



# THE COURIER

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**OBSERVATIONS.**

There may be a few citizens of Lincoln who write neither poetry nor prose, but they are as rare as the blossoms of that plant whose thick juicy leaves absorb meat and drink from the air of a hundred years before yielding any of it to make a blossom out of. These human plants who know too much to cheapen inspiration by printing it prematurely, will, in the fullness of time, blossom through some deep-rooted descendant into gorgeous and symmetrical fulfillment in reward of a century's silence; a reward that is now in slow ripening for the great grand children of those who now ponder these things in their hearts. In Lincoln especially, the number of gifted writers is large of those whose burning thoughts are actually in print, but of those who, in moments which favor confidences, confide the consciousness of the gift of composition there is no end. Meanwhile the law, medicine and the various kinds of mercantile pursuits are filled by half-hearted drudges who feel that they were built for poetry. Returns from a business conducted by a genius who feels himself nobly planned to edify the English-speaking world being rather slow, for every enterprise requires all the devotion and attention of the man who conducts it, the productive energy of a literary town like Lincoln is tremendously lessened. A man who has not even a secret tendency to dissipate

his strength in writing has a very good chance of success because he has almost no competitors with a single purpose.

Mr. J. C. Seacrest of the News has achieved a real newspaper success. Realizing the futility and evaporative quality of editorials, poetry and locals he has not bothered about them, but has observed the ways of advertisers and subscribers, he has adapted his bait to their capricious appetites until he has made "The Journal hated of Omaha." Before the days of Seacrest that paper only received occasional vituperation in the columns of the Bee and the World-Herald. Today these loathsome contemporaries are moved to daily outbursts by the sight of columns of Omaha advertisements in the Lincoln paper and by a knowledge of a rapidly increasing subscription list. This very complimentary wrath is due mostly to Mr. Seacrest's exertions. The policy and the ability which increased the revenues of a morning paper will have the same effect on an evening paper. There is no reason under the new management why the News should not be among the first rate papers of the state. So far as THE COURIER's investigations go the News is the private property of Mr. Seacrest. The accusations that the Journal has bought it and put Mr. Seacrest in charge lack all evidence but that of suspicion.

There are those who say that certain members of our city council think that the best and cheapest way to get good water is to turn it over to a private company. For this reason all plans for increasing and purifying the present supply are discouraged. There is little doubt that a private company would supply better and cheaper water than we are now drinking. In fact no private company would dare charge so much for such bad water as the city government furnishes, nevertheless it is better that the city should own the water. There is always a chance that a few honest and capable men may get into office and administer the city's affairs as they do their own—without waste. If the city owned the street car system and turned back to the city a year's profits, in prosperous years the rate of taxation would be reduced, far-sighted eastern capitalists, that mythical game for which the council is always hunting, would be attracted, might invest, might even settle here. The larger the amount of capital invested in the city the smaller the tax levy. Since the hard times began the rate has been annually increased, until those who have managed to save their property from the wreck of falling prices are almost ready to give it up because

of the steadily increasing rate of taxation. The council, with the exception of Mr. Webster and an occasional colleague, seems deaf to appeals from the taxpayers. Any measure which means an increase of patronage to the council, is from its first appearance on a favorable

If the city were to buy the water rights, the expenses of the water plant would be saved and the rental of the privilege could be expended on city sewers and streets without remonstrance. It is a perpetual reproach to the council that a private company can buy the plant and pay an annual rental for street privileges, and furnish better water at the same price than the city government can. But it is better for the city to hold on to its own even if the price of liberty is high. A corporation sometimes exerts so demoralizing an influence on city politics in respect to the liberties of the city it operates in, that no rental or tax is high enough to reimburse the citizens for the loss of "integrity," for the sale of their inherent rights. The Lincoln Gas and Electric Light Co., is an example of the evils of corporation influence in city politics. The president of this company wields a personal influence large enough to frequently turn the balance his way, but when, as in his case, it is increased by the power of a corporation, it practically puts the city in his hands. We have sold our birthright to light. We are going to be confronted with an offer for our water. There is only one other element that we can sell and retain anything but a feudal right to live. The peasant in the fifteenth century used to kneel before his overlord, lay his head in the dust and place his lord's foot on his neck and swear allegiance. The modern citizen would refuse with a very pretty show of independence to go through any such ceremony, but the feudal lord of Lincoln knows his rights and uses them, as undisputedly as the baron of old. With a president of a water company dwelling among us in apparently harmless but real sovereignty the city would settle down into the peace and quiet of corruption. It is unwise from any point of view or for any reasons for a city to sell such franchises. A businesslike administration of them will, in time, make a city self supporting. It is so in several cities of England and Scotland and no obstacles in the way of franchises disposed of to private parties should stop the progress of the next generation in the practice of municipal economics.

The school board has been obliged,

since it decided to purchase school books for the children, to save the money thus expended by increasing salaries, and both have reached the

the school board, except in the case of the very poor, it was not much of a hardship. Anyway the parents were buying for their own, not emptying their hard-earned money into the lap of the school board. Under the old system the children used their own books, when they passed into higher grades they had fresh, clean books unsoiled and untainted. Then most of the children took pride in keeping the books clean and the danger of infection from the books having been used by diseased children was much less than under the present system. If the board did not buy the books it would have that amount to expend for supplies and salaries and the legitimate and customary expenses of the public schools. But the temptation which overcomes most boards was too much for the Lincoln board. The expedient increases the patronage and the importance of a body which works without much remuneration except that which comes of having places to bestow or supplies to purchase. Buying the books in wholesale quantities saves the middleman's profits. But the profits of the local bookseller are small enough and the city should not compete with one of its component parts.

Under the old system, a child occasionally complained that his parents could not buy books for him. It was then the teacher's duty to ascertain if the child's lack of books was due to parental poverty or meanness. If the former allegation was true, the board furnished the books. The present system is parental. Its tendency is to pauperize, to teach a most pernicious theory of the functions of government, a theory which is weakening the backbone of Americanism now, and which children should be led away from and not into.

A new bulletin "The Birds of Colorado" from the Colorado State Agricultural College has just been received by THE COURIER. It is designed, according to the preface to set forth the present knowledge of the distribution and migration of Colorado birds. It also says that "the total number of species and varieties of birds known to occur in Colorado is 360, of which 228 are known to breed. This is a larger number of species than has been taken in any state east of the Mississippi and is exceeded by only one state of