# Morning



# Oregontan.

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WEDNESDAY, JUNE 17, 1903. PORTLAND, OREGON,

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Grim Days of Sorrow in Heppner.

## DEATH ROLL IS 200

Repose in Graves.

## DREAD WATERS MISS FEW

Families Sundered, and Hundreds Bereaved.

POLICE WORK DONE VIGOROUSLY

Stores Turned Into Free Supply Depots-Many Thousand Visitors-Thrilling Stories of Escape and Tragedy.

#### DEATH LIST IS 200,

HEPPNER, Or., June 16.-Special.)-The excitement is gradually wearing away here. First death reports were exaggerated. Not more than 200 per sons lost their lives, perhaps not that many. About 130 bodies have been recovered. Yesterday 115 were brought in, and today 15. About 100 dwellings

BY LESLIE M. SCOTT HEPPNER, Or., June 16, via Lexington, Or., June 16 .- (Staff correspondence.)-Terrible Willow Creek has shrunk to the size of all innocent brooks. Awful tales of destruction to life and property are graven in its banks. Perhaps 200 people of Heppner have perished.

Nearly 125 bodies have been recovered Over 100 have been burled. About \$500,000 worth of property is erased from the wealth of Morrow County in Heppner along Willow Creek. Scenes at Heppner are indescribable in their grewsomeness, their anguish, their awful desolation, No pen can exaggerate the horrors they prea human form in decomposition. Many do reveal such spectacles when uncovered, and meantime Willow Creek, as if to mock the dead, has returned to a purling brooklet, and the Courthouse clock at every hour peals forth its delorous note into the ears of the bereaved.

A grim-visaged aspect has Heppner. No loafers may tarry in its precincts. A rigid emergency government impresses ablebodied men into the work of saving the town from plague-breeding disease. The lead are dead, but the living must live, The community is ruled by a strong hand akin to martial law. Several thousand persons have arrived from inside places. But they may not indulge in lazy curioslty. Government in extremity is force, and when Marshals and Deputy Sheriffs pass up and down with butt ends of pistols protruding from their pockets, gov-

### ernment has its true exemplification.

Three Hundred Bodles Found. An army of men and horses is sifting great wastes of debris. Three hundred bodies have been found and there are men who say the work is only half begun, An army of women take charge of the bodies as they are borne out of the wreckage by the straining arms of men. An arm, a leg, a toe, a finger, a lock of hair, a tuft of clothing-these are harbingers of horror beneath the mud. Babies and little children lie there buried, with many a gash or bruise on their tender bodies. Forms of women frequently come to light bereft of all clothing save where a corset shields them from the gaze of anxious searchers. Clothing of men is less frequently forn away. The bodies are borne white cloth, and to be laid in rough wood boxes. There is no time for ceremony. It's the grim reality of death. And women who would faint at scenes mandate of necessity without a flinch. hearses, but many at a time, piled high in wagons.

### No Class Distinction Now.

Social lines are all erased in the disaster. The aristocracy of the town delves she found herself wrestling with the ten entirely. The city and county officials are supreme authority. One of them fired sayed. His Family Was Safe, a man to work yesterday at the point of a pistol. Any person detected in looting must be shot on the spot.

Medicines are not needed here, nor physicians, nor nurses. The town must be cleansed if it would escape pestilence. It must have more men to help clean up and provisions to feed the men would be right welcome. Many families are entirely destitute, all their worldly possession having been carried away. In many a

## rphan is left. Help would tend ghten the gloom of all such as these. Awful Scene of Descintion.

Houses crushed and telescoped beyond foundations, deposited in streets or allen property, one-fourth, or one-half, or one mile away; household goods strewn in every direction in recking mud; trees two feet in diameter uprooted and wover in impeded drift into all kinds of awfu fantastic shapes, bodies of men and horses and cattle and pigs all cast in in-

flood was upon the town within three or four minutes after the danger was per-Most of the people were in their houses. The day being Sunday, the hour being dinner time, and a heavy rain falling, all caused them to pen themselves within doors. Most of the dwellings were near the bank of the stream. The people were therefore caught like rats in trap, and so sudden was the warning that comparatively few could reach place of safety. The whole row of houses next the creek was swept away. Spectators of the calamity describe the structures as falling like card houses. The dwellings were tossed about like bobbins, and most of them fell completely to pieces. The wn had perhaps over 250 houses, nearly 200 of which were demolished. The whole business part of town would have been swept away had not the Palace Hotel, a heavy brick structure, diverted the cur-Houses on brick foundations fared better than others because the flood could not so easily wash under them. Identifiention of the dead has been easy.

Most of the bodies show the effects of

drowning rather than of vital injury, though all of them are more or less bruised. Only a few of those who escaped the flood were severely injured.

