

The Oregonian

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TODAY'S WEATHER—Fair, preceded by
showers during the forenoon. Warmer. North-
westerly winds.

YESTERDAY'S WEATHER—Maximum tem-
perature, 67 deg.; minimum temperature, 46
deg.; precipitation, 0.10 inch.

PORTLAND, WEDNESDAY, MAY 27.

THE REFERENDUM NOT A FAILURE.

Impatience with the referendum, aroused by the menace to the Lewis and Clark Centennial, was no unrestrained indulgence here in Oregon in April and the first part of May that the country at large is in danger of forming an incorrect impression of that amendment to the Oregon constitution. A careless utterance of a Washington State paper, for example, leads the New York Evening Post to the conclusion that the referendum is a "dead failure," and that "it is always a dead letter unless somebody wants to use it for improper purposes."

Oregon was pretty badly scared, it is true, when the referendum was invoked for three undesirable obstructive votes on acts of the recent legislative session. But The Oregonian, at least, offered reassurance while the panic was at its height, and expressed a confidence in the popular judgment which the sequel has abundantly justified. The referendum was, it is true, invoked for improper purposes, but it was proven to be a dead letter in exactly that case rather than the opposite, and its insurance qualities were left unimpaired by the fact that the three petitions in question failed to receive the number of signatures requisite to bring the challenged measures before a vote of the people. The result may be accepted everywhere, as it is in Oregon, as a fresh testimonial to the wisdom and safety of popular government.

The referendum stands accordingly as a safeguard in the people's hands against pernicious acts of an unworthy Legislature and a conniving Governor. Any hope of using it as an instrument of improper purposes must be infinitesimal, after the late severe test, in which powerful interests—corporations in one case and labor organizations in the other—conspicuously failed in their attempt to invoke the plebiscite by widely circulated and strenuously urged petitions. The amendment is the stronger for its trial; and while it is likely to remain a dead letter except in its operation as a potential check on legislative misconduct, it may yet have a day of abundant triumph in actual employment to defeat a pernicious law. Efforts to bring government nearer to the people, as the National convention system has brought our Presidential elections, are not to be condemned offhand. Hardly a Legislature in the land abjourns without some specific acts being submitted to a referendum. It is not a violent extension of this recognized and approved practice to codify it for instant use in any emergency on demand.

BETWEEN TWO FIRES.

With Mr. Harriman steadily reducing the railroad mileage under his control by the sale of branches and connections wherever some other road wishes to enter, it is hardly probable that he is seeking to secure the Columbia River & Northern. Mr. Harriman has much less to fear from this new road than has the Northern Pacific. The O. R. & N. has received only a limited amount of business from the route traversed by the Columbia & Northern, for the simple reason that it made no effort to develop or encourage development in that region. The Columbia River will prevent the line crossing back into the Oregon territory of the O. R. & N., but to the east and north great possibilities await its extension. As the Northern Pacific and its close ally, the Great Northern, are now in undisputed possession of that rich territory, any uneasiness over the encroachments of the new road would naturally come from them.

The predominant feature of Mr. Harriman's policy on the Pacific Coast seems to be a persistent effort to divert everything possible to San Francisco and to make no attempt to reach out for new traffic in the Northwest. This failure to aid Portland and Oregon in securing what rightfully belongs to them is explainable, perhaps, by the fact that any increased development in Oregon and Washington, except on the line of the Southern Pacific, would not aid the Harriman properties centering in San Francisco. The Northern Pacific, on the contrary, is directly interested in the development of Oregon, Washington and Idaho. The business of these three states may be of small consequence to Mr. Harriman, but it has a value for the Northern Pacific. The wheat, flour and lumber business of these states is the foundation on which the Oriental trade has been built, and on this foundation it will rest for many a year. Mr. Harriman cannot take this trade to San Francisco, and he does not handle it properly from Portland. This leaves it at the mercy of the Northern Pacific or the people of Portland.

A PROMISING EXPERIMENT.

