

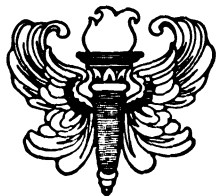
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The National Weekly



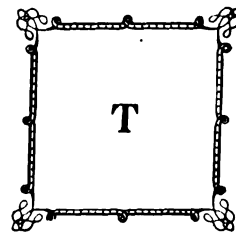
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Peter Fenelon Collier—Robert J. Collier, 416-424 West Thirteenth Street

NEW YORK

January 16, 1909

Blessed Is He



THE HUMORIST is the only creator who is assured of welcome by his contemporaries and of affectionate quotation by his neighbors. The world is immediately receptive to his tidings of great joy. Poets, painters, sculptors, musicians work against the grain of the natural world. Their message does not fit snugly into the structure of the universe. Their life is a battle, and sometimes a torture; and in sadness they beat their lonely music out. They may be struggling to inform a sullen world that all the blind effort is shaping up to a radiant consummation, and that the whole race of mankind is dimly obedient to the heavenly vision; yet most men, hearing this interpretation of the daily lot, think it criticism and curse the singer. Then comes the humorist. With a vision of life as full-orbed as that rendered through the lyric voice or the color-sense, and an interpretation of pain and failure as searching and fundamental as that of the prophets, he roars out his truths to the applause of his hearers. Revelers halt the chorus for him to insert his mirthful strophe, and the saints delay the rite to catch his casual whisper. His visits to this stricken planet are never ill-timed. DANTE ate bitter bread where ARISTOPHANES would have won enthusiastic banquets. Kindly is the fate of RABELAIS, CHAUCER, DICKENS, even CERVANTES—to be both glorious and happy—to reveal truth and gain welcome.

Sport

A YOUNG MAN, spending some years in New Haven for the sake of equipping his mind with weapons for a happy and useful existence, fails to perform successfully in a rowing contest against Harvard University. His health deteriorates; he is unable to resist disease; in six months he is dead. The tragedy is a condensed and powerful argument for the return of college athletics to within the limits of cheerful relaxation, to the temper in which it is practised in the British colleges, where it is not treated as if every football or rowing contest were a Trafalgar or Waterloo.

Ugliness and Beauty

MENTION POE in a well-mannered gathering, and these are the ideas that group themselves: First, a bright cluster of glossy Ravens and shuddering Rue Morgue murders; less sharp but still clear, the Bells and the Gold-Bug; and, last in the ardent throng, a dim wake of Annabel Lees and Ulalumes shivering off into the immemorial darkness of midnight tarns. This estimate places POE at a small remove only from the horror school of "MONK" LEWIS, with the feast of worms and the anapestic play of moonlight on tombstones—a naked appeal to the fleshly nerve of fear. This is precisely to lose POE in the dexterity of his trick performance. It will take him long to emerge from his magic mirrors, cabinet specialties, floating bodies, and thumping, leaping tambourines. It is as difficult as if HERRMANN the Great had rounded off his breezy evening with a call to prayer. If POE is fully to inherit the future, we must separate him from his perishing elements. We must subordinate the horror and mystery, and leave the sound but slender structure of beauty. POE says while his adorers applaud:

"It writhes!—it writhes!—with mortal pangs,
The mimes become its food,
And the angels sob at vermin fangs
In human gore imbued.

"And the angels, all pallid and wan,
Uprising, unveiling, affirm
That the play is the tragedy, 'Man,'
And its hero the Conqueror Worm."

There are traces innumerable in literature of an alchemy that touches the decaying form into beauty. We have the Persian's word for it:

"That every Hyacinth the Garden wears
Dropt in her Lap from some once lovely Head."

Perfect in such transformation are the lines:

"And from her fair and unpolluted flesh
May violets spring."

In this realm POE is not a great poet. His right to immortal life must be found in other fields.

