

The Oregonian.

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TODAY'S WEATHER—Partly cloudy, with showers; south to west winds. YESTERDAY'S WEATHER—Maximum temperature, 64; minimum temperature, 44; precipitation, 0.15 inch. PORTLAND, WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8.

COLLEGE ORATORICAL CONTESTS.

"Something too much of this." The remark is from "Hamlet." The Oregonian quotes the phrase that it may apply to the contests of college oratory. To us these contests between the colleges seem every way unfruitful. The whole question is, Do such exercises contain within them a principle, method or means of intellectual development? The Oregonian takes leave to doubt it; and it will give its reasons. Quickness of mental operation or action is an essential condition of oratory. But the practice of writing out orations and committing them to memory for delivery has an opposite effect. It chills the mind down to the letter and checks the flow of the spirit. It leads the mind into a state of dependence, and even of helplessness, cuts off spontaneity of thought and substitutes formal coldness of speech for the quick, keen thought that live words demand. The objection is not that the college orations be themselves "poor stuff." On the whole, they are as good as you might expect. But the objection is that from their method of preparation and delivery no real development of the powers of the mind, for purposes practical or useful, can be expected. A ready speaker never will be made that way. If one is to be a participant, as a speaker, in actual affairs, he must school himself to talk in the simplest, plainest and most direct way. Study and practice of sonorous periods will do little or nothing for him. The skill he needs he can get only in the rub of affairs; and in order to find it he must forget his method of college oratory, or at least abandon it. But the chance is that if he will give his own mental hand a free rein, he will find it to him, and even lead him into fields that will be fair to both sides and that will stand without interruption the first time some single employer or employe slips a cog in his mental machinery. Things are getting to a pretty pass if the immense building operations now under way in Portland must come to a standstill every time a contractor's or business agent's liver gets out of joint. With all our praise of organization, we ought to be an organization of baseball bats and meat cleavers to fall upon the necks of cranks, contractors and cocky walking delegates. A RIGHTeous DECISION. Monday's decision of the Federal Supreme court sets at rest for all time the contention between land-grant railroads and settlers upon lands within the indemnity limits of such railroads. Compressed into a nutshell, the decision of the highest tribunal is this: The rule by which original land grants are withdrawn from sale or location, pre-emption or homestead entry does not apply to indemnity lands. At the first trial of this suit, which was brought by the United States against the Oregon & California Railroad Company to cancel patents issued to the company for certain lands in what is known as the "West Side" grant, Judge Bellinger held: There is a well-established distinction between "granted lands" and "indemnity lands"; and the principle is firmly established that the title to lands in the indemnity class does not vest in the railroad company for any reason, which they are contingently granted, but, in the fullest legal sense, remains in the United States, until they are actually selected and set apart, under the direction of the Secretary of the Interior, specifically for indemnity purposes. Until such time, the title remains in the Government, subject to its disposal at its pleasure. This view is confirmed by the Supreme Court. Under the Federal act of July 25, 1850, as soon as a land-grant railroad had made its survey and filed its maps and plats, the Secretary of the Interior was required to withdraw alternate sections within ten miles on each side of the surveyed line. By the act of May 4, 1870, it is provided: "And in case the quantity of tea full sections per mile cannot be withdrawn on each side of said road, with said limit of twenty miles, other lands shall be selected." To make up the deficiency. "But the railroad did not make such selections. It simply claimed land in large quantities. It did not specify its deficiency, nor did it put its finger on certain lands and say it wanted them in order to be made whole. It was extreme in its demands and recognized no 'squatters' rights." And now the United States has said to the railroad (and there seems to be no way of taking it back): "You are entitled to what the law specifically gives you, and you can't 'hook up' great areas for a contingency. If you can find within the indemnity limits enough land to make up your deficiency, pick it out and we will give you title to it. The settlers were there ahead of you, and their rights we hold sacred. We will not allow you to tie up wide areas on the theory that some time, perhaps twenty-five or fifty years from now, you may be entitled to a part of them." A large number of men on both sides of the Willamette Valley are now secure in the homes and farms they have created. The effect of the decision will probably be an early selection by the railroad company of lieu lands, which it is to be hoped will be offered for sale at a reasonable price. UNION, CONTRACTORS AND PUBLIC. Organized