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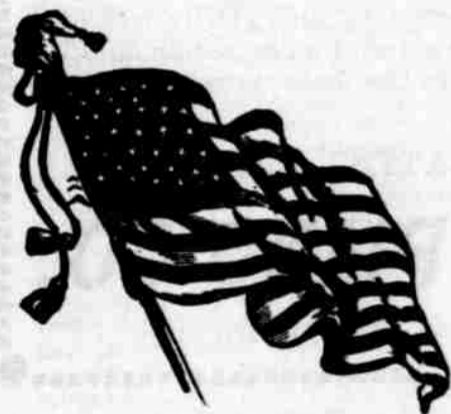
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OBSERVATIONS.

It has been several times announced through the press since the recent disastrous fire that unless the city council shall abrogate its functions and adopt with reference to the city fire department, measures dictated by fire insurance companies without regard to the wishes of taxpayers, fire insurance rates in this city would be increased from fifteen to twenty-five per cent. It is reported that at the last meeting of the council a member of that body stated that the insurance companies threatened, if their demands with respect to the fire department were not acceded to, to at once raise the rates to such an extent that \$125,000 more per year would be paid

for fire insurance in this city than is now paid for the same indemnity. The insolent arrogance of the threat indicates that it is not entirely divorced from a source which has heretofore assumed to dictate municipal action but which in one instance at least during the past year has ignominiously failed. As a part of the proposed plan a Mr. Hartman, residing in Omaha, who is designated as "the compact manager," was brought to Lincoln to instruct the city council as to its public duties, at an executive session from which the people who bear the burden of oppressive taxation were to be excluded. Owing to the fact that Mr. Hartman, "compact manager" from Omaha, could not afford to spend a night in the city and as the council did not get ready to exclude the people who elected them and whose servants they are, from their deliberations until about the time the late train left for Omaha, the council was deprived of the immense advantage which must necessarily have resulted from the disinterested advice of the distinguished Mr. Hartman, "compact manager" from Omaha, as to how the city should conduct and manage its municipal affairs.

Under the circumstances it would have been eminently proper had some member of the council who "objected to outside interference," risen in his place to state that there could be no increase in fire insurance rates beneficial to the companies without the combined and concerted action and agreement of all the companies doing a fire insurance business here. He could have read chapter 81 of the acts of the last legislature which makes it an offense punishable by the infliction of a fine of not less than one hundred dollars and a revocation of license authorizing the transaction of business, for any fire insurance company or its officers or agents to enter into any combination or agreement relating to the rates to be charged for insurance or the manner of transacting the business of fire insurance in this state. He might with profit have assumed a belligerent attitude and informed the "compact manager" and his employers, the insurance companies, that at the first attempt on the part of the insurance companies to make good their threat and increase the rates, the council would at once proceed to enforce the law which requires such companies to pay a tax in proportion to the value of their property and franchises regardless of the act which the companies induced the legislature to pass some years ago under which the personal property of such companies is now valued for the

purposes of taxation. In conclusion he could with propriety have handed to Mr. Hartman, "compact manager," his passports with the friendly suggestion that he immediately return to Omaha and there among the adherents of Hitchcock and Rosewater seek that appreciation which he failed to arouse in Lincoln.

The cost of running the city of Lincoln amounts to just a hundred dollars a day more than the total income. A business man who managed his own affairs so disproportionately would lose credit and the respect of every sane man. The council knows the condition of the city treasury, yet when importuned by representatives of those who pay the larger part of the taxes to reduce the expenses of the city to its income, certain members of the council talk about "outside interference." Messrs. Winnett, Guthrie and Webster are conscientiously trying to make the expenses coincide with the income but so far without success. To vote taxes on other people's property is much easier than to resist the appeals and votes of individual firemen and policemen and supernumerary clerks though neither the one nor the other class do a labor equivalent for their wages. One of the policemen who was afraid of losing his job inadvertently remarked that he had not worked for so long that he had forgotten how. Yet the majority of the council disregard the necessity for a reduction of expenses. As a last resort the citizens whose property is being confiscated can enjoin the council from spending more than there is in the treasury or from increasing the assessment and there is a growing inclination among the too-patient taxpayers to use the recourse accorded by the statutes.

It is not surprising that the officers of the regular army are cheerfully alert and a trifle impatient of the pathetic farewells accompanied by inundated tokens of affection which female relatives are bestowing upon the boys in blue with yellow gaiters. The time has come which justifies the existence of the military and its cost. The volunteers are doing their every day duty and the officers fear that these pre-funeral services will unfit the privates from regarding themselves as humble portions of a great machine. Peace to the military is abnormal. War is the natural and the expected and the civilians' excitement and tears before any one has been hurt, belong to the habits and modes of thought of civil life which your true soldier feels, if he does not express, a contempt for. The

commandants, who in their lonely garrison life, have spent their spare time in studying military science, who know the number and quality of the United States soldiery, who have planned campaigns as successful and brilliant as those of Grant's and Sherman's and who have despaired of any opportunity to prove their devotion to their profession and their country are now exultantly on their way to Chickamauga or one of the other southern points of mobilization. They do not spend much thought over the danger they are gallantly marching into except in that one sharp moment of farewell from their families. They think neither of danger nor discomfort, but of plans for the healthful feeding and lodging of their troops, of how quickest to execute commands from headquarters, of matters of discipline and order and again of the safety and comfort of their troops. There are no idle tears on the faces of these veteran officers whose opportunity has come for which they were graduated twenty or thirty years ago, and for which they have been studying and preparing ever since. Ten years more of peace, and the grudging appropriations for the military would have been still further lessened, and soldiers would be an anachronism. No wonder then that the middle-aged alumnae of the military academies are cheerful and preoccupied. War is like a revival of business to the merchant and money lender. They are no longer pensionaries of the government but its indispensable bulwarks and the change from a dependant position to a responsible one is a relief that forebodings can not alter.

"Rupert of Hentzau," Anthony Hope's sequel to *The Prisoner of Zenda*, now appearing in McClure's continues to cause a great deal of speculation as to whether the author will dare allow the young Englishman to reign in Ruritania. But the unlikely, if not impossible is no longer miraculous when recorded by Anthony Hope. The Englishman's fidelity and chivalry force him into assuming the personality of the king and when the real king is killed his cousin cannot disavow his pretensions without endangering the fame of his lady the queen. The only obstacle now between Rudolph Rassendyl and the throne of Ruritania is Anthony Hope's timidity. He is strengthening and multiplying the circumstances which make it next to impossible for Rassendyl to be anything but a pretender for the rest of his life. When honor, loyalty and self-interest are on one side and hatred of a false position on the other and an Englishman, created