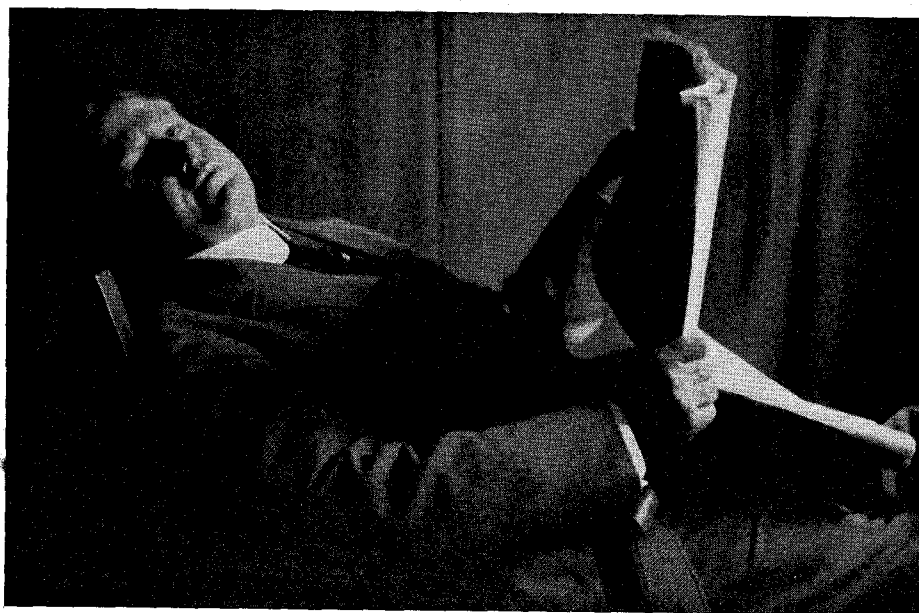


## A BOOK THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN

SINCE the death of that writer of romantic yet strikingly human stories whom the world knows as "O. Henry," there have appeared in print many instances illustrative both of his humor and of his close touch with life in many phases. And now *The Bookman* for July publishes an unfinished letter in which William Sidney Porter, to allow the writer his true name, attempted to give the spirit of a projected novel which might have been even more a "human document" than the best of his finished stories.

This fragmentary letter about a story that will never be told



"ABOUT THE ONLY CHANCE FOR THE TRUTH TO BE TOLD IS IN FICTION."

In conveying the idea of a novel just begun at the time of his death, O. Henry wrote, "I do not remember ever having read an autobiography, biography, or a piece of fiction that told the TRUTH."

—a letter expressing a peculiarly genuine and unconventional author's idea of what a novel should be—is given as follows:

"My idea is to write the story of a man—an individual, not a type—but a man who, at the same time, I want to represent a 'human-nature type,' if such a person could exist. The story will teach no lesson, inculcate no moral, advance no theory.

"I want it to be something that it won't or can't be—but as near as I can make it—the TRUE record of a man's thoughts, his description of his mischances and adventures, his TRUE opinions of life as he has seen it, and his *absolutely honest* deductions, comments, and views upon the different phases of life that he passes through.

"I do not remember ever having read an autobiography, a biography, or a piece of fiction that told the TRUTH. Of course, I have read stuff such as Rousseau and Zola and George Moore, and various memoirs that were supposed to be window-panes in their respective breasts; but, mostly, all of them were either liars, actors, or posers. (Of course, I'm not trying to belittle the greatness of their literary expression.)

"All of us have to be prevaricators, hypocrites, and liars every day of our lives; otherwise the social structure would fall into pieces the first day. We must act in one another's presence just as we must wear clothes. It is for the best.

"The trouble about writing the truth has been that the writers have kept in their minds one or another or all of three thoughts that made a handicap—they were trying either to do a piece of immortal literature, or to shock the public, or to please editors. Some of them succeeded in all three, but they did not write the *truth*. Most autobiographies are insincere from beginning to end, and about the only chance for the truth to be told is in fiction.

"It is well understood that 'all the truth' can not be told in print—but how about 'nothing but the truth?' That's what I want to do.

"I want the man who is telling the story to tell it—not as he would to a reading public or to a confessor—but something in this way. Suppose he were marooned on an island in mid-ocean

with no hope of ever being rescued; and, in order to pass away some of the time, he should tell a story to *himself*, embodying his adventure and experiences and opinions. Having a certain respect for himself (let us hope) he would leave out the 'realism' that he would have no chance of selling in the market; he would omit the lies and self-conscious poses, and would turn out to his one auditor something real and true.

"So, as truth is not to be found in history, autobiography, press reports (nor at the bottom of an H. G. Wells), let us hope that fiction may be the means of bringing out a few grains of it.

