Morning Oregonian

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TOO MUCH ENTHUSIASM.

The bill providing for a tax supervising commission, concerning which the city council expresses undisguised alarm, is not a surprise attack upon the tax-levying functions of that body or of any other body brought within the scope of the bill. The bill follows explicitly the recommendations made by a commission created by the 1919 legislature, whose report was published in full in the Portland newspapers. The bill which has been introduced by Mr. Gordon was prepared by the Taxpayers' League, a voluntary organization, and it, too, was given to the public through the press.

The revolutionary element in the bill as it applies to city taxation is that it divorces the tax-levying from the tax-disbursing power. But it is not a new idea. It is in practice in state affairs. If the state government were conducted as is the city government, there would be a meeting of the executive heads of the penitentiary, hospitals for the insane, higher educational institutions, and various departments; each would decide how much money his department or institution ought to spend; they would thereupon levy the taxes necessary to raise the total amount. But state affairs are not conducted that way. The several institutions and departments present their estimates to the legislature, and the legislature pares or adjusts the estimates to the ability of the taxpayers to pay. In that sense the legislature is a tax-supervising commission.

Coincident with commission government there has come a steadily increasing city tax levy. There undoubtedly would have been considerable increase under any system of municipal government. But we have under commission government five commissioners, each of whom administers a department of city government. It may be said that each is enterprising and each is industrious. Each wishes to be of greater service to the public and each can see whereby, if he had more money at his disposal, he could accomplish things which he conceives would be of public benefit.

It is easy enough to calculate the small consequence to the tax roll of an addition of $25,000 or $50,000 to one department's budget. It does not, indeed, amount to much if only one department or political unit of the county is adding the sum. But if five city commissions and the county commissioners, and the port commissioners, and the school district each adds a drop, the little drops of tax water become a tub full and finally an ocean.

That is what is happening. It is not here implied that there is a definite agreement among the commissioners not to interfere with each other's yearly plans or estimates, but whether definitely conceived or not, the tendency is one of non-interference lest the commissioner interfered with strike back at the budget of the commissioner who first interferes.

While in the city we have five departments each virtually its own tax-levying body, we have several political taxing units — principally city, county, port, school district — which levy taxes upon the same people and also work independently of each other. Each wants all it can get for its own purpose and none takes account of the needs of the others. It is not wise government. It is not good government.

The Gordon bill proposes to bring all budgets to a focus. It will put a supervisory commission over all taxation. This commission will have power to revise and co-ordinate so that no unit shall place a burden for a non-essential upon the public at the sacrifice of an essential that comes within the functioning of another unit. The commission will be appointed by the governor from among the qualified citizens of the county. There is no sacrifice of home rule.

Nor have we patience with the argument that this commission might exercise arbitrary powers to the injury of the public. There has been hardly a reform or regulatory law proposed which has not brought out a cry against implied autocratic powers therein contained. It was raised as regards the present commission charter. Under that charter the mayor may indeed become an autocrat. He may take to himself virtually all the powers of the commission. But he does not do it. He will not do it so long as we have a sane mayor. It is impossible to grant supervisory or regulatory powers of efficient sort without empowering discretion and judgment that may be perverted by the wicked or the insane if they get into office. Government is a trust—you can't have government without trusting someone. You cannot have tax supervision or centralization of budget-making that will be at all worth while unless some of our political units surrender certain functions they now possess. The question is whether we shall go the whole road and centralize responsibility for taxation upon a single body or continue along the present haphazard and costly way. There is no revenge, or politics, or wanton desire to shear any official of power or authority. But it is as plain as day that the public needs protection from the enthusiasm of its servants in office.

We shall never be able to fill offices with men who are capable of performing their own complex administrative duties and grasping as well the intricacies of every other office. It is now proposed to create a commission that will do that which the several officials cannot do—get an understanding of the co-ordinate needs of the several political units and apply that understanding to the benefit of the people.

HIS CABINET.

When Mr. Harding settles down to the task of naming a cabinet for himself, and relieves the volunteer and conscripted army of best minds of the labor of doing it for him, his difficulties will begin to disappear. It is consoling to hear from him that "no selection will be made because of party obligation without consideration for the best service to the country." That would appear to dispose of Harry Daugherty, his political manager.

But it is not so easy to dispose of Mr. Hoover. Certainly his claims to consideration are not partisan; the opposition is nothing but factional and partisan.

The public hears through the authoritative letters of Mark Sullivan that Hiram Johnson will consider the selection of Mr. Hoover a "personal affront." Without asking why the nomination of any eminent and qualified American citizen should be an affront to Johnson, it is sufficient to say that his opposition is a fair measure of his interest in President Harding, the republican party and the country. Besides, it is Harding's cabinet, not Johnson's.

