

Morning Astorian

Established 1873.



RATES.

By mail, per year \$6 00
By mail, per month 50
By carriers, per month 60

THE SEMI-WEEKLY ASTORIAN.

By mail, per year, in advance \$1 00

ASTORIAN PUBLISHING COMPANY.

THE ELDER STATESMEN.

"The five wise men of Japan" is the title of an interesting article in the Examiner by Helen A. Gardner...

It may be as well to explain what is meant by the elder statesmen, who must be constantly referred to in all affairs connected with the policy and control of Japan.

There are five of them at the present time. They are the ex-prime ministers who have served Japan with wisdom and loyalty in the past in office.

Upon their retirement from office it is felt that the country has need of their accumulated wisdom, and she retains them as advisers to the emperor; himself a very able man, deeply revered and beloved by his subjects who believe him to be the ablest and most incorruptible ruler on the earth.

It is as if our ex-secretaries of state, war and finance, who had served with marked distinction and ability, irrespective of party could be called at any time as advisers to and with the president in his recommendations to the cabinet and to congress.

The system is designed to hold for the nation its ripest wisdom and enlist in her behalf, to the end of their lives, the loyal advice and help of her strongest and best equipped men.

At the present time they are Marquis Ito, Marquis Yamagata, Count Matsukata, Marquis Oyama and Count Inouye.

So hesitant have the emperor, these elder statesmen and the cabinet been to resort to arms in their contest with Russia that many of the stronger young men have blamed them bitterly and felt that their course would subject Japan to the contempt of the nation, who would get the idea that she was weak, vacillating or afraid.

Out of the situation grew the extraordinary reply, by the newly elected president of the diet, to the emperor at the convening of that body a few weeks ago—the first time that such a thing ever happened in Japan.

Some of the radical men wanted to make sure that the emperor was not misled by the counsel of a too conservative body of advisers so that he did not realize the existing sentiment of the people. They took that method of calling his personal attention to what they believed to be the demands of the country.

As all the world knows the result was the instant dissolution of the diet before all of its members had been even sworn in, some having delayed en route from their homes.

This drastic action of the emperor has undoubtedly enabled the cabinet to conduct its diplomatic work on the lines felt by the emperor and the elder statesmen to be wisest and most hopeful in the interest of a peaceful conclusion of the negotiations; or, if war must be the result, to prove to the world that Japan had done all in her power to avert it.

Meantime one often hears the anxious and sincere question from the younger men, "What does your country, what do the strong foreign countries, really think of Japan's delay? She has waited two years for Russia to keep her solemn pledge. Does not your country think that is weak?"

But then it is not upon that that weighs the great, the terrible responsibility of striking

the blow that may easily involve the world.

A CHECK TO SOCIALISM.

President Mellen, of the New York, New Haven and Hartford apparently agrees with those who a year or so ago were saying that Messrs. Hill and Morgan were the chief missionaries of socialism in this country. He is quoted as saying that if the Northern Securities merger had been upheld and had resulted in a combination of the railroads of the country through the device of a holding company, "government control and ownership would have ensued, and such could not fail to be deplorable, politically and financially."

That the establishment of the merger, legality would have been followed by at least a gradual consolidation of the railroads scarcely admits of a doubt, says the New York Tribune. The tendency for years has been in that direction wherever the law allows; and the lawyers' invention of the holding company to get together indirectly railroads which were directly forbidden to combine was exactly the instrument suited to the consolidation of all railroads in spite of anti-trust laws. It was especially a happy device, since it enabled those who started out in momentary command of a railroad situation to extend their control indefinitely without permanent ownership. A bare majority of a holding company would for all time control two railroads only a bare majority of whose stock was owned by the company. That fraction might still further be reduced by merely owning control of a holding company which in turn owned a majority of the stock of one or more of the original holding companies. It would be necessary to put in money enough to get control of railroad systems, one by one, to add to those already combined, put the control of the property in the hands of a holding company, and then let who would own the greater part of the actual property.

Obviously there was no legal obstacle to such complete dominion of the transportation system of the country by a few men if the Northern Securities Company had been sustained. Obviously also no such absolute mastery of the business of the country by private individuals would have been tolerable. The only outcome would have been national control of the railroads. The private holders who could thus triumph over the law forbidding consolidation would possess a power rivalling that of government itself. No matter how reasonable and conservative the private management might be, the demand for government control would be irresistible. The private capitalists would find that they had simply brought the railroads into a system gigantic enough to point a moral for socialist agitators, and so united as to be convenient for purpose of condemnation.

From this point of view it is clear that not the leaders of Wall street but those who attacked this newest scheme of railroad financing are the real conservatives. The decision of the supreme court is a great practical barrier to the spread of a socialistic movement which would have meant the transformation of our government. Nobody devoted to the traditions of the American constitution can contemplate without dismay the idea of the mastery of the railroads of the whole country being centered in Washington, with their thousands of employes, holding all private enterprise in their grip, made a part of the government machine. Either the railroad employes would themselves be the dominant political power, or they would be the tools of the political managers for the subjugation of the people. Yet such a system would be inevitable, and perhaps desirable, as an alternative to an irresponsible private control of these great highways, with their powers of working good or ill to the whole states. That is what the supreme court has happily saved us from, and conservative finance is beginning to realize it.

The emperor of Corea has sent for an American dentist. Perhaps he wishes to make gas while the Japs and Russians fight over his territory.

During the presidential war next fall the bookmakers will find it difficult to induce any one to put money on the democratic dark horse.

Whenever a Mormon returns home late at night he can give the excuse that he was visiting his other wife.

NO MORE TROUBLE. As All the Bad Negroes Are Dead Quiet Has Been Restored. Dewitt, Ark. March 28.—Two more negroes have been put to death near St. Charles, making 11 negroes in all that have been killed as the result of rioting which began last Monday. All is quiet tonight at St. Charles, as it is believed that most of the objectionable negroes have been slain and no further trouble is looked for.

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