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UMATILLA COUNTY'S DEBT.

The East Oregonian publishes in this issue a very interesting statement of the financial condition of Umatilla county, which has been furnished through the courtesy of County Judge Hartman. The figures of this statement are quite startling; but tell nothing new to those who have made themselves familiar with affairs at the court house.

For twelve years past the debt of the county has been growing at a very rapid pace. In 1888, the outstanding county scrip was only \$42,241.33, while on December 31, 1st, it was \$196,461.45. The increase in the debt has been gradual since 1888, due largely to the failure to collect the taxes promptly and apply the proceeds to the debt's extinguishment. Thousands and thousands of dollars have been lost by leniency and procrastination in this connection, while expenses and interest have piled up the big score against the county.

Until last July the county had an asset of \$173,298.17 in delinquent taxes, but late investigation has proven that only a small portion of this large amount is collectible, and at the present time the county's delinquent tax asset is put down on the books, as stated by Judge Hartman, at \$47,674.40, the most of which will probably be lost if procrastination is to continue in the collecting of taxes from those who have found it pays to be always delinquent.

The county judge makes the necessary explanation of the figures in the course of the statement, and it should be read and studied by every taxpayer and worker in Umatilla county, on whom the burden of debt falls with unrelenting force. We are told these statements of the financial condition of the county are to be re-issued every sixty days hereafter, so that the progress down or up can be better observed. Just because of neglect and inattention to the duty, county officials at the court house have not furnished these statements for years, although semi-annual statements are provided for by law, and because of it the taxpayer has been kept in the dark, while the debt has grown like a first crop on new ground.

This debt statement, taken in connection with the fact that the total tax rate in Pendleton, the year of 1901, will be forty mills or four per cent, and in the county and outside of Pendleton twenty-five mills or two and one-half per cent, the taxpayer will have food for reflection that will meet his every requirement for sometime to come. But let it be remembered that this condition of affairs is entirely due to the fact that the taxpayers for years have voted into office "good men," who knew who to favor "their friends" that taxes were not collected, while the county credit was liberally expended, with the only result that a mountain of debt was piled up, which is a stone around the neck of every man who works to live in the county. If the taxpayers will only learn to vote for "fit men" instead of "good men," the debt in time may be paid and the burden of taxation become gradually less in the county. However, this is almost too much to hope for.

One fact should be stated before closing this article. Those occupying county office at present are not responsible for the present condition of Umatilla's finances, but if they do not make some headway against the tide of debt during their terms of office they should not ask to be entrusted with the duties of their positions again. It is time that the people of the county required performance during the terms of office instead of con-

tending themselves with promises during the campaigns, as has been the case in the past.

"The boy without the playground is the father of the man without a job," says Mr. Joseph Lee of Boston. This remark has merit in it. The playground is the place where the young hopeful gains his knowledge of his fellows and such knowledge is the chief capital of every man as he goes through life. Without the playground the boy is handicapped as he approaches maturity and enters upon the race of sustaining himself and those depending upon him. The playground education is a very important part of the education that fits a man for life's struggle.

JAMES J. HILL'S GENIUS.

Twenty-eight years ago James J. Hill entered on his extraordinary railway career. It was just after the severe panic of 1873. A little bankrupt road ran out of St. Paul to St. Cloud, a distance of 50 or 60 miles. It had been started by the aid of state bonds, and some Holland capitalists were back of the venture. Mr. Hill believed that these Holland bondholders could be induced to scale down their bonds to the real value of the line, and events proved that he was right. He got the ear of Canadian capitalists, among them the present Sir William Van Horne, and there was the beginning of the St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba railroad, or the great Northern, as it later came to be known.

Mr. Hill's rise in the railroad world could not be termed "meteoric." It was a long, hard struggle. For 28 years he has been plodding away at his life work. But he stands how the conceded chief of the American railway world. He is the master mind over a consolidated system of more than 20,000 miles, bonded and capitalized for about one billion dollars. The figures are startling:

Great Northern (in full) \$411,222,000
 Northern Pacific (in full) \$1,000,000,000
 St. Paul system (in full) \$527,440,000
 Grand total \$1,938,662,000

Capital stock Great Northern \$190,000,000
 Bonds subsidiary companies \$248,949,000
 Capital stock Northern Pacific \$100,000,000
 Bonds \$100,000,000
 Capital stock St. Paul \$25,000,000
 Bonds \$125,000,000

But all this carries the system only from Seattle to Chicago. The Erie railroad, practically owned by the same combination, has 2,271.63 miles of system. Its capital stock is \$171,140,800, its funded debt \$140,418,100.