Mr. Wallace, who has the inside track for the agricultural post, is said to be against Hoover. The people at large know very little about Wallace, but they know a great deal about Hoover. If Mr. Harding, in his anxiety for harmony, decides to drop Wallace and take Hoover, there will be very little dissent from the country; but if he drops Hoover, and takes Wallace, there will doubtless be a different story.

Little men have no enemies. Big men have many enemies. If Mr. Harding shall select a cabinet to which nobody objects, he will have a cabinet which nobody approves.

IT MIGHT BE WORSE.

Alexander Graham Bell, father of the telephone, has been visiting Britain and was asked his opinion of the British telephone system by the London Times, which recently exposed its deficiencies without mercy. Being a visitor, he wanted to let John Bull down easy, but that only adds force to what he said, which is:

> I think you do very well, but you do not compare well with the United States, and I think recent history in the United States reveals the cause. We had the best system of telephony in the world before the war in the United States. Then we came into the war, the telephone was taken out of the hands of private companies and run by the government. Immediately the efficiency of the service fell. Now the control has been returned to the companies, and I hope the efficiency will improve. The decrease in efficiency in consequence of government ownership is found elsewhere.

Of course American telephone service might be better, but any persons who want to know how much worse it might be should go to Europe, where public ownership is the rule, whether in Britain, France, Italy, Germany or any other country. There his patience would endure as many trials as did that of Job. As Dr. Bell intimates, we had a taste of that kind of thing when Burleson seized the wires, but he had not time to put them under the perfect blight of bureaucracy before he had to hand them back to their owners.

Apologists of public ownership pretend that their plan had not a fair trial in this country, because it was made under war conditions, but Europe has had it constantly, in peace as well as war, and its execrations are loudest in peace. The beauty of the American plan of private ownership under public regulation is that it combines equal, fair rates and absence of discrimination with good service and the ingenuity, enterprise and efficiency which private enterprise alone can give.

THE PORT OF PORTLAND BILLS.

With regard to the Port of Portland, the legislature is called upon to decide between a group of bills prepared and recommended by the most representative bodies of the port district and bills offered by individual members on behalf of particular interests or to promote different policies. The six bills are the product of the committee of fifteen appointed by Mayor Baker and representing all the people of the district, of the port commission, of the dock commission, and of a committee of twelve from the chamber of commerce representing the commercial and business interests as a whole. In opposition to them are set the bill of Captain Hosford, evidently designed to serve particular interests regardless of any general orderly plan of port development, and the bill promised by Senator Joseph, who proposes at this late day to prepare a general revision of the Port of Portland laws, thus doing again in haste that on which the several bodies mentioned have been at work for a year. It should be plain that the bills favored by the people of the port, as indicated by the action of their representative bodies and by their vote at the election, are entitled to preference over the eleventh-hour products of individual legislators.

The six bills meet all the objections of a variety of critics. They embody the substance of the original bill on which the people voted in November, together with amendments guarding the principle of home rule which its sponsors promised to obtain from the legislature. That bill was threshed over by the chamber of commerce committee, which proposed some changes that were accepted by the committee of fifteen, while it abandoned others, and agreement was reached on the six bills, covering the full purpose of the initiative bill and the home rule pledges.

An attempt is made, either by the Hosford bill or by amendment to the bills of the committee of fifteen, to bind the port commission to a particular scheme of improvement in North Portland harbor at a given time and cost without regard to its place in the general scheme of port and channel maintenance and improvement. No such restriction should be placed on the commission. Its primary duty is concerned with the harbor of Portland on the Willamette river, to which that of North Portland on the Columbia river, important though it may be, is only collateral. It should satisfy the people of North Portland that the commission is pledged to improve their harbor as soon as a feasible plan can be drawn—the engineers are now working on it—and as soon as the necessary funds and plant are provided, which is expected to be in 1922.

Some of those directly interested have expressed satisfaction with this pledge, but others, whose land holdings are entirely outside the city limits, wish to insert in the bills a legislative mandate to the port commission to give their own local scheme preference over the legitimate claims of the port proper, which is the city of Portland with its 258,000 people. The limits as to time and cost which they propose would force the commission to neglect its primary duty—maintenance of the channel—and to adopt a plan of low first cost but entailing exorbitant annual expense for maintenance and of doubtful permanence, when an alternative plan of permanent construction costing far less to maintain can be executed by a year's delay. The proposed restriction would be against the general interest of the port, and the commission's hands should not be tied.

If the legislature will take as its guide the clearly expressed wish of the people of the port, who will pay the cost, it will adopt the measures recommended by all the representative bodies and will refuse to mar them with restrictive amendments.

