

DAILY CAPITAL JOURNAL

BY HOFER BROS.



THE MOVE FOR PUBLIC LIGHTING.

The city council at its adjourned session Saturday evening took action on the resolution of Hon. Tilmon Ford before the Greater Salem Commercial club to have the city ultimately own and operate a lighting plant. After this resolution passed the club last week The Journal took pains to ascertain the wishes of the business people of the city in regard to such action, and found a large majority in favor of the move, in fact it was almost unanimous. This voice of the people in favor of a public lighting plant is of course in some measure the result of feeling aroused by the fact that this city has had very poor lighting service at the hands of the Citizens' Light & Traction company the past year, and also on account of the very high rates charged. These conditions may be different in the future, as a new company has gained control of the business very recently. These new people make very flattering promises, but we had similar ones from their predecessors just about a year ago, with what results the public very well know. Why the new company and its promises should be any more relied upon than were those of their predecessors is not apparent to the average citizen at this time, in fact the only conclusion to draw is that the representations of this company will be less believed than those of their predecessors, simply because of the flagrant abuse of the public confidence by the latter.

This move on the part of Mr. Ford is very opportune and proper in the light of what has transpired. It will be remembered that a franchise was granted to Mr. Anson for a new plant, and it will also be remembered that the outcome proved that such franchise was simply obtained to sell or handle in the interest of its owner if opportunity offered. Such opportunity did not offer and the whole matter went by default. Later Mr. Kurtz wanted a franchise, and this paper protested that it was simply another scheme to get something to sell, and that it did not mean competition for the city in any event. This prediction proved only too true, for Mr. Kurtz was enabled to sell his commodity to the existing company before he secured his franchise, and the result is that light consumers of Salem have had to pay for their folly.

When Mr. Henry came to Salem and bought up the electric plant and the gas plant, he made propositions and promises that on their face seemed to offer a fair solution of the problem on a business basis, and this paper insisted that he should be given a fair trial and show to demonstrate that he meant to do the fair thing. But now before he has been able to put his promises into execution he has unloaded his whole enterprise at a royal profit and again our city is up against the problem of getting public and private lights at a reasonable price.

The truth is it must have become apparent to all by this time that there is no such thing as competition possible in the lighting business as it is conducted in these times, and that the only protection for the consumer is public ownership. It is generally believed that the real ownership or control of these private corporation plants is too often vested in the great electric trust, the General Electric company, and it is possible that such is the case, and that this fact explains the impossibility of getting competition. For this further reason it does seem pertinent that the business people of any community of this size or larger should take the only kind of a step that points to emancipation from such conditions.

It is hoped that the committee of the council and our mayor will go into the merits of this proposition with great vigor and see what can be done to lift the yoke off the necks of our citizens. The old council appointed a committee to make just such investigation, and then declined to act upon the recommendations of Engineer Thielken and Mr. Griswold who pre-

sented some very attractive propositions. Let us find out if we must forever expect to be gulled in the purchase of light and then the people of a wide-awake American community will know what steps to take for its own protection. Give our people a chance to protect their own interests.

UNCERTAINTIES OF LIFE.

Life and all its uncertainties was never more fully exemplified than in the case of Miss Ella Shipp who was buried Sunday. Just a week ago she was out for the afternoon with her friends, wholly unconscious, as they were, that in the short space of seven days her mortal remains would be consigned to the allotted space of man, there to rest until the final awakening. The large number of friends who attended the last sad rites of deceased was a testimonial that few receive. It was a gathering of real friends who knew her best, not an empty sightseeing crowd. During her life she spread sunshine and good-fellowship by her presence, and when she was cold in death those who had absorbed the rays of her affable heart were present to lend comfort to her grief stricken parents and brothers. Such seasons are more than passing shadows, and they appeal to the better spirit of man. More like her and the world would be a paradise which it would be cruel to desert. May her soul rest in peace.

"BACK TO THE WOODS."

The rush to the cities may give a few thousand people more excitement than would have been their lot had they remained to become cultivators of the soil, says the Seattle Times. Whether this excitement will pass for real happiness depends on the individual. The rush to the cities is also crowding them with unskilled labor, which can make no advancement.

A return to the country of a part of this body of unfortunate city seekers would result in good to themselves and to the agricultural communities. But to get these people to return by any method of persuasion is impossible. Only actual and continued effort drives them away. Then they go with a feeling of shame and disappointment. It is "back to the woods," and they act as if every man they passed was scoffing at them.

This branding of country life as "back to the woods" is grossly unfair. There is no inherent virtue in a city job. There is nothing in the life of a farmer or planter that makes his the "Rube of literature. Many a young man in town who speaks of "back to the woods" with the air of a philosopher and the conqueror of cities works harder and has less comforts, and less fun, than the farmer's boy. There is nothing in the countryman that cannot be brought to the average city standard by a shave, or a suit of workman's clothes—and three days' wandering about the streets.

