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## OBSERVATIONS.

### Street Decoration.

Many elaborate booths erected for last week's street fair were undeniably ugly though the merchants spent enough on their decoration to have secured beauty. Not to be invidious, but for the sake of truth and in order to profit by the experiences of one year for next year's improvement, there were but three booths that received praise. Believing that the decision of the multitude when uttered unconsciously and offered gratuitously is valuable, it is worth while to study the reason for these three village triumphs. A glance eastward from the government building on O street revealed among a hedge of booths one dominant Moresque dome. This dome with its slender peak was light and airy and indubitably festive in effect. The short arcades, on each side of the dome, were also very pleasing. Further east on O street was a small Greek temple, erected with nice detail and smoothly covered with white oilcloth. A block further east stood another booth, in the shape of a pagoda and filled with goods exquisitely draped, and juxtaposed by a colorist of no mean ability.

These three notable displays among a confusion of badly designed and decorated booths indicate that before another fair time we should learn new methods and accept new canons.

The decoration of New York by Dewey was a new departure in American street decoration. In the first place the streets were not left to be decorated in spots by each householder according to the riot or the commonplaceness of his imagination.

Leading up to the arch, Venetian masts have been erected. Far from criticising the plan and scope committee for adopting a foreign architectural expression of triumph, it is to be congratulated for selecting the arch, the masts and winged victories to express a nation's joy over the return of a conqueror. The moment that the Admiral sees these old symbols of triumph his mind will, perforce, be carried back to the Medici and the warriors of the Italian cities, to Caesar and Rome triumphant, to Athens and Miltiades or to Admiral Themistocles.

It is with architecture as with songs and words: certain notes and certain vowel combinations mean triumph, and if a new symbol be selected it will require centuries for a nation to learn it. The architectural language the New Yorkers used was first adopted by the Greeks, enriched by the Romans and completed by the Italian cities.

The unity of the decorations is the new feature in American municipal triumphs. The householders along the line of march have been requested to hang rich rugs and bright stuffs from their windows. Thus making a better and more effective background for the procession than the tawdry cotton bunting with colors rain-soaked and stained that we have been in the habit of putting up wherever a tack or nail could be driven and with out much regard to the effect. By decorating the sides of the streets themselves and by restricting the decoration of buildings to flat draperies hung from windows the committee has secured unity, or the subordination of one part to another for the sake of the whole.

### The Fire Department.

Most of the citizens who take an interest in and hope for much from the weekly council meetings were disappointed that the council did not, at least, discuss the needs of the fire department on Monday. A change in its organization or the destruction by fire of more valuable property is imminent. Considering the condition of the city funds it is difficult to secure a better fire chief than Chief Wiedman, but these difficulties are not so great as the dangers which menace the city so long as an incompetent man is in charge of the department. Lacking the force, the self-confidence, the good judgment, and the specific knowledge of fire fighting which a chief should possess, Mr. Wiedman's incumbency of the office is a menace to the city.

The firemen are unprepared by drills for the emergency of a fire. The stations are neatly kept, the horses well groomed, and there is probably not another fire chief's cart in this country so gorgeously painted as the Lincoln one. And the latter seems to be the principal perquisite of the position. It will be remembered

that when Mr. Wiedman superseded Mr. Malone that either the new chief or the old one alternately sat in the cart for days waiting for a fire alarm. The cart has been made the insignia of office, the splendor of the position belongs to him who sits in the cart. It is as the crown to the king, and more it is his seal. Without it there is no joy in being chief and the firemen who have the knack of painting are put to work painting and striping the cart whenever a scratch mars it. According to the rules of conduct considered essential for the Lincoln fire department, the first and most important relates to the fire chief's cart and the state he is thus enabled to maintain while being driven about the city by an obsequious fireman. There is really no other vehicle perfect in appointments, driver and all, in the city. Coupes are scarce, the only victoria has disappeared and the large two seated family carriages, stanhopes, and surreys are not especially startling.

A rickety cart, poorly groomed horses, and untidy stations would not be a credit to the department, but the citizens would submit to less show and fewer parades by the fire department, if they might witness a few drills, and be surprised by the quick, concerted, intelligent action of trained firemen. At the present time the department is apparently unconcerned about fires but particular about shining brass and polished paint. Sixty or seventy dollars a month paid to a fireman for painting carts and shining brass and copper is very much higher than the market price of such labor. For a trained fireman who knows exactly what his duties are when the fire alarm sounds, who understands the machinery of the various implements for putting out a fire, and who can handle them without breaking, the salary is not excessive. The audiences which have watched the Lincoln firemen at work will bear witness to their lack of discipline, their disorganization and helplessness when the department is attempting to get control of a serious fire. On dress parade they are a hearty, clean, neat group of men, and in so far as shining paint and brass can reflect credit upon the department, the department receives it then. But, I maintain, as firemen doing the work for which the department exists, the shiniest street parade is but an obnoxious reminder of their real inefficiency. If they are failures as firemen, it is a conspicuous and repeatedly demonstrated failure all around.

Nebraska has a meteorological reputation for high winds which the weather record sustains. Up to the present time it has happened, only happened, that no fires have broken out during a wind storm of great velocity. With the present inexperienced set of carpenters, painters, and hostlers, called firemen by an uncritical council, if a fire were to break out in any of the down town blocks while

the wind was blowing, in a few hours Lincoln would become but a name for isolated residences surrounding a few acres of what was O street, N street, Eleventh street, etc., flanked by a postoffice building, banks, shops, and all the various buildings which make a town. There are very few fire proof buildings here, and a fire department that could not prevent a stone church from burning when it was separated ten feet or more from a burning building would be unable to keep a fire from spreading in the direction of the wind over the whole block and if the block then the town.

### What Dewey Said.

In his first interview with reporters in American waters, Admiral Dewey contradicted the impression which the anti-expansionists have industriously circulated, that he was in favor of Aguinaldo and of evacuating the Philippines to any sort of government. The Admiral said that he knew Aguinaldo well and that he was bright but shallow and the tool of sharp lawyers who were using him to accomplish their own purposes in the Philippines. He said the Filipinos were a bright and industrious people, still incapable of self-government, but more capable of autonomy than the Cubans. The Admiral said also that he only knew enough to run a ship and was pretty sure he was not clever enough to run the United States, that he could not even make a good speech and that he must be contented with his lot. To be sure his lot is not deplorable just now and most anybody would be contented with it. Even Julius Caesar or Napoleon on his return from the Italian campaign was greeted with no more enthusiastic affection than Admiral Dewey has been. It seems very likely that one of the two great political parties will nominate him for the presidency. None of his family seems to know what his politics are. He said to a reporter who quoted his (Dewey's) son's authority for saying that he was a republican, that his son knew no more about it than a stick of wood that lay on the deck near where he was standing. It has been suggested, therefore, that the national convention that meets first, either democratic or republican will nominate Admiral Dewey. His freedom from a landsman's predilections prejudices, the width and soundness of his views and his habit of making decisions quickly and correctly would be of inestimable value to a president. As for the speech-making we can get along without that, we have heard so many speeches and whatever Dewey does say is so pointed and sensible. As the president of this country the heart of the people might safely trust in him. He has spent the most of his life on the open sea, with a wide horizon on all sides of him. Wall Street has never blocked his vision. It has been so far away that it has not influenced