

## OPEN LETTERS

### The Charleston Exposition.

AFTER cold weather, spring is at hand in the Charleston Exposition; and full spring is needed to perfect its charming design. Its grass must be wholly grown, its flowers in full bloom. Already the jonquils and hyacinths are making the central garden radiant, presently the roses will follow, and then, with the air favorable to loitering upon benches or in gondolas, the place will seem as truly enchanted by day as it is now in its fairy-land of darkness and electric light. To wander at night among its floating domes and minarets is like moving in the golden prime of the good Harun-al-Rashid; for it may in truth be styled the duodecimo of our expositions. Philadelphia had an octavo; Chicago "a folio; Buffalo a quarto. The quality of Charleston's is exquisite.

When the Centennial was undertaken, Philadelphia counted over half a million inhabitants. At the time of the World's Fair Chicago had more than a million. Intrepid and gallant Charleston numbers but twenty-three thousand white people! It is not wonderful that the Confederacy proved hard to overcome.

Either the Meeting or the King street cars take you up at the Battery, and in twenty-five minutes set you down at the gates of the Exposition—twenty-five minutes from the town's beautiful southern water-front to its verge on the north-west by the Ashley River.

Entering, a symmetrical arrangement, three buildings making a quadrangle's three sides, confronts you after walking to the left from the gate. These are joined by low galleries running unbroken between them and holding the government exhibits. They inclose three sides of a garden whose complete beauty awaits the roses. The Auditorium makes the foot of this quadrangle, where you stand.

The brevity to which I have been invited allows me to touch only a few things, and these merely upon their surface. To look at, I have found the Cotton Palace (as it should be from its place at the head of the quadrangle) the most imposing. It presides over the assemblage. Commerce is at its left hand, South Carolina at its right. And certain things inside South Carolina must be especially named.

Rising to its dome is an edifice of the earth's products, the offering of Southern soil. Yellow grain crowns it, and much white cotton mingles in its base. Look from this shining structure at once down some steps to Florida, with its pale

moss hanging, and its flamingos. These two taken together, one warm and high-colored, the other almost mystic and full of shadow, are like the two strains of hilarity and sadness which make the music of the South. Look at them well, for they are the unconscious undertone of the whole Exposition, and lie at the base of its beauty. Through the brilliant variety of Spartanburg's exhibit, the cereals of Chester, the woods and tobacco of Darlington, you may trace these strains running like a motive. So much for the appeal to the eye.

Among the appeals to the intelligence in the South Carolina Building it seems to me that the exhibit of Winthrop College stands first. It is a college for women, with a kindergarten department as well as a normal graded course. Some five hundred are being taught there, and it turns out teachers for the schools of South Carolina. Its diploma indicates that besides her book-learning each young woman has already benefited during two years by a practical experience of teaching the younger classes. From its kitchen exhibit to its examination-papers, this showing of Winthrop College is admirably presented. The institution must do great good.

But the South Carolina Building holds one object which to me (and I should think to any good American) is of surpassing interest. No appeal to the eye, you understand; merely a piece of paper. But between its four corners flows our life-blood. Between its four corners lies the vital center of our history. After the Declaration of Independence, what writing can you find, what document, comparable in significance to the original Ordinance of Secession, "done" at Charleston on the twentieth day of December, 1860? There it is, with its few sentences and its many signatures. The Declaration asserted our national birth; this Ordinance pronounced our Union dissolved. Near it is a tablet to the memory of De Kalb, who fell at Camden, 1780; near it, also, is the vase presented by the ladies of South Carolina to Andrew Jackson after the battle of New Orleans. But after seeing the Ordinance I could not look at these. I stood in front of that secession document, pondering. "Done" at Charleston, December, 1860, forty-one years ago! What would we have been now? A litter of snarling puppy republics. Can you not see us? Republic of the South, Republic of the North, Republic of the Middle West, Republic of Utah, Republic of Tacoma and of Los Angeles, etc., etc.—and Europe splitting her sides over our grand failure! Yes, I stood in front of the Ordinance, with thoughts of

Washington, of Lincoln, of Lee; and I thanked God for the surrender of Appomattox.

