

# Polk County Observer

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BY LEW CATES

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## FORETELLS END OF WAR.

Many persons will no doubt find interest in the predictions of Mme. de Thebes, the famous French seeress, who just has issued her annual almanac containing prophecies for the coming years. It is explained, incidentally, that Mme. de Thebes begins her prophetic year on March 21, instead of January 1, which accounts for the delay in her announcements. A large share of her prophecies this year of course deal with the European war, which Mme. de Thebes believes will be ended by July, or soon thereafter. To France, she says, the outcome will bring tremendous consequences, "entirely different from what France imagines." For England she foresees a "glorious future," and Russia will emerge from the war "morally superior," but will pay dearly for her victory. As for Germany, the seeress prudently chances a double guess—one of a Germany torn by internal dissensions and rebellion against militarism; the other of a Germany suddenly yielding and declaring herself beaten in order to recuperate and again hurl herself at her enemies with new strength. Austria-Hungary, she says, will cease to exist, while the restoration of Belgium is foretold. The United States is to undergo many changes and will suffer from financial crises and the effects of an earthquake.

Of course the guess of Mme. de Thebes is no better than that of any other person, but the prominence she has gained in the past lends interest to her predictions at this time. It is also of some little interest to note that the date which she sets for the ending of the great war closely corresponds to the estimate of the great Lloyds' insurance corporation, which is reported to now be offering insurance at odds of two to one that the war will end by July. And certainly every one will hope that this guess may prove correct, whether the other predictions are verified or not. Naturally Mme. de Thebes' sympathies and inclinations might lead her to see things favorable for her own country and its allies, but her say-so will not make it so. Her prediction of the speedy ending of the war, however, encourages a hope that in this particular, at least, she may prove to be correct—a much shrewder guesser than Kitchener and some others, who have told us the war may last for several years.

## RATHER EXPENSIVE.

A modern battleship is a rather expensive luxury in times of peace, but a prime necessity in case of war. The United States now has the distinction of possessing the mightiest battleship in the whole world, an honor—if you wish to call it that—which comes with the recent launching of the super-dreadnought Pennsylvania. Surpassing in size and gun power even the famous Queen Elizabeth, the pride of the British navy, the Philadelphia, when completed, will have been two years and four months in the building, and will represent an investment of approximately \$13,000,000.

All the latest devices in fighting equipment have been incorporated in the Pennsylvania. By the use of fuel oil her cruising radius will be considerably increased and she carries a main battery a third larger in number than the Queen Elizabeth. By the pressure of a single firing lever a whole broadside is fired—eleven and a half tons of steel from either side. She is fitted out with twenty-two five-inch rifles for defense against torpedo boats, and herself carries four submerged tubes by which she can launch the deadly torpedo against the unwary enemy craft.

It may please the vanity of the American people, quite naturally, to boast the greatest fighting machine afloat and we may be allowed to point with a justifiable pride to the triumph of engineering skill and science as typified in this gigantic vessel. But a few minutes work by the daring crew of a submarine could precipitate the whole thing a mass of wreckage at the bottom of the sea and all we would have left would be a memory. In these days of undersea activity there is as much risk for the big dreadnought as for the smaller battle cruiser, even with the most modern fighting facilities known. Until an adequate protection is found against

attacks from beneath, \$13,000,000 worth of battleship will continue to be a poor investment from an economic point of view. Whether even with such protection the investment is worth while remains a question to be threshed out.

## CONSIDER IT WELL.

When the county fair board convenes in Dallas next Saturday one of the important questions before it will be whether or not to sanction the introduction of a race meet in connection with that annual event. Naturally, there is some opposition to horse races, but this is true of practically every other sport. What will attract the attention, or receive the endorsement of one person, may not appeal to another, and therefore in order to please the various elements of society amusements of a diversified character are necessary where the entire populace is interested, as in the case at hand. There can be no question that properly conducted race meets would induce the attendance of home people who have heretofore considered the county fair in the light of a pumpkin show or a ladies' bazaar; and moreover they would have a tendency to bring many who like the ponies from adjacent territory, thus injecting outside capital into a purely local enterprise.

It has been truly said that under existing conditions there is little of interest on exhibition at the county fair for other than those engaged in agriculture, horticulture, stock, needlework or school work, and while this may seem quite enough there are hundreds within our own little balliwick who are not sufficiently interested in any of these commendable lines of endeavor to even grace the grounds with their presence. They want something more exciting; something that will set their sporting blood tingling in their veins, and it would appear that "the races" would fill this requirement. At any rate, the proposition is worthy of careful consideration by the board of managers. It may, possibly, not be in accord with their personal views of entertainment, but it must be remembered that the county fair should be conducted along lines pleasing to their constituency—the people—whose fair in reality it is. There is considerable sentiment in favor of the new order of things.