Locked in Close Embrace A. Abrahamsick, who was rescued, died oday. The bodies of Dr. Vaughn, Postmaster, and his wife were found today locked in each other's embrace. A foot of each body was all that first came to light. Mrs. Vaughn's dress was intact, and she still wore her jewelry. At the railroad depot a live 2-year-old baby was found yesterday in a grain sack in a pile of drift. The mother was rescued a short distance further down stream.

George Conser's experience was probably as extraordinary as any. Mr. Conser was sitting in his house with his wife, Dr. McSword and John Ayers when the flood picked up the house. The floor of the front hall bulged upward, letting in torrents of water. Conser and his wife fled opstairs. They do not know what became of McSword and Ayers, and believe the two men must have tried to escape out the door. While the husband and wife were upstairs a partition fell in on them and held them down to their necks in water. They thought their last moment had come, and kissed each other good-by but a friendly current took the house shoreward. There the structure was all but demolished. When the waters abated Conser kicked out a window and with his

"We had given up the fight," said he when we were saved. We lost all our ousehold effects and these clothes are all I own in the world."

Emergency Organization Formed, Gilliam, who returned from Portland last night, was made president of the emerorganization of citizens Sunday night, after the flood had wrought its ruin. He has been indefatigable in his present duties, and is nearly worn out with fatigue. The body of Dr. McSword was found yesterday 33 miles down C E Redfield returned in the early

darkness of this morning to find his home, his wife and his three children all swept away. As he stood by the scene of deso lation be wept aloud in his anguish. His and not a vestige of it remains. All stores were ordered open today by

the emergency organization, so that goods could be procured for relieving distress Goods were confiscated, especially implements, though the credit of the city was assured for payment,

"But I can't get in the door," pleaded a thrifty merchant.

"Because the key won't fit."

"We can kick it in, then," declared Conser, but at this emergency the key fitted "We must have all the teams we can

get," proclaimed the dictator. All available teams were put to service "We must have food for the men," he

"Go," addressing a lieutenant, "and get

a beef wherever you can find one." Nine Perished Here, Hotel Heppner was completley demolished and about nine inmates perished. One of its proprietors, Jones, was among the victims. The other proprietor, Ashbaugh, escaped. About 40 persons were in the hotel. Only one who remained saved his life. Arthur Ducket stuck to his room to Roberts' Hall to be washed and though nearly all of the structure broke dressed by women, to be shrouded in away from him. The persons who lost their lives in the hotel besides Jones were his wife and three children, Andrew Peterson, of Hillsboro, who was taking orders for the Pacific Woolen Mills; a man one-thousandth part as awful obey the named Fisher, from Haystack; another named Boyer, of Kansas; and Mrs. The floor swims with the half-diluted Haines, wife of the cook. Ashbaugh was mud that drips from the victims, but the in a cottage adjoining the botel with his living patter through it or sweep it out wife and two children and a child of when it gets too deep. The rough boxes Jones. He snatched up the elder of his go to the cemeteries, not singly in children and called to his wife to follow. She, in trying to save the two other bables, lost her own and saved that of Jones Believing she was doomed, she sat down on the bed. The house fell asunder and in the mud with the lowly, and with the rents. Bruised and cut by heavy timbers, same grime on its faces. All eat the same enervating food. Politics is forgot-in her arms she floated against the pickshe lost her baby. With the Jones baby ets of the Methodist Church and was

Dr. Higgs saw the flood from his office window, and immediately ran for his house, 200 yards distant. But the dwelling was carried away before his eyes. He was beside himself, for he believed his wife and child to be in the house. But they were safe in the church.

Touching were the scenes when kinsfell net after the catastrophe those whom

(Concluded on Fourth Page.)

Dread Scenes Along Willow Creek.

## HAVOC BY THE FLOOD

Death and Disaster in Its Savage March.

#### FARMS AND HOMES CONE

Railroad Carried Bodily Quarter of a Mile.

#### MUTE STORY OF A BABY'S FATE

Searchers Pursue the Sad Task of Rescue-Farmers in Despair Talk of Seeking New Fields-Damage Not Calculable.

## HEPPNER REACHED BY WIRE

was opened with a patches wire last night. The lines had been in trouble all day, but by herculean labor on the part of the Western Union and the telephone company the damage was temporarily repaired, so that The Oregonian is able again to present full news accounts of the events and scenes following the disaster.

dent O'Brien, of the O. R. & N. Co., expects to run trains to Heppner by Sunday.

