

EDITORIAL.

The Democrats and Populists central committee, of North Dakota, have agreed to consolidate the opposition to the Republicans. A committee has been appointed to outline a platform and suggest a common party name.

A legislature and governor were elected in Washington, on a union ticket, and from some cause, possibly economical administration, the state is today in better shape than since it discarded its territorial swaddling clothes, and its warrants, which have always been at a discount, are selling at a premium.

The above paragraphs from exchanges are straws which show how the political winds are blowing. Oregon ought to profit by a similar union of political forces in the interest of the people. But Oregon is cursed with such a surplus of poisonous plunder politicians and a scarcity of real leadership and disinterested statesmanship. If there is such a thing left in American public life.

Oregon will never be rid of extravagant and expensive state and county government until the professional machine politicians are given a back seat. Oregon will never get relief from high taxation until honesty is more regarded than success in politics, and that will be next day after eternity. Besides about every third man or woman wants an office or a job on the public.

But the JOURNAL is not a pessimist and does not despair. It has always striven for clear methods and higher standards in public affairs. It has at times thought it discovered the effect of its persistent agitation for reforms a long time afterwards. It finds that several Republican state officials are now carrying out measures of economy that it has always advocated.

The JOURNAL is not a purist in public affairs, but it believes it can see growing up in men like Governor Lord and Secretary Kincaid a determination to serve the people more and the machine less. Direct responsibility to the people and a higher sense of public duty is the tendency in some of our Republican state officials. Some others have yet to learn this. We have state officials that have in their departments practiced no economy whatever. But, in spite of progress in the right direction, it is the duty of the reform forces in this state to follow the example of Washington and present a solid united front against the party in power.

The people have a right to have a strong, well-organized opposition Peoples party in Oregon. By this we do not mean a Populist party, as such, but good government in state and nation demands that the people have a party directly responsible to them which the party that is in power for a long time can never be. It is responsible to the machine that inevitably is constructed under the present political system.

It is the duty of an opposition party to hold the machine party in power to a strict accountability. The people's party in any state must be animated by higher ideals, conducted by cleaner methods, dominated by noble motives, controlled by pure men and stand closer to the hearts of the masses than the party in power. A people's party, or opposition party that is a mere "sideshow" of the party in power, or that is run by sordid office-seekers, or fast-off mal contents of the old parties is not worth three straws to the taxpayer. If it went into power in Oregon it would only stay long enough to reveal its true character in bad government, and be cast out at the succeeding election.

A people's party led by a newer, cleaner and more "unselfish" class of men, and free from all unpractical and visionary notions, founded on a few elementary propositions, and a firm determination to impudently a little more common honesty in public affairs, would be worth having.

Such a party might have a long lease of power in this state, as it may have in Washington, until it became, world.

polluted with corruption, associated with grasping and greed, and torn into factions by the ambitions and selfishness of its leaders.

If such a party can be organized in Oregon, or any other state it should be done. Until it is done the people are going to elect the best men they can find in the old parties. The people are not going to swap off men who are doing well for political adventurers or schemers under the control of a new machine.

Without throwing the power completely back into the hands of the people, by a new system of county primary elections, and state and district nominating conventions not bogged in corruption, there is no political reform possible. Political results will not rise above their source, and at present the source—the Portland system of primaries—is defecated and overripe, and the people know we are telling the truth.

English Preparation for South Africa.

LONDON, April 12.—A Cape Town dispatch says that Admiral Rowson, commander of the British squadron in South African waters, will sail shortly with sealed orders in the direction of Delagoa bay. It is rumored that he has been ordered to make a demonstration against Germany's attempt to get a foothold in Delagoa bay.

There are indications that the British preparations against the Transvaal multiply in many directions. It was semi-officially reported this week that two more regiments had been notified to prepare for South Africa, and negotiations with Scotch ship-owners are pending for four transporters to be ready at the end of June.