## BUYING THE VOTER.

A Pennsylvania legislator has evolved a plan for getting the voters out on election days, and has framed and introduced a bill to put his scheme in operation in that state. Briefly stated the idea is that when a voter appears for registration he shall receive a certificate good for one dollar on his tax bill, and when he appears at the polling place to vote he is entitled to another similar testimonial of his good citizenship, making two dollars that may be applied to his taxes. Only taxpayers would be given these certificates, so that the inducement would not extend to those who were not bona fide property owners. The certificates would be nontransferable and good only for the year in which they were issued, which apparently would reduce the chance for corruption to a minimum.

Unquestionably the amount mentioned would offer quite an inducement to many voters, who would figure they could earn \$2 in no easier way than by attending to their duty in the matter of registration and voting. The idea of forcing or buying citizens to vote, however, has never met with popular favor, as it is held to be inconsistent with ideals of democracy and political liberty, and of course should not be necessary if our commonly accepted theory of popular government is well founded. Nevertheless, it is true that a surprisingly large number of voters do neglect to perform their duty as electors, and the problem of remedying this defect in government receives more attention every year. If the plan of a moderate rebate on taxes would actually solve this problem not a few citizens might give it their approval, although of course non-taxpaying voters would probably complain they were being discriminated against.

## A GOOD SUGGESTION.

One of Dallas' most progressive citizens has suggested that residents having friends in the eastern or middle western states send them forthwith by parcel post such flowers and blossoms as are to be found at this season of the year, the purpose being to impress upon them the superior climatic conditions of this coast country. The suggestion is not only a good one but timely. In many sections of the country winter is still lingering in the lap of spring, while Western Oregon has been enjoying "growing weather" for weeks past. The suggestion may have been induced by the story of Dr. Cherrington and the maple leaf, but if it could have the same effect it certainly would be well worth the effort. Gathering the most fragrant spring bloom at hand, send it to some distant friend or acquaintance and see what the result will be.

## KILL THE WINTER FLY.

Do your fly swatting early. That's the way Miss Jean Dawson, director of the Cleveland anti-fly campaign, modified the familiar slogan to accomplish such miraculous results for her city. To kill one winter fly is better than to kill a million later in the summer, according to Miss Dawson, and her work in Cleveland proves that she knows what she is talking about. No matter if it is still cool weather and only one fly has been brave enough to show itself, the time to start the war against the flies is now. Those that live through the winter are few, and that's just the reason efforts made now can be so effective.

When Dr. Dawson—for this woman anti-fly general can write a Ph. D. after her name as professor of civic biology at the Cleveland Normal school—began talking about swatting the fly the people of Cleveland thought her remarks were a little unseasonable. "We can't find any flies," they said. Dr. Dawson told them to look in the cracks and crevices of their attics and basements and stables and sheds. They looked. There were a few flies. "But why trouble ourselves about a few half-dead insects," they objected.

Then came Miss Dawson's astounding figures in proof of her plan. The children and grandchildren and later descendants of a pair of flies breeding from early spring to late fall can be numbered only by using a string of twenty-one digits, she said. The number she gave was 191,010 quadrillion flies, enough to cover the entire earth forty-seven feet deep. Of course the flies, like human beings, are troubled with a high death rate, especially of infants, and no mother fly has ever been able to have all her eggs hatch into flies, which in turn reared unbroken families.

Dallas people who contemplate a visit to the Panama-Pacific exposition would better wait until June, according to the Hon. Verd Hill, who has just returned from a thorough inspection of the big fair. The exhibits are not as yet in place, while in some instances foreign displays have not arrived. This is truly inside information, and is worthy of careful consideration.

Polk's superintendent of schools is receiving so much favorable comment, not only from educators in this but other states, that we may have to guard against losing him. Through Mr. Seymour's efforts in behalf of our educational system he has unconsciously gained an enviable reputation. The world is seeking men who know how.

Uncle Sam may well say with respect to the European war that "It's an ill wind that blows nobody good."

It's a lucky thing, come to think of it, that we had it out with Spain before the big war started.

## OTHERS' OPINIONS

Dallas, March 28.—I read with much interest the editorial in a recent Observer concerning the local patronage at Dallas of the mail order houses. I read this with interest as I do everything on the subject because I myself as a local resident am seeking light on that problem. All that you have said in this article and that which has been previously said in your columns, is true enough and to the point. The great difficulty is that it does not cover the whole field and that you do not reach to the entire discussion. If I may trust the statements of our local merchants—and I think I may—one of the heaviest drains upon them comes through the credit system. Local merchants have told me that if they could collect the long overdue accounts they have on their books and get in the absolutely dead accounts that besprinkle their records for the years past, they could immediately reduce current prices today. I do not myself believe that the merchants are making a great deal of money and I believe from what they tell me that it is very largely due to the fact that they are doing a credit business and are losing much money through bad accounts.

