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East Oregonian

THURSDAY, MAY 17, 1900.

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The registration of voters in this county is quite heavy. There are more votes in the county than was estimated. It would appear that the population has been considerably increased in the last two years. Umatilla's population is something like 20,000. The result of the census to be taken next month will be waited for with interest.

Bourke Cochran, of New York, made an address recently at Montgomery, Alabama, wherein he proposed to solve the Southern race problem by repealing the fifteenth amendment to the constitution. It would require the votes of three-fourths of all the states to do that, and these could not be obtained. Therefore, the advice of Mr. Cochran is impractical. As ex-Gov. MacCorkle, of West Virginia, pointed out, the negro population is not only a valuable factor in the industrial progress of the South but is also an element of political strength which in the future the South may find itself interested to utilize. The repeal of the fifteenth amendment would necessarily mean a reduced representation of the South in congress and in the Electoral college. One thing is certain, revolutions do not move backward." Mr. Cochran in his address appears to think they do.

The assessment of Multnomah county for 1899, shows a reduction of $11,210,693 in values over 1898. Money on hand and assessed in 1899 amounted to $1,063,175 while in 1899 it decreased to $527,225. Town lots fell from $20,261,534 to $14,122,008. Improvements from $9,771,497 to $6,557,192. On April 5, 1899, a little more than one month later than this assessment, the statements of the four national banks of Portland showed deposits amounting to over five millions, and it is safe to say that the seven private banks of that city had as much more, or a total of ten millions and yet only one-half million was assessed. In other words, under our present taxation system, taxation is unequal, and almost everybody looks upon it as robbery, and all of those that do, attempt to escape it. In short, the present system of raising revenues for government offers opportunity to the rascal and tempts the honest taxpayer to become one. In fact, it affords a school for scoundrels.

It is asserted by the leaders of the prohibition party that fully 500 votes will be polled in this county for that party's ticket at the election next month. This is undoubtedly an over estimate. There are a great many people who have symptoms of voting the ticket but they never do. They preach prohibition, but they do not vote it. To attempt to control men's appetites by enacting and enforcing a man-made law is almost a waste of effort. Men who cannot govern their appetites should probably not be allowed to participate in the government of others. If the man who abuses the use of alcoholic beverages was disfranchised, on the ground that since he cannot control himself he should not expect to participate in governing others by his right of suffrage, it would likely do more for temperance than even the adoption of prohibition, and at the same time it would leave to men who could control themselves all the rights guaranteed to them under free institutions and self-government.

The trainmen on the Washington and Columbia river railroad should be informed in no uncertain way that the road has no switching rights on Webb street. The switching should be done in the company's yards in the lower end of town, and not upon a street where teams and people are passing at all hours of the day. At times the streets in the vicinity of the mills are blocked for a half hour or more with a train switching, to the risk of people passing with teams and on foot. And even "flying switches' are now and then indulged in, when the streets are filled with children returning from school. The council should inform the railroad company of the careless action of its train crews and, if a stop is not put to the abuse, the guilty ones should be vigorously prosecuted. The trains of the company have a right to go up and down the street, to and from its depot, but the company has no right to leave its trains standing upon the street or to switch its cars on the street, and the management of the road is of such an intelligent kind that it only needs its attention called to the abuse in a proper way for it to afford a remedy.

MOLDING NATIONAL CHARACTER.

To the earnest observer the last three years have developed some significant changes in the character of the people of this republic. Some of these may be considered commendable and in furtherance of a higher national standard, but it cannot be denied that others must be viewed with regret by those who have a clear grasp of the possibilities of character building under the democratic impulses which are supposed to be guiding the destinies of a great and numerous people. Believing that the gratifying changes need no particular encouragement and realizing that grave dangers lurk in the wake of those less open to approval, Albert B. Crowe considers the latter class in a thoughtful article in the current Popular Science Monthly. His position is that a study of science has direct bearing on the molding of both individual and national character. Such study strives to get at facts, to discover the truth, and in this way avoids that hasty jumping at conclusions which is responsible for so much that is undesirable, not to say inimical, to the best interests of the nation. Mr. Crowe intimates one notable and unfortunate change, in his opinion, that this country has ceased to hold its one-time view "that the civilization of a nation is directly proportionate to the amount it expends for education, and adversely proportional to the amount it expends for war." Less than three years ago the president of the National Educational Association proudly exclaimed: "England, six to one for war; Russia, thirty-eight to one for war; America, four to one for education." Mr. Crowe fears we have even now reversed this, making it "four to one for war."

