

# CHRONICLE AND COMMENT

By ARTHUR  
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SOME day soon this department is going to take up at length the subject of mistakes in books about New York. Here, for example, among the novels of the season is Mr. Charles Hanson Towne's "The Chain," frankly designed as a picture of the New York of twenty years ago. The most irritable critic could not accuse the author of writing of the city with merely superficial knowledge, yet Mr. Towne is guilty of several curious little slips. For example, he places THE NEW YORK HERALD in 1902 opposite the old Astor House. Of course, it never was directly opposite the Astor House, and the migration from the corner of Ann street and Broadway, on the site of what was once Barham's Museum, to Herald Square, at the junction of Broadway and Thirty-fifth street, took place early in the 1890s. Again Mr. Towne describes his hero going to "Florodora" about 1905.

A FEW years ago, when Mrs. Wharton's "The Age of Innocence" appeared, from all directions came corrections of minor inaccuracies. Such and such a style of hat was not worn in the period with which the story was supposed to deal. The boxes in the old Academy of Music at Fourteenth street and Irving place were not as Mrs. Wharton described them. Patti did not sing in New York in such and such a year. All these corrections were strictly legitimate, only the writers offered them entirely too seriously. The fact that Mrs. Wharton was occasionally ten years out of the way in introducing an event that is a matter of record did not in the least affect the quality of "The Age of Innocence" as a novel. "Nicholas Nickleby" is not to be dismissed forever because in one of the Dotheboys Hall chapters Dickens makes Squeers direct one boy to hoe the weeds in the garden and the next minute order another boy to break the ice in the pitcher.

ODDLY enough, these little curiosities of misstatement about a city's topography or history are invariably made by the persons who really know, or at least are qualified to know, of what they are writing. They are not to be found in the stories of those who derive their local color from books of reference. One of the most curious of topographical blunders appeared in Owen Johnson's "Max Fergus" of some years ago, curious for the reason that at the time the writer was under the influence of Balzac and emulating his model in the study of streets. From his office in West Tenth street, opposite the Jefferson Market police court, the shy lawyer Boffinger trails a woman, first southward, then across Washington Square, then northward along the avenue, then eastward on Twelfth street. So far so good. But then Mr. Johnson went on minutely to describe the pursuit leading from Twelfth street north along Irving place. Of course, Irving place does not, and never did, run below the northern side of Fourteenth street.

E. P. DUTTON & CO. announce for early publication "To Tell You the Truth," a new volume in their edition of the works of Leonard Merrick. Even where a volume practically embodies tales that have been published before, this new edition has enabled the author to introduce little refinements and to smooth over what he considers the rough edges. He has made a number of felicitous changes in names. For example, there was that very charming tale "Little-Flower-in-the-Wood." The cafe of that tale was originally called the "White Wolf." In the new edition he calls it the "Cafe of the Good Old Times." Mr. Merrick thus explains the change: "Long after the story had been published I came across this name over a little workman's cafe, a debit, on a country road somewhere, and it was so exceedingly appropriate to the story that I regretted that I had not struck it sooner. I have never heard of any cafe of this

name in Paris, and 'Little-Flower-in-the-Wood' is purely fiction."

ALSO the name of the cafe patronized by the famous Tricotrin and his cronies has been changed in the new edition to the "Cafe of the Beautiful Future." Mr. Merrick called it that because he felt that there ought to have been in Paris a cafe called the "Cafe of the Beautiful Future." Three or four years ago Mr. Merrick confessed that he dreaded to go back to Paris. He feared that he might not find Tricotrin alive; in other words, he wondered how much of the life of Montmartre the war had left. He wrote: "It is quite possible that I may find that I can never write of them any more, for, lacking the familiar atmosphere, I think they would be pathetic figures. Personally, I found it sad to meet the Musketeers again in their middle age and 'Vingt Ans Apres.'" That was not Robert Louis Stevenson's sentiment. It was the twilight tales that R. L. S. loved best.

