

Oregon City Enterprise

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THAT JOHNSON & ANDREWS' WARRANT.

The Courier last week by insinuation, if not by direct statement, said that County Judge Ryan had improperly gotten away with about \$100 belonging to Johnson & Andrews, the contractors, who built the vault at the court house last summer. The records show that the bids for this contract were asked for to be paid for in cash, the contract was let to be paid in cash and at the especial request of the contractors to whom the contract was let, the payments were to be made upon the certificates of the architect, and in order to get the advantage of their bid, the court made arrangements whereby Judge Ryan was to pay the contractors upon presentation of certificates and at the meeting of the court warrants were drawn in payment of amounts paid out; these warrants by agreement of all members of the county court were sold for 2 per cent premium, the whole amount of premium amounting to \$68 to be deducted from warrant drawn in final settlement of contract, thereby giving Clackamas county the benefit of two per cent premium upon this contract. In this matter Judge Ryan simply carried out the wishes of the county court the members of which thought it would be all right to make \$68 on a transaction of this kind for the benefit of the county. At the time the transaction here referred to was made, county warrants of the most desirable character were only selling at one per cent premium whereas it was only through the arrangement had with Judge Ryan that the sale of the warrants on a two per cent premium basis and the saving to the county of \$68 was accomplished. It may be the style in Kentucky to mis-state things and try and make the public believe any political story that will tend to help the Democrats out of the hole but the Courier will find that this kind of politics will hurt much more than help the cause of the minority party. What the people want are the facts and if Judge Ryan has saved the county any money in this or any other contract, the Courier ought to be willing to so state it and not try to make the people believe that there was a graft going on. The Democrats must be reduced to desperate straits in their endeavor to gain control of Clackamas county affairs if they must mis-construe as a graft a transaction by which the county really profited. This is on a par with a number of other stories that our esteemed Kentucky Colonel has been giving circulation around town and some of them concern the Enterprise.

PUBLICATION OF ASSESSMENT ROLL.

In a recent issue the Oregon Law School Journal, published at Salem, advocated the publication of the assessment roll of each county prior to the time it is considered by the county board of equalization. The publicity that would attend this course, argues the editor of the publication, would prove an effectual remedy for "tax dodging." The Journal supports its position by the following editorial on the subject:

"We have for several years studied the subject of assessment and taxation and have observed the effect of many laws enacted by our legislatures for the purpose of bringing about a fair listing of all property subject to assessment and taxation in this state. A great many taxpayers, in nearly all stations of life, have talked with us about the prevailing practice of evading assessment and the consequences that follow. They generally consider that the present habit of prevarication in listing assessable properties is a mischief that most seriously retards our advancement, and that it more than overcomes all our efforts made at the public expense and by private enterprise to induce immigration to our state. That our tax rolls show scarcely a tenth of the real value of our property, and as it is upon the amount of this low valuation of property, as shown on the assessment rolls that our tax rates are levied, our tax rates appear to be high and exorbitant to people coming to the Pacific coast; and as a consequence many are deterred from locating in our state.

"If all property were assessed and listed at its true cash value it would not require anyone to pay a greater sum than he now pays; but, on account of new properties which would be added to the roll, which now escape taxation, many would not be compelled to pay as much taxes as they do now. Many frankly admit that they stretch their conscience somewhat in giving in a list of property to the assessor, and that they aim to omit from their list as much property as their neighbor, according to custom, will omit from his assessment. That they would cheerfully list all their property at its true cash value if all other prop-

erty were assessed in the same manner. That they desire to bear their just proportion of the public expenses, but, under the present practice, if they listed their property fairly, they would be compelled to pay more than their just share. That while they are willing to do their part toward the payment of taxes, yet they are determined to do no more. We find the people unanimous in the desire for good government, and that they are willing to pay their just proportion for its maintenance.

"This notorious usage of 'tax dodging' has become a virulent ulcer upon our body politic. An Oregon tax roll is the eighth great wonder of the world. Its study proves to one that conscience has often been discarded, and that many must surely trust that their Maker on that final day of judgment in casting up the final account of their deeds done on this earth will forget to scan these tax rolls. The reckless manner in which the properties owned are forgotten by many when the assessor calls on them is remarkable. While it is true that people know quite generally that there is a habitual evasion of the assessment laws to a certain degree, yet few have but a faint conception of the extent to which this practice is carried, unless they personally examine the tax rolls.

"Our state has a law requiring publicity in the allowance of bills against counties. This law was enacted in 1891, and requires that all bills presented to or allowed by a county, excepting where the charges are fixed by law, to be published in a leading newspaper of such county. We have observed the practical effect of this law with considerable interest. This law saves every year many thousands of dollars to each county of the state.