I know of merchants with good up-to-date stores, who have accounts on their books running into large figures against single individuals. I know of such accounts that are positively uncollectable and, on the other hand, I know of such accounts owed by men able to buy and sell the grocer or other merchant whom they hold up in this way, many times over. The deadbeat account in local trade is one of the biggest drains on that trade and it comes through the credit system. The merchant has to live. Nobody can deny him that privilege. To live he must make up his deadbeat accounts by compelling the paying patron to absorb it. There, it seems to me, is the structural weakness of the whole retail trade as now pursued.

If the merchant undertakes to protect himself by organization there is at once a howl from the dear public. He is "combining in restraint of trade." He is doing things which are, in the eyes of the public, immoral and unlawful. I have referred to this being a problem. How is the merchant to protect himself against the deadbeat as local retail business is today conducted? Our local merchant is himself human as the rest of us and buys either where he can buy to the best advantage or buys under duress and fear of removal of trade. You cannot very well deny his customer the same privilege. When the customer finds that he can buy from a mail order house a bottle of Dr. Price's vanilla for 51 cents which the retail dealers want 65 cents for and that along with other things he can buy 33 1-3 pounds of granulated cane sugar for \$1, and, indeed, a long list of articles for prices which are illustrated by these two cases, he is apt in the end to consult his pocket book and he is not to be blamed for doing it. I have seen a good many tests of the thing worked out and it is not true that the item of freight and drayage anywhere near equalizes the saving in the prices.

It seems to me that the fault lies with the public primarily in forbidding or at least actively objecting to the grocer, the baker and candlestick maker organizing their trades on a cash basis and under a system that will eliminate the deadbeat and the slow payer.

The cash order house sells at a low price, not only for reasons peculiar to what is practically a wholesale trade, but, bigger than anything else, he sells for spot cash and only for cash. Let our merchants address themselves to this problem and they, I think, will find they can sell their goods at much smaller prices and will pull the teeth of the mail order houses. It is probably not worth while to go into the question of the return to simpler methods and to the morning shopping basket. When each delivery at the house costs the grocer five cents, as has been testified to by dealers, the public must expect to pay the five cents. If the public will voluntarily eliminate that cost by going to the grocer and allow him to sell his delivery wagons they will get at one extremely expensive item, for which they themselves are to blame.—Local Buyer.

Portland, March 24. To the Editor of The Observer: Being a native of Polk county inclines me to feel a very strong interest in its welfare. Every time that I visit the county I note the improvements that are being made. The hamlets are growing into towns, and the towns are becoming model cities for their size. A few weeks ago business called me to Independence and Dallas. The amount of paved streets and other adjuncts of a city were a pleasant surprise to me. The country is also developing and industries increasing. A portion of my father's donation land claim has been subdivided and it is traversed by a railroad. The landscapes of the county are superb. The Greek Arcadia cannot excel them. If one will stand on the Bethel hills he can survey the valley, the emerald coast range, the Cascade range with its crystal peaks and rugged altitudes, the Willamette flowing between—a panorama of rare, if not unexcelled beauty and grandeur.

I need not descant upon the superlatives of soil resources, scenery and climate which Polk county possesses. They are understood and realized. What is needed is accurate and successful exploitation and progressive and practical development, talks which cannot be accomplished in a day. Impulse and impatience will be ineffectual, but a well directed and intelligent effort will be successful. That which makes one somewhat impatient is that an unprecedented combination of fortuitous circumstances favors this coast during the present year and I fear that we will not get the full benefit of the possibilities. I feel assured that it is no fault of the citizens of the county. I have read with interest some of the literature prepared for the benefit of the county. I can commend its subject matter and compliment the author. But my regret and surprise were excited when I read the report brought by Mr. Henry G. Campbell from the Albany meeting. Still I cannot but feel that the matter will be so adjusted that the people of the county will get the benefit of their diligence.

Pursuing the subject a little farther, allow me to say that the ingenuity of the most skillful and experienced publicity workers with their latest and most effective schemes will no doubt be brought into requisition at the exposition and that some methods considerably different and more attractive or alluring should be adopted, than have usually been employed, if our county shall successfully compete in the race for public favor. Let us then give all the aid and encouragement that we can to those who are representing us at this, the greatest exposition of the world. J. D. LEE.



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