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OBSERVATIONS.

The membership of the Union Commercial club now comprises most of the men of the city who have made enough of a success of existence to be employers rather than employed. All the professions except, perhaps, the ministerial, and most of the branches of commerce located here are represented. The basis of their association is purely social. The rooms are the meeting place of friends, who separate into groups and play games, gossip or talk politics or business as they please. They come and go as they please. There are no rules. Mutual improvement, city improvement, child study or economics are scarcely ever mentioned. Now this is just as it should be. The club was organized to minister to the gregarious instincts of the men of Lincoln and it is fulfilling that purpose with greater or less satisfaction according to the more or less exacting requirements of the individual member. But the members of such an organization might take an interest in decent and economical city government. They might devote an occasional hour to an examination of the progress the city has made in the direction towards which all cities, even the worst, are striving. The science of city government would repay a little study by these men who represent the best in the city. An hour or two once a fortnight spent in brotherly discussion of the conditions which make residence in Lincoln un-

healthy and at the same time expensive, would undoubtedly result in changing those conditions for the better. A little of the keen comprehension of difficulties and the best way to surmount them, by which the membership of the club has been successful in individual management, if applied to city affairs, without regard to politics, would immediately be felt in the ring which now controls the city. Essayists and students of economics say that it is only when the city or state is *in extremis* that her citizens are apt to exhibit patriotic attachment. The cumulation of selfish conspiracies in regard to the city water and in regard to the city lighting, has exasperated the citizens to such an extent as to illuminate their patriotism and loosen the hold which party has on them. The granting of another important franchise to Mr. Thompson may be enough to turn democratic uncertainty into victory. It is a small spark to set so big a fire, but the heap has been increasing in size and inflammability until only a small spark is necessary.

Last winter when a German officer ran a peasant through with his sword for having accidentally fallen against him, the papers of the United States were severe in condemning a military system which allowed such a crime to go practically unpunished. The outrage at Fort Sheridan, where a private soldier was bound and dragged by the heels to the place where the military court was in session is worse than the German incident by so much more as this is a free country and Germany a monarchy at the mercy of a brutal and half-mad soldier. Then the officer who stabbed the peasant was drunk. He had been carousing, he was boasting of his greatness as an officer when the peasant lurched against him. Flushed by wine and by his conception of his position, in the presence of his companions it was incumbent upon him to destroy a churl who knew no more than to shove an officer. But the case at Sheridan was different. The private had committed no personal offense against the officer who was sent to bring the prisoner to court. The officer had not been drinking. He was in the act of performing a customary duty and there were no companions to applaud his severity. The officer capable of such an offense should at least lose his rank in the army. Such men as he keep respectable men from enlisting. It is the frequent complaint of recruiting officers that only men who have failed to make a living, who are incompetents in every way, apply for admittance to the army. Such an incident as this will not tend

to increase the popularity of the army either with those who are already privates or with those who thought of joining it.

The report of the special committee, appointed six months ago for the purpose of investigating the water department of the city was read to the council on Monday night. Messrs Comstock, Woodward, Spears, Finlay and Lawlor constituted the committee and the report was signed by all the members except Mr. Lawlor. The last mentioned explained his refusal to sign the report by the statement that he was opposed to the recommendation of the appointment of a water inspector and examiner and to the purchase by the department of two pair of scales to be located at the Rice well and at any other place where the council may decide to locate a new station.

The report of the committee is a business like, frank statement of the cost of the three stations for a year and their conclusions after a relative comparison of the cost and quality of water furnished by the three wells. For instance: "It is the judgement of this committee that the F and South street pumping stations should be abandoned as soon as a sufficient supply of good and wholesome water can be obtained in some other locality and that by the consolidation of the South and F street stations the cost of operating expenses can be greatly lessened. For instance during the year from July 1, 1896, to July 1, 1897, it cost \$6,321.36 to operate the F street station, from which station very little water was pumped, it being simply held in reserve for fire purposes.

The committee is of the opinion that the A street test wells should be immediately connected with the mains and the citizens given the benefit of the good water derived therefrom while an exhaustive test of said wells is proceeding."

If I understand the report, which is a little difficult in the passage where it recommends the abandonment of the South street and F street stations and in the same paragraph their consolidation, the committee advise the abandonment of the F and South street stations if a sufficient flow of pure water be found elsewhere, if not the consolidation of the two stations; if the A street pumping test proves that there is water there in abundance, the location of a permanent station there; the purchase by the department of a pair of scales for each permanent pumping station; the placing of a meter at every point where the water mains are tapped, beginning in the placing thereof with those taps where most water is consumed; and the appointment of a water inspector who will collect reliable data for the re-rating of water assessments.

The committee believes that if these suggestions are acted upon the water department will be self-supporting.

There is a little doubt that, considering the experience of the state with coal dealers at various state institutions situated in different parts of the state that the recommendation as to the location of a pair of scales at each pumping station is a wise one and that the adoption of this particular advice by the council on Monday night will save the city thousands of dollars. The city scales may be all right but pumping station scales are inclined to be more accurate, for certain reasons which inhere in human nature rather than in scales. The refusal of Mr. Lawlor to sign the report because it recommended scales is perfectly consistent with his previous championship of the South street station which consumed more coal than any other station considering the amount of water pumped.

Take it altogether, this report of the water committee is the first encouraging sign that the people have had that the water question is nearing a satisfactory solution. All the recommendations are based on the trial and failure of other methods. The council recognized the soundness of the advice and adopted it. With all the city wells located in a fresh water basin, by the use of electricity which will locate the pumping station at one place, preferably the Rice station, by the adoption of the meter system to stop waste, the department will be self supporting without the aid or consent of any private individual.

It is of course difficult for a council to resist the more or less direct influence of the holders of Gas company stock, who are naturally in favor of increasing the earning capacity of the plant by about three hundred per cent of the cost of the extra labor and coal required to do the pumping. Stockholders in the Gas company are canny citizens. By years of labor and saving they have accumulated money enough to get into the "prominent citizen" category, and influence enough to carry through whatever project seems profitable. If the council and citizens resist their insidious advances it will be unexpected but none the less satisfactory to the body of taxpayers who groan without relief under the burden of an increasing tax levy. Letting the pumping contract to the water company at \$20,000 a year is \$3,000 more than the mayor himself admitted that the city can do it for. It is to the interest of the whole community that the city continue to perform the remainder of the