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FACTIONAL SPITWORK.

REPRESENTATIVE BEUT-GEN'S bill to deprive County Judge Webster of his joint duties with the county commissioners in transacting county business, and restricting him to purely probate business, seems to be a petty piece of factional spitwork, and for this reason ought not to meet with favor.

ON DANGEROUS GROUND.

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From The Astorian. There is a mighty juncture in affairs that calls for the most deliberate and far-reaching action by the Republicans, as such. It is the passage of the Chapin bill for the establishment of a railway commission charged with the immense task of wharping the railroads back into the harness of the Oregon from an unbridled commercialism.

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counties where less than five per cent of the teachers are normal graduates. In one of the Willamette counties there is only one such teacher. It is the misfortune of the normals, but not all their fault. There are so many of them, they have been but half supported. In attaining growth and influence, their creation and the manner of it has crippled them.

NEW RAILROAD MAP. A NEW railroad map of the Harriman lines in Oregon is very encouraging and gratifying, and is a sufficient cause for great rejoicing and general celebration all over the state—or would be if the indicated projected roads were sure to be built in the near future. They may be, and if they are everybody in Oregon will be ready to give Mr. Harriman the glad hand on that account, but it cannot be forgotten that railroad presidents, and Mr. Harriman in particular, sometimes change their minds, and do not keep specific promises, let alone making the actual railroads correspond with railroad maps.

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men in favor of political pets who seek soft jobs where there is little to do and plenty to get. Consequently the public, if it could express an opinion, would undoubtedly favor the contract plan, relying on the president and Secretary Taft to make a good contract. Hence there is some disappointment over the deference shown to the threatening outbreak of Chief Engineer Stevens, and the holding up of the Oliver contract. Public criticism on this point is not in order, because the public is not in possession of inside facts, but it is safe to say that there has been a good deal of "backing and filling" and mismanagement, and the contract plan seems to be preferable.

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state already having a railroad commission. Lumber manufacturers and other producers over there have suffered about the same as those of Oregon, and are making similar demands. Oregon and Washington have both treated the railroads very well, but the people's experience the past year was "too much."

A Washington dispatch says that to admit the letters written by Representative Hermann to various parties in evidence "will put the defendant in a deplorable position." Very likely; hence the quite natural effort to keep the letters out of the record. If Mr. Hill should build another transcontinental railroad, wouldn't Mr. Harriman have to do the same, with terminal in the Pacific northwest? But no; we forgot; there is no money for railroad building.

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There is no good reason or excuse for the proposed change. If this action is prompted by Sheriff Stevens, it will be well to remember that he was elected by a very small and for awhile doubtful plurality of votes, which does not justify him in organizing a hostile movement against another county officer. The sheriff ought to be fairly treated, but no measure of revenge or spite ought to be countenanced in the legislature. Judge Webster is doing good work, and the people generally approve of it, and they desire him to be let alone.

WHEN the legislature sets out to tinker with laws made by the people, it treads on dangerous ground. It is the electorate now that is final authority in Oregon, and it knows how to wield its power. Through the initiative it has enacted reform laws that never could have been wrong from the legislature. The importance and utility of the representative bodies at Salem is largely lessened as a result of experience. There is less concern and less interest nowadays in what the assembly does, for there is a way in which good legislation can be secured, without the assistance or intervention of the legislature. It is easy to imagine a time when the people, cognizant of their power of legislation through another channel, might conclude to lessen the number of legislative sessions, say to one in four years. It is equally easy to imagine a condition wherein the sessions would be shortened and the legislators be still further stripped of their importance and prerogatives. In no way can such a day be more hastened than by giving politicians full swing at Salem, and in permitting them to manipulate laws in their own interest, rather than in the interest of the people. A long stride in that direction is just such a travesty on legislation as was proposed with reference to Statement One of the direct primary law, which it was planned to so change that it would be neither more nor less than an effective block to the carrying out of the will of the people in senatorial elections. Of almost identical import was the successful effort to subordinate the interests of the people to partisan considerations in the railroad commission bill. Pursuit of such enterprises will have its sequel in legislative decadence, greater or less, according as wisdom or folly prevails at Salem.

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WHY THEIR CASE IS WEAK.

MAIN indictment, and one that counts heavily against the state normal schools, is the low relative percentage of normal graduates who are actively engaged in teaching. The average in the country at large is but 15 per cent, figures surprisingly low. In Massachusetts and New York, where normal systems are elaborately developed and generously endowed, the percentage is 46 and 25, respectively. In Connecticut it is 36, Indiana 20, Illinois 10, Kansas 10, Iowa 12 1/2, Maine 23, Minnesota 25, Missouri 15, South Carolina 25, Vermont 24, and in Wisconsin with a highly developed system 35. The average is so small that it leaves 85 per cent of the elementary teachers to be trained in other institutions than normals. It raises a question if, after all, the importance of normal training has not been over magnified, else why are not more normal graduates in the work? Were their efficiency markedly superior, would they not be more in demand and accordingly more in evidence in the schools? In Oregon these doubts are heightened by local conditions. The state has per capita four times as many normals as the average in the country at large, and yet has

CONSTRUCTING THE CANAL.

LETTING the contract for digging the Panama canal seems to be a very difficult matter. It is not strange that it is difficult, for it is a big job, but the government seems disposed at times to give up the contract scheme and do the work itself. Chief Engineer Stevens is said to have threatened to resign if the contract were let, and then the Oliver contract was called off, and it was intimated that the contract policy would be abandoned, though this report has not been confirmed. That there will be "jobs" in the job, whichever course is pursued, is to be expected, but it would seem that these would be reduced to the minimum under the contract plan. By this method the government would be "jobbed" perhaps but once, whereas if it attempts to construct the canal directly "jobs" will be numerous, in spite of the utmost efforts of the president to prevent them. Responsible contractors would probably do the work in far less time than the government would, and do it as well. The country in a great undertaking like this does not care about a few millions extra expense, provided the work can be well done and pushed to a speedy completion. It has full faith in the president, but not much in members of congress as a rule. The country would like to see an end made of the jealousy of chief engineers and of some of the interminable balls of red tape, and also of the pull of congress-

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Congressman Wharton has introduced a resolution in which he declares the evidence in the Thaw case to reveal a "depth of moral depravity, degradation and degeneracy unequalled in all the annals of our criminal history." We fear he imagined himself making a campaign speech about the opposite political party. The Thaw case in all its essential features is unhappily a very common one. If the men had been carpenters, and the girl a housemaid, nobody would have given more than a passing notice to the same evidence. An extraordinary monster is said to have been cast by the waves on the beach at Seaside, whose simple people are in doubt as to its identity. As the strange thing is reported to have the head of a turtle, the body of an octopus and the horns of an elk, scientists will have no trouble in recognizing it as a species of Prevarication, which only makes its appearance around hotels in the dull season. This congress will pass no Philippine tariff bill, and it is now reported that the ship subsidy bill will probably pass, which will make one large sin of omission and one of commission for it to answer for, and the responsibility for the latter will rest largely upon the president, who has somehow been curiously induced to advocate the ship subsidy grant. Secretary Hitchcock has probably made some mistakes, and his policy may have done injustice to some honest settlers, but when one thinks what might have happened if Senator Carter, one of Hitchcock's violent accusers, had been in his place, the secretary's misdoing sinks into comparative insignificance. Congressman Crumpacker says the Philippine islands are, like the sword of Damocles, hanging over our heads. That simile should draw renewed interest to his name. The Washington legislature is also likely to pass a demurrage law, that

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