



# THE COURIER

LINCOLN, NEBR., SATURDAY, MARCH 31, 1900.



ENTERED IN THE POSTOFFICE AT LINCOLN AS  
SECOND CLASS MATTER.

## THE COURIER,

Official Organ of the Nebraska State  
Federation of Women's Clubs.

PUBLISHED EVERY SATURDAY

THE COURIER PRINTING AND PUBLISHING CO

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Telephone 384.

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### Subscription Rates—In Advance.

Per annum.....	\$1 00
Six months.....	75
Three months.....	50
One month.....	20
Single copies.....	05

THE COURIER will not be responsible for voluntary communications unless accompanied by return postage. Communications to receive attention, must be signed by the full name of the writer, not merely as a guarantee of good faith, but for publication if advisable.

## OBSERVATIONS.

### Children's Stories.

Few children are rewarded by an interesting book when they commission a grown person to select it for them. Stories which seem to the well read adult, oppressively didactic and uncommonly dull are read with breathless interest by children, and on the contrary, stories in which grown people find imagination, a lively style, and an interesting plot are considered stupid by the children. There are many exceptions as "Alice in Wonderland," "The Jungle Books" and "The Arabian Nights," which have the united approval of youth and old age. But "Robinson Crusoe," "Sanford and Merton," and "Swiss Family Robinson," on account of their oppressively patronizing tone and the self-conscious virtuousness of the style can only be read by children. Grown people have been taken in by such self-exploiting quacks too many times ever to suffer it in a mere storyteller. Older children who read Dickens are in luck, because the exaggerations, impossible magnanimities, renunciations and unmitigated criminals make Dickens' stories a great bore to grown up people. While his vogue still endures familiarity with some of his books is expected, but it is well to have done with him at least before the eighteenth year.

St. Nicholas, a magazine for young

folks, is an interesting monthly full of charming pictures and many interesting stories. All over the United States youthful subscribers await its monthly arrival with impatience. The April number contained the final installment of a serial story called "The Colburn Prize." It is the story of two little schoolmates who were friends and the best scholars in the school they both attended. The prize is a watch offered for the best essay by Mrs. Colburn. The two little girls, Gertrude and Alice, decide to compete for the watch, but Gertrude, whose school papers have always graded a trifle higher than Alice's is afraid to hand her essay in when she has written it. After reading it over she concludes that its brilliant correctness of diction and originality of thought will certainly be awarded the prize and thus deprive Alice of the recognition she covets. She therefore delays copying it and tells the teacher that her story is not ready when the limit of the time for offering it arrives. Alice wins the prize but the self-sacrificing act and actor are discovered and announced and introduced to the whole school. The author's lack of a sense of humour prevents any appreciation of the mortification of Alice, who must realize that the prize was hers by default and not by merit. For recompense the author has Alice save Gertrude's life on the way home from the *exposé* where Gertrude was also presented with a watch, in place of the one she renounced. Of course the effect of the self-sacrifice as a lesson is entirely lost by the handsome recognition of Gertrude's magnanimity. But the children who have read the story from month to month were pleased with the finale as with the whole story. They saw no discrepancies, they did not object to the elaborate machine effects to create and reward a heroine. They did not object to the absence of life. It conforms with their ideas of literary propriety that the heroine should have no faults, that she should be a child of grace, without blemish and colorless as the author's style. The children whom I know have read this story with unfeigned interest and unquestioning acceptance of the author's taste and talent. It is therefore a successful children's story. Psychologists say children as a whole have no real sense of humour. Their verdict of "The Colburn Prize" is an indication that at least they do not insist upon humour in literature.

