

State Historical Society
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THE COURIER

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OBSERVATIONS.

ONCE or twice, when he seemed to deserve it, it has been a genuine pleasure to commend Governor Holcomb. There have been, at times, gratifying indications on the part of the populist governor of a purposed rising above his political environment for the sake of true patriotism, and hopes were entertained that Nebraska might yet be proud of her straddling governor who blundered into office. But these hopes were short lived. I am afraid that the man who appointed Mart Howe and E. C. Rewick to office is, after all, on the Howe and Rewick level. It doesn't seem to be an easy matter to make a patriot out of a populist. Governor Holcomb is manifesting a populist's disregard for law and order, and his puppet performances in response to the string-pullings of the suffering Mr. Rosewater are not calculated to commend him to the favorable consideration of the people. It is a great deal better, dear Governor Holcomb to follow the law, than it is to follow populist prejudice or the erratic and mentally and morally untrustworthy Mr. Rosewater.

I am moved to deep and abiding mirth by the exhilarating effrontery of "Director" O. B. Howell, as evidenced in a circular letter to former students of the Nebraska Conservatory of Music. This cheerful and enterprising promoter and erstwhile resident of Lincoln succeeded in foisting himself upon a school of some sort in Denver, and he is now in the process of transference to that city. Mr. Howell did not come up to the quite excusable expectations of his landlord in this city; hence he decided to abandon the conservatory of music here. He is desirous of luring his former students out to Denver, and the circular is addressed to them. In it he says: "It is a well known fact that Lincoln is not in any sense of the word a musical city. The citizens take almost no interest in musical art in any of its forms. The best concert or opera companies can seldom pay expenses, when on rare occasions they venture to appear here."

Now, in the name of all the blacksmith shops and undertaking establishments and peculiar what-not with which "Director" Howell's past is picturesquely intermingled, who gave this man a license to express an opinion on Lincoln as a musical city? Is it forsooth, his shaggy locks or raven imperial that give him a musical culture sufficient to venture to criticize Lincoln as a musical city? Or, did he learn the "art" of music by working the blacksmith's bellows, or rise to the position of a musical critic by clambering on top of a pile of pine coffins? When and in what fashion did this charlatan with a shady past, who scarcely knows an octave from an octoroon, or a bar of music from a bar of iron, or a vocal chord from a cord

of wood, become a critic of things musical? "Director" Howell's nerve in assuming to pass judgment on Lincoln as a musical city is almost as funny as Mr. Will Owen Jones' testimonial for "Dear Mr. Croan" and that was very funny. When a wooden man like Howell, crammed to the brim with ignorance, presumes to condemn Lincoln on account of its lack of appreciation for "musical art," it is in order to guffaw, and there is, no doubt, much guffawing in this city just now.

It really doesn't pay to keep props under men like Croan and Howell. The former was upheld until forbearance got to be mighty tiresome, and then when he left town he sought to discredit Lincoln before the people of the country. Now this man Howell, after mining long and deep in the credulity of our people, at length reaches his limit, and in leaving has the effrontery to make disparaging remarks about us. Of course there is no use getting angry at these will-o-the-wisps. Their cavortings are provocative of amusement rather than of anger; but in the future it would be well to keep the Croans and the Howells in their proper place as long as they stay with us. Howell deprecating Lincoln as a musical city! His nerve ought to be embalmed.

The attacks on Lincoln and the state institutions maintained here made by the gentleman with the disturbed intellect, described by Judge Scott as a "cancer and microbic fungus upon the body politic," are not without a certain definite purpose. It is no secret that Mr. Rosewater's attacks upon the preparatory department of the state university were made with a view of securing this class of school patronage for one or more institutions in Omaha, and his scheme includes an attempt to separate the agricultural college with its heavy endowment from the university, and establish it in Omaha. We are pretty bad down here in Lincoln, but Mr. Rosewater and the city of Omaha want nearly everything here. As a sop to the Omaha Cerberus we might forward Rev. Byron Beall and prepay the freight charges.

