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OBSERVATIONS.

Considering the high winds which prevail in this section, the scarcity of fire proof buildings and competent fire chiefs and the limited supply of water the losses by fire have been few and small. The Davis fire occurred on one of those rare nights when the air was still and the smoke ascended in a straight column. To the spectators who watched the smoke slowly increasing in volume for the two hours before the appearance of flame, the failure of the firemen to chop holes through the floor that the water might reach the fire is unexplainable. The firemen, in fact, deluged the smoke with water without having any effect upon it except to augment it. The conclusion from the discussion over the conduct of the fire, which has almost displaced the contemplation of a war with Spain, has been that it would pay the city to employ a chief who has learnt the best modern methods of fighting fire. Upon a fire chief's ability to rapidly and correctly locate the source of the smoke and flame and his knowledge of the quickest and most effective way of getting at the fire, depends hundreds of thousands of dollars

and frequently valuable lives. When fire threatens the business portion of a city it makes very little difference to the insurance companies and to those whose property is on fire, whether the fire chief is a democrat, republican or populist. He should not be at the head of the fire department of any town without having served in a subordinate position in the fire department of a city large enough to keep the firemen of the different districts busy. What hospital practice is to a physician, experience in a metropolitan fire department is to a fire chief. There are scores of competent men in a subordinate position in the New York or Chicago fire department who could be induced to take charge of the department here. But if such a man were sent for, the claims of the few local and non-professional aspirants to the place must give way to considerations of the interests of the whole city. Lincoln has never had a fire chief whose education qualified him to supervise buildings and point out dangerous devices. If such a man had been in charge when the Richard's block windows were walled up the openings would have been sealed as securely as the rest of the wall. The owner of a building is not supposed to have expert knowledge of conditions which are dangerous in case of fire, but the duties of the chief of the fire department, if well executed, will prevent the occurrence of many fires by convincing landlords that certain building expedients are dangerous. The conditions of the fire of last Friday were a repetition of those which obtained when the C. C. Burr property was burned. The large brick house smouldered for many hours because the firemen were unable to locate the fire which was so sluggish that it never broke into a blaze. But the house was destroyed by water applied to smoke and flame and not turned on the fire. The question of getting a competent man who can diagnose a fire correctly and rapidly concerns every citizen who pays insurance rates and much more those who own uninsured property, but I am well aware of the futility of these thousands of people attempting to insist upon an intelligent and expert fire chief. Both Bob Malone and Chief Weidman would consider such sensible conduct as destructive of their constitutional rights, and on the occasion of the first fire of consequence the new chief would have a warm time checking combustion in structures not, strictly speaking, built of brick and wood and stone, nor even of iron.

The support of a paper which is only nominally a party organ, but really

desires to offend no one, is of a greater injury to one of its own candidates than the opposition papers. There are three principal ways in which a paper can support a candidate, viz., by formally and paragraphically expressing its convictions of the candidate's virtues and qualifications for the office, discrediting the opposition candidate by printing biographical proofs of his unfitness, and by abstaining from printing anything which may prejudice the mind of any one against its own candidate. As to the first some of the best and most loyal papers cannot always express approval of the party nominees, who under our city system are frequently the worst men in the community. Such papers run the risk of losing patronage and business galore by what the professional politicians scornfully designate as "their squeamishness." The second duty of a party organ is much easier, for where it is extremely difficult to unqualifiedly support any man owing to the frequency of temptation and the imperfect defences of human nature, the opposition candidate is never invulnerable and there are plenty of authentic biographical references which will discredit him if skillfully arranged for the subscribers' perusal. This second duty is the easiest of the three and is scarcely ever omitted by a newspaper with any metropolitan habits whatever. The third duty is not so carefully fulfilled, especially if the company which controls the paper is running a job office too. When a man who is a large job office patron, holds a meeting and abuses the candidates for whom that paper is supposed to be working, it is very difficult indeed for the organ to refuse its patrons request to print a full account of the meeting and the charges made against its own candidates. But by doing so the people who do not go to the meetings of the opposition and who subscribe for only their own party organs are made aware of the charges inspired by malice and partizan convention. Printed in their own paper they will read them with greater or less attention and having read them in an authorized organ of their own party the injury is done and the candidates, unfortunate in the choice of a friend who will do just as much for a friend and ally as an enemy, providing the latter pays him as well, are discredited.

It was not difficult for the Journal to state entire approval of Mr. H. W. Brown, a man of such integrity and withall modesty, that any newspaper commendation seems a cheap impertinence. But considering that politics has gained him the censure of Mr. Wolfenbarger it is well enough to

state that Mr. Brown has the good will and respect of every one who knows him. There is just the difference between Mr. Brown and Mr. Wolfenbarger that there is between a reasonable man who is willing that the rain should fall on the just and the unjust, and a vindictive egoist convinced that the community is obstinately wicked because his syllogism will not prove. But in last Monday's Journal there was an account of a Red Ribbon meeting in which Mr. Wolfenbarger, in language which on the street would have been ribald, expressed his unwarrantable convictions as to Mr. Brown's ultimate destination and said he would not go there too because he was too good, or words to that effect. The profanity appeared in the Journal beneath charges, which, unexplained and unconnected with any circumstances would prejudice many people against one of the republican candidates for exciseman. The Journal is supposed to be the organ of the republican party in this city. It has a larger circulation than any other paper and in printing Mr. Wolfenbarger's attack it multiplied his audience by a hundred and probably, by so doing, secured some votes for the opposition. The moral is that a man may pretend to a friendship until treason pays him better, also that a newspaper's value as a party organ is seriously impaired by a desire to please everybody.

There are a few who believe that the culture and discipline gained by a conscientious member of a club or chautauqua circle is equal to that of a college course. If this be so then the latter half of the century has found a royal road to knowledge which may be traveled in pleasant company, unmenaced by the fear of a plucking or a "condition." A student who fulfills the requirements of a first class college course must give all his time to it. He can not finish creditably by only filling up the interstices of his time with study, attendance upon lectures and laboratory work. The four years are a steady grind at the course, presided over by lecturers, each one of whom requires enough work from each student to occupy his whole time. The voluntary *devot* to science or literature outside of college has no searching examinations to prepare for, no learned and exacting lecturer to urge him day by day, nor hope of Latin parchment to reward a search of the encyclopedia. Yet the study which is now being stimulated by culture clubs all over this country is accomplishing what colleges cannot for the very reason that a club will accept what portion of a member's time she can give