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## OBSERVATIONS

In last week's Courier regret was expressed that the public conscience in Lincoln and Nebraska is in a state of chronic somnolency. This is readily explained. The people in this city and many portions of the state have for many years taken a matutinal opiate in the perusal of the State Journal. Through that paper there has been distilled into the sensibilities of the people a subtle poison that has been damnably effective in dulling the individual, and through the individual, the public conscience.

The people of any community naturally look to the newspapers for an interpretation of and judgment on acts of public concern. If the newspapers are honest and quick to expose corruption and unlawful practices the people are rendered alert and are easily stirred to action. When, on the other hand, the papers to which the people look for instruction, become mere apologists for vice, when they gloss over the most wicked crimes and stand sponsor for practices at variance with all proper ideas of right and justice, when the interests of the whole people knock at the door of the editorial sanctum unheeded while the boodler and felon are welcomed with outstretched hands, then it is not surprising that the public conscience is rendered inactive. In this section the people have looked to the Journal and for a quarter of a century they have been confided and abused. Not once, from the first day of its life, has it lifted its voice or exerted its power against a public wrong when the wrong doer was backed by money or power. I defy anybody to point to a single instance where the Journal has taken the side of the people against the boodlers

and political gamblers. No crime is so black that it cannot find in the Journal an adroit apologist, providing the criminal can command influence. The paper that made frantic excuse for C. W. Mosher the day after the closing of the Capital National bank, that fought step by step, every effort that was made to meet out justice to the members of the Mosher ring, cannot be expected to be influenced by any consideration of public weal. It never has been in the past, and it is doubtful if it will be in the future. The Journal is a great and powerful newspaper. It is impossible to estimate the benefit it might bring to the people of this city and this state—quite as impossible as it is to estimate the evil it is responsible for. The State Journal, the recognized champion of boodlers and the upholder of vice is the greatest enemy to good government and the public welfare in the whole state of Nebraska. This is a sweeping assertion; but a little reflection will convince any proper minded person that it is true.

One reason why there is so little effort on the part of the people to right the wrongs that are done is the knowledge that the morning newspaper, which should be, naturally, a powerful ally, stands ready to discourage any movements of this sort. Two or three weeks ago there was started in this city a movement to protest against the exorbitant rates charged by the Lincoln Gas and Electric Light company for the lighting of the city. Nobody questions the fact that the prices charged are excessive, and the newspapers, as self-appointed guardians of the people, might reasonably have been expected to take up this protest and demand a hearing. One paper, the News, did so. What did the Journal do? In its columns there promptly appeared a threat that the stockholders of the gas and electric light company, many and powerful as they are, would retaliate in no uncertain way on any person who ventured to join the movement for lower rates. That threat constituted the Journal's comment on this important subject. A little later in Judge Dundy's court, in connection with the Outcalt case, there was perpetrated an outrage that moved the entire community, somnolent as is its condition. Did the Journal utter one word of condemnation? Not a word. Then came the disgraceful verdict in the Davis case. What had the Journal to say of this disgusting spectacle, this judgment, in effect that Davis didn't commit murder, but should be punished as if he did? Some smooth generalities and equivocation and an inadvertent admission of the "fact that there is a remote possibility that he is innocent." But with all the suggestive facts in the Davis trial before it, not one word of protest against the outrageous and paradoxical verdict. And thus it is with every question of public interest. The editor of the Journal, Mr. Gere, is a good man, and his private character would entitle him to sweet peace in the life to

come. But the venality of his newspaper rises up as a bar, and if there is any weighing done at the gate of heaven the Journal's viciousness may more than balance the editor's personal integrity.

