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Polk County Observer

Published Semi-Weekly at Dallas, Oregon, by the OBSERVER PRINTING COMPANY

Office Phones.
Business office ..... Main 19
Press room ..... Main 19-2

EUGENE FOSTER.
W. H. TOTTEN.

Entered as second-class matter March 1, 1907, at the post office at Dallas, Oregon, under the Act of Congress of March 3, 1879.

Subscription Rates:

One Year	$1.50
Six Months	.75
Three Months	.40

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THE SCHOOLS AND PROGRESS.

Elsewhere The Observer prints an article from the pen of George C. Mitty, of Eola, in which that gentleman takes upon himself the duty of critic of the present home credit plan now in use in several schools of Polk county and which has been found to work satisfactorily, as we are reliably informed, in every community in which it has been tried. We do not give space to Mr. Mitty's article because we ascribe to his views, but merely to show that, no matter what progress advanced thought and modern ideas may accomplish in this country, even in so pronounced a way as they have done in the school system, there are those who cling to former methods and ideas. The Eola critic admits that he is giving these problems "study in repose and solitude" and one is forced to the conclusion, after reading his criticism, that that is the only way in which he has investigated them. We presume that Mr. Dykstra, one of the successful instructors of the county, at whom the article is aimed, is amply able to defend his position, and we do not intend to further his contention other than to declare our steadfast belief in the merit of the plan of which he has become a disciple and which has been successful elsewhere.

Mitty's contention that advanced thought along educational lines is irrational and unsound, is really ludicrous and not borne out by facts. In every branch of endeavor today modern ideas are taking the place of former methods and nowhere is this improvement more pronounced, and in no instance has it been more successful than in our school system. Our Eola friend should bestir himself from his repose and forsake his solitude long enough to escape from the traditions of the past and get out into the world and see what it is doing. He should no longer gain his inspirations from the columns of the Ladies' Home Journal, but should learn of conditions as they actually exist. He hints that the failure of a large number of eighth grade pupils to pass their examinations may be attributable to what he is pleased to term "erratic fads," which has resulted in their losing sight of the real aims to be accomplished in a common school education. We do not believe it. We refuse to accept any theory as tenable which tends to prove that any pupil, who finds a genuine interest in his school and in his studies, will forget the important ends involved or the work to be accomplished in the school room. We have always thought that the more interest any pupil showed in his work and in his school life, the more certain would be his progress along all lines taught therein. It is the unstudious, uninterested pupil that fails to pass his examination, and to attempt to prove that, because the pupils were wholly interested in some one branch of the school work, that they have failed in the others, is the rankest kind of folderol. All efforts along modern thought in educational matters has been to interest the pupils and to hold that interest, and that, we take it, is the primary object of the home credit plan. Possibly, if the home credit plan had not been in operation, or some of the other "erratic fads" of which Mr. Mitty declaims, the percentage of successful examinations might have been considerably reduced.

Mr. Mitty tells one truth, however, in his article, and that is that one of the primary objects of the school system is the building of character. We all grant it. And if the child who is taught that his duty is to share his portion of the burden at home, that he should cultivate industrious habits, and exercise care in his personal appearance and daily life, is not building character, we do not know how it can be done. This is the aim of the home credit system, as we understand it. The schools of today are different from those of the past, but so is practically everything else in the business and social world and our educational system is but keeping step with the march of progress. Those who still cling to the old idea that the "three Rs" comprise all that is necessary in education are happily becoming less numerous but occasionally we find such a person, the latest notable example, evidently being the Eola critic.

We presume that the attacks of Mr. Mitty will not seriously affect the scheme. But it must be admitted that such arguments, and the position which he assumes, have formed the most serious obstacles to the improvement of Oregon's educational system. While many in this state have been satisfied with old-fashioned ways and antiquated methods, other states have taken advantage of modern ideas and have brought their school systems to a high standard of efficiency. They have forsaken the rut, so to speak and placed their schools upon a higher plane, ready to embrace and take unto themselves the best which advanced thought has suggested. But Oregon is rapidly taking her place in the fore front of progress in this regard, notwithstanding the objections of those who cling to the errors of the past, and in probably no other state of the union has improvement in this regard been more pronounced. There is still one great feature along this line, however, which must be improved before we shall reach the goal, and that is more remunerative salaries for our teachers. If we would retain our best instructors and permit them to give our children the benefit of the training they have received in the institutions of his state, they must be paid in proportion to their ability. When this shall have been accomplished, we shall no longer see them flocking to other states and giving to the children of other communities the energy, the skill and the upbuilding influences which should be Oregon's. Those who have refused these flattering offers, and have remained to give our schools their best efforts are entitled to the thanks of all who believe in progress and that the home credit plan has been the outgrowth of bright and brainy minds, and essentially a home product is a credit to the state and to her modern instructors.

