

## OBSERVATIONS

BY SARAH B. HARRIS

## The City Council

WHILE considering the character and motives of the governor, who it is only common practice considering his blameless life and high reputation, to consider innocent of anything but bad judgment, it is much more worth our while to turn public attention to the men who are attempting to administer the affairs of the city of Lincoln. Not within contemporary memory has Lincoln been burdened with such unblushing councilmen. But spring is coming and the newspapers of the city are accumulating material which can be used effectively when the sap begins to stir.

There is Councilman Bacon of the Fourth ward. His son served for ten days as deputy to the city clerk. For this ten days' work as clerk the son put in a claim to the council for \$75.00, his father, who was chairman of the claims committee, allowed it, and a majority of the council voted for it. "Get all you can and keep all you get." "A public office is a privatesnap," should be hung in the council room instead of "God bless our city." If it were not for the mayor, who is making a record for vetoes, the city would be at the mercy of rapacity. In the spring seven councilmen will be elected, and if the citizens do not investigate the personnel and records of the candidates, the subsequent spoilation of the city is their own fault. The councilmen are organizing for re-election. With eight in the council opposed to the leadership of the mayor he will be powerless to prevent the formation of schemes to sink the city still further into debt. It is the season of tax-paying and every citizen who pays his taxes with a groan and a growl should remember that there are only a few councilmen at present in the council who pay any tax to speak of. They have no personal interest in how the money is spent, economically or extravagantly. If the chairman of the claims committee votes to pay his son \$75.00 for ten days' clerical work and the council allow it, it is an example of the standard of conduct and the kind of auditing the council is perpetrating. The turning over in New York City is an example of what an aroused public sentiment can accomplish in the way of putting able and honest men in control of city affairs. Lincoln has nearly a homogeneous population whose consciences and Americanism can be much more easily aroused into concentrated and decisive action than in a city like New York. The Courier has in the past tried to keep the mayor and council within range of the vision of the voters. It is not altogether a pleasant function but the occasion requires that the council be brought within the field of the people's microscope. The things will wriggle when the light reveals them and their anatomy is nauseating, but in the interests of the tax-payers they must be brought under the glass.

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## Mr. W. H. B. Stout

An early Nebraskan, of an activity and strenuousness that when he was in his prime made him a man to be consulted and relied upon, Mr. Stout's death in Washington is an event to the state in the building up of which he took such an active part. The present state house was built by Mr. Stout. The ground gave way under one of the windows of the library on the south side and the masonry of the foundation sagged. The sinking was due to a well, unknown to Mr. Stout, which years before the erection of the second capitol building had been filled up and forgotten. When the library corner began to sink, Mr. Stout's enemies, and he was successful enough to have acquired a large number, accused him of jobbery. He actually spent on the

building fifteen thousand dollars more than the appropriation, trusting that the legislature would reimburse him. But legislatures are more fickle than princes, and the bill for restitution which recurred in many terms of the legislature was always defeated. Suspicion of jobbery defrauded this man of money which he had expended for the state. Finally Mr. Stout removed to Washington. He was given the contract to build a government building there. But the congressmen changed their minds after Mr. Stout had spent large preliminary sums, which he had borrowed as a contractor. He was not reimbursed and he died a disappointed man with his faith in man destroyed. It was his abounding faith in man, his belief in his own powers, and the unstinted use of his strength and energy that gave him influence and elevated him to be councillor to the powers that are elected to administer the state's business; but jealousy, like a creeping tiger, brought about his downfall.

Politics in the early years of Nebraska were no more a primer of purity than they are now. Observation of Mr. Stout's conduct indicates that he was much above the average. He was an unselfish, untiring, a strenuous man. Red blood flowed through his veins into a large heart. He was always human, and until suspicion made him a poor man he was extraordinarily childlike. No one ever appealed to him in vain, until he had nothing but sympathy to give. Lincoln owes him an unacknowledged debt. He was the sort of man who does not count sleepless nights and spending energy that would move a mountain, if it benefited the town he lived in. Many of the flourishing institutions here owe their location in this place to Mr. Stout. He died in Washington at twelve o'clock, just as the bells were ringing for 1902, of heart disease, at the age of sixty-five years. He was poor and old and very much discouraged. The successes of his life he won in his early manhood. When his enemies conquered he had lost the impetus and elasticity of youth. He was surprised, because used to getting his own way, and he never recovered his grip on success. He had great qualities and the people who knew him well sincerely mourn his death.

