

THE COURIER

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OBSERVATIONS.

It is not generally known that the gas and electric light companies in Lincoln charge, when the bill does not exceed two dollars monthly, 50 cents for what they call meter rent—although the customer neither occupies the meter nor is the meter at work for him. But if the bill is a dollar and a half the meter rent will bring it to an even two dollars. It would be a disgrace for any self-respecting light company to collect anything smaller than two dollars. Meters in other places work for nothing, but that does not matter. If the customer were able to regulate consumption so as to use up the electricity he must pay for, whether he uses it or not, it would soothe his feelings when he pays his heavy, light bill.

A grocer might just as well add a certain sum to every monthly bill, which in his estimation, did not pay for the wear and tear on the delivery wagon, horse and boy. He might as well so far as the logic of the charge is concerned, but it would be bad for his business, for there are other grocers who are willing to throw in wear and tear on wagon, boy and repair of both, but alas! and alas! there is only one electric light company, whose bills depend entirely upon the company's ideas of their proper size. Shoe rent for collectors and linemen would be just as reasonable as meter rent. There is nothing in the habits of the company to insure the citizens against any arbitrary expansion of a bill whose size does not suit the rules of

proportion adopted by the Lincoln Electric Light Co. A protest against the overestimated labor of the meter for the month in keeping track of the electricity used by the customer is only answered by the gentleman who collects the meter rent that it is a rule of the company. This closes discussion and appeals. "It is a rule of the company." Allah ilallah.

The hypotenuse is still concealed in the block of Tennessee marble which is killing a large square of grass in the state house grounds. Poor John Currie gave up trying to find it when his acquaintances got too poor to advance money for the search. There are some inveterate sportsmen who are willing to bet that Peary will find the pole before John Currie finds the hypotenuse. The Lincoln monument association, though it has not selected a sculptor is confident that it will be an easy task as soon as the marble is theirs. John Currie has not officially relinquished his claim to seek for the hypotenuse hidden, like Michael Angelo's angel, in marble. The last days of his search were embittered by the impossibility of the task which he had set himself. If the statue be ever completed old John Currie's hand should remove the veil. He got the stone in some mysterious way. He was encouraged by a hope that he could carve a statue of Abraham Lincoln before which people would reverently stand as they do before St. Gauden's statue in Lincoln park.

The really skillful old stone cutter is defeated by his lack of early study of anatomy and modeling. The deep shadows of the decorative friezes around the tower of the Y. M. C. A. building, which grow heavier in successive circles as they ascend and the difference in the patterns prove Mr. Currie has artistic insight. Although not a genius and incapable now of carving a human figure, for which a study of the skeleton is necessary, even to genius, under the influence of an artistic environment and with an education Mr. Currie would have made a good sculptor, for he possesses, first, a devotion to sculpture, and technical skill, zeal and industry when he is working at the art which by temperament he is fitted for and loves. If there is ever a great statue of Abraham Lincoln here it will be because of John Currie. His defeat is pathetic, but if he loves art for its own sake he will be content when he unveils the statue of Abraham Lincoln made by a more fortunate man.

Miss McNab has been travelling in South Africa and sending notes to the London papers. When she returned she found that unprincipled publishers (how smoothly those words fit together)

were preparing to pirate her copy into books of their own. She hastily revised her notes and got out her own book, the looseness of form and lack of style, of which she makes the vicious publishers an excuse for. The book tells of her experiences in South Africa very graphically. In her unconsciously feminine way she says she likes Rhodes and does not like Kruger. But she gives no reason for her approval or aversion. The book is full of Kaffir terms and phrases which, with British politeness, she does not explain. Why is it that the English, when they visit India, Africa or Central Asia, incorporate into their reports the phraseology of a barbarous people and when they visit America insist on their own terminology? Even Rudyard Kipling scorns to apply the terms, baggage, depot, street car, conductor, servant or hack to those objects which we have designated thus ourselves and which do not exactly correspond with the nearest English equivalent. Luggage does very well for the English because, until lately, they have not had the baggage check system and from the moment they started on their travels it was a case of lug. Station is a better word than depot, which means, except in America, a place to store things. British arrogance is teaching us better and "educators" are beginning to say station too. Our street cars are not trams—the latter is neither descriptive nor picturesque, nor exact. A conductor is not a guard nor is a hack a cab. Maid and man are better words than servants for such employes and they also are superceding the less sympathetic word. But why do we not deserve the credit or blame of our own nomenclature. It may be a poor thing but it is our own. And when Mr. Kipling allows the heathen to keep their bungalows tiffin and jinrik shas why should he deprive a much more intelligent people, of the same ancestral origin as his own and who are his wife's people, of their household phraseology? Hack is a much better word than the outlandish jin-rik-sha, yet he discards hack in order to do so, tearing out the front windows, elevating the shafts, and mounting the driver up behind, thus making it a cab, "which it aint." Besides making kindling wood of the hack in the Anglicising process, he has lost entirely local color. Local color is the excuse of Du Maurier for making his English books more French than English. Local color is the reason for the bad livers and the heathen names in Kipling's stories. And the reason is cogent. But even English literary men have enough combativeness from defeated sires to wish to discourage any kind of American independence of speech.

The features of the president of this country are more familiar to a lar er

number of the citizens of Lincoln than is the aspect of Mayor Graham and his council. President McKinley could not walk the streets of Lincoln without instant recognition. His personality is familiar to the public of the United States. Although his character is not of such immediate and apparent importance to us we are better acquainted with him than with the executives of our own city government.

The humbler city officials, such as the policemen, assessors and the city scavenger, are the only representatives of the city known to the property holders at large. Policemen, outside of any influence, are appointed because of their brawn, honesty and liability to stay awake nights and not at all on account of their polish. In spite of which the police, as I have known them have never exhibited their power for the purpose of frightening and bullying law abiding citizens. And the city officials in the persons of the scavengers and street cleaners have been above reproach. But the assessors, who more than any of the city's hired men, come within conversational reach of the plain citizen, sometimes bring reproach upon the very important department they are sent out to secure funds for. In times past they have been good natured, hard working men who executed their mission with a subdued sense of power that did not deprive the assessed of all dignity and self respect. Some of the men, to speak exactly, one of the men who is paid to estimate the taxable personal property of the Fourth ward, has caused more suspicion of and objections to the city government than the strictest bicycle regulations. With his hat on his head he enters a house presided over by a timid woman, who, as the case may be, is cooking, washing or sweeping. Her, he questions with a manner at once coarse and terrifying. In this individual she converses for the first time with the law and her reverence is replaced by disgust. He goes from house to house and as fast as he goes he makes the city government unpopular with that member of the family who is at home daytimes and whose hand is said to rock the world. This particular deputy of the assessor has exceeded even an assessor's privileges, in consequence of which his services to the city are about to end.

The board of managers of the Trans-Mississippi exposition is supposed to meet every Saturday, but for several weeks, it is said, that there has not been a quorum present. Therefore the exact functions and power of the woman's board of managers has not yet been determined upon. So far as the situation has unfolded at present, the woman's board is a sub-committee competent to report and advise but not com-