

Heppner Gazette



HEPPNER, MORROW COUNTY, OREGON, FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 1894.

TWELFTH YEAR

SEMI-WEEKLY GAZETTE.

PUBLISHED Tuesdays and Fridays THE PATTERSON PUBLISHING COMPANY.

Advertising Rates Made Known on Application.

The "Gazette" of Long Creek, Grant County, Oregon, is published by the same company every Friday morning.

THIS PAPER is kept on file at E. C. Duke's Advertising Agency, 41 and 43 Merchants Exchange, San Francisco, California.

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ANSWER OF THE AMERICAN BOOK CO. TO ITS DEFAMERS.

A STATEMENT OF FACTS BY THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY TO THE PEOPLE OF OREGON. A public attack upon the methods, motives, and business interests of the American Book Company, by a small subcommittee of the "Committee of One Hundred," of Portland, Oregon, has recently been published in the "Oregonian," a newspaper of that city.

The "report" embodying this attack is made up of a mass of misinformation, unsupported charges, baseless rumors, and unjustifiable insinuations. Upon this ex-parte showing, with no solid basis of fact or proof whatever, upon mere assertions and insinuations, our character and our business are assailed. Under such circumstances it is but just to ourselves, and to our many friends and patrons in Oregon and on the Pacific Coast, to make a full and explicit answer to these slanderous misrepresentations.

- 1. That our corporation was fraudulently and deceitfully organized. 2. That we constitute a trust and a monopoly. 3. That this alleged trust and monopoly had existed, as such a "combination," for many years before the incorporation of our company.

THE SOURCE OF THESE SLANDEROUS REPORTS. There is but one reasonable explanation as to the source of these attacks. They emanate from some competitor in business who has the skill to make use of venal or glib persons to publish and circulate his own attacks and calumnies for him, expecting in this way to build himself up by defaming the character of his competitors. These reports, which are copied as news by the various country journals, illustrate the fine art of procuring free advertising.

A "HIDDEN MONOPOLY." It is charged that the American Book Company was incorporated in New Jersey, with a capital of \$5,000, and that "under this modest organization was hidden one of the greatest monopolies ever known in this country." It is true that the American Book Company was legally incorporated January 9, 1890, and with the amount of capital named. But for what reason was this state chosen and this small amount of capital made use of, and what were the subsequent steps of its corporate development?

NEW JERSEY WAS CHOSEN BECAUSE ITS LAWS ARE MORE FAVORABLE TO MANUFACTURING INTERESTS LIKE OURS THAN THE LAWS OF SOME OTHER STATES, AND BECAUSE SEVERAL OF OUR LARGE STOCKHOLDERS, WHO BECAME DIRECTORS, RESIDE THERE. AS IS REQUIRED AND CUSTOMARY, "A PRINCIPAL PLACE OF BUSINESS" WAS DESIGNATED IN THAT STATE. THE NEW JERSEY LAWS, HOWEVER, ARE SO STRICT THAT THEY REQUIRE THE MONEY WHICH REPRESENTS STOCK ISSUED TO BE ALL ACTUALLY PAID IN, OR WHEN THE MONEY IS NOT SO PAID IN, THAT ACTUAL PROPERTY AT A CASH VALUATION SHALL BE PURCHASED AS THE BASIS FOR STOCK ISSUED. IN THIS LATTER CASE THE STOCK CERTIFICATES ISSUED FOR PROPERTY MUST

book. There are at the present time in the United States, according to the official trade organ, The Publishers Weekly, more than a hundred corporations, firms, and houses issuing school publications, and there are nearly ten thousand different volumes in current publication. It is a matter of notoriety, among all teachers and school officers, that competition between different houses publishing school text-books has never been more active than since the formation of the American Book Company, or than exists at the present moment.