A scheme to hire household servants by the hour is being evolved from the perplexed brains of Boston women whose wrestle with the servant-girl problem has made them fertile in expedients. The experiment is promising from the fact that girls are first to be trained for the service required in a school established for that purpose. A certificate of competence in the branch of housework for which she makes application to work by the hour will be necessary in order for a woman to secure work at the wage rate hereinafter to be agreed upon. The course of instruction covers ironing, cleaning, cooking and sewing.

This feature, as before said, makes the plan a promising one. It brings housework up to the plane of skilled labor (where, if competently performed, it certainly should be), and insures in its performance the respect and confidence of employers as well as the self-respect of the workers. It promises to housemaids the coveted boon of "time of their own," and makes the hours for which they receive pay belong without reservation to their employers.

Some kinds of work, as window-washing, general housecleaning, washing and ironing, are now being done in this city "by the hour," the minimum rate for capable women being 15 cents. So far as observed, the plan is satisfactory to all concerned, providing the worker understands what she is hired to do. It would be difficult, of course, to extend this system to the more minute details of housekeeping, and especially to cooking. Hence the experiment in Boston, as being systemized upon the basis of thorough preparation for the work required, will be watched with interest by the great multitude of intelligent American housewives.

The German government is engaged in carrying out a plan for the purchase of the six large private railroads remaining in Prussia, and when this op-

eration is completed the Prussian Minister of Railroads and Public Works will be in complete control of the railways of the state. Our American Consul-General at Berlin reports to our Secretary of State that state ownership and operation, from a financial standpoint, has been an unquestionable success. In 1890 the revenues of the state railways exceeded expenditures by 501,000,000 marks (\$19,238,000), and this surplus increased to 751,000,000 marks (\$17,728,000) in 1899. The state roads, under public management, show increased speed, the frequency of service is increased, and the accommodations for passengers improved. The run from Berlin to Frankfurt has been reduced within a few years from fourteen to nine hours, and prizes are being offered for the best designs of locomotives and cars for a 75-miles-an-hour service of small hourly trains to run between the principal German cities in place of a service now generally limited to four large expresses a day.

BRYAN'S LITTLE GAME.

Mr. Bryan, having commended Judge Parker to the Democrats of New York, and Tom L. Johnson to the Democrats of Ohio, now turns his attention to the South, and asks an interviewer: "What do you say to Judge Walter Clark, of North Carolina?" These castings about of the late Defeated are entirely too frequent to be anything but systematic. They are part of a programme distinctly formulated in the boyocratic mind. What might that programme be?

In the first place, Mr. Bryan may figure that if he can get some eminent nobody or great unknown nominated for President in 1904, the ensuing defeat will cause the party to turn to himself again in 1908. But what is far more likely is that Bryan hopes to see so many candidates at next year's convention, and such hopeless dissension among them, that he will himself be the only man upon whom all can agree.

"Next time" is not the day of salvation with the general run of ambitious statesmen. The modest self-effacement of Mr. Bryan justifies the view that the best year for him to run again is in 1904.

This is the same old game which the bosses tried to work on McKinley at St. Louis in 1896, and which Messrs. Hanna, Platt et al. are setting up now on the President Roosevelt. Its success under the most favorable conditions is extremely improbable. When the favorite sons develop their unavailability beyond peradventure, they are not always able to control their disgruntled delegations, and even if they are sometimes the favorite sons do not center their support on the author of their ill-starred undertakings. Because Mr. Bryan promotes Parker in New York, Johnson in Ohio and Clark in North Carolina is not an all-sufficient reason why the second choice of all these states should be Bryan. The young Lochinvar may be a daring rider, but there are some politicians in the party who have forgotten more than he ever knew about the manipulation of National conventions. You cannot crucify a party on a cross of 16 to 1 more than a party once in a million years.

We can tell Mr. Bryan, if he has not already divined it from expressions given him at first hand, that he is tempting fortune too far. He reckons without the ambitions of the rank and file of Democrats when he undertakes to add to the role of disturber of the Democratic peace that of obstructor of Democratic success. He sadly misjudges the brains of the party if he thinks it will submit indefinitely to his assumption that his crazy silver and socialistic propaganda of 1896 are the time-honored "principles" of Jefferson and Jackson.

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