

OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

A Spring Poem

For a fortnight the morning collect of the robin has been intoned again in Nebraska, and no service is more welcome. The monotonous two notes, or is it three?—is the harbinger of the yearly renaissance and the flowers are not more welcome or the pale greenness overhead and underfoot. The tra la la, tra la la, tra la la of the robin which begins at dawn and lasts until the sun is above the horizon is monotonous. There are sweeter bird calls, but none more dear. The robin chooses trees near homes. He likes human society, and we like him, God bless him! He comes so early in the year that the crumbs and grains provided by human beings are his only food. He comes before the tender, juicy young worm has wriggled out of the quilt his mother knit and swaddled him in last fall. Nobody knows the day when the worms will crack their wrappings and crawl out from the earth and from the trees to be warmed by the sun. So the robins come early and by the time the worms do get out the robins are very hungry and millions of delicious worms and bugs catch a sight of the sun and experience the first fresh air and warmth of their existence and the very next minute feel themselves doubled up in the middle and sliding down a pink chute into a crowded stomach. From the worm's point of view the robin is a gigantic, cruel, brassy-breasted monster with an unnatural appetite and a voice like the trumpet of doom or the doleful call to the tomb. To us he is a dainty, golden-breasted beneficent creature who preserves the grain and the trees from vermin. His morning song is the call to seed-time, an introduction to dandelions and violets and to all the poetry and fragrance of summer time.

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Professional Pride

An undertaker under a photograph of himself in one of the Chicago papers advertises that his services are distinguished by an unusual regard for the feelings of the lately bereaved and that he realizes how rude is the intrusion of all strangers at the only time when the undertaker's services are required. The advertisement informs those in need of an undertaker that this one by long and assiduous practice has acquired a soothing manner so that his presence is a comfort rather than an abhorred necessity. Also that "during his long services as a funeral director Mr. B. has had professional relations with the most prominent families of Chicago, having conducted funerals at one time or another in most of them. Mr. B., in his new establishment, has directed a number of evening funerals which thus far have been a great success. It is a very delicate task to enter a home where the distraction of a fresh bereavement makes the lightest word of a stranger seem intrusive to the ear of the afflicted one, unless it is moderated by genuine sympathy or by a deftness of tone and manner attained only through long experience. Mr. B. is related to one of America's greatest poets, Mr. John G. Whittier, whose name he bears."

The consciousness of tact is not a sign that it is not possessed by the man who is proud of his exercise of that virtue, but an advertisement of successful evening funerals and of an acquaintance with a large number of Chicago's distinguished dead is suspicious of the lack of that tact so soothing to strained nerves.

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A Nebraska Author

Mr. Charles A. Hanna's book on the Scotch-Irish is receiving favorable reviews from the largest and best publications in this country. Those writ-

ten by the book reviewers of the Boston Transcript, the New York Mail and Express, the Pittsburg Times and the Chicago Post are especially interesting. The Transcript in a two-column appreciation calls it "a work of remarkable value and interest." In the final paragraph the Boston reviewer objects to the author's rejection of the claims of New England to having made this country: "It is a great pity that Mr. Hanna should have marred his book by the display of sectional prejudice in the introduction of irrelevant matter. Frankly he has no use for New England, partly because of its English character and partly because so much credit has been ascribed to it for its services in the Revolutionary war. An entire chapter is devoted to showing that New England is not the birthplace of American liberty. We have no disposition to argue with the author on these points. New England can take care of herself. But supposing all these points well taken, what have they to do with the history of the Scotch-Irish in America?"

As to the reviewer's question: If this country was settled by English people alone and if all the moral inspiration which has resulted in heroic action was contributed by the English, what is the special significance to Americans of a history of the Scotch-Irish and their tenacious institutions and traits of character? The Dutch, German, Irish, North European peoples, the Huguenots, English and Scotch-Irish have all contributed to the making of that distinctive and distinguished human being which all the world now recognizes as the American. Mr. Hanna's claim is that the Scotch-Irish had a large share in the making of the character of that American. A claim which, if the assertions of the New England historians are fully admitted, can not be substantiated.