Jan. 16

A Poet's Best

TWO OF POE'S POEMS are reprinted by us on another page. In "Helen" and "Israfel" we have POE the sane and undying. Pressed upon by unlovely life, scorning the mob and all the brute accompaniments of democracy, thwarted and dispirited, he did what the hunted deer will do when cornered by the hounds. He jumped clear. Hating his surroundings, spurning the ground, he flew straight up from geographical and racial limitations, and sang a song that Israfel or MOSES and the LAMB could have sung in any clime at any age. Only two things are needed for that music—only two—wings and the golden throat. There is the hint in him of glorious galleys, golden galleys, argosies sunk in the unplumbed acres of mid-sea, the dance of the stars at midnight, the radiant pour of the full moon, the romance of the upper air, lawns bathed in dew and beating back the waves of the infinite distances. He was riming sheer unrelated beauty. He imagined himself free of immediate ugly local life, selfish, cruel haste, fever and thirst, and found singing robes and a welcome in the gardens that hang clear of the temporal world. There is no space, no time in his verse. But, in cutting loose from the local, he did not reach the universal. He had no love for troubled men, no instrument for the low, sad music of humanity. It was the cry of a lonely man, remote from the comforts of the world's loves. All the strings went untouched save the one string of a solitary nature questing beauty. What he reached is enough, although barely enough, to give him immortality. It is the sobbing note of the God-forsaken.

An American Genius

POE'S ANNIVERSARY leads to many words about the poet and weaver of tales, and it is easier for us, as for others, to explain where his genius reached its limits than to give in words an idea of the perfection of his art. Moreover, we like the resurgent wave of opinion in regard to his character. The bigotry and virulence which sprang from the New England conscience at its worst are ebbing. In place has come approbation for a soul which struggled, though at times in vain. If, in his course onward, he seems sometimes to have stumbled, it was partly because of eagerness, and always with his face toward Eldorado. To asseverate too loudly that he was not impeccable is to shackle his memory with a generalization which applies to all mankind. It is by the visions among which he dwelt that one must finally judge him. Concerning these, the personages in two of his tales speak as if of the poet himself:

"They who dream by day are cognisant of many things which escape those who dream only by night. In their gray visions they obtain glimpses of eternity, and thrill, in waking, to find that they have been upon the verge of the great secret. In snatches they learn something of the wisdom which is of good, and more of the mere knowledge which is of evil. They penetrate, however rudderless or compassless, into the vast ocean of the 'light ineffable.'"

"To dream has been the business of my life."

When such a dreamer can crystallize his visions into words as perfect as those of POE, there becomes reason, and to spare, for his country to remember him proudly when one hundred years have passed.

Fortunately Untrue

THE WATCHFUL PRESS AGENT fooled one of the most wary newspapers when he successfully started on its journey the anecdote that Mr. TAFT had been to the theater only once in twenty years—to the play, of course, which this gentleman represented. To the President-elect our congratulations that the story is not true. Not to know the glamour of the play-house, even in America, would be a loss. Pleasure lurks about the footlights. The theater's function is to carry us to fancy's joys.

"Imagination is the air of mind."

The theater's first purpose is to feed the imagination that makes the world approach more nearly to our wishes. Often it fulfils its mission badly, and in this country we still have the task of establishing homes of classic drama, and of new but leading plays, like the Burgtheater, the Deutsches Theater, and the Comédie Française; but even in this country it would be a loss never to see the play; a loss of stimulation, of sympathy, and of happiness.

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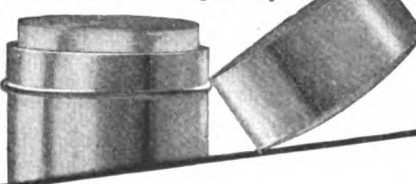
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Hats "On the Hill"

(Concluded from page 18)

proportion of perhaps one to eight or ten, and what were the girls who subscribed?