LIFTING A LOAD FROM THE JUDGES.

Senator Bell has undertaken to perform at Salem a service which will be appreciated by every circuit judge in Oregon. An ancient statute requires him to read to every new grand jury the section defining the law of libel and that other archaic and well-nigh forgotten provision against prize-fighting.

Whether judges always remember the mandate upon them, and do their duty, is problematical. But the senate has passed the bill dispensing with the useless requirement, and the house should do the same; and every well-intentioned judge will be glad if it does.

The territorial legislature of 1855, being made up of godly and peace-loving men, enacted the anti-prize-fighting law and it has been a law ever since. Yet men have fought. It would be interesting to know just what situation moved our revered fathers to declaim against the evil practice and also to instruct the judiciary to call upon every grand jury to give the subject its particular attention.

The libel law was enacted in 1864, when the rancors, feuds and disputes of the Civil war were in full bloom; and it is easy to see that the legislature thought something particularly effective should be done about it. The war was long since over, but no man or newspaper may libel or slander his neighbor with impunity.

CAUSELESS FEAR OF THE SENATE.

A jeremiad is delivered by the New York Times on what it calls the unquestioned main facts that "for several years the senate has been encroaching on both the house and the executive." The house is "overslaughed," its control of money bills "insidiously eaten into and taken away." Senator Penrose's remark that "it doesn't make any difference who is appointed secretary of state" is construed as a frank avowal that the senate "means to be absolute dictator of our foreign policy." The senate is said to have "burked the treaty" with "growing arrogance of conscious power." Its sending of a committee to investigate conditions in Cuba is construed as an assumption that "the senate is all-wise and all-powerful." Senator Capper's condemnation of a dying administration for negotiating to refund the British debt to this country is held to betoken resentment that "the senate has been left out," but:

> Upon the next administration it expects to maintain a martial's grip; hence, everything must be held up until the senate comes into full possession of its own.

Senator McCormick's discussion of diplomatic appointments is termed "a tacit trenching upon his (Harding's) power" and "an unconscious revelation of the senate's resolve to translate the 'advice and consent' of the constitution into 'dictate and permit.'" The Times finds one ray of hope for its gloomy forecast of senatorial arrogance—Mr. Harding's promise that in his relations with senate and house he would not have "a thought of any surrender of co-ordinate constitutional authority," but it solemnly warns the people to "watch anxiously."

The background for all these forebodings of evil is the senate's successful resistance to executive usurpation, Mr. Harding's membership in that body, his popularity there, his conciliatory temper, and the senate's natural exultation at its victory. If the Times had looked into history, it would have found cheer in the fact that the presidents who have had the most violent controversies with the senate, those who have most successfully asserted the executive prerogatives, have been precisely those who had seen service in the senate. It was so with Jackson, Tyler and Johnson. Though Garfield was a member of the house and was only a senator-elect when elected president, it was so with him also. It seems that the senate is tempted to encroachment when a president is a former member and that this presumption provokes the president in question to more determined resistance.

The incidents cited to support the case against the senate were not happily chosen. Having been outvoted in committee and forced to change front on the tariff bill, Mr. Penrose cannot be taken as a leader authorized to speak for the entire senate. As President Wilson denied to the senate information about the Versailles treaty, there is some justification for its seeking information about Cuba at first hand. Since negotiations to fund the British war debt can hardly be completed before March 4, must be approved by the new congress and will affect the policy of the Harding administration, the eternal fitness of things suggests that they be left to Mr. Harding to initiate. Mr. McCormick is as free as any other citizen to suggest diplomatic appointments, and Mr. Harding's freedom to follow his suggestions is limited only by the degree of support that they find among the other senators and by the expediency of making appointments that would be confirmed. There is no evidence that the senate is more inclined to follow the lead of Mr. McCormick than it was to follow that of Mr. Penrose.

In foretelling the unrestrained reign of senatorial arrogance, the Times overlooks the one deciding factor—public opinion. This power has been successfully exerted time and again to bring within bounds any branch of the government that has attempted to invade the domain of the others. It has a particularly keen scent for any attempt to disturb the balance among the three branches, and it has not failed to rebuke and punish any one of them which assumed supremacy over the other two or which displayed indifference to the public interest. When the anthracite coal strike of 1902 threatened to deprive the Atlantic coast of fuel in midwinter, public opinion supported President Roosevelt and forced the senate to take from its pigeonhole and pass a bill repealing duties on coal. When the senate has balked at following the recommendations of a president who clearly voiced the popular will, it has frequently brought "these high-prancing senators to heel," to use the Times' expression. It has just given striking evidence of its readiness to rebuke a president who strives to impose his autocratic will on the senate. This is the more remarkable because it proves that the people were willing for a time to forego peace and a league rather than sanction one-man power, and because the plurality of almost two to one leaves no doubt of their purpose.