The whole difference lies in the universal disposition to get ahead fast. The young man with a city job feels himself the future magnate. He may pass his lifetime in overalls—but there is ever that conceit of future chances. The countryman is not to be credited with these chances. He is too far away. He may have more brains—may make more money—may have a better bed, and better food to eat than the young man in town. But he is too far from Pike street to be "up on things." He is hopeless in his preference for the farm.

But the young man who is to be the magnate numbers thousands—yea, millions. He crowds the cities, hustles for his daily bread and gets from the lighted streets and saloons and the parks what must be his only happiness. He can never be made to see differently—since the city and the only city has been his education.

The country, teaching its children to know the country and the city, is losing a part of its population to the cities. Now let the cities add a study of the country to its ever-present urban object lessons, and there will be a lot of city youths—middle-aged and grey-bearded—go "back to the woods" and live better and wiser and far more comfort.

A movement in this direction is the opening of public of public school gardens in Philadelphia. Children who early get nature's method in their minds will easier follow the call back to nature. They will not be deceived by the sneer from a \$40 a month fellow who may cry "back to the woods." A profitable farm is a better life than running a cigar stand—yet a cigar stand, compared to the state of millions of city workers, brings a princely salary.

The man who knows how to run a farm—and runs it—has less worry than a business man. If the two be of equal mental growth, the farmer has more chance of adopting up-to-date methods and a more versatile life. Decided on its merits, the life of the country is better than the life of the town. Decided by the false glamour of the music hall there is disgrace in going "back to the woods."



A Safety Valve.

This government is made up of the common people, the large majority of whom own homes or farms and are tremendously interested in the continued prosperity and welfare of the country.

To all such the tendency of the times towards social unrest and the usurpation of power by ignorant and irresponsible men rings like "an alarm bell at night," as Garfield said. The property owners and reputable, peaceable citizens must unite at the polls and elsewhere to keep down anarchists and those irresponsibles who tend toward anarchy. This growth does not come from the farms or small villages, but from the very congested cities and industrial centers where great riches and extreme poverty are shown side by side.

In the effort of the discontented to obtain more money, they very naturally, when under the influence of strikes and loss of wages, turn to violence, and should this tendency be permitted to grow lone enough, such malcontents would obtain control of the legislative bodies and absolute ruin to property holders would result.

Macaulay's prophecy regarding this country, written in 1857, is, the SENTRY believes, worthy of consideration at this time.

"Your fate I believe to be certain, though it is deferred by a physical cause. As long as you have a boundless extent of fertile and unoccupied land, your laboring population will be far more at ease than the laboring population of the old world, and while that is the case, the Jefferson policies may continue to exist without causing any fatal calamity. But the time will come when New England will be as thickly populated as Old England. Wages will be as low and will fluctuate as much with you as with us. You will have your Manchesters and your Birmingham, and in those Manchesters and Birmingham hundreds of thousands of artisans will assuredly be sometimes out of work. Then your institutions will be fairly brought to the test.

"Distress everywhere makes the laborer mutinous and discontented and inclines him to listen with eagerness to agitators who tell him that it is a monstrous iniquity that one man should get millions while another cannot get a full meal. In bad years there is plenty of grumbling here, and sometimes a little rioting. But it matters little. For here the sufferers are not the rulers. The supreme power is in the hands of a class numerous indeed, but select; of an educated class; of a class which is and knows itself to be deeply interested in the security of property and the maintenance of order. Accordingly the malcontents are firmly yet gently restrained. The bad time is got over without robbing the wealthy to relieve the indigent. The springs of national prosperity soon begin to flow again; work is plentiful, wages rise and all is tranquility and cheerfulness.

"I have seen England pass three or four times through such critical seasons as I have described. Through such seasons the United States will have to pass in the course of the next century, if not this. How will you pass through them? I heartily wish you a good deliverance. But my reason and my wishes are at war, and I cannot help foreboding the worst. It is quite plain that your government will never be able to restrain a distressed and discontented majority.

"The day will come when in the state of New York a multitude of people, none of whom have had more than half a breakfast, or expect to have more than half a dinner, will choose a legislature. Is it possible to doubt what sort of legislature will be chosen? On one side is a statesman preaching patience, respect for vested rights, strict observance of public faith. On the other is a demagogue ranting about the tyranny of capitalists and usurers, and asking why anybody should be permitted to drink champagne and to ride in a carriage when thousands of honest folks are in want of necessities. Which of the two candidates is likely to be preferred by a workingman who hears his children cry for more bread?

"I seriously apprehend that you will in some such season of adversity as I have described, do things which will prevent prosperity from returning; that you will act like people who should in a year of scarcity devour all the seed corn and thus make the next year, not of scarcity, but of abso-

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