PART TWO. THE SUNDAY JOURNAL. PAGES 9 TO 16

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## MR. BOK'S LITERARY GOSSIP

### Rumors Concerning a Literary Newspaper and a Daily Journal for Women.

### How Beecher Found His Borrowed Books—Magazine Success in England—Literary Women as Housekeepers—Personal.

Special Correspondence of the Sunday Journal.

NEW YORK, April 1.—Every once in a while the New York air gets perfectly surcharged with rumors of new periodical ventures, and at present this is the case. Last week a party of bright literary men got together to discuss the starting of a literary newspaper. Quite a good capital was assured, and the idea was talked of as quite a probability. Then, another set of men recently came together with the view of starting a newspaper entirely devoted to woman and her interests. Here are two projects most seriously talked of. Now, the fact is I do not think it requires a very far-sighted man to see quite clearly that there is positively no room in New York or elsewhere for either venture. The time has not come in our literature when a literary newspaper can be made to pay, as our strictly literary periodicals bear evidence. There is not a single literary weekly, fortnightly or monthly in this country which issues and sells ten thousand copies. A literary newspaper is undoubtedly needed, but things that are needed are not always taken by the public. So far as a daily newspaper for women is concerned, there is no demand for it. Women are unquestionably reading newspapers far more than they ever did, but this is no indication that a daily paper entirely given over to their interests could me made profitable. Such a venture would be costly, for only the best is successful nowadays, and I think that when the projectors of the proposed paper for women carefully look over the ground they will be inclined to abandon the idea.

JOURNALISTIC ANGLING FOR WOMEN.

It is just a nice question to what extent the daily newspaper can hope to secure the patronage of women. Every editor is after it, but how many secure it? "Woman's pages" are almost numberless; they are started briskly by almost every paper which has a Sunday issue. Now, as a matter of fact, there are just two newspapers published in America to-day which are sustaining anything which even approaches a successful woman's department. It happens to be in the line of my work to have watched this branch of journalism, and I make this latter assertion after months, yes years, of the most careful watching. To print the picture of a new gown, to give a column of cooking recipes, to tell how to make a chair out of a barrel, to tell how to clean lace curtains, does not constitute a "woman's page," although many editors apparently think it does. Women receive this class of information from other sources which have better facilities for securing it than has the newspaper. An editor starts a "woman's page," and the first thing he puts into that page is a lot of fashions. And here, where he honestly believes he has made his first hit, he has made his first mistake. Women are not such creatures of fashion as some men imagine they are. There are certain periodicals entirely devoted to women's fashions, and the daily newspaper can no more hope to enter into their field than can the fashion journal, published every week, rival the daily as a gatherer of telegraphic news. There is abundant room for a really good woman's department in modern journalism, but as yet exactly the right article put forth by the right person is still invisible. And the best verification of this will come to any one who chooses to seek it from the women of any of our cities.

THEY BORROWED BEECHER'S BOOKS.

Any one who knew Henry Ward Beecher at all knew of his love of books and the varied libraries which he succeeded in gathering. He was, however, most prodigal in lending his books and forgetting the borrowers. Then, when he wanted a certain book from his library, he would find it gone. He would, of course, have forgotten the borrower, but his method of tracing a borrowed book was unique.

One evening the great preacher suddenly appeared at a friend's house, and, walking quietly into the drawing-room without removing his overcoat, and up to his friend, said:

"W——, why don't you bring back that Ruskin of mine that I lent you?"

The man colored to the roots of his hair. "Why, Mr. Beecher," he said, "I'll take it to your house to-morrow morning. I would not have kept it so long if you had not told me I might."

At this Beecher burst into a fit of merry laughter. "Found! Found!" he shouted, as he took off his overcoat and threw himself exhausted into a chair.