This double combination carried the transcontinental line to the Atlantic seaboard. The final trump was played when the Reading and Jersey Central deal put the combination in direct possession of the desired New York and Jersey City terminals.

It would be unwise to hold out to the American youth the extravagant suggestion that there is a fair prospect of his repeating the extraordinary achievements of this extraordinary man. Such stupendous fortune falls to one man in millions, and may not be repeated at all to the rising generation. But the true lesson of Mr. Hill's life may fairly be held out to every American boy. It is this: That success, in some degree or other, is the reward of the qualities which Mr. Hill has applied in his life work. He started by doing small things exceedingly well. He has been industrious, energetic, careful, honest. He has used one success a stepping stone to another. And over all we behold the man's marvelous patience.—Spokane-Review.

NOTE AND COMMENT.

There seems to be a pretty fair chance for a speedy revival of that branch of the fruit industry known as "shaking plum trees," which received a temporary setback in the state of Pennsylvania some time ago.

Professor Bonrre of Yale college has been delving into history and says he finds no evidence whatever that Oregon owes its salvation to Dr. Whitman. President Penrose, of Whitman college, who evidently thinks he has sounded the historical depths, says in effect to the Yale professor, "Why, you're another." Doctors still differ, don't they?

A congressman's wife, who is writing some very interesting letters to the Saturday Evening Post, thus give an insight to the seamy side of congressional life: "We've got to settle down whether we want to or not, to the ever baffling and never solved problem and to face all these new questions, which so threateningly rise before us. There are the old personal rivalries, hatreds and jealousies; the old insults and slights from political friends with whom we can never hope to get even, because of the very fact that they are political friends. There is the hurly scurry all the mornings and around the departments, and the hurly scurry back to committee rooms, followed at last by a few hours of almost exhaustion in a senate chair only to have little clouds of visiting cards thrust upon one from outsiders while one is trying all the time to follow the legislative business and at the same time to look over the report of yesterday's speech. Then when the day is over, to be ambushed on the way home by office seekers, to be hunted and haunted till midnight and then to endeavor to finish a report, or to read your home newspaper and find your-

self denounced for your most meritorious acts; and finally when the end of your public career comes, to retire to private life, old, poor as Job's turkey, and with only an old scrap book full of newspaper puff, and a volume of printed speeches on hand and gone issues to show for it all."

Homer Davenport, who is surely an authority on cartooning, says: "Aside from the question of politics and vote-making, there is a style of cartoon that is seldom enough employed over here. That is the cartoon of sentiment. To my mind the greatest cartoon ever drawn was the production by Sir John Tenniel, in Punch, entitled, 'Dropping the Pilot.' It showed poor old Bismarck leaving the ship of state, with the erratic William at the head of the gangway. That was a cartoon that brought tears to your eyes and made you grind your teeth. From the standpoint of effect, the most successful thing I have ever done is the symbolical figure of the trust. The trust figure really does not belong to me. I simply applied it. Except for its small head, it is almost an exact copy of an old statue of Hercules that I found in Venice. I was following some pigeon that roosted in St. Marks. They led me into all sorts of beways until suddenly I came on a little opening where stood a monstrous figure, it was the trust, corkscrew beard and all. The Hercules had a smaller figure, firmly clasped by the ankle in the act of dashing out its brains. I saw the trust as it appeared to me and sketched the figure on the spot."

Among the curious happenings in the recent storm at Galveston the following is told. A man who was detained in the business portion of the city until 10 o'clock hurried homeward to reassure his wife and little ones. Crawling along the ground, dragging himself against the wind by the aid of a picket fence, fording a rushing torrent which, but a few hours before, had been a dusty street, half asleep, half lying on his back, he reached his home to find that a huge palm tree had been thrown across the front door. As he roused around the corner of the building to take advantage of the rear entrance, the gale, picking up a huge cypress wood cistern, inverted it over him and twisting it round, scooped him up in lieu of the water it had spilled. He was released three days later at Corpus Christi, having drifted nearly four hundred miles, and returned to Galveston to find his family safe. The same narrator says: Forty-four years ago there was a fashionable summer resort on an island, L'Isle Desnere or Last Island, out in the Gulf of Mexico, a few miles from New Orleans. It had been for a long time a gathering place for all the beauty and wealth of the Creole parishes. But there came a storm, and Last Island was no more. The summer city, erected by well-to-do citizens of Louisiana, was wiped out, together with its pleasure-seeking population and few survivors to tell the tale of the calamity. All that remains of L'Isle Desnere today is a sandbank over which the waves ripple at high tide. —M.A.C.

Tullahoma, Jan. 18, 1901.

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