SEVERAL new books about Abraham Lincoln have appeared in the present season. Three of them were reviewed in last week's issue of the book section. This introduction is the excuse for telling the story of a strange dream. A number of years ago Miss Clara E. Laughlin wrote her book "The Death of Lincoln." Naturally, for months she lived with her subject. To the exclusion of everything else, it was with her in waking and sleeping hours. One night, to use the words of the Tinker of Bedford, she dreamed a dream. In the dream she was walking along a river bank. A man was by her side, and, turning, she recognized him. It was John Wilkes Booth. For a time they moved along in silence. Then, in a sad voice, he said: "Miss Laughlin, I am going to tell you a secret—something that I have never before revealed to any one in the world. I did not kill President Lincoln. He committed suicide in that box."

A WORD or two more about the football songs of yesteryear and the football songs of to-day, a subject that was discussed in this department two weeks ago. Truth forces the admission that the average song that rings across the chalked field, while thrilling in sound, is sadly and surprisingly lacking in literary quality. That does not mean that our universities have not inspired verse of a high order. Take Yale, for example. Mr. Brian Hooker's "Mother of Men, Old Yale," is real poetry. Then twenty years or so ago there was the fine poem by the late Edmund Clarence Stedman:

O mighty Mother, proudly set  
Beside the far-reaching sea;  
None shall the trophies past forget,  
Or doubt the splendor yet to be.

BUT songs like these do not seem to fit the joyous and hectic atmosphere of a big football game, with its riot of excitement and color. There the voices of Yale men are raised, not in reverent praise of the Yale tradition, but in shouting the belligerent prowess of Eli; in barking the threat of the bulldog. It is "Bulldog, Bulldog; Eli, Yale," or

March, march on down the field,  
Fighting for EH.  
Crash through the Crimson line,  
Their strength to defy.

Will some one of Yale's many eminent men of letters kindly oblige by explaining just what "their strength to defy" means?

FROM Princeton, conspicuously rich in literary tradition and achievement, comes about the most atrocious rime to be found in any song designated to spur on a football team. An otherwise excellent song ends:

Locomotives by the score.  
We will fight with a vim,  
That is dead sure to win,  
For Old Nassau.

The riming of "score" and "Nassau" is

bad enough, but the riming of "vim" and "win" is abominable beyond words. There is a real point of "eligibility" to be referred to Dean McClenahan, the sternest and most scrupulous of disciplinarians.

ANOTHER fair point of criticism to be directed against the battle songs of our American universities is on the score of lack of originality in the matter of music. "Up Above Cayuga's Waters" is satisfying and stimulating to the hosts of Cornell's undergraduates, alumni and alumnae, but of course it is nothing, but new words to the air of "Lovely Annie Lisle." There is "Fair Harvard."

Fair Harvard, thy sons to thy jubilee throng,  
And with blessings surrender thee o'er,  
By these festival rites, from the age that is past,  
To the age that is waiting before.

Thrilling and dignified without question, but the air is the one to which bibulous gentlemen in powdered periwigs were singing Tom Moore's "Believe me, if all these endearing young charms" in days when "Harvard was a pup."

ALTHOUGH the words, if we are not mistaken, are by Dr. Henry Van Dyke, Princeton's "Rally round the cannon, boys, and build the fire bright" is nothing but the old familiar "Marching Through Georgia." Incidentally, another song of professional origin is Dean Andrew Fleming West's really fine and thrilling "The Triple Cheer," which, for some reason or other, has been entirely neglected of recent years. That, like "Old Nassau," one of the most widely famed of all American college hymns, is the exception in that it is sung to strictly original music. There is genuine literary quality to many of the lines of "Bright College Years," which once was the accepted hymn of Yale alumni and undergraduates. But five years ago it was an embarrassing possession, for it goes to the air of "Die Wacht am Rhein." At Yale gatherings—Yale did not play formal football in 1917 and 1918—song leaders occasionally called for it from force of habit. But they were quickly suppressed.

SPEAKING of "Bright College Years," a memory frankly personal and intimate, illustrating the grip of the great autumn game and its singing accompaniment, and what the "college spirit" meant in after life, may be permitted here. In the autumn of 1916 the writer of these paragraphs went behind the German lines as a member of the American Relief for Belgium and the North of France. Since the beginning of the war he had read, as we all had read, of the amazing invisibility of the German field gray. The late Richard Harding Davis, in his description of the march of the invaders through Brussels on August 20, 1914, said: "You could see the horses of the Uhlans, but not the riders." From the moment of entering the neck of the bottle that was Belgium, through the gap in the highly charged electric wire that stretched the length of the Dutch frontier, thousands of soldiers were seen, but only in little groups of two or three.