One cause, probably the chief cause, of the stability of our government through a century and a third, during which the institutions of other nations have undergone profound and violent changes, is the unerring instinct with which the people have struck down men whose ambition led them to grasp more power than the constitution gave. The people have often erred in supporting policies of legislation and administration, but they have not failed, as soon as an election gave them the opportunity, to punish men who exceeded their functions. The balance is so nicely adjusted by the constitution that some such corrective as the operation of the public will, adapting itself to circumstances, seems necessary to its preservation. Necessity demands a leader, and the people look to the president to fill that office, but no sooner does he attempt to drive instead of lead than they turn upon him.

Mr. Harding's experience in the senate is no warrant for the conclusion that he will let the senate dominate him, but is a warrant that he will not attempt to dominate the senate. His studied utterances are a plain index to his purpose. His regard for the prerogatives of the president will lead him to preserve them jealously, but his experience as a senator will cause him to show equal regard for those of the senate and will find a way for him to work smoothly with it. If he should belie this forecast, the people will administer a rebuke at the first opportunity and will restore the balance. The constitution is in the keeping of the people, and through all the gales and gusts of public sentiment, they have proved themselves safe guardians.

Now Pussyfoot Johnson comes to the front with the comment that the United States never will be dry because "it's impossible to legislate the ten commandments into people." To which of the ten commandments does the gentleman refer?

The early smelt run is on in the Cowlitz and the finest little pan fish out of the water have appeared on the bills of fare. Nobody ever died from eating too many, though some feel distressed, meaning the wife who prepares them.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle declares fairies really exist, and produces photographs of 'em to prove it. Luckily for the authenticity of the photographs, he had previously announced the permanent retirement of Sherlock Holmes.

The Philippine legislature has killed the bill requiring natives to wear pants, and that is well. Next thing somebody might try to unload finger bowls and other crockery on the white man's burden.

The town of Fairfax, Wash., is to pack up and move three miles to a new location. This is reversing the Seattle method, which would leave the town where it is but extend the city limits three miles.

A duty of 12 cents a dozen on imported eggs is urged by the Pacific Co-operative Poultry Producers. That makes two cents each, as most of the imported variety already have a scent an egg.

A Portland woman sojourning in Pasadena writes back to tell of a fourth of a cord of wood that cost an even nine dollars during the cold spell a bit ago. "There's no place like home."

Dr. Calvin White is disposed to scoff at the goat gland business. A medical man of renown, he ought to know; but there may be goats and goats, as there are men and men.

Charles Nungesser, the French "ace," has decided to give up automobile driving as too dangerous. It probably is if he tries to drive his car as he would pilot an airplane.

We presume that equipment for United States navy aviators hereafter sent on long balloon trips will include boxing gloves.

Some of Lloyd George's people at home object to his golf on Sunday, forgetting he has outgrown them into a Britisher.

A. H. Lea will manage the next state fair and the fair board and the state generally are to be congratulated.

The members may overlook a boxing affair tonight, but not next Wednesday. Early adjournment is in order.

School dances in Tacoma seem to shock the superintendent. He must be old-fashioned.

There is not much talk of saving daylight this year. Saving dollars is more to the point.

Harding is off on his first good time in years and the last he may have for four.

The fact of it is that rents will not come down until buildings go up.

"Shadow?" Oh, yes; he's a memory.

BY-PRODUCTS OF THE PRESS

How Pat Childers Failed to Get Full Value for Apple Wood.

Pat Childers of the Mary Ann hauled down 10 cords of apple wood, cut into 20-inch lengths, for Dr. Dix and dumped it on the wharf, reports the Coos Bay Times. Pat did not know he was handling anything of value.

Neither did Dr. Dix, as he sold it to Bert Cohan of the Marshfield Fuel & Supply company, who resold it to a woman for firewood.

While all this was going on, along came John L. Koontz, who, when he finds out what is being done, says: "What a shame! No wonder the people are broke. Why, that apple wood makes the finest handles in the world and the best smoking pipes in any country."

He immediately went over to the Myrtle Wood factory of Pomeroy & Duncan and told them all about it. They want the wood to make handles and pipes.

Now they are after the wood. Dr. Dix has sold it for firewood; so did Bert Cohan, and now the woman who is going to use it for stove wood is being reasoned with to let Pomeroy & Duncan's factory have it, as it would be awful waste to burn up for firewood what would make several dollars of manufactured products.

Koontz says the country would be more prosperous if the people having under their control the raw products would find a market for them and keep things going, to their own and the country's profit.