labor should move cautiously along the line of demand at this time, making its steps with care and moderation. It is now a power in the industrial life of the Nation. Every community feels its presence and is willing to give place to its principles. This can continue only while its demands are just as between man and man. The exhibition of a domineering spirit will be fatal to its usefulness. There is a vast difference between laying the weight of a just grievance upon the wheels of industry and in the attempt to clog them with an unreasonable demand. In the one case popular sentiment indorses the action, in the other it distinctly disapproves of it. A word to the wise seems to be necessary at this time. We trust that this word may come from labor leaders in this community at once, to the end that unreasonable demands, from which every worker may be driven, the industrial life of the community may not suffer from even temporary suspension of activity. We take it that the desire of Portland for justice to organized labor is as strong as ever. But there is also a feeling—and it is a good deal stronger than it was a year ago—that these complaints as to hours and time and recognition are made not as a basis of settled conditions and steady industry, but merely as a means of forcing the demand for another. If this impression gains general acceptance, and it is growing, public opinion will array itself against the unions, and without public opinion their chance to win is very slight. The interests of society are chiefly those of progress and improvement. It is dangerous to interfere with the course of building or trade upon any grounds except those of plain justice. As to the merits of the present controversy in a part of the building trades field, we shall say nothing. But as to the purposes of public sentiment, it may be well to give the building trades a hint, for they will find that foresight is better than hindsight, much cheaper and less humiliating. Public opinion in Portland will never sustain unions in an effort to recruit aid for contractors in the enterprise of forcing nonunion men into the union. Let them get the nonunion men into unions by persuasion, if they can; but neither employers nor general public will be dragged into a fight to force any man into a union who prefers to remain out of it. Public opinion in Portland will never consent to help the unions force an employer to discharge a nonunion man he wishes to keep and who has given no just cause of offense. A very timely word on this question of labor troubles was spoken by President Roosevelt Monday at Sioux Falls. He said: A conciliation committee can do best work when the trouble is in its beginning, or at least has not come to a head. When the break has actually occurred, damage has been done, and each side feels sore and angry; and it is difficult to get them together—difficult to make either forget its own wrongs and realize the error of its ways. If possible, the effort at conciliation or mediation or arbitration should be made in the earlier stages, and should be marked by the wish on the part of each side to meet the other on an agreement which each shall think in the interests of the other as well as of itself. The stage of difficulty here treated by the President is precisely the stage occupied by the building trades controversy in Portland. It is of profound concern to the community that the questions at issue be settled on some basis that will be fair to both sides and that will stand without interruption the first time some single employer or employe slips a cog in his mental machinery. Things are getting to a pretty pass if the immense building operations now under way in Portland must come to a standstill every time a contractor's or business agent's liver gets out of joint. With all our praise of organization, we ought to be an organization of baseball bats and meat cleavers to fall upon the necks of cranks, contractors and cocky walking delegates. THE STAR OF EMPIRE. Eighty-one carloads of immigrants passed through Sioux City in a single day last week, on their way to the West, the greater part of them from states lying east of the Mississippi River. Yesterday's telegraphic news reported between 2,000 and 3,000 foreign immigrants passing through Chicago Monday, bound for the West. This kind of news is no longer so infrequent as to cause special comment, but the Sioux City news is supplemented by the statement that the exodus from Iowa for the West has reached such proportions that it is alarming those who are not inclined to join the throng. The baker of a small town in Iowa not far from Sioux City states that patrons of his bank alone have spent over \$100,000 in the purchase of Western lands. The movement has attained such proportions that the banking associations have agreed to lend no more money on property outside the state limits. Notwithstanding this edict, the Iowans are still buying Western lands and are coming West to improve them. No man who has spent a decade or two in the pleasant climate and among the wonderful natural resources of Oregon and Washington will truthfully admit that Iowa or any other state lying east of the Rocky Mountains can compare with this country as a place for residence or for gaining a livelihood. This is not said to the disparagement of Iowa. She has grown rich and populous, and will remain so, and she must now witness a shifting of population such as earlier in the history of the country has