* * *

He is not far wrong when he says that this course of reversing our boasted ratio "has been supported by a great body of the people. Even our Christian ministers have committed 'The White Man's Burden' to memory, and breathe never a whisper of the sixth commandment." And he continues: "If, as has been held by all wise and good men, the victories of peace are more worthy to be sung than those of war; if the ability to avoid quarrels or to settle them without force of arms is nobler than that which achieves military success; if true enlightenment and education make for peace and not for war, then our law of direct and inverse proportion has lately been scandalously dishonored." If we have expended so much for education and at the same time have lowered our ideal of national greatness, something must be wrong with that education. Has our system of education, then, failed to elevate our national character? he asks; and at once adds: "He who would answer this question in the affirmative would be a pessimist indeed. Incalculable 'general good' has come to us, we think, by the agency of our schools." They have done much to prepare those sober and conservative persons who in every crisis have helped hold, or have tried to hold, the public mind from excesses or from passing hasty judgment. It is not "sober second thought" which saves us and steers us away from the half-hidden reefs in our first mad course. On the contrary, "it is the sober first thought which has redeemed us from destruction time after time—the sober first thought of the few who are truly educated, who have looked below the surface of things and I considered the hidden and obscure results, who have weighed the right and wrong and have stood immovable for the right." It should be remembered that "sober second thought" often is powerless to correct evils growing out of drunken first thought.

* * *

Our safety must always lie in the presence of those whose first thoughts are calm and far-seeing, and we must judge our educational system by the number of such men and women it produces. The work of faithful teachers must be directed mainly to this end, "else we have reached a dangerous crisis, and our sacred duty is to stop and take our bearings. If we have manifested certain national traits hitherto scarcely suspected, and now willingly confessed, every motive of patriotism and prudence should impel us to study our case, that we may effectually prescribe for it."

Mr. Crowe at this point disavows any intention of raising the question of the political wisdom or simple justice of the course which the country has taken in its international relations. He does not here challenge any belief as to these matters which has been formed thoughtfully, honestly, manfully. But he does maintain that the last few months have left lessons for thoughtful, honest men to unite in studying a proposition not likely to be argued by any clear-headed, reflecting person in America. The first phenomenon wihch strikes Mr. Crowe in this analysis of the national character is the tremendous display of excited feeling. The clamor of the crowd has been dominant. He has seen the people, on the anniversary of Lincoln's birth, "whose life was a message of liberty," receive with exultation and even merry jests the news that American soldiers had slain hundreds of half-naked Filipinos. He finds that "the ears of the multitude have been closed to all counsels, however wise; their eyes to all consequences, however fatal; their minds to all logic, however clear and simple." To Mr. Crowe it is clear that "the force of blind passion has been in hundreds of thousands of men the dominant force."

* * *

In addition to this display of excitement Mr. Crowe notes that we have developed some wonderful instances of credulity; that there is an evident loss of individuality—of moral and mental independence; that there has been shown a spirit of fickleness, of inconstancy; that in the last few months we have been mercurial almost beyond mercurial Frenchmen; that the principles which for years have been our rules of national conduct have been thrown aside in a day, scoffed at, mocked. "In our bulletin crowds we have all see the spirit of the mob, which meets the newcomer indifferent or doubtful, thrills him with the mysterious influence of the men packed around and against him, and sends him away an irresponsible monomaniac." Now all these things, most undesirable, if true, and Mr. Crowe appears to have closely observed, without passion or bias, clearly warn us of danger. No thoughtful person will deny that it is bad when a nation or a man exults over the misfortune even of enemies or makes a joke of killing; follows passion rather than reason; lets go without careful thought the storing faith and principles of his fathers; or gives no heed to the counsels of men of years, judgment and experience.

* * *

If the American people are doing these things—or even if a considerable number is doing them—it certainly is a time for calm consideration and for careful search after a remedy. And the most effective remedy Mr. Crowe believes to be a more thorough study of science in our schools, which, he maintains, tends to produce those most-needed persons of sober first thought. Scientific study brings the mind directly into contact with fact: it practices the mind in inductive reasoning—the drawing of conclusions from particular facts made known by immediate observation of nature; it defies prejudice, demands a sufficient amount of evidence, laughs at credulity through the appeal to reason of love of truth. These statements are in the nature of axioms. Science requires that a man's mind be his own, that his acts be his own, that he shall defend his property in them, have pride in them and stand by them. Clearly, then, the study of science in a scientific way is one of the most powerful factors in character building, and, as Mr. Crowe concludes, "if in our schools we might insure to all pupils this attitude of mind, this desire for strict veracity, we should have started them well on the way to correct judgments and wise conduct; we should have implanted in their natures the first elements of good citizenship."

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