The girls who followed what seemed an unvital law looked to be, in comparison with the healthy lawless ones, anemic, crushed, ruled by institution and tradition—sad, Eastern. They did not appear to be moved by instinct onward to the great and better unknown, which is the motive force of the university at large, but to have a touch of the morality of death. It was sad but inevitable that reactionary forces should be represented. However, it is probable that these forces are really so weak that they will fade out altogether and that the hedge of hats will be maintained in all its glory until another irresistible instinct, the external sign of which is fashion, shall capture the hearts and fancies of the young womanhood of Wisconsin.

The man of Wisconsin fearlessly follows wherever his job conducts him; even if the result is against tradition and convention. He is instinctive, radical in action, if not in thought, and progressive. Shall we deny instinctive radicalism of action to our girls? Shall not their radicalism extend to hats? Sober-garbed law can not divorce a girl—if she is an instinctive Wisconsin girl—from her hat. No hollow reform affects her imagination, least of all, perhaps, the hat reform. Can any reformer touch her heart? Not if he offers her felt and negation.

Important Events in 1909

"LAFAYETTE COLLEGE, EASTON, PA.

"THE EDITOR OF COLLIER'S WEEKLY:

"My dear Sir—How did you overlook in your 'Important Events in 1909':

"(1) Charles Darwin, b. February 12, 1809?

"And most notable of all:

"(2) John Calvin, b. July 10, 1509, the four-hundredth anniversary of whose birth will be celebrated all over the world as the organizer of the reformed churches and the vindicator of liberty, civil and religious?

"Very truly,

"ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD, President."

A Letter to the Editor

"TO THE EDITOR OF COLLIER'S:

"Sir—Every educated man in America knows that President Eliot has rendered splendid service to the cause of education, and I have no desire to take from him one particle of the honor he so richly deserves, but Mr. R. W. Child in your Thanksgiving Number is in error in attributing to President Eliot the introduction of the elective system into American university life.

"In speaking of Dr. Eliot and Harvard, Mr. Child says:

"It meant the introduction of freedom of learning into American university life, not only here about this old institution, but, by example, everywhere.

"The elective system, the freedom of higher education, whatever this or that man shall say of it, has been the most important idea applied to education that ever proceeded from a single mind. It has at least taught the doctrine of individualism in learning; it has at least cleaned out all the old fog and pettifog of our inherited educational tradition. This belongs to him. It is his."

"That this is not correct can be seen from an address by Professor Francis Greenwood Peabody of Harvard, delivered at the University of Virginia a few years ago. Professor Peabody says:

"The expansion of the elective system at Harvard is the secret of its growth. Liberty to teach and liberty to learn have brought devoted students. And the last thirty years of life at Harvard have testified to the American faith in liberty as the basis of education. But when we come to ask ourselves where this system was first devised, we come back to you. Fifty years before the administration of Harvard offered even a modest recognition to the principle of election it was absolutely accepted here by the genius, foresight, and philosophic grasp of Mr. Jefferson. Harvard claims to be one with the University of Virginia in a common devotion to the principle of liberty in educational life."

"Thus it is seen that not to Harvard and President Eliot, but to the University of Virginia and Thomas Jefferson, belongs the credit for introducing the elective system into American university life.

"ROBERT K. MASSIE,

"Alumnus of University of Virginia."

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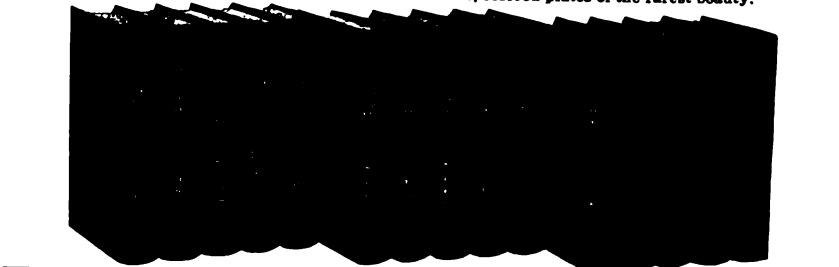
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