WHICH SHALL IT BE?

Nobody can envy the duty which faces the Dallas city council in the selection of the proper paving for the proposed hard surfacing of the streets of the city. There is no question regarding the sentiment here regarding paving, and that it is practically unanimous for improvement is certain. But there is a wide difference in opinion as to the best methods and the proper material to be used. All are united, or ought to be, on the proposition that we should get the best possible pavement, commensurate with the needs of the city, and get it as cheaply as possible. Further, the taxpayers and property owners should receive the fullest benefit of the work already done and for the money already expended in street work. We frankly confess that we do not know whether bitulithic is the proper pavement, but we do believe that it isn't the method to be employed if we are to be asked an excessive price for its use. It isn't the only pavement which may be used—there are others fully as satisfactory and, from present information, which may be had at greatly reduced figures from that quoted by the bitulithic people. Of course they say that other pavements are cheap and inferior and not serviceable, but the experience of other cities has shown that this is untrue.

During a recent conversation with a representative of another form of pavement, the writer was informed that, if the streets of Dallas were already graded and if no further work of this sort was required, that it was his opinion that his company could pave the streets for not to exceed 75 cents per square yard, and guarantee the work to be fully equal in all respects to the so-called bitulithic. It may be that this price is too low to insure the best results, but there are plenty of towns and cities in the country where the company has done considerable work and it is an easy matter to learn what satisfaction the improvement is giving. In a certain town in Northern Washington, where conditions are similar to those that prevail in Dallas, a number of business blocks are now being paved with hard surface improvement which cost the property owners less than $1.00 per yard. There the streets have been macadamized for several years, the concrete curbs are already in place and the pavements are being laid on the surface of the streets without the expenditure of a cent in extra grading. Certainly if this can be done satisfactorily in that community, it appears reasonable to believe that it may be duplicated here.

It is well-known that there is hardly a branch of business that shows greater returns than in the paving line and it is well to proceed carefully when awarding contracts of this nature. It is well, under the circumstances, for the city council to make an investigation on its own initiative without depending on the smooth-tongued representatives of any paving company. Junketing trips at the expense of paving concerns have never proven satisfactory nor have they accomplished the objects sought. It isn't necessary to be accompanied by a pavement contractor when we inspect any sort of method or work of this kind. The pavement is there and it speaks for itself. All that is necessary is to interview a few of the business men and the truthful results of the experiments will be learned from the people best qualified to judge.

What Dallas wants is the best pavement she can have at the least possible cost and The Observer is not yet ready to declare that this is bitulithic or any other patented process. Investigation will clear the atmosphere of this muddle and the city should take every advantage of the experience of other cities where the different modes have been tried.

The taxpayers of the state of Oregon ought to feel mighty thankful that they have such a staunch friend in this man Parkison, of Portland. Stung to the quick by the refusal of the legislature to allow his bill for $250 for "legal services" rendered the state in certain referendum proceedings, he announces that he will once more call to his relief the machinery of the "Oregon system" and call upon the people to defeat all appropriations enacted by the legislature in aid of the state's educational institutions. Thus Oregon's institutions of higher learning are to be again the prey of this pettifogging Portland lawyer, and the denizens of the famous North End are to again reap their reward of free drinks for signing petitions calculated to stick a knife into the University and the Agricultural college.

Editorials of the People.

Signed communications will be printed under this head from responsible parties but their publication does not necessarily imply that they express the sentiments of the editor.

ATTACKS HOME CREDIT PLAN.

Eola Critic Sees No Good in Advanced School Ideas.

Editor Observer:—I noticed an article in The Observer of February 14 from the pen of R. G. Dykstra of Suver, condemning my article regarding new school fads, published in The Observer. To such I desire to make reply through your valuable publication.

As to who is making mere assertions, I will say that I have lived in Polk county since 1890, except from February, 1907, to July, 1910; and attended school here in my boyhood days. Also, that the home credit plan is being used in the Eola school this winter.

I will admit that I have not been visiting schools, but that is not necessary these times, in order to gain information and knowledge upon such problems. While the will-o'-wisps are chasing about, I am seeking information from the children, parents, teachers, public press and current educational magazines; and then giving it study in repose and solitude. My criticism was mainly that chicken raising and gardening was diverting time and attention from the common English branches, and thereby weakening school efficiency, and that but a smattering of instruction was given in these subjects. Mr. Dykstra says, "that such is mere assertion." In reply, I will refer to but one recorded school fact; and that is that in a state-wide eighth grade examination last year, about three-fourths or more of the pupils failed to pass. Was it because efforts were concentrated too much upon essentials, diversified too much upon erratic fads, or just plain incompetency of the leading educational forces?

