

My dear young friend: I hope your little "High School Review" will be a very great success. It will certainly be of ~~great~~ much advantage to its conductors, if they manage it honestly doing their own work - and especially thinking their own thoughts. By far the larger part of such school ventures are spoiled by an overweening desire on the part of the editors to be funny. There are not a great many humorists in the world at any one time and the best of these seldom write ~~with~~ <sup>while</sup> their jests, <sup>and</sup> <sup>and</sup> the business of collecting "funny paragraphs" is carried to such an extent <sup>by the regular press,</sup> that the amateur who relies upon it for his best impression is apt to excite contempt rather than approval. <sup>to write plainly and</sup> simply; think honestly and only claim your own thoughts, should be your high purpose. You will find this very hard to do, for it is the perfection of literary art; but the effort will make you strong just as the effort <sup>to</sup> ~~will~~ <sup>will</sup> make you weak.

I am glad you like the story you mention. I do not like to write about any one work, so you must excuse me. Did you ever consider what the true function of an historical novel is? History tells us of great events and what are <sup>learned</sup> <sup>from</sup> <sup>them</sup>; but of the doers, the actors, the ~~doers~~ <sup>doers</sup> stories.

which  
which make up the great forces ~~who collisions~~  
bring to the world's knowledge great names, it  
tells us little. It may give the organization of an  
army, the equipment of a soldier and the ~~life of the~~ <sup>of</sup>  
conduct and strategy of the commander; but what  
the follower is like, what he feels, what he thinks, what  
he says it tells but little.

The function of the historical novel is not to teach  
history. It is not a unsharpened saddle for lazy boys  
and girls. Its purpose is to give the color of the time -  
what men thought and felt or what they did  
or might have done which history would  
not and could not record. Such work is ~~not~~  
~~not~~ involves not merely a study of ~~facts~~ <sup>to the</sup>  
facts of history but an apprehension of what  
thoughts and acts are in harmony with these  
~~the~~ central facts. Here, again, comes in another ~~form~~  
of phase of preparation, for if you will study the  
great facts of history you will find they are not  
the result of the acts of a few great men whose  
names are preserved, but of myriads of little ones  
whose names were never known to the historian.  
Caesar and Napoleon and Washington and Lincoln  
were not <sup>themselves</sup> the causes of great events but the  
instruments of millions of unknown men whose  
impulses were part and parcel of what we term

their achievement. So when one wants to know what were the <sup>leading</sup> characteristics of the people of a country or an age he will try and understand the representative characters and then ask himself what kind of people they were from whose life these characters spring. He will find many contradictions and will often have to check his work, but if he watches the trivial things that will creep into his story and makes good use of hints from all sources, he will soon be able to realize the life of a people or at least its principal characteristics.

The differences between nations and peoples, as between men may, be superficial or ~~is~~ inherent; just as men may differ in speech, clothing, tones or thoughts and impulses or they may agree in thought and impulses and differ only in externals. A very striking fact which will help you to solve <sup>some</sup> many of the problems of <sup>the epoch of</sup> Spanish discovery, if you keep it in mind, is that almost all the great navigators who piloted the Spanish ships ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> on their famous voyages, were foreigners; Columbus, Vesputi, Magellan, Lebot and many others ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> foreigners. On the other hand all the great fighters — the conquistadores who wrought such marvels of courage and fortitude and cruelty ~~were~~ <sup>were</sup> Spaniards. Does this fact tell you anything about the ~~character~~ <sup>life</sup> of the Spanish people? If it does you have begun to understand

stand how and in what spirit an historical  
novel should be written and can begin to  
give the work its value.

Very truly yours  
Albion W. Tourgee