Some one asked him what he meant. When he could stop laughing he said: "I am always ready to lend my books to any one who will make good use of them and bring them back, but I always forget that I have done it. It happened, in this case, that I wanted that volume of Ruskin, but when I went to the shelf for it it was gone. I knew I must have lent it, but to whom I could not remember. During the past week I began to demand the book of every friend I met to whom I might have lent it. I have been to six houses to-night. A dozen, at least, have protested innocence, but at last I've struck the guilty man. I shall know in future how to find missing books. The plan works beautifully."

MAGAZINE SUCCESSES IN ENGLAND.

The English reading public is said to be far more critical than is that of America, but I often wonder how that statement is reconciled with the peculiar successes achieved in English periodical ventures. The perfect ease with which a magazine of doubtful merit can apparently be launched in England is astounding. Take the new periodicals of recent origin, and not one of them could achieve even a moderate degree of success were it published in America. The Review of Reviews is, perhaps, the most worthy of support from the stand-point of true merit, yet a more shockingly made-up magazine than is the English edition of that periodical would be difficult to find. Yet Mr. Stead has secured an actual sale of 150,000 copies for his paper. Of the first issue of Jerome K. Jerome's new monthly, The Idler, over one hundred thousand copies were sold, yet no one, I am sure, will say that either the first or second number of the magazine was within hailing distance of being even readable, to say nothing of being interesting. In the first issue there was printed, as original, a poem to Mark Twain published years ago in this country. Then it had the first installment of Mark Twain's story, "The American Claimant," which is about through its tedious run in this country. The Strand Magazine, a publication a trifle over a year old, has also a circulation of 100,000 and over, and if you give it credit for having had three bright features since its commencement, you have said all and more. The Long Quarterly is the latest venture, and a success from the start, I am informed. It has brought out one issue. This quarterly purposes to be for fiction what the existing quarterlies are towards politics and church matters. A quarterly is always a dismal periodical at its best, but this recent acquisition from London is simply par excellence in that respect. Truly, to edit a magazine in England and to edit one in America are two entirely distinct things.

LITERARY WOMEN AS HOUSEKEEPERS.

It is a popular supposition that literary women live in a sort of hazy atmosphere, and that the homely arts of cooking and housekeeping are unknown to them. I was particularly struck by the fallacy of this notion by listening to the conversation of two of the most prominent literary women of the day at a dinner party a few evenings ago. One would have supposed that such a thing as the pen never came into their fingers, but that their lives were spent in the kitchen. The fact is that the majority of literary women are far better housekeepers than the public imagine. While portions of their days are spent in their "dens," the kitchen is not forgotten, and frequently have I sat down to a delicious dinner personally prepared by a hostess of literary renown in the absence or sickness of cook or servant. Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren, for example, can cook as well as she can write. Anna Katharine Green is a model housekeeper. For years Frances Hodgson Burnett did all her own work, and cooking is not a lost art with her to-day. "The Duchess" can prepare as palatable a dinner as can her cook. Edna Dean Proctor is likewise an excellent cook. Madeline Bridges loves housekeeping as much as she does to write a poem. Ella Wheeler Wilcox superintends the preparation of all her meals, and markets like an expert. Rebecca Harding Davis is another good domestic manager. Mrs. Humphrey Ward is not in love with the kitchen, but she has an intelligent knowledge of everything in connection with it that makes her independent of the whims of servants. And there is a long list which one could give to prove, and most conclusively, too, that some of our foremost literary women are among the best housekeepers, and do not neglect the kitchen for the library.

CHAT ABOUT AUTHORS.

Sister Rose Gertrude, or Mrs. Lutz, as is now her married name, is employing part of her time at her Honolulu home in literary work, and some articles by her will shortly appear. Mrs. Lutz writes gracefully, she has a fund of material to draw from, and what comes from her pen, it is reasonable to suppose, will be interesting.

Mrs. Admiral Dahlgren has finished her new novel, and it will shortly be brought out. Its title is "Chim; His Washington Winter." The story is built entirely upon original lines, and is a departure from the conventional style of fiction.