BT A. CROFTON. LEXINGTON, Or., June 16.-(Staff Correspondence.)-Great tragedles are nade up of many minor ones, and if Heppner is indeed tonight a town of smeutations, a city of the dead, it detracts but little from the pathos, the impressiveness and the wierdness of the scenes which dot the valley for twenty miles below the stricken city. The canyon of Willow Creek, if not the Valley of the Shadow of Death, truly is a vale of tears. And while the voice of Rachel weeping for her children is heard in mourning at Heppner, it conveys to the observer perhaps a less pathetic evidence of the disuster than does the pitiful wreckage of happy homes strewn along the path of the raging torrent which has destroyed nearly 300 lives. The bodies of many of the persons reported missins have undoubtedly been swept away in the racing waters to find a resting place, and perhaps a grave, many miles below Heppner. At a bend of the river 15 miles from the scene of the cloud burst, a passing horseman picked from a barbed wire fence undershirt of some drowned the tiny baby. As this body, in company un doubtedly with many others, had been borne towards the Columbia by the resistless flood, the little garment had been combed from the infant corpse by the

receded, had been left exposed to view. a mute evidence of the destination of one of the missing. At this point, though removed so far from the initial point of the flood, the evidence of its inconceivable force was more striking than at any other point seen in the valley. A section of railroad track measuring 1200 feet in length, had been lifted bodily from its roadbed a quarter of a mile above, and had been piled up, where the waters had made e sharp curve, in an indescribable mass of wreckage. The heavy steel rails had been bent and twisted by the current into every possible geometrical figure. One section of rail, 200 feet long, on which the fish plates were still unbroken, was lapped around a bluff of mud so accurately that nowhere in its whole length was daylight to be perceived between that and the bank. Neither had the force of the waters buried it further in the soil than was

tentacles of the fence, and, as the flood

#### to the hilt through a point of land until the points protruded a few inches in their Queer Frenk of the Flood.

necessary to hold it when the flood re-

ceded. Two other rails, 20 feet long,

fastened at one end by a single tie, were

driven like some gigantic carpet-tack up

Here also was observed the first instance of a remarkable phenomenon. For a distance of 10 miles along the valley i great number of glass fruit jars, split from the wreckage of some doomed house, had been carried unbroken. Although the metal tops were screwed down tightly on the rubber bands the jars, evidently empty when they started on their voyage were found in every instance to contain about half a pint of muddy water. How this water could possible have entered the sealed jars, and by what fortuitous circumstances the fragile glass escaped injury in a watery tempest which tore trees from their roots, wrecked large residences and snapped and bent steel bars like putty, is not readily to be explained, It is quite certain that a large percentuge of bodies carried beyond Hepp-

### Bedies May Never Be Found,

The flood has been kind in that it buried of its own dead. Thousands of tons of gravel, silt, and loam torn from

valley, and carried in the bosom of the flood, have been deposited as an oozy shroud, varying in depth from six inches to three feet, all over the country. The sinking water has left this deposit a dry and close-packed band of mud, and be-neath are undoubtedly hidden many of the missing dead. From a sanitary standpoint this immediate and unmarked burial may be in some degree desirable, but it is calculated to prolong needlessly the labor of the searching parties and the agonizing suspense of relatives. To search the 18 miles of valley over which the dead may reasonably be expected to be found will necessitate the labors of many men for many days and weeks. The piles of de-bris, tangled brush, and twisted timber, on whose jagged points are spiked mattresses and sofa pillows, chair backs and grill work, clothing, household utensils and all the petty furnishings that go to make a home, are heaped in great mounds against every tree and fence post, basalt bluff and river point, over which the rag-ing waters tore its desolating path. To search the valley systematically for dead bodies, it would be necessary to pull out each separate stick and plank in every one of those numberiess piles. To those who have not seen themselves the have that the waters wrought, the magnitude of such a task will be more evident when it is said that for two days and two nights a thousand men have labored in cessantly in Heppner and its immediate vicinity at a similar work. And tonight users even even or supported to their task and urged to activity by the powerful goad of personal interest

#### appears to a newcomer as though it had Searchers at Their Sad Tank,

the working in the streets of Heppner

never been touched.

