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## OBSERVATIONS.

The death by drowning of Carl Smith, the brilliant young newspaper writer, is a loss to western journalism. His column in the Chicago Record, "Fired at Random," was only second in interest to George Ade's "Stories of the Street and of the Town" on the same page. We print in this issue Mrs. Peattie's sympathetic sketch of Mr. Smith and also one by William Reed Dunroy, both of whom were intimates of the Lycidas they strive to honor.

Summer visitors to the mountains, springs and oceans, are arriving every day to take up their Nebraska work where, in vacation time, it dropped

from listless fingers. The bustle on the streets, in schools, and in the shops is as autumnal as the brilliant hues of September and October. The shouts of the children on their way to school are welcome sounds of life. The conversation between school-mates on their way to and from their sentence of nine months is about someone they call "She," who is "perfectly lovely" or "awfully cross" and a decided trial. There is nothing new under the sun and these childish estimates of the teachers' character and manners are verbatim reproductions of the children of Adam and Eve since schools began. But they are not tiresome. They give to the loitering eavesdropper a sense of continuity of perennial youth, of the unity of all mankind.

There are many who sing a spring-time song but the harvest is the real springtime of trade. At the coming of winter the laissez faire spirit of the summer is driven out of the man and woman who have children to prepare for school, and coal and food to buy. The rigors of a climate with a winter season have the same effect on the spirit of the Anglo-Saxon as spring rains and a summer sun have upon the rosebush. He blossoms into an activity whose results have made this country an empire.

If the death of vegetation were not accompanied by the revival of spirits and trade that lonesome passing of the summer to a dirge of falling leaves, wailing winds and faint odors of decay would not be celebrated with such joy by The Courier, who is at once an agent and beneficiary of this glad new year.

No opponent of asphalt has been heard to deny that the largest and richest cities are paved with asphalt and that the oldest cities are tearing out other kinds of paving and substituting asphalt. It is unfortunate that when the principle streets of the city is in such an impassable condition one man's tar sidewalk has unchangeably prejudiced him against a substance which smells like tar and is the same color but has no further resemblance to it. Natural science teaches that there are many substances which, like rock crystal and the diamond, sand and sugar, mush mellow and cantelope, closely resemble each other in everything but their essential essence. It appears to be useless to urge upon Mr. Humphrey that asphalt is not any more like tar than glass is like a diamond. He says they smell alike and are the same color and the tar barrel from which his walk was made was labeled asphaltum. His tar walk has

not worn well and he refuses his consent to an asphalt paving of the district in which he owns property. Against such iteration it is useless to argue. His townsmen can only hope to elude his perversity by subdividing the district and paving the slope, the height of which is crowned by Mr. Humphrey's property, with brick. All the wholesale region in the immediate neighborhood of the railroad stations should be paved with brick. The horses who draw very heavy loads from the cars to the warehouses, up a slight ascent, need a road rough enough for a foothold. The retail men further up O street, where it is more level, want the asphalt paving because it is less noisy, more sightly, and more easily kept clean. I see no reason why the needs of the two portions of the same district cannot be met by paving the wholesale district with brick and the rest of the city with clean, smooth, satisfactory asphalt upon a twenty year guarantee. Mr. Humphrey's obstruction is based upon convictions against which logic and experience beat ineffectually. There is little hope that he will ever change his mind, therefore the city will have to change its plan.

Improvement in the appearance of the city is very slow, but the change in the neatness of the streets, made through the efforts of the City Improvement Association, is marked. Not so very long ago it was the custom of the bill posters to tear off the large sheets of stiff posters from the bill boards about the city and leave them where they fell, returning in a day or two to gather up the wind-depleted load and carry it to a dumping ground. In the meanwhile the shifting and permanent Nebraska winds had carried the mutilated red and blue letters and faces blocks away. The City Improvement Association noted these habits of the care free, joyfull bill poster and they remonstrated with their chiefs. The happy result can be seen by any one who will watch them at work. The papers are deposited in a hand-cart, which accompanies the bill poster, and removed as soon as the new posters are pasted up.

Every woman who criticises or is dissatisfied with the appearance of the city should join and aid the City Improvement Association, which is seeking to aid the men in their efforts to bring the city up to the grade of other cities of the same size; so that in a few years filthy streets and alleys may no more make us ashamed of our home. The association is not aggressive, it is not seeking to antagonize

the city officials but to aid them in the performance of their arduous duties. In its present condition Lincoln is repulsively ugly as the result of neglect and misdirected effort. A united effort can change this ugliness into a beauty and neatness which will enhance the value of every piece of property in the city and all women are hereby urged to join the City Improvement Association.

Some of the officers of the Biennial which lately met in Denver, wore décollete gowns upon the stage, much to the disapproval of some of the audience. The Courier is informed that it was because the gowns were low-necked and short-sleeved, and not because they were handsome and chic, that a few club women objected. It is not easy to believe that there were many who objected, the matter is so much a matter of custom and environment. Some of the best women, even though they be middle aged, occasionally wear evening dress and the shoulders of a dowager are not always outshone by the debutante. The society of an inland town which does not contain a millionaire, which is not in the habit of dressing for dinner, which does not hire opera boxes by the season, nor possess tiaras and ermine capes, nor priceless brie-a-brac and pictures, is not competent to criticise members of a society to whom these things are a matter of course. The ladies who offended were dressed as they were accustomed to. They were good enough to overlook our gaucheries and make them of no account and it seems ungenerous to criticise them for dressing, on a public occasion, according to custom and as we should do if we were situated as they are. The décollete gown is the dress of ceremony. It is as imperative and conventional as the vestments of an Episcopal clergyman. We may condemn the costume but we conform to conventions just as unreasonable, but we are accustomed to do ridiculous things and they do not shock us or amuse us. The lesson of the meeting of north, south, east and west will be lost if one section insists upon reforming the costume and manners of another section. Our dress and manners, our diet, and in part our habits, are formed for us. If we refuse to conform to the conventions or agreements of the society we are born into, our husbands and brothers are apt to regard us as "queer," and to prefer other feminine society. The rich women who brought their pretty gowns to Denver paid us and the Biennial the compliment of desiring to look their best and to reflect credit