history in which history and literature are so admirably articulated, the connection between the two so expressly and plainly and convincingly shown. For a student, or any old lover of literature, long graduated and rusty, for whom titles have lost their charm and to whom old professors, once venerated, are now pedantic, stilted, little men of not much use in an active world, this book brings back the enthusiasms, the worship of literature and of the beauty that never was on land or sea. The book has an extensive bibliography and a complete index. Mr. Wendell is the author of William Shakespeare, a Study in Elizabethan literature, of a book on English composition, and of a book of essays called Stelligeri.

Truth.

Some criticism of the undemonstrable statements contained in the Declaration of Independence has from time to time appeared in this paper. To impugn a document which, however phrased, has been a source of inspiration to Americans, one should be sure of his allegations. In 1856 so great a lawyer and so enthusiastic an American as Rufus Choate in a political letter called the Declaration "a glittering generality." The phrase "glittering generalities" has passed into popular use and means conspicuous shining words and phrases asserting conditions which people who do not analyze or verify statements by the light of experience, accept as true. Or in other words "glittering generalities" are shining, attractive lies. A demagogue will to the end make use of generalizations based on the undemonstrable phrases of the Declaration to awaken in working

men an indignant belief in their oppression and confidence in the demagogue's power and willingness to change all that if their votes elect him to the place he seeks.

It is therefore not idle caviling to assert the untruth of a part of the prologue to the Declaration. Men are not equally born. Any man who desires can prove the injustice and oppression of society and the institutions of this country to a company which believes the opening statements of the Declaration. If all men are created equal by God then it is easy to convince an adult crowd that cruel and rapacious men have made them poor and unequal in accomplishment and the reward of accomplishment and that these cruel and rapacious men should be displaced from power, deprived of their property, etc.

I do not believe that any statement or creed, however it may comfort or encourage the mourner, is worth while if it is not true. In the long run a false creed destroys character and transfers to the disciple its own hypocrisy. Any man or woman who believes that the Christian credo is false is within his human duty trying to prove it, no matter whether or not he has a better belief to offer. No man can permanently hinder the truth from being accepted by all mankind. The atheist who honestly is convinced that Christians and all the people of the world, of whatever religion, who believe in a beneficent God are mistaken, should not be scoffed at nor reviled because he endeavors to show us what he considers our mistake. His endeavor and the fact that he believes that he is right and that all the rest of the world, living and dead, are wrong, prove the strength of his conviction and the possession of a sort of courage and confidence in himself only possessed by a very few sane men. His anxiety to correct what he believes is a gross misconception should not deceive us as to his motive, which is as unselfish as a missionary's. He thinks we have taken the wrong path and he wants to show us the one he has found. His path leads nowhere and he does not claim that it does, and the one we have elected to follow is trodden deep by feet of martyrs and feet that were pierced; and leads?— But if he can prove that our trail is a false one he does not have to prove his a better. We would better sit down by the side of the road, and be merry with our comrades than follow a road that has no end, for tomorrow we die.

But the truth will prevail. Professors of religion used to believe that the earth was flat, that somewhere there was an end off from which one might step if one could get that far, and that this end was mysteriously protected by angels who warded travelers off with a drawn sword, and further that this doctrine was taught

by the Bible. The first scientist, was it Copernicus? who asserted that the earth is round was in danger of his life in this world, and, according to the priests, of hell fire in the next. Not until man began to study the Bible for the truth in it and without a predisposition to accept absurdities, was its real value appreciated. The higher criticism has put far away any fear that science can affect the moral truths of the Bible. But when the higher critics' books were first published, even those who admitted the truth of their commentaries were shocked and deprecated the wisdom of making them. We still put forth our hands to steady the ark of truth which will be solid as the Andes when we are dust.

The truth about anything can hurt nobody. Its promulgation is for civilization and progress. The people who keep open minds, who are not easily convinced, who know history and have an idea or two about the development of the race, but who more than all respect traditions and their meaning, are the people who are going to arrive first at the goal where all the nations of the earth will arrive eventually.

"Responsibility of the Board."

If any harm befall Miss Stone, the American Board of Foreign Missions is responsible. The Board sent her over there and should have been as ready to redeem her as Mr. Cudahy was to ransom his son from the Pat Crowe gang. Instead of asking for contributions the officers of the Board should have sent the money and asked the American people to make up the sum afterwards. If the Board were composed of business men who were in the habit of appealing to the people as customers, the members would be afraid to lose the confidence and respect of the people by refusing to perform a plain duty and by actually deserting a woman, their agent, who has been abducted while in the performance of the mission for which they sent her to Turkey. It is sometimes said that governing boards of churches have no business conscience or sense of responsibility, or of the binding force of a contract. The allegation is not without frequent instances of proof. The American Board of Foreign Missions has just as much responsibility for Miss Stone as any father has for his son for whom a ransom is demanded by robbers. In this instance the members of the board have miserably failed to acknowledge their responsibility and get Miss Stone out of robber hands before proceeding to punish the robbers as any father would do. Therefore the Board has demonstrated its unfitness to remain in charge of American women sent from this country to heathen countries. The officers of this board receive several hundred thousand dollars every year from