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OBSERVATIONS.

There are many political and historical reasons why the water pumping contract should not be given to Mr. Thompson. In the first place it would strengthen his influence in city matters, and that influence has already stunted the municipal development of Lincoln. With an honest and efficient mayor and a reduced number of councilmen, say two, there is reason to hope that the city could be run as economically as a private business. There are several concerns in the city which make their own electricity and operate their own pumps. If the Lincoln and the Lindell find it economical to run their own water and lighting plants, why not the city? Mr. Thompson is not using every influence at his command to convince Dr. Hoover and Manager Humphrey that they would save money by accepting his services. The present council has among its membership an employe of the gas company and others who owe their positions to Mr. Thompson. These men are gratefully endeavoring to convince their associates and the community that their patron has only beneficent intentions towards the city which he needs only the opportunity to prove. THE COURIER's experience with city politics teaches that every movement towards purifying the ballot, punishing corrupt city officials, obtaining fresher water and various other non-partisan efforts to ameliorate the condition of our wretched city has met with a resistance, impalpable at first, but eventually traceable to Mr. Thompson's

office. In spite of all efforts city politics are not any better. In Lincoln at the present time they are worse than ever. For that very reason there is hope that we are about to improve. We have had Bud Lindsey and Frank Graham and we know that their sort means an inefficient administration. There are signs that the Spring primaries will nominate men who move in an entirely different society, unless we strengthen the influence which has created the present deplorable state of things.

Omaha is just strenuously trying to shake off the yoke which we are trying to slip over our necks. The heaviest taxpayers of that city attended a mass meeting a few evenings ago and were of one mind as to the inexpediency of renewing the contract with the water company. If there is anything in democracy it ought to have a fair trial, which it will never get by shirking responsibility. If the city has the opportunity it will connect the stations and run all the pumps by electricity generated at one station. By using this method we shall save much more than ten thousand dollars and, besides, retain what autonomy is left us. If we fail immediately to run our water works at the same expense or at less than Mr. Thompson has offered to do it for us, we will at least not have blocked future attempts at improvement nor rewarded the heavy villain whose plots against the innocent deserve disappointment.

Philadelphia's cession of her duties to a company is a favorite argument with those who advocate Mr. Thompson's wishes. They say that because the city has never conducted the department economically it never will. No city in this country has solved the problem of municipal government yet, but failures and experiments are bringing the sure result nearer all the time. The contract system, if it be a good one, should not be limited to the water works, but should include all the municipal functions of police, fire protection, street cleaning, etc. Such an arrangement would destroy all sense of individual responsibility and the community would lose the power of united action. The French have never been able to colonize, while the English have colonized the world. The latter have the communal sense which, nevertheless, can be destroyed by disuse. The failures to accomplish good government in the cities of the United States are not without their educational use. The fruit of a hundred years of mistakes is not to be despised. If the people of Lincoln feel that they are not capable of selecting men who can run the city with the success that Dr. Hoover and Mr. Humphrey have attained in running

hotels, and the ability that Mr. Thompson has shown in steering the Gas company, they will refuse to let Mr. Thompson pump the water.

There is no doubt that the large majority of the people of Lincoln are opposed to gambling but it is noticeable that very few of them are brave enough to say so over their own signature in a newspaper. One of the city papers has requested an expression of opinion from readers on the subject of gambling and received a number of anonymous replies which, very properly, the paper refused to print. All publishers have the same experience. Indignant citizens who wish to anonymously upbraid the city government or some other guilty object of disapproval are in the habit of sending their wasted efforts to a publisher, perfectly willing that he should suffer vicarious punishment for their anathema. Before assuming charge of THE COURIER the publisher thought that all men were compound of bravery and chivalry. Individuals of the sex differed in mental power but to her imagination they had all the strong arm and the brave heart. Observation of the seamy side of life which is the only view obtainable in a newspaper office has shown that bravery is almost confined to the female sex. The male animal, who in a state of nature fought all intruders has become such a refined diplomat that when a frank expression of opinion would benefit the whole community as well as himself and his family he is afraid to put his name to an expression of righteous wrath. He is afraid of the withdrawal of patronage, or of revenge from the gamblers, saloon-keepers and mayors who are breaking laws framed to protect the young. And because he is afraid he misses an opportunity to rid the city of a class he really detests. The grand jury is brave because it is composed of sixteen men who are protected from reprisals by the secrecy with which its proceedings are conducted. It has extraordinary powers of investigation not allowed the regular prosecuting officers. Its star chamber methods are a terror to evil doers and the effect of its approaching investigation is already apparent. It is, of course, idle to predict whom it will indict, but the good are not alarmed. It will at least clear the atmosphere for a while.

In the week preceding the Christmas holidays a poor woman was wandering about the shops of Chicago looking enviously at the toys on display. Her little crippled son had conceived a childish passion for a wooly dog on wheels. Not being able to get work and without any money she finally stole one of the hundreds of

wooly dogs in the shops. She was caught and taken to jail where she told her story. She was immediately pardoned. Her story of starvation and illness was verified, benevolent people sent food and clothing and more wooly dogs than the lame lad could lead at once. All of which is just as it should be. But if the poor woman had resisted the temptation to steal, she and her boy would have probably starved and frozen indefinitely. As it is, as a direct result of yielding to temptation she found employment and friends and her boy spent a hilarious Christmas. There is nothing wrong about this story except the moral and that is dislocated.

Improvements are being made so rapidly in electric machinery that machines—three or four years old have lost much more than half their original value. The first electric railways that were put in are operated at three or four times the expense required to run them now. The Lincoln Gas and Electric company probably has a quantity of antiquated—antiquated by the last three years of electrical discoveries—machinery on its hands and it is very clever of Mr. Thompson to make an arrangement, so that if the city wishes to get rid of the bargain with him it will buy his machinery.

The chairman of the waterworks committee is the foreman of the gas works. There may and there may not be some connection between this and the fact that the expenditure exceeds the income of the water department. There may and there may not be some connection between this and the opposition directed against every attempt of the council to lower the expenses of the department by concentrating the four pumping stations into one by the use of electricity and by making every user of city water pay his water tax. With the control of the water department it would be easier to secure a renewal of the city lighting contract which in the not distant future will require to be renewed. If the city once finds out how cheap electricity is it gains a point of vantage very much to be deplored.

Speaking of bravery it does not take much now to stand up for evolution but it did ten years ago. Today the batteries have changed about. Only a man bigoted to the point of induration dare attack evolution and only then when he gets behind a pulpit. Dr. David Starr Jordan of Leland Stanford university, in his lecture before the teacher's convention, would have been listened to ten years ago by the good people of Lincoln in a pained silence instead of the hearty and sympathetic applause which greeted his