"The 'hero' of the story will be a man born and 'raised' in a somnolent little Southern town. His education is about a common-school one, but he learns afterward from reading and life. I'm going to try to give him a 'style' in narrative and speech—the best I've got in the shop. I'm going to take him through

all the main phases of life—wild adventure, city, society, something of the 'under world,' and among many characteristic planes of the phases. I want him to acquire all the sophistication that experience can give him, and always preserve his individual honest *human* view and have him tell the *truth* about everything.

"It is time to say now, that by the 'truth' I don't mean the objectionable stuff that so often masquerades under the name. I mean true opinions, a true estimate of all things as they seem to the 'hero.' If you find a word or a suggestive line or sentence in any of my copy, you cut it out and deduct it from the royalties.

"I want this man to be a man of natural intelligence, of individual character, absolutely open and broad-minded; and show how the Creator of the earth has got him in a rat-trap—put him here 'willy nilly' (you know the Omar verse); and then I want to show what he does about it. There is always the eternal question from the primal source—'What are you going to do about it?'

"Please don't think for the half of a moment that the story is going to be anything of an autobiography. I have a distinct character in my mind for the part, and he does not at all—"

Of this projected novel, *The Bookman* understands, O. Henry left just eight pages in manuscript.

## ANOTHER REMBRANDT FOR AMERICA

ONE MORE occasion for transatlantic moralizings upon the conquest of Art by Dollars, has been furnished by the recent purchase of "The Polish Rider," which many consider Rembrandt's greatest painting, by Henry Clay Frick, the Pittsburg millionaire. The painting had been for about one hundred years in the possession of the family of Prince Tarnowsky, guarded by a price which kept picture-dealers at a distance. Of this masterpiece the London *Sphere* says that "with the possible exception of 'The Mill,' belonging to Lord Lansdowne, it is considered to be the greatest of all Rembrandt's pictures, and at the Rembrandt Exhibition in 1906 was generally accepted as the most perfect expression of the artist's genius."

The painting, listed as "Portrait of a Young Polish Cavalier of the Lyowski Regiment," is thus described in Dr. Bode's completed catalog of Rembrandt's works:

"A young patrician horseman advances toward the right in a hilly landscape on a light gray horse, which bears a panther skin for a saddle-cloth, and turns his handsome, beardless face to the spectator. He wears a long light yellow tunic closely fastened at the top with a number of blue buttons, tight red breeches, yellow boots, and a red cap with a wide border of fur. In his right hand, which is prest against his side, he holds a mace; at his right side hang an Oriental leather quiver and a

bow; on the other side a long sword. The reins are of red Russian leather; a fox's brush dangles from the horse's neck. In the background is a large fortress on a high mountain; on the left at the foot of the mountain a waterfall is distinguishable; to the right a lake with buildings on the shores and a watch-fire."

The painting, we learn further from *The Sphere*, has been on exhibition at the Carfax Galleries in London pending its shipment to America.

## AMERICAN LACK OF LEARNING

WHILE the question "Does a college education pay?" has generally been answered in the negative only by men famous for having made other things pay, it has been left for John Jay Chapman, lawyer, uncompromising political reformer, scholar, and essayist of international reputation, to convict American education of the serious offense of failing to educate. In the July *Atlantic Monthly* Mr. Chapman thus metaphorically presents our national want of learning and our inability to comprehend either the inwardness or worth of true education:

"I would liken America to a just-grown young man of good impulses who has lacked early advantages. He feels that cultivation belongs to him; and yet he can not catch it nor hold it. He feels the impulse of expression, and yet he can neither read nor write. He feels that he is fitted for general society; and yet he has no current ideas or conversation. And, of course—I say it with regret, but it is a part of the situation—of course, he is heady and proud of himself."

We have neglected or rejected tradition and the artistic and intellectual triumphs of the past, asserts Mr. Chapman, unmindful of all that centuries of the best human thought can teach us; forgetting that we are the heirs of all the ages; oblivious of the fact that "all teaching is merely a way of acquainting the learner with the body of existing tradition." We have surrendered all to business and science, and seek only that which can create wealth and promote physical well-being. We have commercialized our universities, demanding of them only that they shall teach our young men how to "get on in the world."

The sudden creation of wealth which marked the nineteenth century, whatever its benefits, caused the disappearance of the old order with all its experience, charm, and refinement:

"In its place we have a crude world, indifferent to everything except physical well-being. In the place of the fine arts and the crafts, we have business and science. Business is, of course, devoted to the increase of physical well-being; and science is, in all except its highest reaches of thought, a mere extension of business."