TO receive that impression of invisibility it was necessary to behold them moving *en masse*. The chance came the second day after arrival in Brussels. Climbing the sharp, cobbly ascent of the Rue des Colonies the writer heard in the distance the tapping drums. A battalion on its way from the Palais de Justice, turned into a military barracks, to the Palais de la Nation for the change of guard mount. The head of the column was swinging round the statue of Godfrey de Bouillon in the Palace Royale along the Rue Royale. On it came, nearer and nearer, the bayonets gleaming in the winter sunlight, and the metallic tramp of the iron shod boots timing with the drum taps. Then the band leader turned, raised aloft his baton, and there blared forth the strains of "Die Wacht am Rhein."

TO quote from a descriptive article that appeared many months later in the columns of the Princeton Alumni Weekly: "Then something very curious happened; something that I can never explain; that I shall never forget. It was the hold of

the years. The moment, the scene, the green gray column against the trees of the opposite park passed from the vision and from the mind. The notes brought a thrill to the heart, a tingle to the cheeks, a poignant memory of kindlier strife. I seemed to be looking over a vast amphitheater, University Field, or the old Yale Field, or the Bowl, or the Palmer Stadium. I seemed to be seeing the waving of blue and of orange and black, and tens of thousands of excited faces, among them those of the most beautiful girls in the world. I seemed to be seeing the green turf and the chalk lines, and the teams running on the field for the beginning of the second half, and in the great stand opposite the swinging hats of the cheering section. And the music was molding itself into the words:

Bright college years, with pleasure rife,  
The shortest, gladdest years of life,  
How bright will seem through memory's haze

Those happy, golden, bygone days;  
Then let us strive that ever we  
May let these words our watch cry be:  
Where'er upon life's sea we sail,  
For God! For Country and for Yale!

TWO weeks ago the point was taken in this department that there were very few football stories of the first order. Several letters have been received taking issue with that expression of opinion. One writer calls attention to what he considers some very excellent stories about the game on the Pacific coast written by James Hopper ten years or so ago. Another asks: "Have you read Lawrence Perry's 'The Winning Play' in the November Red Book?" We have and we have found it a very good story, but its very foundation is a glaring inaccuracy, which coming from a man of Mr. Perry's profound knowledge of the game is nothing short of amazing. The quarterback of the 1893 Haleson eleven comes back from the West for the Haleson-Shelburne game. Between the halves he converts a defeated team into a winning one. Exhorting the players in the dressing room, he says in substance: "The rules now allow you twenty minutes intermission. I want those twenty minutes. In them I will show you how to win." Yet every candidate for a freshman team has known for weeks that paragraph b, section 3, rule 4 begins: "There shall be fifteen minutes intermission between the second and third periods."

PROBABLY one reason why there are not more football stories of the first order is that fiction is hedged about with all kind of restricting rules, whereas fact is not. In writing a yarn about the great autumn game the unexpected may be introduced once, twice, perhaps even thrice, but not more. There must be an orderly respect for the reader's credibility. The thrills must be distributed throughout the game. The turning of the tide may come at the very end, but it must not be overdone. On October 28 at Stag Field, Chicago, there was a football game between the University of Chicago and Princeton. No experienced writer of fiction would ever dare to invent one-half of what actually happened in the last ten minutes of the fourth period of that game.

BURNS MANTLE'S "The Best Plays of 1921-1922," the third volume in the "Best Plays" series, has just been published by Small, Maynard & Company. It is more than an excellent volume for reference; it is very entertaining reading for the rapidly growing number of persons who are turning to the play in book form for diversion without inconvenience. Mr. Mantle has achieved variety in the ten plays he has selected for condensed presentation. "Anna Christie," "Dulcey," "Six Cylinder Love," "The Hero," and "Ambush" are American in theme and authorship; "A Bill of Divorcement," "The Dover Road," and "The Circle," in English; "He Who Gets Slapped," is Russian; and "The Nest," an adaptation from the French. In his introduction Mr. Mantle calls particular attention to two of these plays as being "plays of literary quality written by American authors of promise on American themes. These were Gilbert Embry's searching social satire 'The Hero' and Arthur Richman's 'Ambush,' a vivid, if sordid, study of a common phase of American middle class life."