Lincoln has had its annual visitation of satirical infidelity. Robert G. Ingersoll, with his jibe and grimace, has been among us assailing the Bible. Col. Ingersoll possesses as few other men of this generation possess the gift of putting words together. When he speaks the words come in rythmical cadence. When he writes his prose takes on all the beauty of poetry. He is an artist in diction. When a man ventures to array himself in opposition to the chief tradition of all time, when he displays in that opposition the touch of genius, the trace of art, it is no wonder that attention is attracted to his iconoclastic performance. The most perfect thing that was ever created can be attacked as Col. Ingersoll attacks the Bible. The shafts of ridicule, the fling of sarcasm, can be directed against nature itself with more or less ephemeral effect, especially if one has the fine gift that is Ingersoll's. But this smirking comedian is taken too seriously. Sunday, following the lecture, several of the city ministers made his discourse the subject of their sermons. What is the use of combatting with argument the buffoon who, unable to penetrate the mysteries of heaven, mocks the Almighty and jokes with eternity? There is no occasion for any alarm. The Bible and religion and Christianity have all withstood harder blows than this cynical humorist is capable of dealing. Time will take up Col. Ingersoll and carry him along, and oblivion will cover him over, but the Bible and religion and Christianity will go on as they have gone on these many centuries. Poetry and sneering cannot tear down that faith in man which has been steadily strengthened through eighteen hundred years. I do not know about inspiration; but the Bible is a good book, considerably better than any other book that was ever written. Religion and Christianity may have flaws in them; but they brought light and civilization into the world, and they have made good men and women out of brutal savages; and Col. Ingersoll, much as he would like to take away these three things, can offer us nothing in their place. Let the comedian do his intellectual skirt dance. It may be shocking, but it will not work serious injury. The solid foundation of religion, faith—the Bible, Christianity, cannot be punctured by the toe of the kicking clown.

There is in Omaha a man named John D. Howe. He is a lawyer. He is insane. His certificate of insanity was published in last Sunday's Omaha Bee. The certificate, in the form of a signed letter to the public, was one of the most pathetic—harrowing manifestations I have ever seen. It should commend Mr. Howe to the sympathetic consideration of his friends and secure for him a

suitable retreat where future ebullitions will not have the publicity given to last Sunday's attack.

Mr. Howe discussed Mr. Rosewater and the recent election in Douglas county. This man, who up to his recent affliction, enjoyed a reputation for an intelligence, at least up to the ordinary level, said, among other things: "Why, Rosewater is the man who has done more for Omaha and Nebraska than any other man in either; the most influential man in Nebraska. He built the Bee—the greatest paper west of Chicago; he built the Bee building, the best building in Omaha." There was a column of this sort of stuff. Mr. Rosewater has seriously affected a number of pretty good men; but I do not remember another instance where he has produced such a disastrous result as is evidenced in the disordered mentality of Mr. Howe. The most influential man in Nebraska should put a curb to his influence. It is a bad thing to rob men of their reason.

In Omaha they are going to have a society circus, and Mr. W. J. Bryan is going to be ringmaster. The Omaha people displayed rare good judgment when they selected Mr. Bryan for this important position. No man in Nebraska knows more about the show business than he. Mr. Bryan is acquainted with all the weaknesses of the public and he possesses all the foibles essential to a successful showman. If there is any one thing in the whole gamut of sawdust experience he does not know that fact has yet to be ascertained. Mr. Bryan, better than any other man in Nebraska can surround himself with the glitter and panoply of seeming reality, and induce the fanfare of aggregated orchestras and the noisy pipe of the shrill toned calliope. Mr. Bryan better than any other man, can provide little side show attachments designed to entrap the unwary who escape the seductions of the big ring. Mr. Bryan, better than any other man, can exhibit a versatility in catering to public taste that always brings a measure of success. He can, with the greatest facility, provide various entertainment for various people. In Nebraska the people have had an opportunity of witnessing many different kinds of circuses in the past ten years. There has been the great and only Pride of Two Continents Spectacle of the Exalted Bee, with high and eccentric kicking by E. Rosewater. There has been the one ring circus with Mosher as master of the hippodrome. There has been the Politician's Populist Pretension Extravaganza in extenso, owned and controlled by C. H. Van Wyck. There have been many spectacular and more or less diverting exhibitions; but nothing in the show line has equaled the extraordinary Perennial Vaulting and Contortionist Political Ring Show put up by Ringmaster W. J. Bryan, with side shows to suit the time and place. There has been an up-to-dateness about all of Mr. Bryan's performances that