From Lexington this morning small of searchers began to work towards Heppner; but, while it is possible that they should make a cursory examination of the river banks in their search for corpses, it would not be possible for 50 men to progress a mile a day, were the to examine the debris thoroughly. And so it would seem that for many who last Sunday afternoon sat with their families within their homes at Heppner, a drab expanse of sand will be their only sepulchre, and the murmur of a dying flood

#### Hard to Estimate Damage. To estimate the total damage don

would at this time be presumptuous. The value of the residences destroyed, both in Heppner and the valley, cannot be accurately computed within 34 hours. The ruin spread through 30 miles of fertile land and growing crops is a hard matter to guage, while the losses of cattle, hogs and horses are not even approximately known in any instances by the owners themselves. This numbing instance of the powerlessness of man before such a cataclysm of nature as has visited its inresisted wrath upon Morrow County, and the evidence that the little Valley of Willow Creek is not immune from these disasters, has already had a marked depreciating effect upon property values Many ranchers have expressed a very real and unwarranted alarm about the situation. Many of them, apparently forgetful that never before has any similar catastrophe been recorded in the annals of this district, have publicly announced a desire to seek another and less tumultuous locality. In justification their fears they quote the legends of the aboriginal Indian tribes, whose degenerate and unsweet descendants say that in years gone by the water has filled the valle from one hilltop to another. It is prob-

able, however, that as the present tense excitement passes the residents along (Concluded on Fourth Page )

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#### Portland and Vicinity. gather for annual reunion today.

Attorneys for M. V. Leasis seek to prevent his

itizens of St. Johns demand report from their School Clerk. Page 8. State Board of Health prepares for vigorous campaign against disease. Page 12. Indian War Veterans elect officers and discuss-pensions. Page 14.

# One Hundred Men Are Sent to Heppner

# TO BURY THE DEAD

Appeal for Workers Is Promptly Answered.

### QUICK CANVASS IS MADE

Portland Citizens Give \$8687 to Aid the Needy.

SUPPLIES OF FOOD GO TODAY

Central Committee Organizes the Relief Work With Dispatch and Meets With Generous Response on Every Hand,

## WHAT IS BEING DONE FOR

THE HEPPNER SUFFERERS. The cash relief fund now amounts to

\$8687.25. A gang of 102 workingmen was sent to Heppmer last evening.

Before moon the work of clearing away the debris and burying the dead

will have begun.
A quantity of provisions will be sent to Heppner this morning.

Business men are responding liberally to the call for help. By proclamation of Mayor Williams all funds collected are to be sent to the treasurer of the reltef committee,

R. L. Sabin, Front and Vine streets.

One hundred and two able-bodied men quipped with tools and provisions for n days, left last night for Heppner. Their work will be to clear away the debris which covers the dead and to bury the bodies when they are found. R. T. Cox and J. N. Teal went as representa-

tives of the relief committee of Portland. The men are in charge of J. N. Davis, whose foremen will be F. S. Washburn and C. O'Donnell. They will reach Lexngton on a special train by daylight this

morning and will immediately proceed to the stricken city. was realized when a message was received by the relief committee from J. P.

O'Brien yesterday morning as follows: "Lexington, Or., June 16, 1903.-Mr. Conser says he does not require anything but men and tools to bury the dead. Send 75 to 100 able-bodied men with axes, ooks, shovels and rope to work in the debris and dig out the dead. They have sufficient funds and food to feed those here now, but men coming should have supplies to feed them three or four days.

"J. P. O'BRIEN." In response to this urgent call from me on the field, a meeting of the Merhants' Protective Association was held at 1:30 yesterday afternoon. The other commercial bodies of the city have united with the association in the relief work, and all money collected has been placed at the disposal of the relief committee

#### designated by Mayor Williams. Situation Is Appalling. Mr. O'Brien's message was later con firmed by a dispatch from George W.

Conser, the cashier of the First National Bank of Heppner, as follows: HEPPNER, Or., June 16, 1903,-The situation is appalling. Scores of orphan children and hundreds of

homeless people. Need provisions

and men with tools who will work

GEORGE W. CONSER. This message was received so late in the day that no quantity of provisies could be dispatched, but the working gang carries with it supplies for ten days and orders were given that if necessary they should share a part of the provisions with the destitute people

Heppner. A larger quantity will be sent

by the first train this morning. Over \$8000 in Cash in Fund. The business portion of the city is being thoroughly canvassed by the subscription sub-committees appointed by the general relief committee. Money is pouring into the office of the treasurer. R. L. Sabin, and last evening \$566.25 in cash had been received. Several hundred dollars have been subscribed but not paid into the treasurer. Never in the history of Portland has so much pathy been aroused, and never have thou-sands of dollars been given within an

equal time in Oregon.

Volunteers have come forward and offered their services without hesitation. N.
J. Davis, who left last evening in charge
of the working gang, was among the first
to volunteer. A number of nurses from
St. Vincents' Hospital have volunteered
to care for the sick and injured. If the
relief committee representatives telegraph the necessity of trained nurses,
these whits-capped girls from St. Vincent's will hasten to aid the suffering.
The Oregon Ratiroad & Navigation
Company has carried all men of rulief
work, together with provisions, free of
charge. The telephone company gives
free switching to Heppner and the flooded
district to the relief committee. The fered their services without hesitation, N.

(Concluded on Page 5.)