STIMULATED BY THE CHARGES OF SUCH EVER-present and sometimes virulent competition, there were brought about two legislative inquiries as to the status of the American Book Company, respectively in the states of Pennsylvania and Illinois. In these investigations and hearings the testimony of everybody was publicly invited--publishers, booksellers, educators, politicians, and public cranks. Each of the two reports, to their respective legislatures, resulting from these investigations, completely exonerated the American Book Company from being, in any sense or form, a trust or monopoly, as had been falsely alleged. At the Harrisburg hearing, all the leading publishers of New York, Philadelphia, and other cities were present, and, testifying under oath, each one declared that he knew of no case where any competitor had been "crushed out" or oppressed by this company. And we hereby offer this challenge to any respectable school-book publisher in this whole country today to come forward and declare under oath that he has suffered any oppression in his business from the American Book Company, or that it is within his experience or personal knowledge that this company has ever, at any time, attempted in the least degree "to crush competing houses and destroy all legitimate competition," as charged in this "report."

IN THIS REPORT THE OLD STORIES ARE REHEARSED THAT THE AGENTS OF THIS COMPANY, IN ONE INSTANCE IN THE STATE OF WASHINGTON AND IN ANOTHER IN THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA, ATTEMPTED BRIBERY. WHERE IN THE PROOF THAT THESE AGENTS ATTEMPTED IT IN EITHER CASE? OBSERVE, IT IS NOT CHARGED THAT BRIBERY WAS COMMITTED, BUT "ATTEMPTED." THE WASHINGTON CASE, AFTER DRAGGING ALONG IN THE COURTS FOR SOME TIME, WITH THREE OF THE ACCUSED AGENTS AND DETECTIVES IN THEIR JURISDICTION AND UNDER BAIL, WAS DECIDED IN FAVOR OF THE AGENTS. IT WAS THEN APPEALED TO A HIGHER COURT, SENT BACK FOR RE-TRIAL, AND FINALLY DISMISSED FOR LACK OF EVIDENCE TO MAINTAIN IT. THIS "REPORT" ALSO STATES THAT IN THE WEST VIRGINIA CASE THE AGENT "WAS PUBLICLY REPRIMANDED AND COMPELLED TO TAKE BACK HIS MONEY." IS THIS USUAL CONCLUSION WHEN BRIBERY IS PROVED TO HAVE BEEN ATTEMPTED OR COMMITTED?

THESE TWO UNFORTUNATE SCANDALS, THE RESULTS OF THE SHARP PRACTICE INDUCED BY A VERY EXCITING COMPETITION BETWEEN AGENTS (WHERE THE "MONOPOLY" DOES NOT SEEM TO HAVE "CRUSHED OUT" THE COMPETITION), WERE THE RESULTS OF PALPABLE TRICKS SET UP, ONE AGENT UPON ANOTHER; AND THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY PROMPTLY DISAVOWED ANY RESPONSIBILITY OR CONNECTION WITH THEM. AMONG THE HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF ANNUAL TRANSACTIONS OF THIS COMPANY, THESE ARE THE ONLY INSTANCES EVER CITED AGAINST IT, AND THESE ARE ALLEGED TO HAVE TAKEN PLACE WITHIN A FEW MONTHS AFTER THE ORGANIZATION OF THE COMPANY. AND THOUGH THE CAMPAIGN OF ABUSE AND DEFAMATION HAS BEEN ACTIVELY CARRIED ON EVER SINCE, ITS AUTHORS AND PROMOTERS HAVE NOT BEEN ABLE TO ADD TO THESE OLD AND FALSE ACCUSATIONS, GROWN THREADBARE WITH USE.

AFTER CITING THE ABOVE CASES, THIS "REPORT" GOES ON TO SAY: "THESE ARE ONLY SPECIFIC INSTANCES; BUT THE HISTORY OF THIS COMPANY'S OPERATIONS IN MISSISSIPPI, MISSOURI, OHIO, NEW JERSEY, AND OTHER STATES GIVES US THE IMPRESSION THAT ITS METHODS ARE CORRUPT, AND LEADS THIS COMMITTEE TO THE ALMOST IRRESISTIBLE CONCLUSION THAT THIS IS A WELL-DEFINED POLICY OF THE COMPANY ITSELF IN THE SELECTION OF SOME OF ITS AGENTS AND INSTRUMENTALITIES." WHAT DOES THE WRITER OF THIS VILLANOUS ATTACK UPON HONORABLE MEN KNOW OF THE HISTORY OF THIS COMPANY IN THE STATES NAMED? NOTHING WHATEVER; AND HE IS CHALLENGED TO PRODUCE ANY PROOF OF ANY TRANSACTION ON OUR PART INCONSISTENT WITH FAIR AND HONORABLE DEALING.

