

Polk County Observer

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BY LEW CATES

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WHERE IT IS LAME.

The common school system of this county has been immeasurably improved during the past ten or fifteen years, but it is undoubtedly true that there is room for further and much needed improvement. The most serious criticism of the public school system is that it is primarily designed for those who can complete its courses; in fact is designed chiefly for those who, having completed the high school course, can go on and enter the so-called institutions of higher education. And as the great majority of pupils cannot complete even the common school grades, say nothing of high school or college, the inevitable result is that the many are sacrificed for the few.

A little pamphlet by Edwin G. Cooley, which is being circulated by the Chicago Commercial club, gives some illuminating figures. In 1911 the United States bureau of education estimated the number of children of school age at 25,016,501. Of these 17,813,852, or 71.3 per cent were enrolled in the public elementary and secondary schools. But only two per cent of these were in the higher institutions of learning, and but five per cent were in the secondary schools. Ninety-two per cent were in the elementary schools.

The common school grades number eight, yet, as shown by the statistics, half the entire number of pupils leave school before completing the sixth grade. Only about a third enter the eighth grade, the proportion that enters high school is still smaller, and those that take a college course constitute a strikingly small percentage of the whole. The child who leaves school for his life's work anywhere along the grades takes with him a smattering of learning. He can write, read, figure; he knows some geography and grammar and the like; he has been saved, indeed, from illiteracy, and that's about all. As for individual capacities, there is virtually nothing. And that stamps the school system as a failure and a waste of a tremendous opportunity.

What is needed is a revolution, not a mere amendment of the system. The nation is more concerned in the well-being of the masses of the public school pupils than it is in the special preparation of the favored few. More study of pupil-individualities, more development of special talents, more training for careers other than the overcrowded professions—these are the needs of the American educational system. A school system aimed to produce professional men produces an appalling crop of illpaid clerks and incompetent housewives.

LITERACY TEST.

There may be a trace of merit in the proposed literacy test to prevent undesirable immigrants from reaching this country, but a good many intelligent citizens are unable to see it. On the other hand, there seems to be a widespread feeling that a restriction of this kind will utterly fail to solve the real problem presented, while at the same time imposing a grave injustice on many who may seek the freedom and opportunities of this land, and who would make better citizens and neighbors than many others who easily can pass the literacy test.

There are countries in Europe where large masses are deliberately denied learning because it would strengthen their aspiration for freedom. There is illiteracy among our immigrants that is no discredit to the illiterates, but that is a monstrous stain upon the nations from which they come. There is illiteracy among our immigrants that is simply and solely a proof of the oppression and tyranny from which they have fled.

Naturally the question arises, is it fair or just to discriminate against such immigrants because of the tyranny that forces them to seek a haven here? Is it fair to exclude them because of a thing that is no fault of theirs, but is rather the fault of the governments that have oppressed them and denied them opportunities of learning and intellectual training?

Literacy may be a valuable test of immigrants, if we look to immigration to bring us more clerks and bookkeepers and writers; but we seem to have about enough of those. The feeling that immigration ought to be restricted more has grown of late. But

among the people themselves there has been virtually no thought of basing it on a literacy test.

THE NEW GOVERNOR.

Not for a number of years has there been more universal interest in the change of governors of the commonwealth than is the case this year. Governor Withycombe, who was inducted into office yesterday, was elected largely as the result of a wide-spread feeling that it was time to put the state administration on a more businesslike foundation, and to eliminate grandstanding in connection with this high office. That Governor Withycombe will make good in his effort to meet the demands upon him is the earnest hope and desire of every loyal resident and citizen of the state, and if well wishes and a tender of sincere cooperation will aid him, his coming administration will be as pleasing and gratifying to the general public as it is likely to be for himself. Of course it will be almost impossible to avoid some friction and differences, but so long as the new governor is guided by common sense and a desire to carry out the popular will, he will continue to enjoy the confidence and support of a large majority of citizens.

The new governor is a man of keen perception, high ability and independent attitude. These are qualities which will vastly aid him in interpreting the real public will and avoiding mistakes. No doubt he will be deluged with advice regarding his duty, and no doubt many who have hoped to see the new governor "revolutionize things" will be disappointed. On the other hand, those who hope to see the new governor carefully and conscientiously proceed to cut out the "frills," eliminate needless expense, and in general bring the public business under a smooth working business system, will probably find they have picked a man well qualified for just such an undertaking.

And if the governor succeeds in his effort to give the people of Oregon a "safe and sane" business administration of their affairs, he reasonably can look for even higher honors than already have been given to him. In the field of political leadership there always is opportunity for the man who correctly interprets the popular will and sincerely and honestly strives to carry it out. The new governor's opportunity is before him and his friends will hope to see him grasp it.

BOOTLEGGING.

There is trouble ahead for the guardians of the peace and dignity of the people when Oregon goes absolutely dry the first of the coming year. Dry territory is now experiencing difficulty in whipping out old king booze. At Eugene the other day sixteen individuals were caught in the sheriff's dragnet, each of whom were accused of dispensing intoxicating liquors in violation of the state local option law. The officers express the opinion that there is an organized band of bootleggers operating in the several towns between Portland and Eugene, and they purpose keeping careful watch in order to wipe out the gang.