The ministers of Lincoln seem determined to occupy the field heretofore monopolized by the Kansas City *Sunday Sun*. Not a Sunday passes, but some of them exploit some sensation from the pulpit. The Kingdom of Heaven is displaced by the Reservation; salvation is ignored and sensuality is substituted; piety is forgotten and prostitution is paraded, until our churches are polluted beyond the power of pastelles to purify. Has the love of the sensational crazed all men? Has religion so far lost its hold on men that it is necessary for the preachers to resort to the methods of travelling quack doctors, and advertise meetings "for men only," and distribute books which it is a crim-

inal offense to send through the mails in order to secure audiences? What a commentary on the absence of pulpit oratory in the churches of Lincoln! The people are not only willing but anxious to listen to orators. The Lansing theatre was far too small to accommodate the throng that sought to hear Dr. Gunsaulus. Witness the vast assemblages that welcomed McKinley and Foraker and Thurston and Bryan; and just the other day fifteen thousand people gathered in the little town of Humboldt to hear W. S. Summers talk on "Early Days in Nebraska." This is the orator's golden age, but the pulpit "wot not of this thing."

It is astonishing that the preachers of the city do not see that the result of this constant and nauseating discussion of the social evil is demoralizing, degrading and dangerous. Every man knows that the surest protection from improper advances which a girl or woman can possess is manifest innocence and actual ignorance of the subject. It protects a woman the same as the down on a peach protects it from the assaults of pernicious insects. The pulpit is doing its best to brush from the womanhood of our city this most potent protection. The sense of purity is as perfect a protection for a woman as the garb of a sister of charity is to the members of that order. The man who would strip from a sister of charity the habiliments of her order, whether he came from a dog pit or a pulpit would need to defend himself from the frenzy of a mob, yet the wrong is no greater in the one case than in the other. Men who attempt to converse with women on forbidden topics find their greatest difficulty in introducing the subject and starting the conversation. This is true whether the result desired is good or bad. The rubicon once crossed the conquest is too frequently accomplished. Not many years ago young men used to take young women to church Sunday nights. They occupied the same pews, sitting side by side, with escape from physical contact impossible. In inveighing against dancing this physical contact is always animadverted upon by the pulpit as being a direct stimulus to the passions. Now, what would be the probable topic of conversation on the trip homeward on a summer evening after listening to one of these oft-repeated discourses by our preachers? Let the ministers take heed of the injunction "Offenses must needs come, but woe to him by whom the offense cometh."

Any man who has lived in a large city knows, and if he is truthful will admit, that Lincoln is surprisingly exempt from public vice. The few dens and dives are incomparably small in numbers for a city of Lincoln's size. Yet these sensation mongers stand up in their pulpits and hiss out anathemas upon this community which for virulence excel the maledictions of the priests of

the sixteenth century. But two weeks ago one of them seriously likened our city to Sodom and Gomorrah, and with uplifted hand threatened us with God's curse. Some of us are not peripatetic humbugs or peregrinating parasites. We have an honest pride in Lincoln; we think of it every time we hear the song of Home Sweet Home. We believe in it, want to live and die in it, and glory in the fact that it is the grandest monument yet built to perpetuate the name of the martyred president, whose watchword of life was "malice toward none and charity for all." We look over this city and see that with a population of fifty thousand people, it has built churches enough to accommodate a city of one hundred and fifty thousand. These churches represent a cost of a million dollars, given from the scant earnings of hardy pioneers who struggled against the rigors of the climate and privations of the times to secure for themselves and their families a home. We see these churches exempt from taxation by the voluntary action of these people burdened by the struggle for existence. We see not only a school house, but a college on every hill top, and hospitals, and other eleemosynary institutions on every hand, and while felicitating ourselves that these are enduring evidences of morality and godliness Lincoln is railed at by the immediate beneficiaries of this bounty as being a modern Babylon, and another Sodom. This city is held up as a municipal maelstrom of iniquity, and were these tales given credence abroad, parents would refuse to send their children here to be educated, but teach them to shun this town as they would the gates of hell. Fortunately the truth is apparent, and consequently our population is annually augmented by families coming here to allow their children the privileges here attainable.

There is unquestionably in this city an overproduction of churches and a failure of supply of ministerial ability. The result is a diminished church attendance. To change this condition this unseemly resort to sensationalism has been indulged in. But the time has come to call a halt. Religion itself has cause to feel alarm, when its chosen advocates pervert its purposes and destroy its possibilities. The fathers of the church foresaw that such a condition might arise and the sacred books are full of exhortations to purity of thought, and St. Paul in his inspired writing to the Phillipians particularly admonishes them, "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, if there be any praise, think on these things."

To the clergy of Lincoln this admonition of the Apostle seems to have a personal applicability that entitles it to immediate consideration.