THIS DEFAMATORY REPORT CONTINUES: "IT WILL ALSO APPEAR THAT ITS MOST RECKLESS AND SUCCESSFUL OPERATIONS HAVE BEEN CONFINED TO WHAT IT PROBABLY CONSIDERS THE BACKWOODS STATES OF WEST VIRGINIA, MISSISSIPPI, MISSOURI, CALIFORNIA, WASHINGTON, AND OREGON, AND THAT IN NEW ENGLAND AND MANY OTHER PLACES ITS SUCCESS, IF ANY, IN MONOPOLIZING THE SCHOOL-BOOK BUSINESS HAS BEEN SHORT LIVED." WE HAVE NOT BEEN ACCUSTOMED TO CONSIDER THE STATES NAMED AS "BACKWOODS," IN INVADING COMPARISON WITH THE MORE THICKLY SETTLED AND RICHER PORTIONS OF THE COUNTRY. IT IS WELL KNOWN THAT RURAL AND AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITIES ARE QUITE AS INTELLIGENT, HONEST, AND HIGH MINDED IN THEIR DEALINGS, AND AS CAPABLE OF TAKING CARE OF THEMSELVES AND THEIR OWN INTERESTS, AS ARE MANUFACTURING AND TRADING COMMUNITIES. THE FACTS ARE THAT THESE

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have been no new introductions or wholesale changes in books in West Virginia, California, and Oregon since the formation of this company, in which it could have shared. The Washington adoption occurred within a month after the company had commenced business, so that it had little share in that. In Mississippi and Missouri, under new laws, general changes in books have taken place in which this company has shared, after most active competition with many other publishing houses.

AS TO THE "BACKWOODS" CHARGE, IT IS A FACT WHICH CAN BE DEMONSTRATED BY THE ACCOUNT BOOKS OF THE COMPANY'S SALES IN NEW ENGLAND AND THE MIDDLE AND WESTERN STATES--the older and more densely populated sections of the country, where public education has longest been established--that the text-books of this company are relatively much more largely in use in these States than in remote and more sparsely settled regions.

CHARACTER OF BOOKS PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY. THE WRITER OF THIS "REPORT" HAS SET HIMSELF UP AS A CRITIC AND CENSOR OF THE CHARACTER AND MERIT OF THE SCHOOL BOOKS PUBLISHED BY THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY. HE SAYS, WHILE THIS COMPANY HAS MANY EXCELLENT BOOKS, "CHIEFLY CONFINED TO THE ACADEMIC AND HIGHER GRADES, IT IS VERY WEAK IN THE LOWER GRADES AND IN MATHEMATICS." HE ALSO SAYS "IT IS CHEAPER FOR THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY TO PRINT AND FURNISH AN INFERIOR BOOK THAN A GOOD ONE, AND ITS PROFIT IS GREATER UPON THE POORER ONE, ALTHOUGH IT MAY SELL IT AT A MUCH LESS PRICE." HE INSTANCES HARRINGTON'S SPELLER, AND SAYS IT IS A WRETCHED BOOK, MADE OF "CHEAP PAPER AND PASTEBOARD," WHICH "FAIRLY BRISTLES WITH MISTAKES AND INACCURACIES."

