

DESERTION OF SEAMEN.

For the Oregon Spectator.

MR. EDITOR:—In the number of the Spectator, dated the 6th of August, you have called the attention of your readers to the subject of deserting seamen. In your remarks upon this matter, you have suggested the propriety of passing a law "preventing deserters from holding land claims or voting at elections, and considering them in every sense outlaws." I agree with you, Mr. Editor, that this subject is one of great importance to the people of Oregon, and one vitally affecting their trade and business generally; but while I agree with you as to the importance of some efficient law to prevent seamen from deserting their vessels, I cannot agree that the measures you recommend should become the law of Oregon. A short examination will show that such measures cannot be passed by our legislature, while our present Organic Law exists. That fundamental law gives the right of citizenship to "every free male descendant of a white man who has resided in the territory six months." The law is also a part of the Organic Law, and that cannot be altered by our legislature so as to exclude any person by that law entitled to hold a claim. The only right or power the legislature has to deprive a citizen of his citizenship, is in case of crime, and it is only for the commission of great crimes that a punishment so severe could be inflicted; for our Organic Law declares that "no cruel or unusual punishments shall be inflicted." Besides, it would seem that such a punishment for the mere violation of a civil contract, in this humane and enlightened age, would be too severe, and would defeat itself, by enlisting public sympathy in behalf of the sufferer. If I am not mistaken, there is a statute of Oregon, providing for the prompt arrest of all deserting seamen; who, upon examination, if found to be deserters, are to be promptly delivered to the master of the vessel. I do not remember all the provisions of the act, and as I cannot at this time refer to it, I must only state its substance. I believe that its provisions are as severe and prompt as those of any civilized state in Europe or America. But if the law can be made more efficient by amendment, I am well satisfied that the next legislature will be prompt in its action in regard to this matter. I, for one, am glad that you have called public attention to this subject, and agree with you, that something ought to be done. It occurs to me, that the first thing to be done, is to inform the community of the real nature of the case, that public opinion may be properly directed. Our people are generally from the western states, far from the sea-board, and are not aware of the great importance of seamen doing their duty; but they only need to be properly enlightened, to apply the proper remedy. I do not feel myself very capable of doing justice to this subject; but I will make a few suggestions, which I hope will be of use. The importance of commerce is so evident, that no one can be ignorant of it. The contract between the master of a vessel and a seaman is only a civil contract; but its violation on the part of the seaman, is of very grave importance, much more so, than the violation of ordinary civil contracts; and the reason is obvious, upon a little reflection. The art of seamanship, is one of great difficulty, not to be acquired but by long practice; consequently, new hands cannot be employed upon any occasion. If the seamen desert a vessel in a country like this, with a few inhabitants, it may be impossible for the vessel to employ others well qualified, and the consequences may be ruinous. Long experience has taught the mercantile community to insure their goods. This is generally done too, by ship owners. The contract of insurance always requires the ship to be well manned with good and skillful seamen; and the ship is bound to proceed on her voyage without delay, unless that delay is occasioned by some unavoidable act; such as contrary winds, and other like acts of God. If the ship should not have a sufficient number of good seamen, on board, in proportion to her size, and any accident or delay should happen, the merchant, as well as the ship owner, would lose his insurance; and the chief owner, in such case, would be liable for the whole cargo, for the law makes it his duty to keep his vessel well manned. The vessel must first be sea-worthy; well manned, and well managed, before the insurance office

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can be made responsible for any loss that may happen. The desertion of one seaman might therefore, occasion the loss of a vessel and cargo, worth many thousands of dollars. And even in case of no actual loss to any very great amount, a vessel may be detained for months in consequence of the desertion of seamen. In all countries, where much commerce is carried on, the violation of his engagement by a seaman, is considered an act highly immoral and unjustifiable; and it is still worse, where the desertion takes place far from home, where the vessel has no power or opportunity to employ other good hands. I do hope and trust that our people will do all in their power to arrest the evil. I am satisfied they will. I am convinced that the great mass of our people are honest and intelligent, and we all know that it is our highest interest, that ships may visit our parts with safety. P.

U. S. CONGRESS.

Washington, Friday, Jan. 16.