Though President Kruger has court-martialed his grandson, Lieutenant Eoff, for using insulting language towards Queen Victoria, the most bitter comments can be heard in the clubs and among the better classes of people here against President Kruger, who it is claimed, has done as much as Lieutenant Eoff to insult the queen.

The liberals are evidently beginning to scent coming trouble, and are raising a warning finger, Truth says. "There is serious danger that we shall drift into war with the Transvaal. Lord Salisbury's government is apparently bent upon forcing a quarrel upon President Kruger. Every occasion is taken to insult him, and everything he does is misrepresented. If the outcome is not war, this is only because the wiser men in the ministry have at length realized that war with the Transvaal does not mean a contest with a puny African tribe, but a race war in which a majority of the whites at the Cape and all the Boers will be against us."

Forty Lives Lost.

SIoux CITY, Ia., April 12.—Forty lives at least have been lost in the floods in South Dakota, Iowa and Nebraska. Two persons are known to be lost on the Floyd, three have been drowned on the Big Sioux, two on the Missouri and two on the Coon river, all in the immediate vicinity. Similar cases are being reported daily from points farther away and a sharp watch is kept by the authorities for boats in the Missouri.

Many people are missing, of whose death their friends have no positive information. Most of them have probably been carried down the Missouri, and their bodies probably will never be recovered.

The bodies of two more victims were brought into Sioux City last evening, Danford Magee and Harry Flavill, who were drowned while attempting to ford the Elkhorn, in Nebraska. There has been a general fall in all streams in the locality.

Earp and Sharkey.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 12.—As soon as Tom Sharkey and Peter Maher are matched to fight in the east, Wyatt Earp will journey to New York and not only assist the sailor in his preparations, but will be his principal second in the ring. This matter was all arranged before Sharkey and Manager Lynch started eastward. Danny Needham, who brought the sailor into prominence, has been left out in the cold.

Earp believes that Sharkey is the greatest fighter that lives and believes that with good handling he can become the bonafide champion of the world.

LETTER

Written by Fiend Birchard

In Which he Indirectly Confesses the Crime.

There never was a case before the circuit courts of the county of Marion of such a serious nature as that of the arch-fiend Birchard which was disposed of at the February term, this year. The crime with which Birchard was charged is one of the most heinous in existence and there is no doubt but the accused received the sentence that he merited. In the trial Birchard was represented by three of the best criminal lawyers of the state who spared no pains to prove the innocence of their client but the facts in the case as detailed by the three daughters whom the man-systematically debauched were too plain and conclusive to be unfounded. His sentence of twenty years imprisonment, which is virtually a life sentence, when it is known the man is now aged 66 years, is the maximum sentence.

Much interest was aroused in the case while it was in progress and the verdict of the jury was anxiously awaited. As in all cases there were a number who were inclined for a time to believe that the man was not guilty of the horrible crime with which he was charged, but when such persons have read the letter that appears below which was written by Birchard to his youngest daughter, Minnie, and his wife, while he was imprisoned in the county jail awaiting the session of the circuit court, it is thought they will alter their opinions to conform more closely with the facts as are indicated in the document that appears below:

On a dark stormy night, shortly after Birchard had been sentenced to imprisonment, a reader of THE JOURNAL, while en route to his home, observed an envelope lying in the road. He picked the same up, removed the letter and continued on his way home. Upon his arrival there he began to examine the contents of the envelope. When he had satisfied himself of the nature of the same he lighted a lantern and returned to the spot where he found the letter that he might obtain the envelope and if possible determine how the letter happened to be lost. The envelope bore the following address: "Mr. Frank Wrightman, Salem, Or." At the upper left hand corner of the envelope was the following direction: "If not called for in three days return to W. Shanks, Stayton." It also bore the postmark of Stayton, at which place it was undoubtedly mailed. But a question presents itself in how did Shanks obtain possession of the same? The supposition is that upon receiving the letter Minnie turned it over to Shanks (her brother-in-law) who promptly mailed the same to Sheriff Wrightman, that it might be used as evidence against the author thereof in the trial. But it will probably never be known how the letter was lost on the Turner road.