THAT THE PAPER, PRINTING, BINDING, INTRODUCTION, AND MARKETING OF A POOR BOOK COSTS LESS AND GIVE A GREATER PROFIT, ALTHOUGH "IT IS SOLD AT A MUCH LOWER PRICE," THAN A CORRESPONDINGLY MANUFACTURED BOOK OF HIGHER INTELLECTUAL MERIT, IS A STATEMENT WHICH IS SIMPLY IDIOTIC. ANYBODY WHO KNOWS ANYTHING ABOUT THE PUBLISHING BUSINESS, OR WHO HAS ANY COMMON SENSE, KNOWS THAT THE COST OF THE PRINTING AND BINDING--that is, the mechanical production--is precisely the same whether the book itself be good, bad, or indifferent. IT IS ALSO WELL KNOWN THAT THE COST OF COPYRIGHT IS SO SMALL A SHARE IN THE COST OF PRODUCTION AS PRACTICALLY TO MAKE LITTLE DIFFERENCE; WHILE THE EXPENSE OF ATTEMPTING TO INTRODUCE AND PLACE A BOOK POOR IN MERIT, WITH A CERTAINTY THAT IT WILL NOT LONG GIVE SATISFACTION AND HOLD ITS PLACE, WOULD TEN TIMES OWEIGH THE ADDITIONAL COST OF COPYRIGHT.

HARRINGTON'S SPELLER IS AN EXCELLENT BOOK, PREPARED BY THE LATE VERY BRIGHT AND ACCOMPLISHED SUPERINTENDENT OF THE NEW BEDFORD, MASSACHUSETTS, SCHOOLS, AND WAS FIRST PUBLISHED BY THE HARPERS, A HOUSE MOST CAREFUL OF ITS REPUTATION, BUT WHICH THIS INDORSED IT BY ITS GREAT NAME. THIS BOOK IS ALSO APPROVED ON ITS MERITS BY LEADING EDUCATORS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY, AND SO WIDELY USED THAT ITS CIRCULATION HAS REACHED INTO MILLIONS. THE RELATIVE PROFIT ON THIS BOOK, HOWEVER, IS NOT LARGER THAN THE AVERAGE PROFIT ON OTHER SCHOOL BOOKS.

IF THERE IS ONE CHARACTERISTIC IN THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY'S LIST MORE PRONOUNCED THAN ANOTHER, IT IS THE SUPERIOR EXCELLENCE OF ITS ELEMENTARY BOOKS, PREPARED FOR COMMON AND GRAMMAR SCHOOLS, AS ALL TEACHERS, SUPERINTENDENTS AND UNBIASED PUBLISHERS WHO KNOW THE FACTS WILL UNANIMOUSLY TESTIFY. IF A BOOK IS FOUND TO BE FAULTY, IT IS CORRECTED; IF IT HAS OUTLIVED ITS PURPOSE AND USEFULNESS, IT IS DISCONTINUED. OUR UNIFORM AND CONSTANT INSTRUCTIONS TO ALL OUR AGENTS ARE TO PRESENT AND URGE, IN ANY GIVEN SECTION THOSE BOOKS OF OUR LIST WHICH ARE LIKELY TO PROVE MOST ACCEPTABLE AND SUITABLE TO ITS SCHOOL WORK, WITHOUT REGARD TO THE FACT THAT ONE BOOK IS MORE OR LESS PROFITABLE TO US THAN ANOTHER. OUR AGENTS ARE NOT INFORMED AS TO WHICH BOOKS PAY COPYRIGHT AND WHICH DO NOT, OR AS TO THE RELATIVE PROFITABLENESS OF DIFFERENT PUBLICATIONS. AS A SOUND BUSINESS POLICY, OUR OBJECT IS TO MAINTAIN A HIGH REPUTATION AND SECURE PERMANENCY OF SALE BY SUPPLYING BOOKS OF THE HIGHEST MERIT, AND OF THE KINDS WHICH WILL BE MOST SATISFACTORY TO OUR PATRONS. A CONTRARY POLICY OF FORCING POOR BOOKS THAT ARE NOT WANTED UPON ANY STATE OR SECTION IS TOO FOOLISH TO MERT A MOMENT'S CONSIDERATION.