"Exorbitant bills, such bills as political plums for favorites, and bills for other questionable private motives are now scarcely ever presented or allowed. The people keep posted upon the business of the county, and if they discover a bill allowed against the county which they deem to be wrong they institute proceedings to stop its payment. County courts are made more careful in examining and paying bills. A person is made more cautious about the presentation of exorbitant or questionable bills, because he does not like to have it appear in print that he has attempted to defraud the county. But it appears to us that this law does not go far enough, and that it would be more efficient if it required the publication of all bills allowed by a county. The people should know everything for which their money is expended. The exception in this law, that bills in which the items are based upon charges fixed by law need not be published, would seem to include all bills presented under fee-bills. The fee-bill system in the past has been regarded as a source of the greatest drain upon the public treasuries. Without the publication of such bills it allows the officer's construction of the law and the amount of his bill to go unquestioned by the people who pay the taxes to meet their payment. Nearly every county court of this state now points with pride to the reduction of public expenses. Our county courts are almost without exception composed of very competent men but we cannot say that they are in any way more competent than their predecessors in office. We are therefore forced to the conclusion that the publicity required by this law in the presentation and allowance of bills has been the great factor that has brought about the present economy in public affairs.

"In conclusion we will say that the newspapers of our state have always shown a public spirit, and gladly furnished the news to their readers. The legislature can place proper safeguards upon this law which we propose against the evasion of the assessment laws, by prescribing prices for publication, so that but little expense will be entailed in its operation."

Merry Christmas!

If some of the leading Republicans of this county would spend a little more of their energy in trying to build up the party and help the Enterprise instead of continually finding fault, holding the Enterprise responsible for all of the pipe dreams our friend the Courier has, more headway would be made against the common enemy. If the Republicans desire to have the support of a paper, they should evince a spirit of reciprocity and not be so willing to accept as infallible truths the reflections on this paper that may emanate from the Jesse Moore inflamed brain of the Courier editor while the same persons are equally prompt in denying as unreliable any editorial utterances from the same source, reflecting on their respective administration of county affairs.

ACCORDING to the Courier's ethics, an officer must not be permitted to leave the court house at all—must have his meals brought to him. In a recent issue the Democratic paper had a spasm because of the fact that Judge Ryan absented himself from his office for a short time last Fall. Instead of properly stating the facts in the case, the Courier asserts that Judge Ryan was gone from his office to the neglect of county business for the time of two months. Such is false. The records at the court house show that Judge Ryan held court in September and again in October and that but 31 days elapsed from the time he left the city until he was again seated at his office. Nobody's interests suffered because of the temporary absence of Judge Ryan nor do we believe that any other person than the editor of the Courier has found fault with the situation. At the same time the Courier editor fails to make a note of the fact that for several weeks prior to his Eastern trip as well as for some time following his return, Judge Ryan worked many hours over time in giving his attention to the business of the county and made possible the taking of the vacation without interfering with the business of

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his department at the court house. While absent Judge Ryan also did some good work in advertising the resources of Clackamas county throughout the states through which he passed.

THE Morning Astorian and the Daily News, of Astoria, have been consolidated and are now being issued as an eight-page evening daily.

MEN who can write the Lord's prayer on a postage stamp and the Declaration of Independence on a postal card appear from time to time, but nobody has ever succeeded as yet in writing a president's message on one sheet of foolscap.

A SAN FRANCISCO woman, who is now suing for a divorce from a millionaire to whom she was married only a few months ago, advises young girls not to marry rich men. Here is only another instance of the fact that all the riches in Christendom will not insure happiness.

W. H. DOWNING, of Sublimity, and Frank Lee, of Portland, have been appointed by Governor Chamberlain as members of the state board of agriculture to succeed Hon. W. H. Wehrung, of Hillsboro, and J. H. Settlemier, of Woodburn. In the reorganization of the board for the ensuing year, Hon. George Chandler, of Baker county, was elected president, and W. A. Moores, of Salem, secretary.

AN unsuccessful attempt last week to rob the bank of Brownsville is additional evidence that there is within this state an organized band of bank robbers. The daring of the law breakers was shown at two previous attempts, one of which was successful, and the only way to deal with such individuals is to employ similar tactics. By making an example of some of these lawbreakers, when caught, wholesale wrong doing will receive a setback that would be welcome.

THE Christmas season has arrived, and the Enterprise desires to bespeak for each of its readers a most happy Christmas. At this time of the year the spirit of "more blessed to give than to receive," finds expression in the making of gifts throughout Christendom. With the abundant crops of all kinds that were harvested this year and prosperous conditions, generally, the people of this state are perhaps more happy and contented than in years before.

COUNCILMAN KELLY says the Enterprise hit the nail on the head last week when it attacked the proposition to establish several public fountains in the city for advertising purposes. The venerable alderman from the First ward declares that the proposed fountains would prove a nuisance. Mr. Kelly is right and the council will best serve the city's interests by promptly dismissing the proposition from its consideration.

Rev. J. H. Beaven, pastor of the local Baptist church, is rendering a good service to the young people of this community through the congress he recently organized and is now conducting. Through this agency the young people of the Oregon City high school are afforded an opportunity for acquainting themselves with the general government of affairs in the United States and the other countries of the world, concerning which the average citizen knows none too much. At its recent joint session the juvenile legislators discussed the Chinese question, and the relation of that country to Russia, England and Manchuria. At its next meeting the present muddle as between Colombia and Panama, involving international interests, will be the subject for debate. In addition to the practical knowledge that is gained of the countries of the globe and their governments, the young people are kept in touch with all current events of general import. May the sessions of the Oregon City congress be as long and prosperous as its propitious inauguration indicates.