Sarah Orne Jewett has gone abroad seeking health and rest, and is not to return to America for some weeks.

John Habberton's famous story of "Helen's Babies" has just been translated into the Bohemian language, which now leaves the Turkish as the only tongue into which the story has not been rendered. I understand, in this connection, that the story still enjoys a steady sale, despite its age.

Lieut. Frederick Schwatka, the Arctic and Alaskan explorer, has contracted to write a series of articles on the world's fair, prior to its opening and during its celebration, for a syndicate of prominent European newspapers.

EDWARD W. BOK.

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## WHITMAN AND HIS POETRY.

### He Was Gray and Perhaps Good, but Was by No Means a Poet.

The Independent.

The designation of Walt Whitman as "the good, gray poet" fails of the complete and supreme infelicity of the famous definition of the crab, in that time had made him at least gray. He wrote the noisiest, noisomest stuff ever called poetry, in lines beginning with a capital letter, and whose elusive dactyllic suggestion had a habit of dribbling out into utter prose.

The characteristic of Walt Whitman's style is the big and the braggart. His poems are the long-winded replication of Emerson's egotistic pantheism:

"I am owner of the sphere,
Of the seven stars and the solar year,
Of Cæsar's hand and Plato's brain,
Of Lord Christ's heart and Shakspeare's strain."

So Whitman claimed to be everything and filled up page after page with the weary list of the particular things he was, apparently everything he could think of. The powers of nature and especially of generation he cataloged in the coarsest way, the brutal novelty of which was declared to be poetry by some astonished admirers, although Emerson was greatly annoyed at being represented as one of the worshipers of the rude-stepping bacchanal.

The form of Walt Whitman's verse was as bad as it could well be. After Longfellow's "Evangeline" had tuned the public ear to dactyls, and Tupper had diluted them into catching prosaic rhythms, Whitman adopted the last and weakest fad of metrically structureless verse. Then his diction was strained and repulsive, and modesty was a forgotten virtue and a fallacy.

When the war came he ceased to celebrate indecency, and devoted himself rather to glorifying the greatness of a country which has such big rivers, lakes and other geographical monsters. Though his verse improved, and he wrote some fair short poems in rhyme and meter, his reputation gradually fell, as it deserved; for it was impossible that the pure taste of a decent people could long endure the foul, or find perennial enjoyment in a loud auctioneer's catalogue of members, regions and activities. He outlived his fame, and will never recover his reputation, because he had in him no music, no imagination, no delicacy of sentiment, and was but the voice of one bawling in the wilderness, with nothing to say to the listener.

Are we told to speak nothing but good of the dead? What good can we say? He is past any pain from our words. He has added no strength to our literature, only a name of oddity and crankiness to its list of writers who have achieved notice and mention.

## SPRECKELS TO GO WEST.

### He Yields His Refinery to the Trust and Will Go to California.

Philadelphia Press.

Claus Spreckels will leave Philadelphia for San Francisco during the coming week, with all of his family except his son Adolph, who will stay here to attend to such Spreckels interests as will remain here. His departure will be permanent. He and his family will make the journey in a private car, specially fitted up for their accommodation and that of their servants.

"Mr. Spreckels's sugar refinery will be taken charge of by the trust to-morrow," was the remark that was passed among the brokers yesterday afternoon.

Said a well-posted man: "The difficulty about the price has been settled, and Spreckels will get what he asked. On Monday orders will be received and executed by the trust in Spreckels's office, and Mr. Spreckels will go to his California home."

By the absorption of the Spreckels refinery a deal of the most gigantic magnitude has been consummated, involving an expenditure of $25,000,000 in this city and Boston. There was about $19,000,000 of it spent here, and as this was the point on which the whole transaction was hinged the matter was engineered with a great deal of caution. Every day or so some authentic report would be denied by the trust people, which with other methods of the same kind aided them in bringing about the ends desired by them. Spreckels's plant is equipped with all the most approved patterns of modern machinery, but he could not run it profitably against the great combination of sugar companies that has endeavored for the past nine months to get him in the trust.

