

THE ST. HELENS MIST

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THAT K. C. OATH.

At the recent primary the religious matter was injected. There has been much publicity given to the Ku Klux, Catholic or anti-Catholic matter and the public generally has taken sides one way or the other.

The Gazette-Times is in receipt of the following inquiry in yesterday's mail: "I have followed your paper with a lot of satisfaction in most things, but for the life of me I can't see how you, who stand so strenuously for Americanism, can fail to take seriously the Catholic menace after the oath of the K. C. had been exposed as it was Wednesday night. It must be true or men wouldn't dare to repeat it."

We do not blame this correspondent for feeling the way she does if she believes the alleged oath of the K. C. actually exists. Indeed, she would be a poor specimen of American if she did not feel like joining any kind of an organization that would oppose such a thing as that—an oath that places fealty to the pope or anybody else above fealty to the stars and stripes and the American government.

For that reason we propose to present the facts. Let it be distinctly understood in the beginning that we believe that almost the entire theology of the Catholic church is erroneous and that its church government is undemocratic and ill-suited to an enlightened republic, but that we admit that they have the right to their own opinion about that and they have a perfect right to worship God according to the dictates of their own consciences under our constitution, and, so long as their religious belief does not conflict with the duty they owe their country they are entitled to the same respect and consideration that any other religion is. That, we think, all fair minded people will agree to.

Now for the question, "Why do people dare repeat this alleged oath if it is not true?" The question has been asked us before. "Why don't the K. C. sue somebody for libel?" Well, they have. There are a number of district court cases and so far as we have ever been able to find out, circulators of the oath always have been found guilty of libel, the courts and juries finding the alleged oath does not exist and never has existed.

A number of these cases have gone to the supreme court. We went to Arthur Clarno's law library Friday and located two. Any citizen who wants to be fair can do the same thing. First, we will present the case of H. S. Turner of Santa Cruz, California. Turner was a Socialist running a paper called the "World Issue." He published the alleged oath and was arrested on a warrant sworn out before the district attorney charged with criminal libel. He was convicted in the district court and appealed to the supreme court of California which sustained the verdict. Anyone interested in the truth can find the case in the 154th Pacific Reports on page 34. The opinion of the supreme court was unanimous and it took occasion to say that "it is undisputed that the publication was false." It also pointed out that the libel did not have to mention any particular individual, but the K. C. order as a whole.

The oath is too long and too indecent to print. It is amazing that any man with ordinary horse sense would believe that any white human being would be such a fool as to take such an oath, but religious prejudice is so strong that lots of people do believe it, hence this article.

The other case that we found in the supreme court reports is from Oklahoma. It is in the 166 Pac. page 1110. The oath is set forth in full in this case together with comment by the editor who was sued for libel. The editor in this case was Roy Crane and the case was tried in Canadian county, Oklahoma. Crane was convicted in the Criminal Court of Appeals in 1917 and sentenced to prison and fined. He took the case to the supreme court where the low-

er court was sustained. It is especially interesting to Oregonians to know that an Oregon case involving a similar suit was quoted by the supreme court of Oklahoma. Crane alleged that he got his information from third parties and thought it was true.

The Oklahoma court quoted the Oregon court in the case of the State vs. Hosmer, 72 Ore., 147. In this case Hosmer was sued for criminal libel for publishing the story about the alleged escape of a nun from Mt. Angel convent. It was published in pamphlet form and was used by all the religious prejudice baiters here for a long time. It told of an alleged escape of a Mary Laseaman and how she had been abused by priests. The Oregon court held: "Every repetition of false and scandalous matter originated by a third person so repeating it is amenable to law. If he repeats the libelous words, he must be prepared to prove them or suffer the legal consequences."

Printers seem to be the ones who got into trouble most for circulating this falsehood, though in Pennsylvania a couple of barbers believed not wisely but too well. They got copies of the oath and circulated them in a political campaign. One of them appealed to "The Menace" for assistance, saying he had seen the oath referred to in that detestable sheet. The Menace replied that it was sorry, but that there was in fact no authenticity in the alleged oath. The barbers then pleaded guilty. The Knights who were prosecuting the case thereupon promptly asked that sentence be suspended as all they were interested in was the clearing the name of the order from such a scandal. The case was tried by a Presbyterian judge who went out of his way to denounce the act of circulating such a false and malicious report.

There was a very prominent case in Minnesota about the time the war broke out. In making its investigation the court took possession of the books and records of the Knights of Columbus and had the genuine obligation introduced into the court records. In this case an editor in Mankato, Minnesota, was sued. The foreman of the jury was a Methodist minister, who became quite prominent for a time in the middle west for the part he took after the trial in exposing the falsity of the alleged oath. He was besieged with letters from well meaning but misinformed people and he informed all of them that he was convinced beyond the shadows of a doubt that the allegation was entirely false. These inquiries are gratifying and certain evidence of the fact that the average individual does not want maliciously to circulate these stories or to persecute another sect and if he gets the facts he will not.