Almost at the other pole of the Exposition from here, stands the Art Building, beyond the race-track, beyond the very pretty State buildings which Maryland and New York have erected along the borders of the canal. And here is the next chief point of local interest *indoors*; for out of doors the live-oaks along the canal and by the Woman's Building and the banks of the Ashley River are rich with Southern atmosphere and charm. The tender light on the water, the trees rising from the flat lands on its farther side, their hues mellow against the sky, their shapes blurred in the pervasive, dreamy softness—this makes a local setting worth coming back to bask in many

a time. But the old Charleston family portraits in the Art Building tell the story of the place: its dignity, its elegance, its civilization. There they are, the men and women painted by Trumbull, Stuart, Copley, Sully, looking down at you from their past. And from them you can step to John Sargent in the next room, where hang the modern pictures.

Why are the old ones so serene? Why are the new ones so restless? Is it merely my imagination?

Well, my accorded space is full. If you come to the Exposition, see the South Carolina Building thoroughly, see the pictures, and live much out of doors.

CHARLESTON, March 10, 1902.

Owen Wister.



#### The Height of Absurdity.

THE American Girl of to-day's illustration  
Is drawn so absurdly, abnormally high  
That she looks down with scorn on the rest of  
creation,  
And needs, just to see them, a far-sighted eye.

The Gibson Girl led a procession of others,  
Whose height is now upward of seven feet ten,  
As they tower on high above husbands and  
brothers,  
These lofty ideals of the black-and-white men!

Such heroines, naturally, need to be wealthy,  
And dwell in magnificent halls at their ease;  
For a cozy apartment would prove most unhealthy  
(They 'd have to crawl round on their hands  
and their knees).

American draftsmen, do pause for reflection,  
And mirror our maidens more natural by far;  
To lower your standard will be no objection,  
Since the height of perfection is—just what  
they are!

Anna Mathewson.

#### The Power of the Press.

DID I ever tell you about the time we give a  
chicken-pie supper fer the relief of the starvin'  
Rooshans—or mebber it was Cubans? I fergit  
which, it was so long ago.

Well, 't was like this. We women wanted to  
do somethin' to help the good cause along; but it  
looked, at first, as if there was n't anything we  
*could* do.

"Get up some sort of an entertainment," says

a young woman that was boardin' here, same as  
you be, from New York. "Give a bright little  
farce, or some tableaux, or anything that people 'll  
pay to see."

But, land! we was all fat and middle-aged, and  
homely besides, and people was n't goin' to pay  
their good money just to see folks they could see  
any other day in the year fer nothin'.

"Then give a concert," says the enterprisin' young  
woman. "You must hev plenty of local talent in  
a town of this size." But, land o' Goshen! if she 'd  
ever a-heard any of us a-tryin' to sing, she would n't  
'a' suggested that.

"No," says I. "They 's only one thing the folks  
here hez any talent fer, and that 's cookin'."

"Just the thing," says the young woman. "Give  
a good supper, and charge 'em half a dollar apiece  
fer it."

"That 's too much," says I. "Folks 'd think they  
was bein' robbed if we asked more 'n a quarter."

"Well," says she, "you go around among the  
women-folks and solicit all the good things you can  
think of, borrow the vacant store next to the  
meat-market, hev some of the other women see  
about settin' the tables and waitin' on the people,  
and I 'll 'tend to the advertisin'. Do you s'pose  
the local papers 'll be willin' to do a little adver-  
tisin' fer us?"

"They will, and be glad to," says I, "if you give  
Henery Pillsberry a free invite to the supper, and  
promise to give him all the chicken-pie he can  
eat. He 's death on chicken-pie."

"All right," says she. "I 'll 'tend to that part  
of it. By the way, why not make it a regular  
chicken-pie supper?" says she. "A chicken-pie  
supper hez a sort of an attractive sound to it."

"Agreed," says I, and the thing was settled.