

The Inter Ocean.

Chicago, March 19th, 1891.

Judge A. W. Tourgee,

Mayville, N. Y.

My Dear Judge:--

It was my intention to answer your letter yesterday, but I was not given the opportunity. The truth is lately I have been so interrupted in the matter of writing of any kind that almost all my correspondence has had to be done at home after work hours, and that is my apology for delaying even twenty-four hours a response to your very full and complete statement of your plan for the great Columbian Story, for which let me say I am certainly very much obliged. I have considered the matter very carefully and discussed it with Mr. Bushey. He and I are the only ones who know anything about it, and we both are agreed in our conclusions. The work you propose is certainly a great one, and one that I should think would live in historical literature, but as a serial in a paper like The Inter Ocean I seriously doubt its great value. In selecting literary features for a paper like The Inter Ocean we must select them with a view to the character and wants of the readers. Not the least important portion of the literary readers of The Inter Ocean are the women.

Mr. Bushey suggests that this first part which you propose shall run from January 1st to August 1st, we will be unable

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to get the regular Daily readers to read, and it would be of too high an order for the Weekly readers. A novel of the time of Columbus introducing that great discoverer as one of the characters it seems to us might become as popular in America as ever Ben Hur was, but we fear a historical sketch as long and pretentious as this will be as an introduction would kill the story as a story, for you well know that story readers are not always readers of history, and vice versa, history readers are not all story readers. ~~and~~ It is the fewest of historical romances that have become great favorites. Ben Hur perhaps has been the greatest success of any of them, but it apparently is historical only in that its characters are made to play a part in the governments and nations of the world just as they were then organized and existed.

It seems to me, if you will permit a suggestion from a practical publisher, that your Columbian Romance should begin with the first chapter of the serial publication. If in your library edition you choose to publish historical sketches of the world at the time of Columbus that would be well, but for the serial the story is the thing. My experience is that if we do not get people interested in the first chapter or two of a story that they do not become interested at all, and I should be afraid that the aver-

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age story reader, who is the individual we want to capture, however much we might try to interest him by advertisements and announcements, would become weary of the historical sketches before the story begins. If they are to be run as serials at all I would suggest that they be run without any connection whatever the one with the other. They will probably interest a different class of readers, although many would become interested in both. It is always difficult to judge, however, in a story or any other special feature, what will be of great advantage to a newspaper. Two things are always to be taken into consideration, first, to hold your present readers, second, to gain new ones. Every honest publisher I think will say that he has been grievously deceived time and time again in his judgment as to what would increase his circulation, and what would not. Serials and features that he thought would add largely to his subscription list have hardly made a perceptible increase, and others, that he thought valuable, have not drawn at all. It is with the publisher very much as it is with the theatrical manager, he really never knows whether a thing will be a success, or whether it will take with the people, until after he brings it before them. The serial that increased our circulation more than any other two or three we ever published was one that in the beginning we did not expect very much of, but it

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proved very taking. A serial by the same author later on was a comparative failure, though one seemed almost as good a story as the other. Your name of course with our readers would cause your story or anything you should write to be read, and there are thousands of people, who would not read ordinary historical affairs ~~but~~^{who} would read sketches about Columbus and his time. We of course may be very wrong in our judgment in regard to this matter, but it seems to us that you have got your ideas raised to too high a pitch as to the value of this whole matter as a serial. If valuable at all, it would be of more value to the Daily than it would to the Weekly, though there is no doubt but that it would be of value to both, that is, supposing Mr. Bancroft does his part in an attractive literary manner. I would, however, much prefer to trust the work, if you had Mr. Bancroft confine himself to hunting up the facts and the necessary data, and let you do all the writing.

Please do not think, because of what I have frankly said, that we would not highly appreciate any serial from your pen, for we would, but we have never struck any serial, nor any feature that created a revolution in The Inter Ocean by increasing its circulation, nor do I know of any important newspaper that has been revolutionized, or very largely increased in circulation, by any serial.

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Still good serials are very important to maintain your position, and keep up a healthy growth, and of course a great serial such as this, which you propose, ought to be valuable to any newspaper.

There is one feature, which you suggested, however, which I assure you is entirely impracticable, namely, that of increasing the price of the paper. The temper of the people and the tendency of the times is towards cheaper newspapers, not higher priced ones. They want now for \$1.00 what they could not get ten years ago for \$2.00. The penny Daily now comes in competition with the Weekly. The Morning News of this City is furnished to subscribers all over the country for \$3.00 a year, \$3.00 a year for six days in the Week. Of course it cannot supplant such a paper as The Weekly Inter Ocean, nevertheless, we are compelled to spend a great deal of money on the Weekly edition that would not be necessary except from such competition as I refer to. There is no feature that I can think of, that we could add to the Weekly Inter Ocean, that would enable us successfully to add fifty cents to the price. That paper, it is true, goes to the well-to-do people all over the country, yet if you were to read their letters, you would soon find out that a half dollar is a big sum to a great many of them. The only way that I can see that we could use this

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matter is for you to set a fixed price on what you would let The Inter Ocean have the story itself for as a serial. If you will let me know that we can soon come to a definite conclusion one way or the other.

Mr. Busbey made one suggestion, which permit me to repeat to you, and that was, that the historical part, which you propose to have precede the story, should in fact be rather an appendix to the story. It seems to me that there is good sense in this suggestion, but of course it is a mere suggestion, and as you have given so much more thought to the matter than we possibly could, you will take ^{all suggestions} ~~it~~ for just what ^{they are} ~~it is~~ worth and no more. I shall be pleased to hear from you further in regard to the matter, unless you think that our views are so far off that you cannot make your plans join in with them. With the best wishes for your success in all your undertakings, and especially in this one, and hoping that it may add to your already great reputation, I am,

Very Truly, Your Friend,

Wm. W. W. W.