But it is expensive business. In the Eugene case heavy fines were imposed, which some of the offenders liquidated without protest, but the majority of those persons who sell liquors illicitly are without money, and consequently are forced into durance vile at the expense of the taxpayers, adding no inconsiderable amount in the course of a twelve-month to their already heavy burden. It is absolutely necessary, however, that the provisions of the law be rigidly enforced, otherwise their enactment would be useless. But the penalty for these offenses should be so great that persons inclined toward violations would think twice before sallying forth as distributors of intoxicating beverages.

Sooner or later Dallas must necessarily have the bootlegger to contend with, for in every dry community there are individuals looking for what they erroneously characterize as "easy money," and when this time arrives, if not already here, their apprehension should be earnestly sought and when apprehended no leniency should be shown them. This is the only successful course to pursue to eliminate this illegal traffic. A telling stroke at the opportune moment means much. The people have decreed that the municipality should be freed from the sale of intoxicants, and the ballot is supreme.

THE FULL SKIRT.

There is a direct and vital connection, of course, between prosperity and clothes, and especially concerning the apparel of women. During the recent period of business depression feminine styles have run to tight skirts, and this tendency has gone to an extreme that by many is regarded as next to scandalous. Prosperity is coming back, however, and we are told that with this change will come the doom of the tight skirt. In fact, the prediction is made by one of the large eastern manufacturers of dress goods that very soon the skirt styles will go

to the other extreme. "This," declares the speaker referred to, "means prosperity, wonderful prosperity for the mills, while every allied line of industry and trade will share in the benefits. The terrible trade conditions caused by the tight skirt no longer will prevail."

Thus is thrown a new light on a question that has been puzzling a good many people. A full skirt will mean more material, of course, and more material will require more factory labor. The tight skirt has been a blight upon our industrial and social system. While it has cut down the use of dress goods very materially, it has not benefited the ultimate consumer. Cutting down the amount of goods used in making a 1914 model skirt did not cut down the cost. Somehow and somewhere there was a great economic waste in skirts, to use a complicated and unilluminating phrase. But one thing is quite plain. The mysterious influence which decrees the fashions in women's apparel is going to free us from industrial depression. National safety and the nation's material welfare are now assured by the widening of the hem of that garment which for many months past has consisted of narrow widths.

All this discussion about the Underwood tariff, the raids of industrial and commerce commissions and un-sound administrative policies has been a waste of words. Blind to the plainly obvious fact in our economic life, man has been stumbling along trying to solve the heavy problems of the country's prosperity without taking stock of the amount of material used in woman's skirt. There have been inklings of this trouble, but the tight skirt has not heretofore been brought home to us, as it were. In France the government pleaded with the makers of fashions to widen women's skirts so that the mills could run full time and give employment to the thousands of unemployed. Not until fashion was ready, however, did the ameliorating decree come forth.

But the tight skirt is doomed and the era of the full skirt is upon us. Prosperity again will smile upon our broad land and the "terrible trade conditions caused by the tight skirt will no longer prevail."

SUFFERING BELGIUM.

One of the most pitiful phases of the suffering which has fallen on the Belgian people as a result of the war, is the plight of the innocent and helpless babes, and the no less helpless mothers of that unhappy nation. It is stated that 40,000 babies have been born in Belgium since that country was occupied by the Germans, and it is expected that 40,000 more will be born there during the course of the present winter. Ordinarily the arrival of these tiny mites of humanity would be cause for rejoicing, but it is not so in Belgium at the present time. Although they will not comprehend it, they unconsciously will but add to the woes and suffering and distress which already are well-nigh unbearable, and they themselves will have to share these vicissitudes, until many of them succumb and leave this cold, cruel world with scarcely gaining a start in it.

Mr. Will Irwin, a well known American correspondent, tells of the fearful losses of Belgian babies through lack of food and care. Mothers who can get but a baker's bun and a bowl of cabbage soup for a twenty-four hours' ration of food, cannot produce the milk required to sustain the life of a baby. Some German companies taking milk in their coffee and have turned over the cans of condensed milk to the suffering mothers. "We've received no orders to the contrary—and we're mostly family men," said one German captain to Mr. Irwin. The milk cows in Belgium have been killed for rations for the German army, the supply of condensed milk ran short long ago, and the fatality among the infants is said to be frightful.

Truly, this presents a most deplorable condition and one that strongly appeals to the sympathies of the civilized world. Yet it is difficult to see how this condition can be remedied while the war lasts, although there will be no lack of humanitarian effort to relieve it so far as may be possible under the attending circumstances.

The Commercial club made no mistake in electing Mr. U. S. Loughary to the secretaryship of that organization. Mr. Loughary is familiar with obtaining conditions in Polk county, is himself an orchardist and agriculturist—at least by proxy—and consequently should be in position to furnish much valuable information to the contemplating homeseeker. There is much work to be accomplished, and we predict that Mr. Loughary will make good.

