The Daily Astorian.

ASTORIA, OREGON:

WEDNESDAY.....FEB. 16, 1881

D. C. IRELAND.....Editor.

Crumbs of Comfort.

By examining our telegraphic dispatches this morning, our readers will notice that we have the same old story to tell in reference to the action of congress with regard to the improvement of the Columbia river bar. Every creek and mud flat of the United States, discernible by the aid of a magnifying glass, has its appropriation for improvement; but nothing is allowed—absolutely nothing—for the Columbia river bar. We have, however, a crumb of comfort to offer our friends in Astoria on this seemingly negligent or hostile attitude of congress and the engineer department, and it is this: This is not a defeat merely of the Astoria Chamber of Commerce, but it is also a defeat of the Portland Board of Trade and the San Francisco Chamber of Commerce, both of which have lately joined us in an earnest demand that the entrance to the Columbia river be improved.

Now, what is to be done? We give it as a suggestion that the city of Astoria should, conjointly with Portland, undertake the temporary improvement of the bar by direct tax. We suggest this, although not particularly advocating it.

We should be pleased to have the opinions, by letter or otherwise, of our tax-payers, whose pockets are touched by the difficulties now existing.

The New York Times prints an inteview with Senator Miller, who speaks of monetary affairs in San Francisco as follows: "It makes a great difference whether the city is drawing two or three millions a month in dividends, as San Francisco used to do, or paying out a million in assessments with no returns. The failure of the Comstock, however, has had one good effect. It has resulted in almost abolishing stock gambling, which has ruined so many Californians. There is no longer anything like the stock market in the old sense, and people are not dealing in stocks as recklessly as they used to. We think we have got to bedrock and that from this time we shall go on a surer basis. Our financial methods will be improved by the decadence of stock gambling. Of course if a new mineral zone is found on the Comstock stocks will advance and gambling will be great, but at present there is nothing to indicate any such discovery. It is to agriculture that California must look primarily for her prosperity as a state, and when I left San Francisco her agricultural interests were flourishing."

The seventeen-year locusts, according to Prof. Riley, will abound in portions of the United States next June. It seems there are two breeds of these periodical locusts, one appearing once in seventeen years and the other once in thirteen years. Both broods will appear this year, but not in the same localities. The professor says the thirteen-year brood will probably be seen in southern Illinois, in all of Missouri except the northwest corner, in Louisiana, Arkansas, Indian territory, Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina. The two kinds of locusts differ very little in appearance. The earliest appearance of the seventeen-year locust in this country, so far as the records go, was in 1634, at Plymouth, Massachusetts, and they have not failed to appear once in seventeen years since. No mention is made that Nebraska will be visited by these winged pests, and we hope the professor has made no mistake on this point. They have had their share of this kind of infliction in former years, and deserves to be given the go-by on this occasion.

About Taxing Wheat.

The San Francisco Examiner, of January 30th, wants the legislature to exempt from taxation all the wheat in the state. It says: "In this condition of things it is of very great importance that the legislature should immediately take steps to relieve the farmers from this burden. The remedy is simple. All that is necessary is to exempt the product of the year's crop from taxation." The Sacramento Bee replies:

It can't be done. The constitution declares that all property shall be taxed in proportion to its value and that the legislature shall have no power to pass a special law for the assessment or collection of taxes or extending the time for the collection of taxes, or exempting property from taxation. That ought to settle the case. And we are sure it will settle it when, if ever, it shall come before the Supreme court. The constitution was made to prevent just such special legislation as the Examiner proposes. If wheat must be exempt from taxation so must be horses and houses, dry goods and money and all other property. The constitution was made on purpose to prevent any property from being exempt from taxes. The farmers insisted upon this. They even went so far, for fear something should escape, as to provide for double and in many cases treble taxation. Wheat in store will be taxed on the first Monday in March, the money loaned on it will be taxed, and the note given for the payment of the money will be taxed, and all upon the same day! The Bee made this clear before the election, but as a rule the farmers assured us that it could not be. And perhaps they may have been right.

The Northeast Passage.

M. Struve publishes in the St. Petersburg Novoe Vremya a letter on the subject of future waterway between the Pacific and Arctic oceans. He thinks that Europe and Siberia may be connected by a surer route than that indicated by Professor Nordenskjold, and that a way may be opened by which Siberian products may reach the Pacific. He proposes a scheme for connecting the Obi river with the sea at a point to the west of Nova Zembla, and the connection of the Obi by a canal with the Petchora and Yenisei rivers, thus making a direct waterway between Irkutsk and the ports of the White sea. Connection, too, could be made between the Yenisei and the river system of eastern Siberia, and it would then be possible to reach Nelokan, only 130 miles from Aiane, on the Pacific. M. Struve argues this plan forcibly and at length. Meanwhile, Professor Nordenskjold is having a vessel built at the mouth of the Lena river, in eastern Siberia, and will set out in 1882 on another voyage of discovery in the Arctic seas.

Postal Decision.

The postoffice department was recently informed of the loss of a sum of money which was being transported in a registered mail package to Helens, Montana, and asked if the contractor of the coach route where the loss occurred was not responsible for it. The postmaster general rendered a decision on the subject, in which he says that the report of the inspector for this department who made an investigation would indicate that the loss was accidental and without fault of the contractor, but were it otherwise and it could be shown that the loss was attributable to negligence or even fraud of the contractor, it is not perceived that any right of action would thereby accure to this department, nor does the loss of mail matter without fault on the part of a contractor constitute ground of forfeiture as agreed upon. The facts as presented do not afford this department the means of repairing the loss referred to.

There is good authority for the assertion that Gould has purchased the Montreal Telegraph company. With this purchase and a system now organizing for Mexico, he is autocrat of the wires of the continent.

COMMERCIAL.

The Baltimore Gazette says: The south is on the highway to prosperity, sure enough. Six million bales of cotton is the estimate for this year's crop, which is almost a million in advance of last year, and more than a million greater than the crop of 1879.

Several days ago the Grand Canon Coal company struck oil at a depth of 1,445 feet, near Canon city. Boring had to be stopped until a pump could be put in. The well now yields from five to eight barrels of oil per day, and it is thought that by boring it deeper it will yield a greatly increasing volume.

The quinine production of the world is estimated at from 230,000 to 260,000 pounds per year, as follows: Germany, 56,000; Italy, 45,000; France, 85,000; England, 27,000; America, 63,000; India, 12,350. Efforts are being made to acclimatize the cinchona in Italy. Its successful culture in India and Ceylon encourages the belief that it will grow wherever the soil is dry, the rainfall large and the climate temperate.

All the prominent butter dealers and commission merchants in South Water street, Chicago, have signed an agreement not to sell or deal in any imitation of butter, either as butter or its real name. This action became necessary, as some firms doing the largest export trade in butter in the country, have found that reports of adulteration and fraudulent butter were having a marked injurious effect upon their foreign trade.

The total liabilities of the coffee trade failures now amount to more than $5,000,000. All the houses that have gone down were rich and strong six months ago. They got terribly squeezed in their attempts to squeeze the public. Legitimate business cannot be conducted successfully on the methods of the stock gamblers, and it would be a blessed good thing for the country if the wheat syndicate, pork syndicate, sugar syndicate and all the rest, endeavoring to make corners to rob the people, should meet a like fate. They would obtain no public sympathy, and would deserve none.—Chicago Grocer.

DIED.

On John Days river, February 14th, 1881, Mary A. Dennis, aged 74 years.

NEW TO-DAY.