The letter was written with a lead pencil and the spelling and grammar was very poor. Thinking it might prove interesting reading to many of THE JOURNAL'S readers the letter is printed below:

Salem, Oregon, Dec. 10 1896. MY DEAR DARLING GIRL—I got your kind letter last night. You can't know how it cheered me up. I have prayed day and night. I can't sleep, I can't eat. I must stay here until February and then if you don't come before the grand jury, they will discharge me. O Minnie, and your mother, yes my dear wife, help Minnie to get out of the way. Minnie, they can't make you testify against me. See what the other girls will do but don't tell them what you intend to do. I know you and your dear mother will not do or say anything to send me to the pen for 20 years—no you would die first. I do know I have been a very wicked man and have done very wrong. I can see it all now but I have promised my dear Lord to live a Christian life and I will. Yes my dear wife if we get out of this we will live happy. We will have no more trouble I forgive the girls for all. They did not have to say what they did but it is said now and it can't be helped. I hope they will not do nor say anything else. They will hurt themselves as bad as me. Now my dear wife, cheer up and do as I say and we will meet to part no more in this world. No my dear, I will be a good husband and father to all my children—I love them all. My dear girl if you and your mother want to send me to prison you can. I am in your hands. I can't do anything. I am at the mercy of my children.

My dear girl, you asked me if I blamed you. No, I think they talked it up and you did not know the law, but my dear girl don't say you are afraid of me. Oh that did hurt me so bad. Well if I do go to prison you can come and see me and write to me and I can write to you all. Give my love to all. Willie and Earl be good boys and help mother. If I live in prison all my life you can come and see me and we can write. My dear wife do not come down in the rain. Wait until you hear from me. I will write often, Good Bye.

From your WILLARD P. S.—Let Thomas have the cow back and he will give you six dollars, then we will be out of debt. Tell him to pay you the money."

STATE NEWS. Sheep-shearing has begun in Morrow county. Benton county will pay her share of the state taxes in full. An advance bid has been made for the Oregonian carriage works. A labor exchange has been started in Corvallis with a membership of 25. The outstanding warrant indebtedness of Washington county is \$26,250.00. Clatsop county treasurer has concluded to send in his taxes as soon as collected. J. T. Weaver of Brownsville died. He will be buried by the Woodmen of the world. The cost of running Washington county for the six months ending March 31 was \$21,626.12. The La Grande commercial club are considering the possibility of constructing a railroad line to Cove. The full amount of bonds has been raised for the Corvallis creamery. The plant will be ready by June 1. Lucinda, the widow of the late James Monroe Hamilton, died Saturday, aged 74 years, at Oregon City. It is estimated that 1000 people went out at 12 o'clock Saturday night with nets etc. On Saturday night when the fishing season was open. Union county lumbermen have secured the contracts for the lumber for the Seven Devils railroad. It will require about 10,000,000 feet of ties. Miss Lillian McMillen, the 19 year-old daughter of A. B. McMillen, of Astoria, died of blood-poisoning resulting from a slight injury to the toe. James Hodson, a pioneer of Douglas county, died Saturday at his home in West Roseburg. He was born in Kentucky, Aug. 15, 1814, and came to Oregon from Iowa in 1850. The annual election in St. Helena resulted: President of the council, E. E. Bulck; councilmen, Richard Cox, A. H. Blackley, H. R. Cliff, L. L. Decker; treasurer, W. B. Dillard; recorder, J. R. Beagle; marshal, Allen Robinson. Wm. Keer, of Corvallis had part of his head blown off by a latent stick of dynamite which he was about to explode to avoid the danger of an accident while crossing the mountains. He threw it down and it didn't go off and when he went to pick it up it exploded, blowing off the fore part of his head from the eyes upward.

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