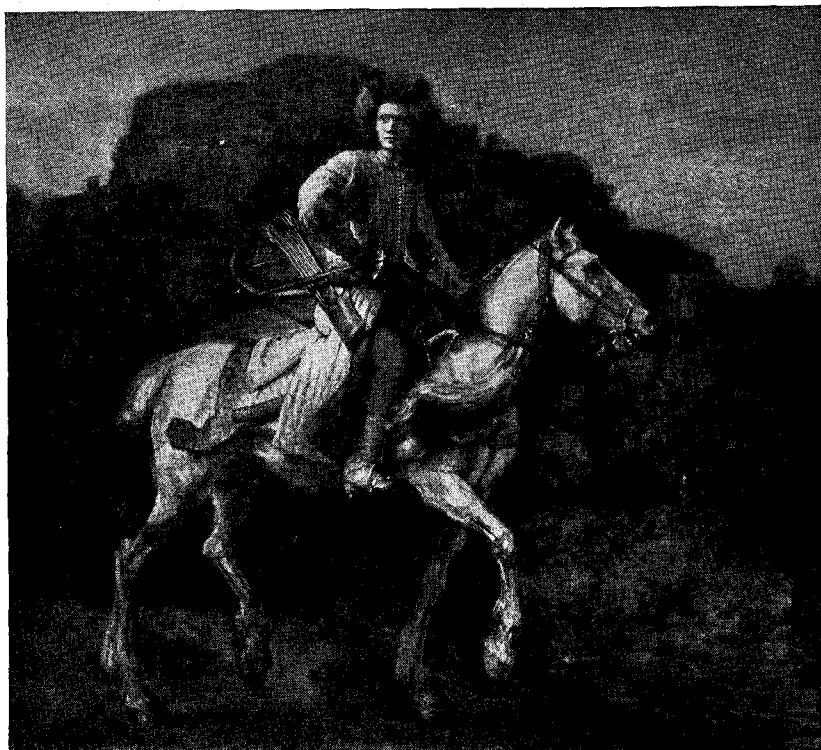
"Science is the theory of world business, race business, cosmic business. Science saves lives and dominates the air and the sea, science does a hundred wonders, and all of us are incredibly in debt to science, and we should not be ungrateful. But science does not express spiritual truth. It neither sings nor jokes, it neither prays nor rejoices, it neither loves nor hates. It respects only its own language and its own habits of thought, and puts trust only in what is in its own shop window."

Without minimizing the real importance of science, Mr. Chapman objects to the assumption of science that its ever-shifting field comprizes everything worth knowing. "I do not," he writes, "undervalue the accomplishments of science; but I deprecate the contempt which science expresses for anything that does not happen to be called science." Science has a complex language of its own; why, then, must science trample upon

the languages of the fine arts, of religion, of philosophy, so important to humanity? These languages science can neither translate nor expound, therefore science should accept them:

"There are, then, in the modern world these two influences which are hostile to education—the influence of business and the influence of science. In Europe these influences are qualified by the vigor of the old learning. In America they dominate remorselessly, and make the path of education doubly hard. Consider how they meet us in ordinary social life. We have all heard men bemoan the time they have spent over Latin and Greek, on the ground that these studies did not fit them for business—as if a thing must be worth less if it can be neither eaten nor drunk. It is hard to explain the value of education to men who have forgotten the meaning of education: its symbols convey nothing to them. . . . ."

"When Darwin confessed that poetry had no meaning for him, and that nothing significant was left to him in the whole artistic life of the past, he did not know how many of his brethren his words were destined to describe."



Photograph by the Berlin Photographic Co.

A NOBLE PAINTING THAT AMERICA WILL SEE.

At the Rembrandt Exhibition in 1906, "The Polish Rider," recently purchased by H. C. Frick of Pittsburg, "was generally accepted as the most perfect exhibition of the artist's genius." It represents a young patrician of the old Kingdom of Poland.

In defense of the much-decried classics as a feature of modern education Mr. Chapman says:

"Drop the classics from education? Ask rather, Why not drop education? for the classics are education. We can not draw a line and say, 'Here we start.' The facts are the other way. We started long ago, and our very life depends upon keeping alive all that we have thought and felt during our history. If the continuity is taken from us, we shall relapse."

Our standards of education are far below those of Europe. "Our art, our historical knowledge, our music and general conversation show a stiffness and lack of exuberance, a lack of vitality and of unconscious force—the faults of beginners in all walks of life." That the art in which we most excel is architecture, is due to "severe and conscientious study of the monuments of art, through humble, old-fashioned training." Yet Mr. Chapman does not recommend "subservience to Europe, but subservience to intellect."

Literature thrives most through the mental conquest of the great literature of other years—the heirship of intellect:

"We think of Shakespeare as of a lightly-lettered person; but