



# THE COURIER

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## OBSERVATIONS.

The sense of security which keeps the gamblers from being scared by the fuss the newspapers are making is not without adequate cause. From the mayor they are assured of no interruption and from Sheriff Trompen, the same gamblers who infest the city, learned at the late reunion that they could pursue their trade without interruption. Had it not been that it was just before election it looks as if Sheriff Trompen would not have interfered even as tardily as he did, after his attention had been repeatedly called to their penal offense. But it was just before election and he was afraid of the newspapers and their ability to arouse the people to a knowledge of the disrespect paid the law by men elected to arrest those who break it. It is safe to say that if the people had been sure of the sheriff's collusion with the gamblers, he would have been defeated by an overwhelming vote.

On the first day of 1898 the publisher of THE COURIER received from Mr. S. L. Geisthardt, an attorney of this city, for whom THE COURIER has printed sheriff's sales and various legal notices, a letter to the effect that the sheriff had refused to publish any more sheriff's sales in THE COURIER on account of the stand THE COURIER took during the campaign on his (the sheriff's) attitude towards the gamblers. Mr. Geisthardt added that "he (the sheriff) says he would like to have you (the publisher) know the reason."

In reply to this round-about statement of his real affection for the class whom THE COURIER has attacked the publisher wrote a letter to the sheriff requesting a verification of these remarkable statements from the high sheriff of Lancaster county. To this letter she has received no reply except a request through the aforesaid attorney for a personal interview, which was ignored. Such revenge and such indirection on the part of a county officer is in itself a proof of unfitness for holding any office and the real sympathy with the birds of prey which the letter shows ought to be investigated by the grand jury. The sheriff's conduct is a more effective means of muzzling the press than obtains in Germany where editors are put in jail for *lese majeste* but where their sources of income are rarely interfered with. Such reprisal for justifiable criticism of very suspicious conduct shows that the writers of anonymous letters to "The News" condemning open gambling, were aware of the protection afforded the gamblers by the county and city authorities and that an open condemnation of them meant a withdrawal of patronage from the various interdependent trades and professions by which the writers earn their living.

The legislative investigating committee has made a report on the penitentiary from which it is made to appear that under state management and control of the prison the expense of maintaining prisoners is \$8.38 per month per man, or a total of \$1,183 per month for 350 prisoners. Under the Mosher-Dorgan lease the contractors received 40 cents per day per prisoner for convict labor; doubtless under the management of the able financiers now constituting the Board of Public Lands and Buildings the state will be able to dispose of the labor of convicts at not less than 40 cents per convict per day or \$10.40 per month. It is estimated that 80 per cent of the convicts can be employed at remunerative labor, the remaining 20 per cent includes those incapacitated and those employed in the discharge of prison duties; thus out of 350 prisoners 280 can be employed and their labor will yield to the state an income of \$2,912 per month, or an excess of income over cost of maintaining convicts of \$1,729 per month or \$20,748 per year. If the figures of the committee and its experts are correct, the penitentiary is now not only self-sustaining but is yielding to the state a profit each month. The last legislature appropriated \$60,000 for the maintenance of 350 convicts for two years, but as the penitentiary is now, according to the

report of the committee, much more than self-sustaining, it cannot be presumed that a dollar of this appropriation will be used. In his message to the legislature in 1877, Governor Garber in speaking of the state prison said: "The average daily cost per prisoner has been one dollar and twenty-five cents." That was before the lease was made with Stout, under which the state paid 60 cents per convict per day for two years, 55 cents per convict per day for two years and 50 cents per convict per day for two years. Under extensions of this lease the price was reduced to 40 cents per convict per day. Twenty years ago it cost the state, according to the message of the governor, \$37.50 per month to support each prisoner under state control and management. Now, according to the report of the legislative committee, it costs the state \$3.38 per month to support each prisoner under state control and management.

In an interesting article in the current number of the *Northwestern Monthly* Mrs. W. G. L. Taylor speaks of the gradual loss of power by city councils and the absorption of specific functions by boards. The consequence is that, although the people hold the council responsible for good or bad government, it is hindered by a real weakness from carrying out a strong policy. The people would be more satisfactorily represented if the mayor had more power and there were not so many councilmen. Two or three councilmen elected at large by a people able to pick out managers whose sagacious and honorable conduct of their own affairs indicated their fitness to run a city's, would restore values which have been ruined by burdensome taxation. Let the city pay as good a price for a general manager as any other corporation of its size, capital and importance. A railroad or trust's manager is so identified with the railroad or trust that he works for, that there are very rare instances of betrayal and extravagance. But if a railroad selected its agents and managers for the irrelevant reasons that influence the democratic or republican parties in nominating candidates, every road which adopted the "system" would be in the hands of a receiver six months after the application of the system. Mrs. Taylor calls the rule of the rings and political clubs an oligarchy of which the Tweed ring in New York and the Gas ring in Philadelphia are examples. "Such reckless squandering of public money, brazen and profligate bartering of public offices and wholesale thieving are undoubtedly exceptional. But they afford an excellent illustration of

the full development of oligarchic tendencies." The latest result of public disgust with the oligarchy is apparent in Lincoln now. Reform has set in inside the dominant party in this section and in its onward movement will clear itself of the rubbish and filth which have come near destroying it. The politicians who are shrewd enough will not endeavor to hinder, but to help it along while there is time.

The resignation of Water Commissioner Byers created much favorable comment upon the effectiveness of the work of the water committee. It is said that Mr. Byers will insist upon a rigid examination by the agent of the surety company which signed his bond. It is very likely that the soulless corporation will look into his books with a sharpness that will satisfy him. In justice to Mr. Byers the examination should be rigid and merciless. Only in this way can he be completely exonerated by a people who have grown suspicious to the point of conviction of the conduct of the water department. If the department has been run extravagantly in order to show that the city was incapable of running it, the water committee may find it out and the security company people may help them. On the other hand if Mr. Byers has economized his resources and collected the water taxes from everybody without fear or favor, the people, in justice to Mr. Byers, ought to know it.

The January number of *McClure's* indicates in the second installment of Rupert of Hentzau that Rudolph Rassendyl is going to be assisted by Colonel Sapt and Fritz von Tarlenheim to mount the throne of his bar sinister grandfather. But it does not indicate how the king, by seven or eight removes, is going to get rid of his English relatives and connections who will be sure to search for their evaporated relative in the candid, slow but generally successful hunting style of the English. This bringing a hero back to the neighborhood of the object he has so touchingly renounced, is a little like the resuscitation of a dead person. Of course we are glad to see him again, but we have made other alliances and we are resigned to the separation of the lovers, especially for such noble reasons as actuated them. Upon the whole the awkwardness of the situation makes our welcome of Rudolph Rassendyl a trifle luke-warm. Flavia's husband is still alive, and, in fact, the noble-minded Rudolph has come back to save his lady from merited conjugal reproaches for writing to

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