### Columbus No Saint.

Eugene Lawrence, in Harper's Magazine.

But who was this famous navigator, and what were his character and aims? The common legend paints him in saint-like and superhuman colors. No man was so wise, gentle, learned, studious, humane. To several of his recent biographers he is without a fault, a Numa, a Washington, with even a higher aim. With more than chivalric austerity he prepares himself for his rare achievements; heaven guides him on his way; he works miracles; sorrows and afflictions follow him; majestic and godlike, he passes away from among men, without a blemish and without a fault. Such he is to De Lorgues, Belloy and the Abbe Cadoret. Irving's delightful biography admit his faults, but softens them into venial errors. His hero is clothed in the fairnest drapery of his matchless style. The common legend has filled all modern histories, until the whole story of Columbus is wrapped in a cloud of falsehood. And there is some truth in the picture. Columbus possessed an unrivaled strength of character and will, a mind of rare power and sagacity. He was strong as Hercules in forcing his way into distant seas, but, unlike Hercules, rather committed than redressed wrongs. Never was there a more striking difference than that between the traditional Columbus of the biographers and the Columbus of true history, of his contemporaries.

## NOT AN EARTHLY PARADISE

### Mrs. Ward Details Her First Impressions of the Famous Capital of Brazil.

### Funerals Are Surprisingly Frequent, and Tarantulas, Snakes and Other Pests Are Numerous—An Ominous Lull in Politics.

Special Correspondence of the Sunday Journal.

RIO DE JANEIRO, Feb. 23.—Our only excuse for so completely altering the programme—after tickets had been bought for Buenos Ayres, luggage actually on the way to the wharf of the waiting steamer, and our mail for a month past having been consigned to the care of the Argentine minister—is the time-honored one that it is a woman's privilege to change her mind. The moving cause was this: We learned, by accident, at the literal eleventh hour, that a pleasant party of ladies and gentlemen, in whose company we journeyed some hundreds of miles on the other side of the continent, were bound for Rio, on board a vessel lying out in the harbor, which in two hours' time would sail. Well, a great deal can be accomplished in two hours by dint of vigorous hustling, aided by telegraph and cable. A man could never have done it, among these procrastinating manana people; but all the world is good to women, and the laziest South American will bestir himself for gallantry's sake, when lucre would not move him. On our side the incentive was great. Having long outstaid the original traveling party, we find our ranks embarrassingly reduced in this third year of globe-trotting; and in numbers there is strength, especially for foreigners in these wild countries. We had been dreading intensely the visit to Brazil, imagining all manner of bugaboos to affright lone females unacquainted with the Portuguese language; and here was an opportunity to accomplish it under the most favorable circumstances.

Therefore here we are, fifteen hundred miles nearer the equator than when we wrote you last week—reckoning distance from the fact that the French, German and English steamers that ply these coasts on their regular trips between South America and Europe register an average running of thirteen knots an hour, and the journey occupies five days. A few days later, when yellow jack stalks abroad on his annual raid, we will flit southward again and proceed to "do" the big Argentine country, the lonely Parana and unknown Paraguay—si dios quiere, as the Spaniards say.

FUNERALS IN THE STREETS.

