

"An Oasis in the Desert."

The Star Chamber Committee Report.

The long expected report of the Star-chamber committee has at length been given to the public, and while our space forbids general comment at present upon the many phases of corruption which the report pretends to present, in view of the fact that the selling of examination papers to persons ambitious to become teachers in our sister state California, has raised one of the loudest noises that has ever been made through the press of that state, we are somewhat astonished to see this in the Oregon smiling committee report:

The committee also desire to state that the books, papers and vouchers of Professor L. L. Rowland are in a complete and intelligible condition, and the committee believe that this officer has performed his duties as superintendent of public instruction in an honest, systematic, and straightforward manner. His conduct is an oasis in the desert of official inefficiency and speculation in the state administration of the past four years.

That Mr. Rowland's papers are intelligible we are not prepared to deny. That they are "complete" we are certain is false; that the duties have been performed in a "systematic manner" may be true, but it has been a system of fraud, and not of "honesty." We assert without fear of successful contradiction, that during the last four years the department of education at Salem has been conducted in a manner that would in many countries send the Rev. Mr. Rowland, this "oasis in the desert to prison" for a term of years. There has been some villainous things developed in California, but none that can compare in shamelessness with the actions of this "oasis" Rowland. We assert that for coin the highest certificates in the state have been given without so much as a pretense of examination. That women, who in county examinations could barely get the lowest grade, have been given state and life diplomas. That the standard was placed high to make it profitable. Even for a common certificate the law says: "He shall strictly examine all persons who apply to him for certificates." Speaking of the state board the law says:

The board shall have power to invite not less than four professional teachers to assist in the semi-annual examinations; but such assistants shall not be allowed any pay, other than is provided for in this act, concerning fees for diplomas and certificates.

"Not less than four professional teachers." Now attend to this fact; when the parties were willing to pay, no examination was necessary, the matter was easily arranged. How much this one got, or how much Rowland got, we were in hopes this committee would discover. We go further, we doubt if during the past four years there have been two state diplomas or life diplomas issued upon examination, and the whole number issued is not far from a hundred—perhaps the investigating committee can tell just how many? Mr. Rowland's successor, the Rev. Mr. Powell, was a very useful man to the committee; did the committee discover from the "complete" records of Mr. Rowland's office that Mr. Powell holds one of those "left-handed" diplomas? Did Mr. Powell tell them that Gov. Grover

at first refused to sign his diploma; and that it took Mr. Carrn two days to persuade him? Did he tell you, gentlemen, that he, Mr. King and Mr. Crawford, raised a sum jointly or separately, or did he show you in the "complete" papers how Mr. Rowland figured up ninety per cent. on eleven different branches, without asking a question? Did he tell you how much it cost to get a diploma? Did Mr. Rowland tell you whom he intended to gull when in his biennial report of 1876, he says:

Candidates for life diplomas and state diplomas, must present to the board satisfactory testimonials of good moral character, and of marked success in teaching for a period of three years, of which at least one year must have been in Oregon, and must pass acceptable examinations in all the studies prescribed for a county certificate, and in the following in addition: General history, algebra, geometry, composition, English literature, book-keeping, physiology natural philosophy, theory and practice of teaching, constitution of the United States and constitution and school law of the state of Oregon. To obtain a life diploma, a candidate must answer correctly at least ninety per cent. of all the questions; and to obtain a state diploma, he must answer correctly at least seventy-five per cent. of the questions.

It has been said of Mr. King, Mr. Crawford and Mr. Powell, there was no need to examine them, they certainly could pass examination. It is a sufficient answer to say that the law is no regard of persons; and any honest man knows that if they had felt certain of their ability to get diplomas according to law they would not have tried to get them in violation of it. The law says:

SEC. 18. The proceedings of each session of the board shall be published for general distribution, containing, in addition to the ordinary proceedings, the result of the examinations for certificates.

Did the investigating committee see any of these results? Did all have over ninety per cent? Are the answers on file? Will the papers show who were the examiners in each particular case? No, gentleman; no, nothing of the kind. You know this, or else you know nothing about it. Some may say: "Why do you mention Mr. King, Mr. Crawford, and Mr. Powell?" Because they were the first to open the gate. They have acted as sponsors for others; they have had the brass to pretend that there was no violation of law in the matter, and they are drawing large salaries, upon these certificates, and are aware that other teachers in the Portland schools are doing the same, notwithstanding that the law says:

SEC. 48. If any board of directors shall draw a warrant on the school fund for the wages of any teacher who has not obtained a certificate as required by this act, and laid the same before the directors for their inspection, such district shall forfeit its proportion of the school fund for the year.