* * *

Searchlights and a bulletproof steel tower are being erected at Lexington, Ky., to guard the Old Pepper distillery, on the turnpike between Lexington and Frankfort, from the thirsty raiders who descended recently on the plant, killed a United States revenue agent and stole several barrels of whisky, says a dispatch to the New York Herald.

The tower already has been erected on the top of the distillery, and workmen are now installing the searchlight inside it. Guards will work in two-hour shifts and from sundown to sunup the searchlight will be kept constantly playing on the grounds and the roads near the distillery. Besides these precautions a special electrical alarm system is being installed and huge signs are posted everywhere warning everybody to keep off the grounds.

The Old Pepper distillery now holds several hundred thousands of dollars' worth of aged Bourbon liquor, and virtually everybody in Kentucky wants some of it. Many have tried to get it, but nobody was successful except the raiders of a few weeks ago.

* * *

"Ready! Aim! Fire!"

A dozen or so Christmas air guns spat out a stinging hail of lead in the form of B-B bullets.

There followed a series of punctured phrases from Amos Meyer of Alameda. A dozen or so pirates, headed by Captain Kidd, lowered their weapons, looked at one another and fled, Amos in pursuit.

Meyer, as is his custom, was catching whiffs of the salt air near the Alameda beach. He was sitting on the lower wall of the breakwater facing the sea, while a second wall reared itself just high enough to cover all of Meyer's body with the exception of that part on which rested his hat. At a distance the hat looked precisely as though it were resting on the top of the wall.

The rest of the story is simple: A dozen or so boys, to whom Santa Claus had been extremely kind in the presentation of an air gun to each of them, had gone out to try their new weapons. The hat looked inviting, and at the command of their able leader, name unknown, they proved their marksmanship by registering at least a dozen bullseyes. Amos is thoroughly convinced there were more.—Oakland Tribune.

* * *

While we may have pitied ourselves a month or so ago on account of high prices, it is possible to take comfort from the misery of others. In a recent issue of a London, England, paper, just arrived in the mail, they publish a summary of their food prices. Beef that cost 24 cents a pound before the war now sells for 60 cents, an increase of 150 per cent. Butter cost 24 cents a pound in July, 1914, and now brings 80 cents, or 233 per cent increase. Bacon now worth 72 cents a pound formerly sold for two-thirds less, or 24 cents. Sugar that brought 6 cents is now worth 26 cents, 333 per cent gain. Eggs sold for 36 cents before the war and now bring $1.44 a dozen, 300 per cent increase. Other foods are listed in proportion.

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In these days of the high price of fuel it proved a distinct shock to Joseph W. Buckingham, a coffee dealer, says the Tacoma News-Tribune, when on entering the basement of his house he could see nothing of his coal pile. He dispelled the darkness with a match and gazed into a great yawning hole fully 15 feet deep, at the bottom of which lay his winter's fuel supply, badly mixed with dirt, and a gas range. In the gloom he had nearly stepped into the chasm himself.

It was apparent that many years ago a fill had been made with a bog bulkhead at one side of the ground upon which the house had been built later. The bulkhead had rotted away in part and the winter's rains, sluicing beneath, coupled with the weight of the coal pile, had caused the cave-in.

* * *

The newly married man was made aware over the phone of the arrival of his wife's parents. Hastily he scrambled to the store and bought some things for lunch. When he arrived home he found not only his parents-in-law, but with them 13 dozen fresh eggs, three chickens, three bushels of potatoes and a chocolate cake—b-u-t this happened 12 years ago, gentle reader.—Columbus Dispatch.

* * *

No matter how antiquated the old craft is, if she gets out on the Willamette these days and travels down stream she makes a good appearance, for the current is running strong. The winter freshet this year has not been very productive in flotsam and the city breed of beach comber has not made many valuable hauls. However speedy the boats may seem when going down stream, it is not so fine a sight to see them laboring as they ascend, for no matter how well they may be engined, it is a snail's pace at best against the drift.

Those Who Come and Go.

A heartfelt tribute to the work of the Americans in Serbia was paid yesterday by Miss Annie Christitch of Belgrade, Serbia, who is in America for the first time. During all the years of the war she was in Belgrade when it was overrun by the hostile armies of Germany, Austria and Bulgaria. "What the Americans have done for Serbia has been not only a great gift in relief and material help, but a more lasting gift in the lesson of the spirit of generosity and self-denial which the Americans exhibited," she said on her arrival at the Benson. "Our great ambition is to emulate America in a small way and to learn to give help where it is needed. We have before us the example of the American men and women who fought the plague in our country and died there, and of the men and women who are working there now. America has been like a big sister to us and we have a very real personal affection for this country." Miss Christitch is here in the interests of the Serbian Child Welfare association, which is trying to provide proper care for the 500,000 orphans in Jugo-Slavia. She comes from a long and distinguished line of Serbian patriots. Her grandfather was Nikola Christitch, prime minister, who helped half a century ago to form the kingdom of Serbia.

