

THE OBSERVER

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EDITOR AND OWNER.

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Harvard and Yale will pay their football coaches \$10,000 a year each. And the pay of the learned professors will continue to hover around \$2,000. Specialize.

The absence of Dr. Cook from the union of Peary, Amundsen and Shackleton, in Philadelphia, is alarming. Perhaps he is discovering something again.

That suffrage procession in Washington will take a long time to pass a given point if the given point happens to be a millinery window.

Andrew Carnegie never carries more than a dollar in his pockets. But lots of men can't carry that much.

A sausage made in Ohio was forty feet long. They must use the dachshund in Ohio.

ABOUT COMMISSION FORM.

La Grande, Feb. 8.—(To the Editor)—Believing that all citizens and taxpayers should take an intelligent interest in public affairs and that some recent events should be explained and discussed a little more than they have been, in order that the average citizen and tax payer may understand them better, I take this means to broach the subject.

Mayor Hall's recent message and your editorial comment on same would lead one to think that all the present wrongs in our municipal affairs can be righted at once by changing the system, and that the only possible relief is to adopt the commission form of government. Only a few short years ago a new charter was thought the proper remedy to cure all our ills and defects. The new charter was adopted and now it seems we are worse off than before. No one seems to be responsible for anything, any more. Numerous glaring blunders are committed, sewers are laid on top of the ground and in places where they have no legal right to be. We have a paid city attorney, a paid engineer, a paid sewer inspector—but nobody is to blame, it is the system, or lack of system, that we have.

The construction of streets and sidewalks, our finances etc., are almost hopelessly muddled and marbled but no one is to blame. It is just the "System." You rightly say that La Grande is the biggest business corporation here, etc. Now what do other large corporations do in such cases? When a wreck occurs on the O. W. R. & N. do the officials say: "Oh well, it's the system we have?" Indeed they don't. They immediately start an investigation and find out which individual employees are to

blame for it and these are dismissed or otherwise punished and made to feel their responsibility.

This has the further advantage of exonerating others who might have been thought guilty. If a clerk in a bank or a store makes a blunder or is negligent it is not blamed on the system, but on the guilty employee. Invariably some one is found who was responsible. Outside of the mayor and councilmen our various officials seemed to be well paid. At any rate, to judge by the scramble that always takes place for the positions, they seem very desirable. Each of these is the head of some department and should be held responsible for at least the most glaring errors, oversights, blunders etc., that are made in this department. In my humble opinion (and very probably in the opinions of scores of others) jumping from one charter to another will not remedy our troubles half so quickly as strict responsibility for blunders where it belongs, will, under our present system.

In this connection, it strikes me that some of the overflow of our booster spirit might be very well employed right here at home towards bettering our municipal conditions. As for gaining time at council meetings: Why couldn't a whole lot of the tedious routine work such as reading of long bills, accounts, reports etc., be cut out by having same typewritten and handing each member a copy? He could then look it over at his leisure and refer to it at any time. Mistakes, overcharges, etc., would in this way be noticed much quicker than they would the other way.

If, as is generally conceded, our mayor and councilmen are not paid enough for their time and efforts, it might be well to increase their pay. Even a very liberal increase in all probability would be cheaper than a change to commission government. They could then give more attention to their duties, and thereby cut out the needless expenses.

Under the proposed commission government it would be just as easy for public servants to make blunders or to neglect their duties as it is now. Its success would depend on the men in the offices, just exactly as our present system does.

The mere fact that a thing is new or modern does not necessarily imply that it is right or good or that it is going to be successful anywhere and everywhere. Many of us remember that our county affairs were in just about the same shape that our city affairs are at present. Then about ten or twelve years ago our county court began to use a little common sense and it was not many years before the enormous debts were paid and if I am not badly mistaken, the county is now in a very healthy financial condition. There was no change made in the system of government, at all. As experience is admittedly the best teacher and as it is always much cheaper to learn lessons from the experience of others than to do the experimenting yourself, wouldn't it be a good idea for the city to study the lesson taught by the county?

Many of us think that we have had enough costly blunders to last for some time and that the most urgent



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change needed is a change in the conduct of the mayor and councilmen towards one another. Let them drop all personalities, arrogance, grandstanding etc., and get down to business.
"Where there is a will there is a way."
Let them publish a financial statement every month but let it be such that it can be understood by the average voter. It is rather hard for the average person to take any great interest in municipal affairs or to exert any needed pressure in any direction unless he has this information.
J. H. BLUMENSTEIN.

Correcting a Quotation.
In his book, "A Wanderer in Florence," E. V. Lucas furnishes a new reading for that quotation about the leaves on the brooks of Vallombrosa, though he credits it to a cousin across the pond. Mr. Lucas visited Vallombrosa and, describing the extortionate rates of the hotels there, tells the story: A departing American was eyeing his bill with a rueful glance as we were leaving. "Milton had it wrong," he said to me, with the freemasonry of the plucked, for I knew him not. "What he meant was 'thick as thieves.'"

It Did, It Did!
There was a time, years ago, when school authorities were not afraid to be grimly humorous.
Under the head of "Instruction" the New York Daily Times of Aug. 10, 1868, printed this announcement: FLUSHING INSTITUTE. Dear Boys—Trouble begins Sept. 15. E. A. FAIRCHILD.

A Rude Little Girl.
Maiden Aunt (reading)—In heaven there is no marrying or giving in marriage. Small Maizie—It must seem like heaven to you here on earth, doesn't it, auntie?—Chicago News.

Solitary Confinement.
The punishment which replaced the death penalty in Italy—namely, life imprisonment with solitary confinement—is considered to be much worse than death itself. Murderers sentenced to life imprisonment invoke death to end their sufferings. Isolation, complete in the very sense of the word—enforced idleness, lack of exercise and sufficient food and continual surveillance in a cell so small as to almost render any movement impossible—such is the fate of a murderer in Italy. Solitary confinement lasts for five long years, sometimes for ten, but convicts can hardly bear it for more than six months. Invariably they are insane long before the term expires, and often they commit suicide. The fear of solitary confinement acts as a preventive to murder as much as and perhaps much more than that of capital punishment. It is quite true that the cases of murder have not diminished to any great extent in Italy since the abolition of the death penalty; but, on the other hand, they have not increased.—Chicago News.

Couldn't Get to Rehearsal.
An actor, being unable to find work on the stage and needing his meals, finally obtained the promise of a conductor's job on the street car lines.
"When do I report?"
"At 4 p. m. sharp," said the manager. "Shades of Booth!" exclaimed the Thespian. "I couldn't stand such hours. The lines would offset the salary. Why, I'd be late for rehearsal every day."—Louisville Courier-Journal.

A Hungry One.
"Your stomach is so affected that I fear we shall have to operate for its removal."
"All right. Remove it. I never use it anyhow."
"You never use it? What business are you in?"
"I'm a poet."—Houston Post.

FOR RENT—6 room bungalow, Mrs. Rynearson. 2-8-13

STRAYED OR STOLEN—A little red cow about 5 years old. Return and get reward. J. H. Wilson, Phone Red 922. 2-6-13

FOR RENT—Six room house, corner Main and Walnut. Hattie J. Eckley. Phone Farm 912. 2-7-13

WANTED—A fresh milk cow with calf or one soon to be fresh. Phone Black 3951 or call at 901 Main St.

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