House of Representatives.—The House then resolved itself into committee of the whole on the state of the Union, Mr. Tibbatts in the chair, and resumed the consideration of the joint resolution heretofore reported by Mr. Charles J. Ingersoll, from the committee on Foreign Affairs, providing for the twelve months' notice to Great Britain of the termination of the convention between that government and the United States, respecting the Oregon territory; and of the amendments thereto pending.

Mr. Rockwell, of Connecticut, being entitled to the floor, rose and made a speech against war and war measures. He read a memorial from the people of his state, stating the amount of business they have concerned in the commerce of the country, and the risk they would thus run in case of war. Yet if war was to come, no matter what their risk or losses, they would be found on the side of the country. He offered an amendment, to defer notice till Congress adjourns. The amendment was declared not to be now in order.

Mr. Pollock, of Pennsylvania, next took the floor, in favor of the notice, and for claiming all Oregon. He maintains that this is no party, but an American question.

Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 20.

In Senate.—Mr. Sturgeon, of Pa. presented a memorial from citizens of Pennsylvania, against any compromise of the Oregon line—claiming the whole territory up to 54 degrees 40 minutes.

Washington, Thursday, Jan. 22.

In Senate.—Mr. Allen called attention to statements attributed to him, in the report of the Union of last night, in Mr. Calhoun's remarks, in which Mr. C. is reported to have said—

"I was happy to hear from the chairman of the committee that a 'masterly inactivity' would not lead to war, but that the course he (Mr. Allen) recommended would lead to war."

Mr. Allen denied that he (Mr. A.) had admitted that the notice would lead to war. He did not believe it would.

Mr. Calhoun explained what he said yesterday, and was happy to hear Mr. A. say now that he did not believe the notice, if given would lead to war.

House of Representatives.—The House had up this morning a resolution to distribute Fremont's report, which caused a short debate, and much ill feeling was manifested by some of the members.

Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 27.

In Senate.—Mr. Webster's resolution calling on the President for all information relative to the Oregon negotiation, was laid over until Thursday. Mr. Benton, speaking on the bill to construct sixteen war steamers, believed there was no necessity for apprehensions of war, and moved to postpone the

bill until the 1st of May. Mr. Dickinson of New York, believed war was unavoidable. Mr. Hannegan and Mr. Fairfield followed.

House of Representatives.—A bill for the relief of the heirs of Robert Fulton, and one to continue naval pensions, were read twice. A debate then followed on the Oregon notice.

Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 28.

House of Representatives.—Mr. C. J. Ingersoll made a proposition to end the Oregon debate on Thursday of next week, which was lost.

The Oregon question was next taken up. Mr. Owen spoke his hour in pointing out our claim to the territory, and in favor of giving the twelve months' notice.

Mr. Thurman followed, and stated the claims of each country. He remarked that the treaty provided for the notice. The question now is, shall said notice be given by direction of Congress. He defined elaborately the three great powers of government, and goes decidedly for giving the notice.

P. S.—The Senate adjourned for the day, after speeches from Messrs. Fairfield, Bagby, Miller, Cass, Speight, Hannegan, &c., on the bill to build steamers. The House also consumed the day in debate on Oregon. Messrs. Owen, Thurman, and Thompson, all supported our claim to the territory, and advocated the giving of the notice.

Washington, Wednesday, Jan. 29.

In Senate.—Mr. Webster's resolution calling on the President for late correspondence on the Oregon question, was adopted.

House of Representatives.—Mr. Ingersoll's resolution to stop further debate on the Oregon question on Thursday, was laid on the table by a vote of 84 yeas and 52 noes.

Mr. Holmes spoke against the giving of the notice and against war.

Mr. H. Erving spoke in a very earnest manner against the notice being given and against war.

In Senate.—The Senate adjourned for the day, without taking the question on "the bill to appropriate fourteen millions of dollars for a steam Navy."

Washington, Monday, Feb. 2.

House of Representatives.—Mr. Dargin, of Ala., offered a resolution to settle the Oregon question by the 49th deg. of parallel, and giving Vancouver's Island to Great Britain.

Mr. Tibbatts, of Kentucky, submitted a proposition on the same subject, that the President give notice forthwith of the abrogation of the joint occupancy, and to accompany the notice with the expression of an earnest desire to continue the peaceful relation between the two countries.