IS THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY HOSTILE TO PUBLIC EDUCATION? TO THE CHARGE IN THE REPORT "THAT THIS MONOPOLY IS DISASTROUS TO OUR PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM," AND THAT "THE PUBLIC ARE CHEATED OF THE RIGHT TO INDEPENDENT TEACHERS, GOOD SCHOOLS AND GOOD BOOKS," WE ANSWER THAT THIS IS A BASE AND UNJUST ACCUSATION NOT ONLY AGAINST US BUT AGAINST THE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL AUTHORITIES OF THE STATE OF OREGON. IT SAYS IN EFFECT THAT YOUR TEACHERS AND SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS ALLOW THEMSELVES TO BE HOODWINKED AND CHEATED BY PUBLISHERS OF SCHOOL BOOKS. NO STATEMENT COULD BE MORE UNTRUE OR UNJUST TO THIS HIGH-

mined and intelligent class of citizens of your state. It is incredible that a man in his senses would thus attempt to introduce and malign any class of his fellow-citizens, much less the supervisors of public education. Refuting this infamous charge, we make this clear assertion, and call upon all intelligent men who know the history of the schools of this country to say whether or not it is true. We assert that no body of men have ever done more to stimulate popular education, foster progressive and enlightened methods of teaching, arouse educational thought, and generally promote the intellectual growth of the country, than the men who, as school-book publishers, were the predecessors of the American Book Company; and they have accomplished all these things by constantly producing, from time to time, the best possible school text-books. We further assert that those who compose the present management of the American Book Company are still faithful to these high traditions, and are still doing for the schools of this country, through furnishing them with good books, all that experience and capital can accomplish.

THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY IN OREGON. It is charged that this company, and the "combination which has existed for many years," framed your text-book laws, and that all your school-books, "except Brooks' Normal Arithmetic and three other very unimportant books," were selected from the American Book Company's list. The simple facts are that there never has been any such "combination for many years," or for any time, as is alleged; and that the adoption of books six years ago in Oregon took place years before the American Book Company came into existence, and under open competition between the different entirely independent houses, as everybody in Oregon knows who had anything to do with the selection at that time.

THE SALES AND PROFITS OF THE SCHOOL-BOOK BUSINESS ARE CONSTANTLY AND VERY GREATLY EXAGGERATED BY THOSE WHO ARE IGNORANT OF THEM. INSTEAD OF THE PROFITS ON SCHOOL BOOKS BEING \$50,000 A YEAR IN OREGON, AS CLAIMED IN THE "REPORT," THIS SUM MORE NEARLY REPRESENTS THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF ANNUAL SALES IN THIS STATE--which, in any event, is not more than \$40,000, and of course only a small portion of this amount can be reckoned as net profit.

THE AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY HAS NEVER AT ANY TIME RAISED SO MUCH AS A FINGER TO INFLUENCE OREGON LEGISLATION IN ITS BEHALF. ON THE OTHER HAND, WHAT DID THIS COMPANY ACTUALLY DO FOR THE PEOPLE OF OREGON WHEN IT BECAME THE PUBLISHER OF THE BOOKS WHICH HAD ALREADY BEEN ADOPTED FOR USE IN THAT STATE? WE STATE FACTS KNOWN, WE BELIEVE, TO EVERY PERSON IN OREGON, WHEN WE SAY THAT IT USED EVERY MEANS IN ITS POWER TO RENDER THESE BOOKS AS CHEAPLY OBTAINABLE BY THE PEOPLE AND AT CHEAPER RATES THAN EVER BEFORE. TO THIS END AND AT GREAT EXPENSE IT BROUGHT ITS BUSINESS AND CAPITAL TO YOUR STATE, AND ESTABLISHED ONE OF ITS BRANCH HOUSES IN YOUR CITY OF PORTLAND. IT HAS THIS CASE ITS LOT WITH YOU AND IDENTIFIED ITSELF WITH YOUR COMMUNITY. WE ARE OURSELVES, THEREFORE, IN A BUSINESS SENSE, OREGONIANS, SHARING THE FORTUNES OF YOUR STATE, AND ENTITLED TO FAIR AND JUST TREATMENT FROM OUR FELLOW-CITIZENS. THAT WE SHALL RECEIVE JUSTICE AND EVEN GENEROSITY AT YOUR HANDS IS ASSURED TO US BY THE TRADITIONS OF THE PACIFIC COAST.

AMERICAN BOOK COMPANY, By its Officers and Directors. OFFICERS. DAVID B. IVISON, President, ALFRED C. BARNES, Vice-President, HARRY T. AMBROSIE, Treasurer, GILMAN H. TUCKER, Secretary.

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