I criticised the home-credit plan, because school holidays are offered as an inducement. A system whereby pupils can gain holidays as merit rewards, and later receive demerits in the form of decreased percentages in their study examinations, is certainly upon a par with a faker's swindle. It may temporarily gull the children into more active home industry; but sooner or later they will gain a moral realization of the bilkishness of the reward system; and it will not be a morally elevating realization. The excuse is offered that the children do not take advantage of such holidays. In reply, I will say that when a reward is offered, it should be offered in a way that it will be desired, can be accepted with pride, without any questionable doubt of its fairness, or about affecting the educational standing of such pupils. To offer school rewards upon any other basis is morally injurious; consequently, I would ask, upon what basis of honor does the home-credit system rest? It is approved by Alderman; who is Alderman? Also, who is the most modernized, irrational, erratic, leading school instructor of the United States? Time will tell. But examination tests of pupils in studies and character are good signboards.

Teachers that canont influence and encourage children to do their home duties, as a matter of duty to their parents, and a credit to their own worth of character, are not fit to assume character training; and those posessing such abilities should not be hampered by any unjust set system.

Mr. Dykstra says "that I do not realize that the home is the fundamental institution of civilization." Bosh! It seems that the erratic, irrational locoed bunch of leaders in educational work, do not realize the needs of the children, the homes and the nation. It is character; just, noble, sublime characters, possessing unselfish, self-sacrificing love, and a deep sense of justice and fairness for all humanity.

In the common schools all efforts should be concentrated upon higher character training, and instruction in the common Eiglish branches; and vocational training should come later in life.

I sometimes wonder if public school efforts were concentrated more upon influencing and controlling character growth, would there be such a crying need for the juvenile courts? If that high appeal to honor and self-responsibility, now being exemplified in our juvenile courts and modern prisons, was transplanted into our educational system, would there be such extensive need for such courts and prisons? If an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure, why neglect the ounce of prevention to the prospective future prisoner, while administering the pound of cure to the present convicted criminal? Especially so, when the remedy is beneficial to all, and an overdose is impossible.

Teach to spurn the tainted, before vocational skill in acquiring, and pressing necessity arouses a desire and love for the almighty dollar.

In conclusion, I will say that those interested in educational problems, should read an article written by the president of the San Francisco State Normal school, published in the February number of the Ladies' Home Journal. My condemnation of the present school curriculum and educational forces, is very mild in comparison. Yours truly,

GEO. C. MITTY.

Eola, Ore., Feb. 24, 1913.

ADVERTISING.

(By F. M. B.)

An enterprising merchant at Cornelius, in the Peaceful Valley country, says that he never advertises until business is good. In looking over the columns of the Tribune, of that place, for the past 29 years, we have never been able to locate his advertisement. Business was never good. If this same merchant had not been located in Peaceful Valley the tale would not have been unfolded. Neither would cobwebs have adorned his door. Peaceful Valley is located three miles out of Podunkville and the whole township "understands each other"—every merchant is related in some way to the other merchant, or the other merchant's wife, and if a stranger comes to the valley and starts up in business the other merchants hold a family reunion and invite the stranger into a game of "freeze-out." Cold feet and chills attack the stranger and he immediately treks to a place where the woodbine twineth not, and the whang-doodle lieth not in wait. Then he advertises some, the cobwebs disappear, business bustles up, and—he advertises some more, tells the truth about his goods, and prosperity waxeth warm. He doesn't wait any more for business to grow—but makes it grow with up-to-date methods. This story never had a moral.

New Electric Line.

An electric line from Salem to Bend is a plan proposed the past week, when the Oregon Railway Co. was incorporated with the avowed intention of building such a road. It is proposed to have the line connect with both the Hill and Harriman roads in the Deschutes valley.

To Improve Reservation.

The Indian service has a plan under way to clear cut-over and logged-off lands belonging to the Indians in order to aid the various tribes in agricultural progress. It is estimated there are about 10,000 acres in Oregon reservations that will be improved in this way.

PARK IS GOOD INVESTMENT

Competent Advice For Dallas Comes From McMinnville.

The Polk County Observer is wont to refer to McMinnville whenever it brings up an example as a spur to its own community. This is well and proper, but it said the other day in speaking of our city park that it was not favored by nature. Now brother, come off. You stand alone in this opinion. Come down and look us over You haven't been there, have you? Natural beauty is the chief merit of our park. Its rotund depressions and gentle declivities, flowing brook and spouting fountain, its natural foliage, its waterfalls adjoining and a flour-spattered matermill in the back ground, makes a superb setting. Dallas has a fine location for a park, and the LaCreole stream cannot be surpassed in its rippling beauty. By all means, Dallas, get a park. It is one of the best investments a community can make.—Telephone-Register.

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