Judge T. H. Crawford of La Grande passed through Portland yesterday on his way home after a month's visit in California. "I'm glad to get back, although I did have a fine time in California," he said. "I took in the great football game and I think it was the finest game I ever saw. I don't think there was a team in the United States that could have beaten the University of California that day." Judge Crawford went south to visit his son at Los Angeles. The real thing that draws him to California each year is a chance to visit his two grandsons, aged 14 and 11. "Do you know there wasn't a drop of rain in Los Angeles until the morning I left?" he said. "Northern California was looking beautiful. There has been plenty of rain in that section and the hills are green. The orange crop is a fine one this year." He was at the Imperial.

"There is more suffering in the world than any one can imagine," said Miss Clarissa Spencer as she passed through Portland on her way south. Miss Spencer for 16 years has been world secretary of the Young Women's Christian association, with headquarters in London. Her duties in this capacity have taken her all over the world. During the war her life was particularly strenuous. "I have seen girls in the devastated regions of France who had endured almost unbelievable suffering," she said. "In spite of their trials, they were hopeful for the future. I have seen girls in Austria who were poverty stricken. Money is practically worthless there and men, women and children are undernourished. What we need is a world sisterhood, which can wipe out the class hatreds and nation hatreds and unite the women of the world in a programme of service."

L. F. Fenton of International Falls, Minn., is at the Multnomah for a few days. "We are more or less of a company town," said Mr. Fenton yesterday. "The one or two large lumber companies use all the available hotel and rooming-house space to house their men. Several capitalists in our town are interested in making Superior National park of Minnesota a second Yellowstone. They favor taking advantage of the government offer, which is very liberal. The government has offered, for the amount of the taxes only, the ground on which six hotels may be built. The government will also give the timber from the land to be used in building, stand half the expense of the clearing and furnish a government engineer to select the sites.

G. M. Curtis of La Grande passed through Portland yesterday on his way to Salem. Mr. Curtis is state chairman of the legislative board of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers. He is interested in some "safety first" measures which have been introduced into the legislature. Mrs. Curtis will be at the Perkins until her husband returns from the capital city.

One of the largest publishers of popular songs which are hummed by young and old in all parts of this country is Jerome H. Remick of Detroit, Mich. Mr. Remick is at the Portland with his wife. The headquarters of the chain of Remick stores all over the United States are in Detroit and New York.

F. A. Rowe, banker of Wheeler, Or., believes that one term in the legislature is quite enough for any man. "One is enough for me," he said, when he was in Portland this week. "I had a great time during the last session, but I don't believe in getting the 'legislative bug.'"

Mrs. J. G. Megler is an Oregon woman who has demonstrated that a woman is fully capable to run a large business herself. She owns a cannery at Brookfield, Wash., and is the manager of the concern. She is here for a few days at the Portland.

R. F. McKesson, wholesale dealer of San Francisco, was at the Oregon yesterday, going over the Portland field. He is the man who patented one of the methods for making a Morris chair into a reclining couch, all just by pressing the button.

David C. Whitney and J. J. McLoughlin of the Whitney Lumber company, Detroit, Mich., are in Portland looking after their business interests here. The Whitney Lumber company operates a sawmill at Garibaldi, Or.

J. Karcher Jr., traffic manager for the North Atlantic & Western Steamship company, arrived in Portland yesterday from Boston. He will inspect the terminals and the freight field and visit local representatives.

M. F. Hardesty, one of Seaside's strongest boosters, is at the Imperial for a few days. Mr. Hardesty is one of Seaside's councilmen, and was one of the chief instigators for the concrete pier.

R. B. Magruder of Clatskanie is in Portland for a few days. He is one of the prime movers of the drainage system, by which the delta lands of that country are being reclaimed for garden purposes.

Thomas R. Sheridan of Coos Bay stopped in Portland yesterday on his way home after a business trip to Canada. He has been away from Oregon eight months and says that he is glad to be back again.

Rattlesnake Is Viviparous.

MONTESANO, Wash., Jan. 19.—(To the Editor.)—I am sitting in the presence of a smooth guy who never told a lie and got caught. I desire the assistance of The Oregonian in nailing him to the cross.

This person asserts that he has plowed up rattlesnake eggs by the thousand. John Burroughs asserts that rattlesnakes are born alive. Can it be possible that we have John on the hip? C. D. LLEWELYN.

Standard authorities are agreed that the rattlesnake brings forth its young alive.

