

THE OBSERVER

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ILLITERACY IS DECLINING.

Illiteracy is slowly but surely disappearing from the country according to the last report of the department of commerce and labor.

In the country in general the decline has been from 10.7 per cent in 1900 to 7.7 in 1910. Among children from 10 to 14 years of age the decline is from 7.2 to 4.1 per cent. Figures also show that each successive generation in this country has a smaller proportion of illiteracy and this is always least for children from 10 to 14 so that the proportion is considerably less for children than for the aggregate population.

In 1910 the whole number of children between 10 and 14 who were unable to read and write was 370,120 divided as follows:—White 144,659; colored 218,355; Indian, Chinese Japanese, 7106. Among native white children the proportion of illiteracy has fallen to 1.7 per cent and among those of foreign or mixed parentage the per cent is sometimes as low as 0.6 per cent. Among colored children the ratio is much higher, frequently up to 18.9 per cent.

Improved educational opportunities is bringing down the percentage of illiteracy rapidly. It is estimated that when the present generation of children grows to maturity the percentage of illiteracy among the white population will be no greater than in the most advanced countries of Europe.

As may be expected the northern states show as low as 1 per cent and less of illiteracy and a few years more of compulsory schooling will eradicate this. In a republic education is the greatest safeguard, and in fact is the only effective weapon against usurpation of power. Enlightened people have nothing to fear.

BLAMES AIR NOT TREES.

An entirely new theory as to the cause of floods has been evolved by Willis L. Moore, chief of the United States weather bureau. This was voiced at the fourth national conservation congress at Indianapolis, in an address on "The Story of the Air".

Mr. Moore entirely upset the accepted theory that the Mississippi floods are due to the cutting down of the great forests along the course. Instead, he declared floods are caused by air conditions. On this point he said:—

"As long as we have the Gulf of Mexico to the south of us we shall have floods. The warm air coming up from the gulf meets the cooler air from the north, causing condensation and rain. Therein lies the cause of floods, and the forests—rather the lack of the forests—have nothing to do with it. The forests however should be conserved for their own value."

This argument commends itself to the sober judgment. It does not obviate the necessity of doing everything possible to conserve the forests of the country. It does not obviate the necessity of doing whatever may be needed to check the annual destruction of property in the flooded area. The government must still grapple with the problem and the

plans now proposed for consideration by congress should be carried out.

Mr. Moore has given a plausible explanation of floods and a strong plea for conservation of forests because of their general value.

CONTINUED GROWTH CERTAIN

La Grande has every reason to look forward to continued growth. This is said with the full knowledge that a presidential election has just been decided for we do not take much to the talk that hard times are going to follow the inauguration of Woodrow Wilson.

Looking at this city from any angle and there is every reason it has had in the past. This is assured and even greater volume to the business than in former years. The pay rolls will continue to grow larger rather than smaller, the farms will produce as much and the timber will be turned into money faster than heretofore. With the Masters-Ewoldt company getting ready to mill the Lad Canyon timber and the other lumbering concerns all working more money will be taken from the world's commerce for the Union-Wallowa product.

There is every reason for smiling for the future.

WALLOWA COUNTY'S MINERAL.

Here is a little prediction the Observer would like to make:

It will be but a very few years until there is developed in Wallowa county several first class producing copper mines the stock of which will be quoted on the exchange and the output of which is going to make fortunes for someone.

Because Wallowa does not produce gold is no reason for her copper continuing to remain idle in the hills for another century. And Wallowa has the copper.

For the next six weeks 125 enlisted men will be busy chewing 40 kinds of tobacco to decide which kind shall be bought for use in the navy. Still we wonder why it is so hard to get recruits.

William J. Bryan is about to build a \$100,000 house on his farm at Mission, Texas. He will paint it white and forget the past.

Though other styles may change, it is believed winter taxes will always be in vogue.

Turkey has no money and no credit. In other words, Turkey is right in style as a nation.

Undetermined Joke.

"There's a crook gone to the island for ten days that I'll be looking for when he comes out," remarked a policeman on an east side post.

"Why?"

"Well, listen. I caught him trying a door on my beat the other night and took him in. He started to be nasty about it, and I swung my stick at him. Before I could land him one on the head he shouts out to me:

"Don't hit me! Look out! There's a dynamite stick in me pocket!"

"I stopped quick enough, all right, for, you see, I get all the blowing up I need at the station now and again. But listen. When that chap was searched at the station there wasn't a sign of dynamite on him."

"Who was the joke on? Never mind that. The question is, who will the joke be on? Just wait."—New York Globe.

Two Puns.

Miss Young—After all, what is marriage but a mystery?

Miss Older—Yes, and what is spinsterhood but perpetual mystery?—London Tit-Bits.

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In the middle ages night robes, as a general thing, were unknown luxuries. Under the Tudors royalty and nobility had them made of silk or velvet, and, as the old books say, "hence no washing was necessary."

A nightrobe of black satin bound with black taffeta and edged with velvet of the same color was daintily fashioned for Anne Boleyn.

More luxurious still was one owned by Queen Bess. It was of black velvet, fur lined, and greatly offset by flowing borders of silk lace. And in 1568 her majesty gave orders that George Brodigan should deliver "threescore and six best sable skyppes, to furnish us a nightgown." Four years later her highness orders the delivery of "twelve yards of purple velvet, friezed on the back syde, with white and russet silke," for a nightgown for herself and also orders the delivery of fourteen yards of murrey damask for the "makyng of a nightgowne" for some one else.

Nightgowns for ladies of a later period were called "nyght vails." In Queen Anne's time it was the fashion to wear them over the customary dress in the streets in the daytime, when out on a pleasure walk. And, as was fitting, ladies who indulged in night caps had them also made of silk or velvet, with "much pretty garnishing of lace and glittering cords," and the fair ones made presentation of costly caps to each other as tokens of respect or affection.

Lack of Tact.

"Why did you jilt Percy?"
"He is lacking in tact."

"Why, I thought he always said nice things?"
"He does, but not always the right things. He was protesting his love yesterday when we passed an old woman."

"I saw my cue and said:

"Will you love me when I get old and look like that woman?"

"Of course I will, darling," he cried.

"So I dismissed him. The idea of his consenting to think that I could ever get to look like that horrid old thing!"

Women are so particular.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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