Mr. Brown, of Va., and Mr. Pettit, of Ia., offered propositions on the same subject.

The several propositions were referred to the committee of the whole, which has the subject under consideration.

BRITISH VIEWS.

From the London Times, Jan. 2.

Oregon, should the American population ever attain a substantial preponderance, would not long remain a British colony; but occupancy, though an irresistible power, is not a right, and depends on numbers, not arms.

The terms of the message imply, then, the alternative of war, or conclusive negotiation. War is too monstrous to be thought of for a moment, except after every effort at a compromise has been exhausted. Britain and America must be too sensible of their mutual benefits, mutual dependence, and mutual respect, to peril the substantial blessings they now enjoy, and are daily multiplying in the relations of peace, for the bloody and precarious glories of war.

'Ah! John, my uncle has been in New York, and your's hasn't. 'Well, what of that? My uncle has been in prison and your's hasn't.'

From the New York Sun, Jan. 8.
Rail-Road to Oregon.

New Project.—Members of Congress are debating the Oregon question, and rejecting the surest and best mode of settling the title to that territory. A railroad ought and must be built to the South Pass, and the sooner it is commenced the better for the country and its interests. A correspondent suggests that the government take the job itself. Thousands of mechanics and laborers would go on with the different branches of the work, under the protection of the government, and they could be paid in land, and thus there would be a continual settlement along the whole line of the road sufficient to protect it, and instead of making one man independent ten times over, thousands would be placed beyond want and made happy. Five hundred thousand people emigrate from the east and north, to the west or south, every year, and our territories are now ready to become states, with the single exception of Oregon. It is therefore the policy and duty of the government to guide this emigration in the most advantageous direction, and no time should be lost in pushing on a work upon which we hope to carry to our Atlantic cities, the valuable productions of the Asiatic world.

From the New York Sun, Jan. 24.

Another Project.—Preliminary negotiations are on foot for the purpose of constructing a great central line of railway to connect the cities of Halifax and Quebec, in British North America, with the view to its ultimate extension, in the laps of years, to the mouth of the Columbia, in the Oregon territory, and the following specific bonuses or advantages, in addition to the usual general privileges of a chartered or incorporated company are included the heads of a draft, act or charter of incorporation by the respective legislatures of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Canada. The following plan is in imitation of the one proposed by Mr. Whitney for a railroad from the Atlantic states to the same point.

"1st.—A free grant for ever of all the unlocated Crown lands in the several Provinces over which the railway shall pass, together with permission to use such timber and other materials, along the course of the railway as shall be required for the construction of the works.

2d.—A pre-emptive right to the promoters and shareholders to become the purchasers, at each station on the line, of blocks of land of not less in extent than 20,000 acres each, at a minimum price per acre, the purchase money to be paid in ten equal yearly instalments; of which the first shall become payable at the end of six months from the opening of such several portions of the railway as shall be connected with the stations to which the said blocks are attached.

3d.—A pledge from the Provincial Governments that, in the event of the returns on the capital invested in the construction of the works, in the operations of the Company, during the first five years from the opening of the entire line, not realizing to the shareholders £5 per cent. on their money, the said Provincial Governments collectively shall, for five years, make up such deficiency, so as that an annual dividend of £5 per cent., during the period specified, may be secured by all holding stock in the Company."

From the U. S. Journal.

RAIL ROAD TO OREGON.

1st. It will bring two oceans within two weeks of each other.

2d. It will open the interior of our country to settlement, and make two great markets, embracing the world for its products.

3d. It will be the channel of trade between Europe and the East Indies, with all intermediate and neighboring islands, countries, &c., and as such will be a bond of peace between those nations and the U. States.

4th. It will increase the eastern, and create a western commerce for our country almost too vast to be conceived of.

5th. It will enable the United States to defend its shores with greater facility.

6th. It will encourage emigration, and diffuse a hardy race of people over the whole west.

7th. It will ameliorate the condition of the east, and cause emigration from Japan and other eastern powers, who will reach the new world without sailing round it.

8th. It will enable the United States to collect a revenue for the support of govern-