MACHINERY ALREADY AVAILABLE

No Need to Create New Commission to Investigate Water Power.

CARLTON, Or., Jan. 19.—(To Oregonian Editor.)—I want to thank The Oregonian on behalf of the state bureau of mines commission for the excellent editorial, indorsing and commending the work accomplished during the past years by the bureau.

A bill has been introduced in the legislature by Senator Joseph, which provides for the appointment of a new commission to investigate the water power possibilities of the state, and particularly the Columbia river gorge.

The Bend commercial club has publicly announced that it is sponsor for a bill which it is proposed will be introduced, creating another new commission for the purpose of making a study of the waters available for power and irrigation in central Oregon. These bills will necessarily carry appropriations to cover expenses of these two commissions. The organization and expenses of these two commissions, etc., in addition to large fees that will have to be paid for expert engineers, geologists, etc., will require large appropriations. If the above commissions are appointed, there will be a duplication of organization expenses, in addition to the cost of field work.

The determination of water flows, drainage areas and dam sites is primarily a question of geological survey of earth and rock structure, and only secondarily a question of civil engineering.

In the bureau of mines the state already has a well organized and functioning commission for scientific research, with a staff of trained experts regularly employed and engaged in work of the exact nature that will be required for the purposes contemplated by the two bills. This bureau has its established offices, clerks, records and equipment. It would seem that economy, efficiency and dispatch in the undertaking of the work of water power investigations would be promoted by turning the proposed work over to the bureau of mines commission. The normal appropriation made for carrying on the bureau would have to be increased to cover the expense of the additional work but a large saving would be made over the expense of creating two new commissions.

The bureau of mines already has a large amount of data in its record bearing on the subject, which each of the new commissions would have to acquire by original research and at great cost. These data have been collected in connection with the general geologic surveys which the commission has been making for many years, but also directly in connection with similar service which the commission has rendered to the state in connection with the investigation of irrigation, drainage and power projects.

Speaking as chairman of the bureau of mines commission, I think I correctly represent the opinion of the entire board when I say that this commission being composed of non-salaried men, who are already devoting a large part of their time to the commission work, are not looking for any additional responsibilities, but nevertheless, looking at it from the standpoint of the state, it would seem that the machinery already in working order and operating, and already paid for by the state should be utilized for the new projects, rather than undertake the assembling of a new organization for that purpose.

W. B. DENNIS.

NORBLAD'S BILL IS ATTACKED

Correspondent Charges Senator Is Prejudicial Against Austrians.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON, Eugene, Jan. 19.—(To the Editor.)—Comes The Oregonian with a three-quarters of a column story concerning Senator Norblad's measure to knock out purse seining of the mouth of the Columbia river under the guise of salmon protection.

Senator Norblad's bill is not caused by an inspiration to protect the industry, but by prejudice. Reading the article over, one can easily detect the prejudice against purse seiners, not so much because they are supposed to be the destroyers of immature salmon, but because only five out of 186 gears obtained their licenses from Oregon; because the purse seiners do not spend their money in Astoria (where cabbage sells for 12 cents a pound, while Portland people get it at 3 or 4 cents); because the purse seines are manned by "aliens"—no, not Swedes, but by Austrians.

If Senator Norblad really wants to protect the salmon industry why does he not include the trollers—more than 2500 outfits—who catch and destroy thousands and thousands of immature salmon each year? Probably there are too many Swedes engaged in trolling.

In the first place there never were 186 purse seines operating along the coast of Oregon at any time. The number of purse seines operating from the Columbia was scarcely more than 100, and of this number more than two-thirds operated along the Washington coast, reaching as far north as Willapa harbor. How could they get their licenses from Oregon, when, in order to do so, one must be a resident of the state? Why should they get Oregon licenses when their Washington license was already serving the purpose?

Another fact is that the purse seines are not manned by aliens, but by naturalized citizens and by those who have declared their intentions to become such. At the same time more than 2500 troller boats carrying from one to three men each, mostly who are not citizens and who have no licenses, for the most part, go unmolested by Mr. Norblad's bill, despite the fact that government officials from the fisheries bureau have found that they destroy hundreds of tons each year.

ANDREW J. NATERLIN.

THE WINTER WOODS.

O the woods, the woods in winter
Have been written of and talked of;
But the woods far to the westward
Have a strange enthralling beauty.
Woods of sagebrush, prickly greasewood,
Rabbit brush and withered bunchgrass,
Pungent sagebrush, gray in winter.
Coyotes skulk among the shadows
Howling through the crisp, still, clear nights;
Rattlesnakes sleep 'neath the white ground,
Swift jackrabbits leap above it.
When the snow bows down the sagebrush
It is like some seer old monarchs,
Bowed with care, by friends forsaken;
Heavy white hair, gray old faces
Bending low o'er the coyote tracks
Like an emp'ror o'er his treasures.
When the king, the northwind's howling
It stands brittle, crisp defiant.
Strange woods these, but all we have here
In this land of arid spaces,
Western woods we know and love.