By the way, they assure us that just now is the healthiest season in Rio, when yellow-fever cases are down to the minimum; yet last evening, in course of an hour's drive, which happened to lie along the broad, palm-bordered avenue leading to the main Campo Santo, we passed no fewer than eight funeral processions on their way to that city of the dead whose population must outnumber the living city a thousand to one. Though every foot procession went at a lively jog-trot, and those in carriages galloped along at full speed, it was easy to tell to which social strata the departed belonged, for here, as elsewhere, the same treatment is meted out to dead people as when they were living, according to the Scriptural axiom, "To him that hath shall be given." Those Brazilians who have lived in luxury are escorted to the tomb with the "pomp, and circumstance" (and, incidentally, with the vast expense to the relatives, who thus have double cause to mourn), of sable-canopied hearse, a score of plumed horses, and a long following of hired carriages filled with male friends—every man of them wearing black kid gloves, a broad band of crape around his tall silk hat, and a yard or two more of the same emblem of woe conspicuously streaming from his right coat sleeve, and those we saw bowling merrily behind the hearse were all smoking the inevitable cigarito and animatedly discussing politics, or perhaps the financial condition of the family of the deceased. In no case are there any women, for, as usual in these southern countries, the "gentler," and presumably more tender-hearted sex, are excluded from funerals and must bid the last adieu to those they have loved in the privacy of their homes—a very sensible argument among these passionate, high-strung, uncontrollable people who boast no Spartan females.

The humbler dead, stretched, coffinless, on a black-palled board, or inclosed in a gaudily-painted box, are borne to the place of interment on the shoulders of their friends, while those of the followers who can muster enough mil reis, go out on the second-class street cars. We observe one beautiful custom, that everybody in sight—on their balconies, in the streets, in shops, in carriages, rich and poor, haughty and humble—reverently uncover their heads when a funeral cortege passes by, doing involuntary homage to the pathetic "it" which we must all become when the soul has fled.

HOW THE LITTLE ONES ARE BURIED.

Even grim death is not without its humorous side in this strange city. Brazilian angolitas ("little angels," as the corpses of children are universally called), are not arrayed for the grave in the conventional white or black of other countries, but in scarlet. There is a small scarlet hearse for the convenience of those who can afford it, adorned with scarlet pall and curtains, scarlet plumes and trappings for the horses, while the little coffin it contains is invariably covered with scarlet, and the wreaths and bouquets on top of it tied with scarlet ribbons. To carry out the "eternal fitness," the child should have died of scarlet fever, instead of diseases engendered by dirt and neglect, the prevailing cause hereabouts of mortality among children. The angelitas of people too poor to hire the splendid scarlet hearse are conveyed to the tomb on the heads of their parents, in a small box, painted blue or yellow, striped with white, almost identical in contour, size and color with those boxes that are continually trotted about the streets in the same manner, containing bread, cakes and dulces, so that to unaccustomed eyes the two are indistinguishable.

We arrived at the cemetery gate just as a soldier's funeral was filing through, and, wishing to see the spot where the wanderings of so many of our unfortunate countrymen have ended, we left our carriage and followed the procession—at a very "respectful distance," remembering the prevalance of small-pox and other contagions. The dead warrier lay upon a sort of double-decked platform, in full view of men, with only his martial cloak around him, and had been carried in this manner through the crowded streets of the city on the shoulders of his comrades from the barracks, a distance of three miles or more, preceded by a military band playing jubilant marches and quicksteps. Uncoffined, he was laid in the soldiers' corner to await the resurrection reveille. Each of his late comrades took a shovelful of the freshly turned-up earth and threw upon him, and then, to the exhilarating strains of "The Barber of Seville," they quickstepped back to town.

The riotous growth and intensity of green in this grave-yard is appalling, for it is the rankness of the battle-field—life rioting upon death. The splendid palms that flaunt their plumes in the face of the sky have their roots set deep in decay, and in that decay are the germs of fever and death. By this time the sun had disappeared, but the evening breeze, reeking with poisonous odors, came hot and unrefreshing. We thought of the old saw, anent a green Christmas and a fat graveyard; for, though the festive season is passed, these February days must be cold at home. But, thank heaven, in no cemetery of "God's country" can such fatness be found. Whatever you do, friends, don't die in Brazil—or, for that matter, anywhere in Spanish America. If you happen to cherish the Protestant faith you would be put into a shallow hole among suicides, Jews, here-