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AN ERA OF PUBLIC IMPROVEMENTS.

There can be no reasonable objection to granting any lighting franchise in this city, if it be properly guarded, produces sufficient revenue for the city, and is competitive in lowering prices.

This is on the old theory of granting any private franchises at all. But the progress of the age favors public ownership of these franchises. The new charter favors public ownership of water and light plants.

If franchises are a good thing for private corporations, if they can afford to give heavy bonds and pay a percentage on their gross receipts, they are a better thing for the public to own them directly and in the first instance.

Any franchise this city can grant to a private corporation will double and treble in value in the next ten or twenty years, and why should not the city have the benefit of such rapidly increasing wealth?

Public ownership means cheaper capital, lower interest, no taxes, supervision, bookkeeping by officials already employed by the city, and the service rendered the entire community for light and water without expense.

Public ownership of a franchise means that there will be large sums spent in building the plant and maintaining it. A water or light plant established by the city would mean large payrolls for labor.

What this city needs more than anything else is larger payrolls on public improvements—the building of sewers, streets, sidewalks, crosswalks, parkings, public grounds, bicycle paths and alleys.

Public ownership of lighting or water adequate for the city of Salem, as it will be in a few years, means a plant twice the size of the present plants.

The present city council should consider that the new charter that goes into effect in October, is a public ownership, and that under that charter the people have the first right to determine for themselves what shall be done in this matter.

THE SPREAD OF VICE.

The communication read before the city council Tuesday evening by City Recorder Judah, and referred without action, relating to the spread of vice in this city, was worthy of more attention.

It is to be regretted that it was not signed by some of the women of the city, as the letter seems to have been wrung from the experiences of some suffering mother, who has felt the contaminating influences.

That vice is spreading its foul network over more of our fair city's territory than ever before cannot be disputed. It has extended to at least one place of property in North Salem.

Who is to blame? The property owner in selling property or leasing property for such purposes, because it is outside of the city limits. It is beyond regulation or control of the city authorities.

When the new city boundaries go into effect the city will have authority, and all houses of ill-fame can be concentrated in one quarter of the city, where they shall be publicly known for their true character.

This is not said in condemnation of anyone, and even with the sincerest pity for those living in moral darkness, but to sound the public warning that the spreading evil may be dealt with.

SAVE THE GRAND TREES.

There is not a week passes but some grand old tree that has stood for a century or more is slaughtered in some part of the city.

These leafy sentinels of the pioneer

days stand in the streets here and there on private property, and add to the beauty of the city.

There is one street in South Salem where a careless or vandal lot owner cut down and appropriated two oak trees recently, that have stood a hundred years, and gave grateful shade.

They were not his trees. They belonged to the public. They stood in the street, objects of beauty, shelter and shade. Yet the vandal hand of a grasping, uncivilized rooster stretched them low and burned them.

There is a street in South Salem that should be called Fir street, if that is not already so named. Grand and beautiful firs, some of them 75 feet high, line either side of the street a hundred feet or more apart.

They are planted on the edges of the street, as if set out artificially. One of these was cut down the past few weeks. Yet that street belongs to the public.

The beauty of our city should not thus be marred, and until the city boundaries are extended over these suburbs the county court should forbid cutting all trees that stand on the streets in the suburbs.

Under the new city charter a Park Board will have control of these trees. Until that board is appointed, private property owners should co-operate with the bounty court in preserving these old landmarks. Sometimes a mere tenant destroys a tree that has graced the landscape for a half-century.

Politics for 1903.

In the strict sense, there are no off years in American politics. Although theoretically there is a lull for two years immediately before the presidential contest, except as regards the maneuvering of each party in congress for position in the big campaign yet actually elections of great importance take place a year in advance of the quadrennial round-up. In November of the present year Ohio, Iowa, Maryland, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and other states of considerable importance will elect state officers. The contest for governor in Ohio and Iowa are always exciting. They will unquestionably be so this year. The fact that Senator Hanna is to name the candidate for the Republicans for governor, and that he is a candidate for re-election to the senate from the legislature which will be chosen next November, will be sure to give this contest a great interest for the whole country, and the interest will be heightened if, as seems probable, Johnson heads the Democratic ticket.

Kentucky Democratic.

Probably the Democrats will carry Kentucky in 1903. They have an election law which leaves nothing to chance, and it may be relied on to count a majority for the party which framed it, and which intended it to roll up Democratic margins irrespective of the relative number of Republican and Democratic votes actually deposited at the polls. In Maryland the contest will be much more exciting and uncertain. The Republicans carried Maryland in the two latest presidential elections, and they won, in the contest last November, four of the state's six members of congress. The Republicans began showing strength in Maryland in the election of 1895, when they carried the state for governor. Then followed McKinley's victory in the state in 1896 and 1900. But Smith, the present governor, won the state in 1899. It is believed that he will be re-nominated this year. The legislature to be elected this year will choose a United States senator to succeed McComas, Republican. Moreover, Gorman, who has just pulled himself out of obscurity and secured a new term in the senate, is now the titular leader of the Democrats in his chamber, and he aspires to lead his party in the presidential canvass. His fate in the latter role will be decided by the vote of his state in 1903.