The Mail and Express says that "Mr. Hanna has made a distinguished historic offering to the substantial literature and documentary riches of our day. There has never been lacking a resounding echo in the trump of fame of the virtues and achievements of the Scottish race. It has been an accepted tradition and experience of this hemisphere as well as of others that wherever this hardy stock was grafted it would inevitably get on, thrive and bloom and be fruitful of good result. And in these volumes is contained the great preliminary account of this vigorous and vital element of Scotch-Irish in our own national life. . . . It is curious how pride in Scotch-Irish ancestry merges in an almost personal pride that those same ancestors got away from both Scotland and Ireland. This pride may be detected in this work, blended with the serenities of the student of a great historic movement. America's debt to Scotland is greater than most New England historians have admitted. The reaction against the Boston view of the making of our country as chiefly a Boston deed has possibly been increased in recent years by the old persistent certainties of New England that she was the founder of the American commonwealth. They of New England have the habit of writing themselves up more than the people in other parts of the land, of less leisure, less inclination for the pen and less of the dominating Anglo-Saxon spirit which brooks no rivalry and sees no good in anything foreign to itself."

The Pittsburg Times says: "In the person of Charles A. Hanna the Scotch-Irish have found a historian who promises to treat the subject exhaustively, and, judging by the tone of his first two volumes, he intends to maintain every claim which has been

made by that element of our population that they are the salt of the earth and that they have always been the leaders and prime movers in every great epoch that has marked the progress of the country. . . . The volumes are valuable as a contribution to general history, interesting in showing the growth and characteristics of this people, the causes which contributed to the formation of those characteristics, and their transplanting and survival in a new country and amid new environments; and they will be especially interesting to the millions of descendants of that stout virile race who still contribute so much to the strength and greatness of the nation."

The Chicago Evening Post reviewer says: "Students of these volumes will recall the lament of Alexander the Great that he, unlike Achilles, had no Homer to sing of his exploits. The Scotch-Irish in America have found as yet no Homer. How could they among the New England writers of American history? And yet Mr. Hanna will not diminish this mischief by insisting so strenuously that the puritans of England and the Scotch-Irish Presbyterians were of wholly different blood. His grudge against New England carries him to indefensible extremes. The geographical boundary between Scotland and England is scarcely visible. Kershope Burn is a very little creek. Sound patriotism and sober history alike condemn this pitting of Dutchman against puritan, puritan against covenanter and covenanter against cavalier. There is glory enough for all and if we hunt for it also some shame. America has been lifted to its high place not by this or the other race, but by the noble men and women (English, Scotch, Dutch, Irish, German, Swede) of all the races that colonized her prairies, conquered her mountains and subdued the wilderness. The duty of the historian is to represent impartially the constructive services of every element in our earlier population. Mr. Hanna's volumes are a valuable contribution toward that thrilling narrative, the history of the Scotch-Irish in America. They are a world of industry and patient enthusiasm; no serious student of our annals can afford to neglect them; and though marred by an obtrusive narrowness, they bring into open day a constitutive element of American life as remarkable as any in our national development."

An excess produces an intemperate reaction. The claims of the Boston set that the New England puritans contributed the ideals that conquered first in the Revolution and then in the Rebellion have begun to be resented by the whole country. And there is danger of our not giving to the New England patriots and reforming orators the credit that is their due. They were a great, a very obstinate as well as a conceited and bigoted people. The Scotch have the same characteristics, and it is not at all likely that their services to this country, to themselves and to posterity will be forgotten so long as they can speak and write and still possess descendants like Mr. Hanna, the author of the Scotch-Irish in America. The length and earnestness of these reviews, as well as their invariable position at the head of the column, are a great compliment to the first book of an hitherto unknown author.

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Prince Henry's Visit

Prince Henry was much more democratic than many of his hosts, city functionaries, who were as titillated and as anxious to show that they were used to the ways and conventions of courts as the courtiers at the coronation of the king in "The Prisoner of Zenda." They one and all did well; but their artificial courtliness set awkwardly. We are accused as a people of loving royalty, its signs and personages, more than any other people. This is not so. We do not love a lord and grovel before a king as a people but as individuals. Those of us who had not the entree to Prince Henry's presence do not at all approve of the obeisances and salaams practiced by

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