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## The Bartley Pardon

It is unfortunate that Governor Savage in his message gave no more definite reason for the pardon of Bartley, the defaulting state treasurer, than that he thought he should be pardoned. The governor was constantly importuned. To say that he should have paid no attention to the friends and attorneys of Bartley is easy, but we do not know the inner history.

The republican state press appears to be nearly unanimously opposed to the governor's action. But if the citizens could be shown that Bartley has retained no portion of the money he embezzled, and that the people for whom he has "kept a stiff upper lip" are not relieved of a great fear by his escape from the penitentiary, Nebraska newspapers would not so bitterly and persistently denounce the governor's action.

It is a suspicion that pity for a prisoner and his family and a conviction of an excessive sentence, and the disjointedness of the times in which the defalcations occurred are not the strongest reasons for the pardon, that has caused the uproar. It is the suspicion that the former treasurer still has a large portion of state money that irritates the people. Doubtless the governor can show the state that these suspicions are unfounded. When he does the criticism will disappear and the governor will regain the universal confidence of the republican party that

he possessed when he was nominated and elected lieutenant governor of Nebraska.

There is no unpartisan patriotic citizen who will not frankly support the governor's argument that no man should be kept in the penitentiary when he should be pardoned because his release would injure the party of which he was a member when he was convicted. If the man has served a period in the penitentiary equal in length to that which other criminals who have committed the same sort and degree of crime receive, in the interest of impartial justice he should be pardoned, irrespective of any party arguments, especially if he is not contumacious, and has made what restitution of the stolen property is in his possession.

Party expediency does not belong in the class with the eternal verities. Governor Savage is right when he disavows its influence in the pardon of a convict who was suffering an excessive sentence. Men are gentler than they write and more merciful than they talk. If the state can be convinced that there are no state funds remaining in Bartley's hands or that he has not expended them to obtain his pardon since his sentence began, this storm of protest will subside and there will be joy all over the state over the return of the father to the family and the husband to the wife.

It is true Bartley was sentenced to an excessive term in the penitentiary. A year in the penitentiary is as a lifetime in the open. His sentence was made twenty years because the people were exasperated over the conduct of Nebraska state treasurers. Their conduct of the office was corrupt. They took money to which they had no other claim than the custom of their predecessors. Bartley never pretended to be anything more than an ordinary man and he inherited without scruple and carried on the traditions of the office. His sentence was cumulative in that it represented the exasperation of the citizens of the state of Nebraska over the conduct of himself and his predecessors. Governor Savage is convinced that Bartley had served his own time and was then serving the vicarious sentence of his predecessors, who were settled in comfortable homes in various parts of the state. Mainly for this reason, there is little doubt that the governor pardoned Bartley after he had served one-fourth of his time which observed from the outside passes like a dream, but which counted inside the intolerable walls of the penitentiary is much longer than the span of life. The convict measures his time by moments; the free man who more by good luck than anything else has escaped five years of incarceration measures the time by years that fly ever faster and faster when maturity is attained.

Eight Annual Exhibit—  
Nebraska Art Association

By SARAH B. HARRIS.

The progressing excellence of the exhibits prepared by the officers of the Nebraska Art Association indicates a development in the knowledge and taste of the officers of the association as well as in the taste of the public whom the pictures are brought here to please. This year's pictures now on exhibition in the art gallery of the university library are on the whole better, of a higher grade of workmanship and inspiration than ever shown here before. The tone of the pictures is low; a quietness and repose distinguishes them. The qualities which Whistler regards as essential are present in a large number of the pictures in the gallery. Even in the brightest picture, a nude gilded by the direct rays from a glowing lamp, the effect is quiet and steady as a beam of light. We do not appreciate the beauty of light and atmosphere, unless we are artists born, until we see them in a picture. Then the mystery of light and its comprehensive phenomena is revealed by the illumination of another's genius. Thereafter when a beam of sunlight falls upon the commonest object and makes of the high-light a gem we realize and see beauty. But that

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