

Illustrated American Works:

—BY—
WILLIAM CULLEN BRYANT,
EDWARD EGGLESTON, D.D.,
PROF. JACOB HARRIS PATTON,
HARRIET BEECHER STOWE,
PROF. ROBERT R. RAYMOND,
JUDGE ALBION W. TOURGEE,
MAJ. GEO. F. WILLIAMS,
DR. JOHN LORD,
AND OTHER EMINENT AUTHORS.

FORDS, HOWARD, & HULBERT,
PUBLISHERS,

SUBSCRIPTION DEPARTMENT,

No. 30 LAFAYETTE PLACE (BELOW ASTOR LIBRARY),

New York, August 27th 1890.

Dictated.

My Dear Mrs. Tourgee: -

I return to you by express to-day chapters one to twenty-four inclusive of the "Golden Lilies." All of the early portion I find very much as I left it, if not absolutely so, and therefore I have nothing more to say about that portion of it than I said in my letters last spring when you first began sending them to me. I wish you would hunt them up and see what is there said, particularly as to the transposition of some of the chapters. I feel it to be of the very greatest importance to have the book start off in the midst of interesting talk and action, and not with the long description of the Church of the Golden Lilies. Moreover, this would be in accordance with the usual respect paid to the hero of story or drama, who is never thrust to the front in the opening scene.

And now, not by way of self laudation, but with strict appropriateness to the matter in hand, I wish to quote to you a brief sentence from a letter addressed to me by Dr. Lyman Abbott, when I had begun sending him back proofs of his volume of sermons entitled, "Signs of Promise:" -- "My Dear Mr. Howard: I wish you would publish all my books. The blessedness of having so keen and friendly a critic before other critics get at one's work, is beyond all description." Now, that I quote simply to show the Judge what one sharp-eyed and clear-headed man feels in reference to this kind of inside criticism, and I could duplicate it from not a few other men whose names stand high as literary workers; and the point of it is that I wish to emphasize what I said regarding the sermons in the early part of the "Golden Lilies" story, and to repeat the same with reference to the one in chapter XXIII.

The sermon is good; admirable; I endorse and believe every word of it: but it is altogether too long for the place. I venture to say that eight critics out of ten (who really review the book) will express the wish that these sermonizings had been very greatly condensed; and the more they sympathize with the aim and strong flight of the book itself, the more will they regret that its efficacy should be hindered by so many unnecessary words. The same ideas and principles are inculcated in various portions of the book, and I think it a very great pity that these heavy passages should occur. They certainly will hinder and not help both the story and its moral. Having said this much, I shall say no more on that head; and if the Judge insists upon their retention, shall accept his decision without discussion.

I think he would better glance along through to see what queries and suggestions are made here and there, and either leave, or modify or strike out, as suits him. I will drive ahead with the rest of the book as fast as possible.

One thing more I will say, which has a collateral bearing on the sermon question although it refers to the whole book: I think it all too long, as a whole. In sending me the copy you have omitted chapters XLIII and XLIV. Averaging these at the low figure of 3000 words each, the total sums up 180,676 words, which will make a book of 536 pages of 300 words each. I am convinced that the interest of the reader, and the influence of the book, and the extent of its circulation, would be very greatly helped by condensation in a great many places where the Judge enlarges and expatiates with argument and illustration upon points which he could far more strongly enforce with some of his terse and well-put statements. He is fond [and with good reason], of scornfully inveighing against the long and morbid self-analysis so prevalent in modern fiction; and one of the most admirable chapters, to me, is the one in which he shows how the spirit of Murvale Eastman regains its healthful tone and clear sight without that laborious process; yet he himself is quite as fond of laborious analysis of things objective, and sometimes, it seems to me, he defeats his own object by too much talking about it.

The note in which you accept our suggestion as to terms, and accord permission

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permission

for us to apply a portion of your dues to the old book debt, is received, and F. H. & H. will send a formal acknowledgement of it. Thanks for your consideration.

*Sincerely,
J. H. Howard*

P. S.

One thing more. Please do not forget to have the Judge give some of his suggestive titles to the chapters. That has always been one of the charms of his books to me, and I think it would be a positive addition.