### The City Election.

The Chicago city council last Saturday night passed the appropriation bill for the current year, after a session of ten hours in committee of the whole. The bill authorizes \$3,000,000.00 in excess of the largest possible receipts. The Chicago councilmen are not representative citizens, but they are representative city politicians, men who make their own

living from the taxes paid by industrious, self-supporting and self-reliant citizens. The larger amount of money these councilmen order expended, the larger their patronage. The aggregate of property assessed against these city legislators is probably not a larger sum than \$10,000, and so great is the city treasurer's respect in every city for councilmen, that in all probability few of them have even paid the city their personal taxes. The evils of the system of unlimited suffrage most of us profess to be proud of, are most apparent in the legislation and in the persons and principles of the legislators of the larger cities. In cities the size of Lincoln the system works better. Really representative citizens, men of family, of initiative energy and of unblemished reputation are found among the councilmen of Lincoln. Contrast the management of this city's finances with that of Chicago. With a falling assessed valuation since 1897, the council has not increased the levy, but, *mirabile dictu*, the levy has been decreased. In other words the income of the city has decreased since 1897 at the rate of \$30,000 a year. Nevertheless, largely through the keen intelligence of Mayor Winnett, the soundness of President Webster's municipal economics and his knowledge of city finances, through the conduct of the water department by Commissioner Tyler ably assisted by Chairman of the water department Spears, the city has paid its bills, has issued no bonds, and has actually effected a reduction of \$50,000 in the outstanding warrants and a decrease of \$24,000 in the floating indebtedness. This council is not a howling mob of only partially Americanized foreigners like the Chicago council, voracious for an individual increase of patronage and salaries, but a group of fourteen citizens, even as you and I, personally interested in the welfare and not in the looting of the city.

At such a time as this, when the city is about to elect new officers it is only fair to its faithful servants to investigate their administration of their duties.

The retirement of President Webster from the council is a matter of sincere regret to members of all parties who are at the same time faithful citizens. At all times and under greater or less temptation to be selfish, he has placed his duty to the city above all other considerations. The refunding of the city debt was largely due to Mr. Webster's good financing and his steady opposition to any measures which would cost the city more than the municipal income, is one of the reasons why our income and expenditure balance.

Councilman Spears of the third ward and chairman of the water department has earned a second recognition. In connection with Mr. Tyler he has lowered the expenses of the water department. The substan-

tial results of his chairmanship are incontestably recorded in an article contributed to The Courier but published under the head of Observations, because of its pertinency and value as a summary of the accomplishments of the present council. Citizens of the third ward who approve honesty, economy and ability are invited to read and consider this report of Mr. Spears' efficiency when considering the best man to vote for.

In the history of Lincoln the saloons were never kept in such good order as they are under the present excise board, consisting of the Mayor, Mr. H. W. Brown and Mr. F. W. Brown. The laws which were framed to control saloons and reduce their evil influence is enforced, without fanaticism but in steady and undeviating compliance with the law. Mr. H. W. Brown is a man in whom all men trust. It is idle to reiterate his good qualities. He has lived in Lincoln more than thirty years. All his customers are his friends, and every acquaintance trusts him. His reputation is the work of time and an unassailable personality. Under the present regime liquor is not sold to minors, the saloons close on time and dives are closed up. Every man or woman with sons should not lightly decide to work for a change in the personnel of the excise board.

### The Humblest.

Of all the occupations by which men endeavor to make a living and if possible to make the world better the hardest and least glorious is that of a newspaper editor. Publishers of books or magazines are further removed from the activities and interests of every day life, and besides a book or magazine publisher is conceded a certain discriminating and specialized knowledge of his business denied an editor, whom there is none so poor to do him reverence. The butcher, the baker, the candle-stick maker are supposed to have learned their trade, to know something about beef, pork, fish and fowls, about breads and cakes, about tallow, wax and moulds, that lawyers, bankers and general dealers have not learned. And these other tradespeople and professional men do not attempt to instruct the butcher, the baker, and the candle-stick maker in the technicalities of their business when an unkind destiny throws these merchants in meat, bread and tallow in their way. But editors and doctors must take criticism, advice and exhortation from every street corner rencontre. Possibly it is because every man is his own doctor and every man worth living is an oracle to a small club or home circle. It is none the less trying to the editor, the least regarded of all men, after he has pondered a subject in his heart and searched the dictionary, encyclopedia and local oracles for many months, after he has carefully writ-