—MARGARET HUMPHREY.

Former Soldiers Learn Trades.

London Star.

Many former soldiers of the British army, unable to follow their pre-war vocations, are working in the royal gardens at Windsor castle, in England. They are learning to become market, private and jobbing gardeners. Others are taking up training as grooms, clerks, jockeys and pastry cooks.

More Truth Than Poetry.

By James J. Montague.

An Open Winter.

Throughout my youth, I often used to wonder
What made the feathered choristers appear
Before the snows were gone, and how in thunder
The little rascals knew that Spring was near.
The flowers—not the blossoms of the florist—
Though locked in Winter's grip was all the land,
Would thrust their little heads up in the forest
With prescience that I could not understand.

In vain I asked my elders for the reason;
They either had to say they didn't know
Or lamely told me that the springtide season,
Through some queer magic made the flowers grow.
I wondered if some kindly little fairy,
For fear the flowers too long in bed should stay,
Sent out the birds a week ahead to carry
The message that the Spring was on the way.

But yesterday, with Winter breezes stinging
My cheek—and long before the Spring is due—
I heard a little hoarse-voiced robin singing,
And pausing now and then to cry "Kerchoo!"
And crocus shoots, a mocking sun invited
To spring up prematurely from their bed,
Are laying on the meadow, brown and blighted—
And also, I may mention—very dead.

A little sun—a little warmth—had tricked 'em;
Alas, they knew no more than human folks.
As easily as I do they fell victim
To one of Nature's rather clumsy jokes.
They both were hoodwinked by a freakish season;
They have no more prophetic gift than men,
And no more intellect—and that's the reason
I'll never trust a bird or flower again.

* * *

A Year For Publicity.

An actor has refused to talk for the newspapers, knowing doubtless that in that way he could get more notoriety than in any other.

* * *

A New Point of View.

When we learn from science that the world is only a tiny speck compared with the Betelguese the former kaiser's ambition doesn't seem so lofty after all—that is, if he really confined it to owning the earth.

* * *

Political Strategy.

Evidently Tammany Hall is playing for the crook vote in New York City, feeling sure that in that way it will have a big majority.

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Love's Habiliments.

By Grace E. Hall.

One day with happiness unspoken,
I called the mystic weavers in
And gave to them a single token,
A magic garment to begin:
A single thread from Fancy's spool,
With trembling fingers lightly tossed,
Bidding them weave by Fancy's rule—
Nor count the cost.

They wove most faithfully by night,
With deft imagination's aid,
When moonbeams spread translucent light
Upon the silent hill and glade;
Oft from the realm of sweeter thought
There came suggestion quite approved,
And swiftly then the weaver's wrought
As fancy moved.

It was a mystic, magic thing—
The robe they made for me to wear,
For Fancy spread her lovely wing
And brought the threads from everywhere;
And when you came with tender eyes
To view the weavers' work of old,
Love was arrayed—O glad surprise!—
In cloth of gold!

In Other Days.

Fifty Years Ago.

From The Oregonian of January 21, 1871.

New York.—Information has been received here that arms and ammunition were recently landed on the Cuban coast by the ship Hornet. The cargo was landed at night.

The wife of Rev. J. W. R. Sellwood died last week at Milwaukie, Or.

The excavation for the basement of the new penitentiary to be built at Salem is almost finished.

Captain William C. Walker will soon arrive in Portland from San Francisco to take charge of construction of the Northern Pacific railroad.

Twenty-five Years Ago.

From The Oregonian of January 21, 1896.

Washington. — The United States Venezuela commission today invited governments of Great Britain and Venezuela to submit to it all evidence in their possession, the evidence not to be deemed an abandonment of the rights of either nation.

The special light committee appointed to lessen the bill of the electric light committee by decreasing the number of city lights, will have a meeting soon.

Rival mission workers of the north end last night entered into a bitter personal quarrel, both sides claiming that the other interfered with the preaching.

Lotteries Are Illegal.

KENT, Or., Jan. 19.—(To the Editor.)—Would it be against the law to put a number in a sealed envelope and sell it? My chum and I want to sell a comfort by selling these numbers at so much a chance. We are trying to get enough money to go to summer school at Corvallis in our club work. G. D.

Section 2116 of the Oregon laws provides that "any person who shall promote or set up any lottery for money or other valuable thing, or shall dispose of any property of value, real or personal, by way or by means of a l