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TUESDAY, - - - - JUNE 15, 1897

AN UNMUZZLED PRESS.

In the trial of the newspaper correspondents on indictments for having refused to answer certain questions asked them by the senate sugar trust investigating committee, the question to be determined, and which the papers the reporters represented are determined to have settled, is the right of a newspaper representative to refuse to disclose the sources of his information. Acting under instructions from their employers, the reporters refused to answer the questions put to them, and are now being tried for contempt. The question is, can they, or ought they, be made to tell where the information came from. To the first half of the question the answer might be yes; to the latter half there can be but one reply, and that a most emphatic no.

Newspapers publish news at their peril. If they make misstatements concerning any one, both the criminal and civil law may be invoked; the one to their punishment, and the other to compensating the injured party in damages. Public good demands the publication of public business; how it is managed, or mismanaged, and this regardless of whom it hurts. All the public needs to know, all anyone needs to know, is that the statements made in a paper are true. The fact that the injured party, if such, has his remedy in the courts, is sufficient protection to the public against any abuse of power on the part of the press. If the position is maintained that a reporter must disclose the sources of his information, much of the power for good will be taken away from the press, for then the information will be withheld. Men in high positions, realizing that a newspaper secret is inviolable, furnish information that otherwise would never be made public.

Once the press is muzzled, a great sigh of relief would go up from peculative senators and other officials, as well as from some of the big syndicates and trusts. Free speech and a free press, "unawed by influence and bribed by gain," are necessities of the times.

A TENDER MURDERER.

It is wonderful how keen a sense of propriety, how delicate a perception of moral turpitude, and how tenderly solicitous of others' good names even a hardened criminal may be. E. B. Soper, alias "Sandy" Soper, is an apt illustration of this fact. Sandy, judging from his picture in the Oregonian, is a lantern-jawed, crop-haired crank, and yet his history shows that he was a loving father and a tender husband. He loved his children so dearly that realizing he could not educate them and give them such advantages as he desired, he killed them to put them out of their misery. Then when he thought over his act, and of what disgrace it would bring upon his beloved wife, if it was discovered that her husband was the murderer of her children, his conscience smote him. He just couldn't bear to think of it, so, moved by his mighty love for the dear woman, he killed her too, to prevent any such disgrace falling upon her.

Then he came to Portland and married again, and the evidence goes to show that he there murdered another of his children, a little 2-year-old girl, by his second wife. The motive in this case is unknown, but presumably it was a highly-sympathetic and proper one.

Soper is on his way back to Missouri to answer for his crimes before a hart hearted lot of men, but undoubtedly a proper appreciation of his delicate instincts will cause the ladies to smother him with flowers.

The annexation of Hawaii is as certain to happen as anything earthly can be. The sugar trust is against it, because it wants its products, now admitted free of duty, shut out of competition with itself. The greater number of the people do not want it, because of the mixed population it would add to our citizenship. But in spite of this feeling, the annexation will be made, simply because this government will not allow any other nation to absorb Hawaii; and to prevent it this government will have to take it in.

Senator Aldrich is said to be so sick that he will be unable to attend the session of the senate during the debate on the tariff bill. Some very ugly accusations have been made against him, he being openly accused of having been hand in glove with the sugar trust in preparing and advocating certain duties in its favor. If one-half the statements are true we do not wonder at his being sick. He ought to be dead.

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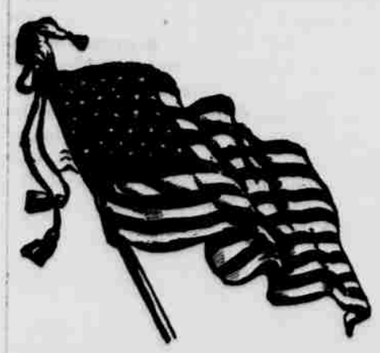

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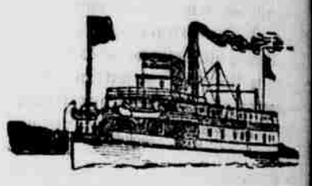

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