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OBSERVATIONS.

The question in dispute between the Lincoln Street Car company and the city as to the former's liability for paying taxes between the tracks is soon to be settled in the courts. In the meanwhile there is no reason why the company should not go on with the repairs necessary to keep the plant in working order. If the company wishes to spend forty thousand dollars in improvements and repairs there is no reason why they should not proceed to do it. The council will not agree to keep the paving between the tracks in repair. The franchise that the company has been granted gives it the exclusive right to the middle of the road, a right which inconveniences and frequently endangers the life of pedestrians. The cheap transportation and access to distant parts of the city recompenses the citizens for surrendering the best part of the highway, but the company should keep that part of the road of which it has been granted the exclusive use, in repair. On the other hand the property has not paid satisfactory returns on the investment, and it is idle to expect the owners of the property to pay anything that the law does not exact from them. There is not a taxpayer in Lincoln who would voluntarily pay more taxes on a property than the law required. Some of the best lawyers have expressed their professional opinion to the effect that the street car company is not obliged by law to pay the paving taxes as-

sessed against them. The question has been taken into court and it should be decided there. In the meantime, opposition to the company because it has referred the matter to the courts, is inconsistent. There is not a member of the council however given to patriotic posing and sophomorical speeches, there is not a citizen of Lincoln, or of Utopia, for that matter, who would not do exactly as the directors of the street car company have done. This being so, and I have yet to hear of anyone willing to pay taxes which he was not legally compelled to pay, let us treat the street car company without prejudice.

The Beth Book by Madam Sarah Grand is the last of a trilogy which began with Ideala and was followed by The Heavenly Twins. It treats, as they do, of the evils consequent upon having two moral codes, one for men and one for women. Beth is a precocious youngster and an unconventional young woman who marries a cad because he asks her to and because her people are poor. Her choice of a husband does not justify, as printers say. She is a young woman who has never allowed her judgment to be biased by custom or convention. She judges the rich and the poor, peer and peasant with a singular accuracy and justice. Like the scales in a physical laboratory kept under glass that the specks in the air may not disturb their delicate and true adjustment, Beth's intuitions are exact and her conclusions flawless, humanly speaking. Yet she married the first man who asked her. He happened to be a mercenary, dandified, brutal, ignorant doctor, and daily association with him became vivisection without an anaesthetic. Yet she will not admit there is any relief, and not until he himself wishes a separation does she leave him. Association with a being whose standards and tastes are superior is as painful to one as to the other. The inevitable comparison and just as inevitable loss of self respect is uncomfortable even for a degenerate. Though in the case of Dr. Maclure, Beth's husband, it is complimenting him more than he deserves to call him a degenerate. That word presupposes former excellence, and Dr. Maclure shows no survival of breeding, character or intellect. He is a beast without a beast's refinement and reserve. To be convinced of his incurable vulgarity requires no discriminating judgment like Beth's. Yet she marries him and does not discover that he is impossible for several years. This is the weak point of the book. Without an unhappy marriage Mrs. Grand could not, of course, secure the effects

on her heroine, but she might have made the villain justify more exactly.

The Beth Book is about the size of The Heavenly Twins. It takes Mrs. Grand 575 pages to tell her story, but the story does not grow tiresome, therefore it is not too long. Novelists are in the habit of beginning with a Minerva and Apollo at least eighteen years old. Modern story-tellers recognize the necessity of explaining the conditions surrounding the childhood of their characters and respond to it more or less. But Mrs. Grand devotes two-thirds of her pages to the childhood of Beth. The account is so vivid and, in a sense, autobiographical of the lives of all sensitive and imaginative children, that when the story reaches the mature period, when it begins to deal with the everlasting dispute concerning the rights of women and the immunities of men, it is less interesting.

Mrs. Grand is a brilliant and logical woman. She has a message to deliver as imperative as Joan of Arc's, and she delivers it quite as bravely and effectually. She has been told apparently that men do not like her books, to which she replies in this one, that she is not writing for men but for women. She thinks if the women can be induced to expect more of men, the men will respond. She says that when women loved knights, true knights there were, when she loved troubadours the men turned troubadours. Whatever the standard be, woman has made it and only woman can change it, so in truth, it makes very little difference whether men, except for their reflexive influence on women, approve of Mrs. Grand's books or not.

Much is expected of the investigating committee now at work on the water, police and fire departments of this city. It is composed of men of the same party to which the officials it investigates belong. Thus the people are beginning to hope that the rumors which have been afloat ever since the beginning of the present mayor's administration as to the selling of positions in the fire and police departments, may be confirmed by facts. They hope for the worst because a punishment of such offenses now will make the election of any of the old crew very difficult if not impossible. The republican party is striving to rid itself of the rubbish which has weighted it down and obscured its principles. It is a measure of self-preservation, and if those who are guilty do not succeed in concealing the evidences of their robberies from the people they have robbed there is more encouragement in the present situation than there has

been for years. The council committee has proceeded very wisely in making its investigations. It is composed of those who have fought for an economical administration, and the result of its work, unless the obstacles to discovery are insurmountable, will be gratifying to the people.

The mayor wrote the following note to the council and it was read at the meeting on Monday night:

To the City Council—Gentlemen: Owing to the pending investigation of the water department I have deemed it advisable to make no permanent appointment to fill the vacancy occasioned by the resignation of L. J. Byers. In view of the situation I deem it best to place the department for the present in the hands of W. W. Cochran, and would therefore nominate him for that position temporarily, and only until such time as it may seem advisable to make a permanent nomination. I trust you will agree with me on the advisability of pursuing this plan, and confirm the appointment hereby made. Respectfully submitted, F. A. GRAHAM, Mayor.

The confidence the council has in the mayor is startlingly illustrated by its conduct after reading the communication in immediately appointing Mr. Woodward and Mr. Webster to confer with the mayor and discover if possible whether the appointment was to be temporary or permanent.

The first number of The Kiote, a new magazine published by the English club of the state university, has appeared. It is small, neat and the contents are interesting. It contains three short stories, two short poems and an editor's drawer under the heading, Yelps. The first story in the book is written by Miss Pound. It concerns the courtship and marriage of a maid of all work and bears photographic signs of realism. If it were not for the tone of patronage, obscuring the evident sympathy of the writer with the subject, the sketch would be altogether admirable. This paragraph shows the story-tellers attitude: "Lottchen was married in the church, with Father Kersenbender, the priest, officiating, and had probably, in the chronicles of her circle, the most elegant wedding of the year. We sent her a present and though we did not, of course, attend ourselves, we were told by our new servant the details of the events." We on our part immediately feel the arctic distance between the story-teller and her humble heroine. In passing, we might note that it is the custom of her majesty, Queen Victoria, and the members of the royal family to attend the funerals and weddings of turnspits and scullions and of all faithful