

# West Shore

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PORTLAND, OREGON, SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30, 1889.

A FEW days ago a man sitting quietly in the office of one of Portland's hotels was fatally shot by the discharge of a revolver that accidentally fell upon the floor from another man's pocket. This is but one of many incidents of that kind occurring daily all over the country, and shows how pernicious and utterly useless is the habit of carrying weapons of any kind. We have laws against carrying concealed weapons, but they are rarely enforced. It is all a matter of public opinion. So far as our western cities are concerned, there are no more weapons carried in them than in eastern cities, save by strangers from the east, who, as soon as they decide to go west, at once equip themselves with a revolver. Go among the permanent residents of our cities and you will find no weapons on their persons; but make a canvass of the floating population and you will find them plentiful. This suggests the question, Why should a man who goes unarmed at home put a revolver in his pocket when he travels? The New York man, who feels safe in Gotham, arms himself when he visits Chicago, and the Chicago man does the same before he trusts his precious life in San Francisco. It is all absurd and wrong. Where one man finds a legitimate use for a revolver ninety-nine men get into trouble, simply because they are foolish enough to carry one. There lies in the Portland jail to-day a man who would not be there but for the fact that at a certain time he happened to have a revolver in his pocket. Were it not for that fact, Gibbs would be a free and happy man to-day and young McDevitt would still be alive to be the pride and joy of his parents. The constitutional right to bear arms does not involve the conversion of the people into walking arsenals. The great majority who do not carry weapons, and whose lives are constantly endangered by the minority who do, have a right to demand that every person except officers of the peace be

prohibited from carrying weapons, and should exercise that right to the extent that the laws we have, or can easily secure, shall be rigidly enforced. We prohibit an apothecary from selling poisons to any one not having an order from a reputable physician, while dealers in arms sell revolvers unrestrained, and yet where poison takes one human life the deadly revolver terminates a hundred. No dealer should be permitted to sell a revolver to any person not having a permit from the authorities to carry it, and any person not having such a permit, if found with a weapon on his person, should be punished by a fine large enough to make its imposition effective. To be sure, this would cut down the sales of dealers and would somewhat curtail the perquisites of the coroner, but, as a matter of economy merely, the county could better afford to buy all the revolvers sold, and give the coroner a good, fat salary, than pay the cost of inquisitions and criminal trials imposed upon it by this habit of carrying weapons by men who have no legitimate use for them. Public sentiment ought to be strong enough in this matter to practically abolish the revolver habit.

The trick of making horizontal reductions of assessment valuations is one in which Oregon county boards of equalization are adepts. Everybody howls about the ridiculously low valuations placed by assessors on taxable property in Oregon, and still, when it comes to levying the tax, there is often a horizontal cut of a large per cent. of the total on the assumption, supported or unsupported by evidence, that the county's valuation is out of proportion with that of other counties. Last year Marion county, in which the capital of the state is situated, made a straight cut of twenty-five per cent., and this year it is announced that the assessor's report from that county shows a gratifying increase—increase over last year's perfectly arbitrary reduction. This year there is another instance in Clatsop county, in which the booming city of Astoria is located. The assessor performed his duty, made his report on oath; then came the equalization board and reduced the total valuation thirty per cent. Why stop at thirty per cent.? Do the people of Astoria wish to convey the inference that their property is really not of much value after all? There is but one way to make an equitable assessment, and that is upon the whole value of all taxable property. There should be some method of state equalization that would prevent the arbitrary reductions so often made by the county equalizers for the purpose of lessening the contributions of their county to the state government. The Oregon assessment laws need remodeling in several important particulars, and property owners need to be educated to a sense of more exact justice than now prevails.