

MR. LEWIS' CAUSTIC PEN.

It Deals with Board of Education Matters Again.

To the Editor of THE COURIER:—

THE anonymous communication is the favorite resort of the liar and the coward. When it comes to us through the mails, we consign it to the waste-basket, as unworthy consideration. Whether it shall be used in the newspaper must be left to the editor's conscience to decide. It is the usual vehicle for malevolent abuse and slander.

I will state a few facts in connection with matters covered by the ill-starred communication in your last issue, and leave it for the readers of your paper to judge whether the writer of it comes under the general rule of the anonymous letter-writer.

Strip the communication of its verbose and malevolent falsehoods and see what a gauzy framework you have left.

Let me take these charges up *seriatim*. They have been so often repeated, usually under cover, that some one may really believe there is some truth in them.

First, the statement that I am opposed to the employment of women as principals is obviously false. Out of seven principals now serving, that have been elected by the Board in the grade schools since I became chairman of the teacher's committee, five are women. I have said that I thought more men should be employed in the schools, but that under present conditions we could get a better order of ability for those positions among women than among men, and that a first-rate woman should always be chosen rather than a second-rate man.

Of two men mentioned as chosen for principals, the charge that they were without experience is grossly false. There were both experienced teachers, one of them having done many years of successful school work, and he is not even guilty of the heinous offense of being a college graduate.

As to the charge of favoritism and prejudice in the selection of teachers, the committee passing on all nominations is made up of the superintendent and three members of the board, who have always acted unanimously in recommending the election or dismissal of teachers, and the chairman has no more voice or influence in the matter than any other member of that committee.

It is the usual charge of the incompetent when dismissed from the force.

The oft-repeated charge of extravagance on the part of the board has never yet had a fact or a figure back of it, so far as I am aware.

The past records of the board and a comparison of the cost of educating our children with that in other cities in the country disprove the charge, and show that in hardly a city, east or west, is the cost so small as here under the present management. It is time to give us something else than vapid charges of this kind without a fact to base them on.

There is nothing more absurd than the claim that the board in having its books examined and put in shape attempted to "indict former boards of education with (*sic*) criminal mismanagement."

Through the employment of various secretaries, some of whom were not experienced in book-keeping, the accounts of the board were in undesirable condition and it was thought desirable to employ an experienced accountant to disentangle the threads. For this work, Mr. Leavitt, a thoroughly qualified man was employed. His work was a long and tedious one, and he charged what he claimed was a reasonable sum for his services, which was paid. Is this vilifier, who draws his inspiration from a member of the board, prepared to say that the work was unnecessary or the sum paid excessive?

And is it material whether he belonged to the Congregation! or the Lutheran, or any other church?

The dreary mass of misrepresentation and abuse that follows, covering the elections to vote school bonds, and the refusal by the board to pay a species of blackmail demanded of it, I will not take your space to answer.

Let us come to the action of that dreadful "Lewis element supported by the women" in selecting an architect for the high school and other buildings.

A special committee was appointed to take this matter in charge. Neither of the women upon the board, nor I, was a member of that committee, and our only action in the matter was to vote on the re-

port made, as the records will show. The "comparatively inexperienced architect" chosen, (whom, by the way, I did not know by sight at the time) has planned and superintended the construction of some of the most expensive and substantial buildings of the city, including the Brace block, the Y. M. C. A. building, the Universalist church, not to name many of our best flats and private residences. His selection gave, I believe, general satisfaction, except to a few disgruntled architects and their friends. His plans for the High school have received the unanimous approval of the board, including the "Lewis element."

Again as to the election of Superintendent Strong for a term of three years, there is the same disregard of facts.

The statute gives the power to boards of education in cities to elect a superintendant for a term of three years, and I believe wisely. Acting under that power the board, as then constituted, elected Mr. Strong by a unanimous vote for a term of three years and fixed his salary. The wishes of the newly elected members were not consulted, but as six hold-over members voted favorably on the proposition, it is difficult to see how their rights were interfered with.

Another trumped up charge is that we have slighted the claims of teachers from our own city, and imported a large number of teachers from the east to take places in our schools.

No home-bred teacher has been refused a place in our schools when fitted by education and experience to fill one, and the High school has a larger proportion of State University graduates in its corps of teachers than the university itself has.

"Furthermore, we do not believe," etc.

Who pray is the anonymous "we"? Why did not the people in its wisdom elect him, her or it to the school board to put his, her or its extraordinary abilities in school management to the test and save us from my "imbecile policy"?

Is it some teacher discharged for incompetence or something worse? The cry against the "importation" of teachers is the last word of incompetency.

Is it someone whose "job" I have helped to block in the board? Is this the explanation of its anonymous malevolence? Is it some politician of the baser sort who thinks that some of his would be spoils are taken from him?

I have suffered sufficient abuse since I went upon the board to become somewhat callous to it, and shall try to endure with more or less of patience, the mendacious and cowardly communications of anonymous writers.

The little *curs* and all. "Tray, Blanche and Sweetheart, see they bark at me."

HENRY E. LEWIS.



APRIL HOPES.

IN MEMORIAM.

Mrs. Harlan P. Foster: Thursday morning at seven o'clock, the spirit of Mrs. Foster left its earthly confines and entered the great unknown.

Surrounded by the dear ones of her family, she passed away in peace.

Hers was no ordinary character; a devoted wife, a fond and loving mother, and a loyal friend. The indomitable will which upheld her in her last sickness is an indication of the strength of her character, yet she was gentle, and kindness was her prevailing characteristic.

Her's was always the kind, gentle word, never the harsh or irritating. Her friends she counted by scores. She never swerved in her loyalty to them. In every emergency, in joy or in sorrow, in prosperity, she was always to be relied upon.

A beautiful life is gone, but the memory of that life will always be a comfort to her family and to her many friends.

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