Sec. 19 was a very useful section to the state board. If a person had ever lived in the neighborhood of a Normal school, large or small, or had a cousin or an acquaintance that had attended one, the matter was easily arranged, if they were thought to be financially sound. Read the section and then we will illustrate its application:

SEC. 19. The state board may, at their discretion, grant, without examination, diplomas and certificates to persons presenting authenticated diplomas or certificates from other states, of the like grade and kind, as those granted by the board of this state.

The Rev. Mr. Jones had a diploma from California; it stated on its face that Mr. Jones had passed a satisfactory examination. The board were pleased to grant

the Rev. Jones a diploma. Mr. Rowland is a Rev., and of course had a "fellow-feeling" for Jones; and Mr. Chadwick is almost a Rev., and has a fellow-feeling for every one. Here was a safe case, and so they determined to let the Rev. Mr. Jones see how exact and law-abiding they were. They gave Mr. Jones to understand it would be necessary to authenticate the diploma; then it came out that Mr. Jones had the diploma, but that he had never passed the examination. His friends, his well known experience, his unquestionable merit, had secured him the honor of a diploma without the "degradation" of an examination. The board were surprised, not to say chagrined. They could not pretend that the diploma was good, after what they had said; they cut the Gordian knot; they declared that the fact that Mr. Jones had the courage, the honesty to tell the truth about the matter, so surprised, so overwhelmed them, that they were not insensible to the moral grandeur of his character, and to mark their admiration of truth, they would give him a diploma that substantially asserts that out of 110 questions, on eleven branches, he had answered 99, when the truth of common people would be that he had not answered one.

Did you discover, gentlemen, that an ex-president of a collegiate institute, connected with the Portland High-school, had the misfortune while J. J. Browne was county superintendent, to get only a second-grade county certificate, and that thereupon the Rev. L. L. Rowland, D. D., this "oasis," did urge the state board to grant a life diploma to the said gentleman "on account of his high social standing;" and that furthermore one of the teachers of examination took occasion there and then to tell the Rev. L. L. Rowland what he thought about the matter; and what the people would think about it, if they once got to understand it? And did you, among the "complete" papers of this "oasis," find a resolution of the board that no more diplomas should be issued without examination? And did you discover, furthermore, that the promise was a lie; that the resolution was a snare, and that, like a river, their course of knavery broadened and deepened as it came to its close? At the institute held in Salem, August, 1877, the following resolution was presented by Professor Marsh:

Resolved, That in the opinion of this institute it is unwise as well as unfair and illegal for state certificates or diplomas to be issued to applicants, otherwise than on regular examinations before the board, or on presentation of similar certificates or diplomas from another state.

Mr. Syl. C. Simpson offered the following substitute:

WHEREAS, We have been informed that it is the determination of the state board of examination hereafter to issue the state diplomas and certificates provided for by law only to candidates who have been duly examined and found worthy, to those who present similar diplomas or certificates from other states, and to retiring members of the board, therefore:

Resolved, by the Oregon State Teachers' institute, That we heartily approve this determination of the board, believing that the practice of granting such diplomas and certificates to other classes of persons without examination is liable to great abuse, and is a prolific source of jealousy and dissension among the teachers of the state, and that the inflexible rule of the board on the subject should be "equal and exact justice to all, and special privileges to none."

And the Rev. L. J. Powell got up and introduced a "love feast," and a camp-meeting, right in the

midst of the institute, and begged them, and implored them, not to destroy harmony and good feeling and gentle and brotherly love, by passing such a resolution. And King, and Rowland, and Crawford peddled diplomas, and positions in the Portland schools, and promises—some of which have not been kept—and the matter was postponed—but not forever.

Gentlemen of the investigating committee, there were some four or five thousand dollars in this educational job; there were many interested in keeping it quiet; it has been kept quiet. You have made your report—it was the crack of a pocket pistol—when it might have been the roar of a cannon.

We desire it to be distinctly understood that those who send us advertisements from abroad, must send the cash with the advertisements, if they would have them appear. We have numbers of advertisements sent us from strangers saying, "Please insert and send bill." This we cannot do; the cash must accompany the copy and the order.

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The table will be supplied at all times with the best the market affords.

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Also that all moneys due the undersigned on current accounts must be settled and paid within ten days, otherwise they will be put in the hands of an attorney for collection. H. B. PARKER. Astoria, Oregon, Jan. 1, 1878. 1-2w\*

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And everything that is needed in the cooking line at the lowest living prices. Call and examine before purchasing elsewhere. J. K. WIRT.

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