Some Straws This Year.

Rhode Island elected a Democratic governor in 1902, and that fact gave the Democracy some aid and comfort at the time. In the election this year the Democrats are understood to feel considerable confidence. Rhode Island's vote does not bulk very large in the electoral college, but if the Democrats win Little Rhody again they will say that they are making gains in New England, and will begin to think they have some chance in Connecticut and New Hampshire. On the face of things, the situation seems to favor the Republicans in all the states this year in which they are normally strong. The only point in doubt in relation to Ohio, Massachusetts and Iowa is as to the exact Republican lead. It will be long in all these states. In Ohio in 1902 the Republican candidate for secretary of

state, who headed the ticket chosen that year, had a lead of 90,000. There will be no special incentive to make the plurality as large as that this year, unless Johnson gets the nomination for governor, in which case the Republicans will cut up the best canvass of which they are capable. In any case, there will be some very interesting politics in 1903. Several of the states which will vote will furnish a very fair barometer of the direction and force of the partisan currents at that date.

Washington and Lee.

To the Editor of the Evening Star:

More than one writer on the Lee statue has attempted to justify the action of the Virginia legislature on the grounds of the similarity of the lives of Lee and Washington. But, as a matter of fact, proof only of one resemblance has been made to appear. They were both Virginians. Here the similitude ends. Washington represented and led an oppressed people, who had time and again presented their grievances to the mother country, and finally these were set before the eyes of the world. The world then knew what the contention was about. Washington let the patriots, thus organized and armed with everlasting right, to a successful victory. In this, as in all other acts of his public and private life, he was the open representative of all that was noble, grand and patriotic. He did not desert a high salaried office and violate a sacred and binding oath, under the British government, through any hatched up pretext of greater loyalty to his colony, to assume the honored trust assigned him by his contemporaries.

Lee headed an organized but powerful mob, equipped with stolen arms and ammunitions of war, which he, as an officer of the government, had, without protest, witnessed in their systematic transfer to the disaffected states by the leaders of the cause he was then secretly preparing to espouse. With this stolen equipment, and without the slightest pretext, appeal or plea, and with no declaration of principles, further than that of imaginary danger to a system of human slavery, which his followers had never owned or admitted, Lee headed a rebellion against his government, which, for its destructiveness, was unparalleled in the world's history. And he justified himself on the specious pretext of loyalty to his state.

And, again, have the friends and admirers of Washington, and they are legion, either individually or in their organized capacity, ever dared to claim, on the score of his eminent and patriotic services to the British crown, a place for his statue in Westminster Hall, at London? And how much less appropriate and seemingly would such a claim appear had he ignominiously failed as Lee did, in his scheme of disrupting the government of the mother country!

Lee was a Failure.

Washington, although self-educated was a great general, and Lee, with all the coaching the government had so lavishly expended upon him, was not. Washington was always considerate to the comfort and lives of his men. He attempted no impossible things. Lee did in many instances. His invasions of the north must have appeared to his better judgment, and beforehand, as vain. His order for the celebrated "charge" of Pickett, at Gettysburg, and that, too, after the



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battle was clearly decided against him, was little short of premeditated and wholesale murder, and his persistence in holding out after the evacuation of Richmond, and that in defiance of the frequent pleadings of his magnanimous and humane pursuer to " Spare the further effusion of blood by an immediate surrender," showed a wanton and reckless disregard for precious human lives.

Robert E. Lee did but very little that was for the good of his state, but very much that was harmful and ruinous. At an early age he became the protegee of the government. In the meantime he was not in his state's service or in any material way promoting her welfare and prosperity. When he deserted (yes, that is the word,) his government's service he threw the weight of his influence, and that was no small item with a hero-worshipping constituency such as he then had, in favor of the secession movement, and thus he became the instrument for evil in carrying many of his fellow citizens with him to their certain destruction. And this is the man who in its mistaken folly his state government seeks to set up in our national halls as an example to posterity. One can but wonder in this connection what Robert E. Lee would have done had not that portion of Virginia once belonging to the District of Columbia been ceded back to his state. In that case, would he have been loyal to the government, in the domain of which Arlington House stood. W. H. RAGAN.

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New York, April 23.—The new Chinese minister, Sir Chen Tung Liang, K. C. M. G., is paying his first visit to New York since his recent arrival in this country. He is not, however, a stranger to the city as he visited here many times during his collegiate days at Andover. Tonight he will be the guest of honor at a dinner to be given at Delmonico's by the American Asiatic Society.

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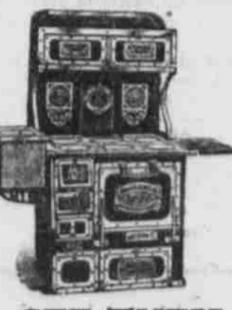
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