We presume that our correspondent does not have the printed copy of the oath that is circulated from the Congressional Record, but a lot of people do. It is not, perhaps, surprising that they do not look up the record and see about it. They have a right, perhaps, to believe that the printed slip is true. But here are the facts and we ask anyone who is interested and wants to be believed to be fair minded to go to the library and look the matter up for himself.

This oath was published in the Congressional Record, but it was published as evidence in an election contest wherein Eugene Bonniwell contested the election of Thomas Butler, the contestant alleging that Butler circulated this alleged oath against him and that the oath was a falsehood and libelous. And this is the conclusion of the elections committee which the printed folder does not contain:

"This committee can not condemn too strongly the publication of the false and libelous article referred to in the paper of Mr. Bonniwell and which was the SPURIOUS oath of the Knights of Columbus. It also condemns the publication of editorials which would incite religious prejudice in a campaign. No man should be persecuted for his religion whether he be Catholic or Protestant."

What do you think, fair minded reader, of an organization that will circulate this alleged oath as a part of an official government document without at the same time stating that the same official government authority said on the same page that the oath was a lie? If a man will lie about one thing he cannot be believed about anything.

The speaker who was here at the Blue Mouse this week stirring up hatred at 55 cents per head and selling his books, at the conclusion of the lecture, like a patent medicine fakir, is too smart a man not to know that this alleged oath is a fake. He referred frequently to the Masonic fraternity. As a member of that fraternity we resent his evident effort to hide behind the respectability of that ancient and honorable order which fights its battles in the open and with uncovered faces and wears its insignia with open pride. Had Mr. Sawyer cared to be entirely fair to the Masons or to the K. C., he could have cited the fact that this alleged oath was investigated fully by a committee of Grand Masters of the Masonic lodge in California. They broadened the scope of their investigation to include alleged Catholic propaganda and in a long report occurs these sentences:

When Knights Thrift. When Knights of old met in tournament, they wore coats of mail and helmets of steel. Modern Knights are not so well prepared. Two of them met on the streets of Portland the other day and had a merrie joust. One was a Knight of Columbus and the other a Knight of the K. K. K. The latter didn't even have time to don his knightie and pillow slip. The cause of the challenge was that the Knight of the one C to sign the compulsory education bill. The Columbus Knight declined with thanks whereupon the three K knight accused him of being a K. C. He ad-

mitted it and passed a few heated rejoinders to the circulator. As the joust that followed was on the Y. M. C. A. sidewalk, the Y secretary called a cop and both were landed in the bastle instead of being decorated by my ladie fair as knights of old.

The Exalted Cyclops, Mr. Gifford, hastened with bail to the knight of his Klan, but the Knight of Columbus was left to languish in durance. The judge fined him \$20 and suspended sentence.

And this is but a sample of what we may expect from the stirring up of religious strife. We hay not duplicate Dublin and Belfast, but we will have a joyful time just the same.

We haven't had time to talk to our "foreign master" about it, but here is a bit of advice we hand out to the Columbus Knights gratts:

There isn't any use fighting the compulsory educational measure. It will be wasted energy. You are outnumbered about ten to one in Oregon, and, as Senator Cal Morrow used to say, "The critter's eyes are set," and it won't make the slightest bit of difference whether the bill is right or wrong, just or unjust, necessary or unnecessary, vicious or virtuous. You haven't a Chinamen's chance this year.

MR. TAFT BEFORE A LONDON AUDIENCE.

Mr. Taft's tact and capacity for saying the right thing in the right manner in a delicate situation was manifested upon the occasion of his first public appearance in England Monday night as guest of honor at the Pilgrim's banquet.

Speaking with pleasing purpose the earl of Balfour struck a slightly false note when he said that Chief Justice Taft, elevated to the highest executive office and the highest judicial position, had discharged the duties of both in a way to command the approval not only of America but of the world.

Since President Taft was retired to private life in 1912 with the electoral vote of Utah and Vermont to his credit, it was going some for Lord Balfour to say that he had discharged the duties of the presiden-

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tial office in a way to command the approval of the American people.

Rising to reply, Mr. Taft could not well afford to permit the misstatement to go unchallenged. But, on the other hand, it would have created embarrassment if he had dissented seriously. With quick wit and ready tact he met the situation facetiously, reminding the distinguished company that he had retired from the presidency of the United States with "the full and unmistakable consent of the American people." All who have had the privilege of hearing Mr. Taft in a public address will have a mental picture of the genial smile that went with that joviality and can readily believe that the sally excited merriment.

While it is a historic fact that Mr. Taft carried only two minor states in 1912, it is well understood in the United States that the adverse verdict was against his public policies and chiefly the result of a split in the republican party, and in no respect was a condemnation of Mr. Taft as man and citizen. If the verdict were to be taken on Mr. Taft's uprightness, patriotism, courage, high legal attainments and capacity for taking with unruffled spirit political fortune or disasters, he would easily carry every state in the union. It is also conceivable that under other circumstances Mr. Taft would have made a very acceptable president. It was his misfortune that he went to the White House at the wrong time.—Spokesman Review.

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