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OBSERVATIONS.

Judge Scott's decision against the Omaha fire and police commission is in accord with law and our democratic tradition. There is an idea at the bottom of gubernatorial interference with local self-government that the people are not to be trusted to select their own hired men. The state legislature of New York has passed some impertinent and unconstitutional bills interfering with the local self-government of New York city. Reformers seem to think that justice, purity and discriminating ability to select officials to run the people's business all reside in the country. To be sure most of the great men in this country were born on a farm. But they did not stay there long. They came to the city, where contact with their kind broadened and freed them from the characteristics that isolation breeds. The farmer is, naturally, no better than all the rest of the sons of Eve who earn their bread by the sweat of their brow. He grows suspicious of city people and resorts to tricks to beat them which none but the lowest in the city would stoop to. He comes to town with a wagon load of wheat or corn in which there are large rocks concealed, and drives upon the elevator scales with an untroubled conscience, sure that all men are liars and thieves and that he must fight them with their own weapons. Such conduct would be condemned by the ordinary merchant on account of its commercial silliness, if for no other reason. He knows that his credit and his patronage are immediately weakened

by dishonest practices and that detection is certain. A few days ago a number of housekeepers in the southeast part of the city were victimized by a farmer who offered them added eggs at fifteen cents per dozen below the current market price, assuring them that the eggs were freshly laid. The farmer sold twenty-five dozen without much trouble, and when Spring comes he can easily sell the same women bargain vegetables, for they will have forgotten his ingenuous features. A reporter of the *Call* who visited the state penitentiary last week says that there is a greater proportion of farmers there than of any other business. (Incidentally, there are no lawyers there.) This is to be expected in a population so overwhelmingly agricultural as Nebraska. But if the popular idea were correct the proportion of agriculturalists now engaged in the sedentary occupations of stitching leather and broom corn at the penitentiary would be much smaller. The farmer is no better than other men and he will not be any worse when isolation shall have ceased to make him suspicious and revengeful. Even then he should not be allowed to vote on questions of the adjacent city's fire and police officers; first, because he does not pay their salaries, and secondly and inclusively, representation is based on taxation.

Governor Holcomb's appointments have not shown a larger wisdom, a purer motive than the ordinary dweller in a brick row of city houses. His appointments are of the earth, earthy. They do not show the enlightened agricultural purity that he is supposed to represent, and which his admirers allege as an excuse for the gaucherie and obscure construction of his public utterances. He has not shown that he is better able to run Omaha or Lincoln than the citizens themselves, and Judge Scott's decision is concurred in by everybody who believes that God made the city as well as the country.

Mr. Austin of the *Call*, and others equally earnest but less vociferous, state objections to the selection of Mr. Bushnell for postmaster which in any party that maintained any discipline would prove an insurmountable obstacle to his appointment. He is charged with a lack of fealty to party men and party measures, and there seems to be no lack of proof to sustain the indictment; this, however, under the practice that has heretofore obtained, ought not to deprive him of the coveted position. The best federal appointment in this state was at the request of a republican senator, Mr. Thurston, given to Mr. Houtz, who, at a time when Mr. Bushnell through the

columns of his paper was expressing his doubt as to the wisdom of the McKinley tariff act and in a hesitating way advocating legislation in favor of free coinage of silver, was using his best efforts to secure the election of W. J. Bryan as the representative of this congressional district in congress. The policy of republican managers in this state has been to reward treachery rather than fealty, to recompense those who have broken the faith rather than those who have kept it. The sin that Bushnell sinned ought not under well established and repeatedly recognized precedents bar him as an applicant for an appointive office under a republican administration.

Party ties have been weakened and party supremacy has been destroyed only by the... this congressional district there was sent as a representative of the republican party to the national convention at St. Louis in 1896 a mulatto who, within a period of about ninety days, was seven times arrested on as many different charges of having violated criminal laws. The chairman of the county convention which selected delegates from this county to the district convention that selected Bud Lindsey as the congressional delegate was remembered by the party at the last election for the part which he took in sending to a national convention as a representative republican a person bearing such a malodorous reputation.

It was recently stated in an evening paper that if Mr. Bushnell is appointed postmaster, Lindsey is to be given the position in the office now held by Mr. Worrall. I predict that if such an appointment is made not a member of the next legislature from Lancaster county will be a republican. Republicans will not submit to such indignities. If the republican party has not within its ranks workers who are respectable men, who have made a living in some occupation more honorable than that of a dive keeper, it ought to retire from power and turn over the administration of public affairs to some party possessing more decency, if less ability.

It is a surprise to a great many who have had reason to suspect that the water department is leaking that the committee has been able to discover so small a sum paid out improperly, whether it eventually reached a real laborer or not. When the public is convinced that the department is not run in the interests of the city and a

committee is induced by the force of public opinion to investigate, the public expects to be informed of the reason why the department has not paid. A sum of sixty-five dollars or so misapplied will not explain it, though it does show the unfitness of the water commissioner for his position. Mr. Thompson's pumping scheme includes the hire of only two men, where about twenty are now employed. To serve the purpose of enlarging the political patronage of this department of the city, just as many, instead of as few men as possible, have been employed at the four stations. This policy, together with the number of stations and the unfortunate coal contract, is the cause of the empty treasury. Mr. Byer is not responsible for the system.

anyone. A few years ago when he was connected with the police department disgraceful conduct was charged to him by another committee and Mr. Byer resigned after an investigation that made the daily newspapers unfit for family use. Nevertheless, Mr. Byer's retirement from his present position will not appreciably increase the revenues of the water department. We need a new system more than a new man, and until we adopt it the yearly deficit will increase.

I noted last week the alleged improvement in the financial management of the penitentiary under the present state administration as set forth in the published report of the legislative investigating committee, from which it is made to appear that the cost of maintaining convicts has been reduced to \$3.38 per convict per month. Upon a rental basis of 40 cents per convict per day (I am informed the state receives 50 cents per day for each convict whose labor is leased), and estimating that 80 per cent of the convicts can be employed at remunerative labor, the state would receive \$2.912 per month per convict labor, while it would expend \$1.183 per month for the maintenance of 350 convicts; the excess of receipts over expenditures would be \$1,729 per month. In the nine and one-half months since April 1, 1897, this excess would amount to the sum of \$16,425.50, thus making the penitentiary a source of revenue instead of an expense. If it costs only \$3.38 per month to maintain each convict, during the last nine and one-half months the state has expended in such maintenance \$11,243.50. The records in the office of the auditor show that

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