"We are expecting much of the legislature," remarks an Oregon exchange. To which may be added without exaggeration that we have already had too much from Oregon legislators—too many freak laws; too many unconstitutional measures; too many commissions and departments created;

too many unmerited appropriations; in brief too much legislation. There appears to be a bill introducing contest among the membership of both houses, a majority of which augur little, if any, good to those who pay the freight.

The congressman who says this country could end the European war in ninety days, simply by imposing a strict embargo on the export of all manner of munitions and supplies, apparently is drawing on his imagination a bit too strongly. No doubt it would seriously inconvenience some, if not all, the belligerents, but it is rather presumptuous to say it would end the war.

And now a scientist promises to produce cowless butter, claiming the latter commodity can be made direct from grass. The oleomargarine makers, however, have been producing cowless butter for a long time.

Someone has discovered a very suspicious sign in connection with the advent of the new year. The moon will get "full" twice during this month, which will be setting a bad example, to say the least.

Even if our army is not very large it is particularly safe. It is so scattered about the country that the enemy couldn't get at it if it wanted to.

Polk county should pride itself on having the model one-room rural schoolhouse of the United States. It is something to be proud of.

OTHERS' OPINIONS

To the editor of The Observer: As a reader of your paper may I make a suggestion? I note in The Observer the numerous things to which you call the attention of the people of Dallas as evidence of your progression and public spirit—your industries, your buildings, your civic improvements and your public works and charities. I also note that you set forth the fact that Dallas has a modern and efficient hospital. It has. But it lacks support. All of the charities, public works, etc., are well supported. Why is the hospital neglected?

As I was a patient in the Dallas hospital for some length of time I had ample time to study conditions, and so became aware of the following facts:

The Dallas hospital was not built as a money-making scheme, but to fill a vacancy, and place in the city of Dallas an institution, the need of which has long been felt.

The Dallas hospital has given care and attention to many cases for which it has received no payment.

The Dallas hospital has never refused to accept a case because of the patient's lack of funds.

The Dallas hospital has received little or no aid from the city, or people, of Dallas.

The Dallas hospital is thoroughly up-to-date, has modern equipment and is under capable and efficient management, and such an institution is a benefit not only to Dallas but to all the surrounding country.

With the above facts for premise I think that the Dallas hospital should receive assistance from the people of Dallas and this portion of Polk county because:

The assisting of the hospital would permit the care and attention of more charity cases.

It is not fair that the hospital should bear the total expense of any charity case.

As the people of this part of the county give aid freely to all worthy projects that are brought before them, surely if you, as editor of The Observer, were to put this matter before them in the right light they would respond willingly. Great sums of money are being sent from this country to Europe for hospital uses, so surely a little assistance could be rendered to our home institution.—Very sincerely, N. N. Christy.

Another Bridge Wanted.

A. B. Warkentine was last week circulating a petition among taxpayers of this vicinity to be submitted to the county court in the near future. The petition prayed for the building of a bridge over the La Creole river two miles east of Dallas on what is known as the Ramsey road and in it is embodied some information concerning the inconvenience to which the nine households who live in that locality are put who find it necessary to cross that stream in winter in order to reach the county seat. It is further stated that it will be necessary to withdraw the mail carrier service during the rainy season, which will leave the families without daily mail.

Mr. Warkentine has raised \$209 by popular subscription for the improvement of the road.

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Some Trite Facts About Dallas In a Nut-Shell

Dallas has two planing mills and wood working factories, also an iron works and machine shop.

Dallas is a trade center for a vast surrounding territory.

Dallas has nine religious organizations, with seven edifices of worship.

Dallas has a modern sewer system, touching all sections of the city.

Dallas has many beautiful and costly homes. And the number is on the increase.

Dallas has an active Commercial club and a Woman's club constantly working for the material interests of the community.

Dallas is the starting point for the hunting and fishing grounds. Deer, grouse, pheasants and quail are here, while an occasional cougar or wildcat is found. Speckled beauties abound in the streams.

Dallas enjoys the reputation of being a clean town, with a good moral atmosphere.

Dallas has a \$15,000 armory, large and well equipped.

Dallas has a sawmill cutting over 15,000,000 feet per annum, and furnishing steady employment to 175 workmen.

Dallas has an electric light and power plant which represents an investment of over \$100,000, and furnishes day and night service to Dallas, Independence and Monmouth.

Dallas is a ready market at good prices for everything raised on the farm. The local demand is greater than the supply.

Dallas has a volunteer fire department that fights the destroying element like old-timers.

Dallas probably handles more motor than any other town in the state. Angora goats make money for their owners.

Dallas has two substantial financial institutions, occupying modern brick blocks.

Dallas has large tracts of standing timber tributary to it, dotted here and there with sawmills of the smaller class.

Dallas is the home of the Polk county fair.

Dallas' rainfall averages 45 inches per annum. No zero weather.

Dallas has nearly all the fraternal orders extant; few are lacking.

FOR INFORMATION ABOUT DALLAS, OR POLK COUNTY, ADDRESS SECRETARY COMMERCIAL CLUB, DALLAS, OREGON.

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