never known. The descendants of the New England pioneers moved "way out West" to New York, and in time the new generation of the Empire State contested with the Indians of the Illinois plains for a foothold in that country. Thence westward to Minnesota and Dakota, and finally to Kansas, Nebraska, Colorado and beyond the Rockies to the Pacific Coast. Every inducement that beckoned the Easterners westward is as potent and fruitful today as it was generations ago, and in addition the West now offers inducements that the wildest dreamers would not have thought possible a few generations ago. The youthful Iowan of the Willamette Valley are now secure in the homes and farms they have created. The effect of the decision will probably be an early selection by the railroad company of lieu lands, which it is to be hoped will be offered for sale at a reasonable price. SERVICE PENSIONS FOR VETERANS. Summer Post, Grand Army of the Republic, has adopted a resolution requesting Congress to pass an act placing all surviving veterans of the Civil War on the pension rolls at a minimum of \$12 per month. It is probable that a universal service pension bill of some sort for the benefit of the veterans of the Civil War will be enacted within the next ten years. The precedent for such a pension exists today in the service pension of \$12 a month now paid to 8233 widows of the Mexican War and the 8017 widows of Mexican War veterans. This Mexican War service pension act was passed by Congress in 1887, about forty years after the close of the Mexican War. It is nearly forty years since the great battle of Gettysburg was won; it is just thirty-eight years since the Civil War was practically ended by Lee's surrender. Whether Congress should at once enact a general service pension bill is a question of expediency; it is sure to be passed sooner or later, and as a matter of economy it is quite likely that it would not cost the Government a very large sum in addition to what is now paid pensioners and what is sure to be paid through special acts for the relief of individual soldiers whose claims have been rejected by the Pension Bureau or who deem their present pensions unequal to their merits. The pension roll today is about 1,000,000 strong, and of these pensioners about 975,000 are veterans of the Civil War and their widows. The number of veterans that are not now upon the pension roll probably does not exceed 250,000 men, and these probably a good many are in easy circumstances and would not apply for a service pension. How many of the present pensioners on the rolls would be benefited by a service pension act it is impossible to estimate. Of course, those whose present pension is less than the amount of a service pension would be benefited by such an act to the amount of the excess of service pension over their present pension. It is likely that Congress would grant a service pension at first of more than \$8 a month, as it did with the Mexican War pension bill when first enacted in 1887. It is well, perhaps, for the veterans to begin to push this bill upon the attention of Congress, for it will involve a long debate, and a decision will not, naturally, be reached for several years. Death is rapidly reducing the army of veterans and before a general service pension bill is enacted the burden involved by its passage will be much lighter to bear than at present. Practically without the enactment of a general service pension bill the surviving veterans are rapidly being added to the roll by special pension acts. A general service pension bill would be much better, because today it is the soldier who has the best political pull that through special pension acts gets his name placed on the pension roll. The Grand Army of the Republic for a number of years has discussed the wisdom of a general service pension act, and one of its commanders, a sound jurist and an able soldier, argued on every occasion that the country would ultimately enact such a pension bill; that it would be driven to it by the increasing number of special pension acts, which operated as a check upon the general service pension bill; that the assistance necessary to obtain a statute for his individual relief. There is not the slightest hope of any decrease in the number of these special pension bills; there is not the slightest hope of any reform in the pension laws, and it is probable that a general service pension law is the best way out of the difficulty. Under the act of June 25, 1890, 496,138 veteran soldiers and 143,201 widows drew pensions as well as 15,363 mothers and 697 widows. These invalids draw pensions for disability to earn support by manual labor, disability not due to military service. Under this act so many veterans have obtained a pension that a general service pension bill would probably not greatly enlarge the number of names upon the pension roll, although it would increase the pension of many of them. There are those present pensioners who feel that the assistance necessary to obtain a statute for his individual relief. There is not the slightest hope of any decrease in the number of these special pension bills; there is not the slightest hope of any reform in the pension laws, and it is probable that a general service pension law is the best way out of the difficulty. Under the act of June 25, 1890, 496,138 veteran soldiers and 143,201 widows drew pensions as well as 15,363 mothers and 697 widows. 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