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THE COUNTY OFFICIAL PAPER**THE SIERCKS CONFESSION FIASCO.**

Startling indeed was the news on Monday morning that John G. H. Siercks, an inmate of the State Insane Asylum, had confessed to the murder of Daisy Wehrman, and that by this confession John A. Pender was cleared of the crime for which he is serving a life sentence in the penitentiary, after having been sentenced twice to hang and of finally having his sentence commuted to life imprisonment by the Governor. The news was startling to everybody. The statement made by the idiot contained something of the real facts in the case as brought out by the evidence in the two trials of Pender. To the people of Oregon who were not familiar with that evidence, except perhaps in a general way as reported in the newspapers, the confession was a real confession and it was loudly proclaimed in the daily papers of Portland, that a great injustice had been done to Pender, and that he would now be released and that it would probably be the duty of the legislature to appropriate \$10,000 to repay, in a measure, to Pender for the great wrong he had suffered at the hands of the people of Columbia County. But the confession of Siercks did not strike the people who were familiar with the circumstances and the evidence, as anything more than a frame-up by Pender's detectives, or else the hallucinations of a weak mind after brooding over the murder and its details by a man who was a neighbor and who was partly familiar with the details of the horrible crime. With each succeeding statement made by Siercks it became more convincing than ever that the jury made no mistake when it pronounced Pender the guilty man. So improbable and impossible were the statements of the idiot when compared to the actual facts as they existed that no credence was given them at all by any person who was familiar with the details of the evidence or of the real facts as proven at the two trials of Pender. The later repudiation of the confession by Siercks was to be expected, but it came a little before the time predicted for it. The confession and the consequent proceedings in regard to it were a big farce staged for the purpose of exciting sympathy for a man convicted of murder and, if possible, to cause his liberation from the prison. But it has failed. The repudiation and the showing of the impossibilities of the truth of the statements in the confession came too quickly to secure the desired results.

This so-called confession by a crazy man has brought to light some peculiar statements, which were little dreamed of by the good people of Columbia County. The detective Thatcher who worked up the confession, after having called to his assistance the chaplain of the penitentiary and others of more or less prominence, proceeded to give to the people of Columbia County a lecture for having a desire to punish somebody for the awful crime, and that Pender just happened to be the man upon whom an excited and prejudiced mob could wreak vengeance. All of which was just silly rot. The people of Columbia County are reasonable and sane people, very largely, and are just as respectable and as good citizens as are the people of any other county. To say that there was a desire for revenge on somebody, regardless of whether or not it was the right party, is an insult to the intelligence of the people of Columbia County and Oregon. Coming from a stranger who is not known and who was never before heard of by the people of this county, those same people have not been slow in denouncing the work of Thatcher as that of a hired detective who would do anything or say anything to earn his money.

On top of this rank statement by the detective Thatcher, comes the statement by Governor West that "Pender did not have a square deal" in Columbia County. Such a statement coming from the Governor of Oregon, to say the least, is very ill-advised. No doubt the Governor based his statement on the representations made to him by the attorneys and partisans of the convicted man, one of whom, by the way, is a member of the State Pardoning Board. To say that Pender did not get a square deal is absolutely wrong and without foundation. To say or intimate that he was not given a fair trial before a fair and impartial jury and before a fair and just judge, is going a little too strong. It has

been stated that there was perjured testimony against Pender and that some of the witnesses may have been crooked, etc., but even if that be true, which has not yet been proven, it does not warrant the assertion that he did not get a square deal. The trial of Pender for the murder of Mrs. Wehrman was held long after the excitement over the case had passed. The evidence in the case was presented to a grand jury selected from among the taxpayers of this county. They were convinced that it was sufficient to require him to explain his whereabouts and his actions on that eventful night. Later the evidence was submitted to a jury of 12 men, all citizens and taxpayers of Columbia County, and Pender's side of the case was handled by two of the best lawyers in Oregon, John F. Logan and John H. Stevenson. These lawyers were aided and assisted by the Pinkerton Detective Bureau, and everything was done and every bit of evidence secured that was possible to obtain. After viewing the premises, listening to the evidence and watching the effect of same, hearing the arguments of the lawyers where every bit of the evidence offered by the state was attempted to be torn into shreds and discounted, and after receiving the instructions of Judge Campbell, whom everybody in Oregon knows to be a just and fair man, the 12 men decided that Pender was guilty. But on account of the evidence being of a circumstantial nature the jury was unable to decide as to the degree of guilt. Then after a wait of about 15 months, another jury was secured before another judge and the defendant had secured another eminent attorney, John A. Jeffrey, to assist in his defense, and with the aid of more detectives, the evidence was submitted to the second jury, and Judge Eakin, than whom there is not a more careful and conscientious man in Oregon, instructed the jury, a verdict of murder in the first degree was found.

Every effort was made to secure a new trial, even to the securing of a pistol which was dug up on the Wehrman place, but which was strongly suspected of having been planted there for the purpose of being dug up at the proper time; but nothing was gained by such tactics. Then an appeal was taken to the Supreme Court of Oregon, where the evidence was before that tribunal and the questions of law thoroughly discussed, and that body of the best judges in Oregon, upheld the decision of the Columbia County Court. In the face of all this and more, for the Governor to say that Pender did not get a square deal, is saying that the grand jury, the two trial juries, and the judges and the Supreme Court, were unfair. Truly some strong representations, or rather misrepresentations, must have been made to Governor West to cause him to make the statement that Pender did not get a square deal.

If ever a man charged with a heinous crime on earth got a square deal, Pender was afforded that privilege.

Whether he is guilty or not, is, to use his own words, best expressed when he said "I am the only person living who knows whether or not I committed that crime." Two juries of fair and impartial men have said that he was guilty. The Supreme Court has upheld them in that decision. Pender received a fair trial at the hands of the Columbia County Courts. It will take more than the inspired confession of a lunatic to make people who know the facts and circumstances of the case believe anything different.

A STATEWIDE QUARREL.

County Judge Clark, of this county, has gone to the defense of State Highway Commissioner Bowlby in the matter of the charges which have been preferred against the Major by the Columbia County Taxpayers League. It is quite possible that Judge Clark has made a serious mistake in this course. The figures as stated in the resolution condemning Major Bowlby are public records, many of them in the office of Judge Clark. If he is not familiar with those figures, he should be. If they do not show conclusively that Major Bowlby has been an expensive luxury to the taxpayers of Columbia County, the taxpayers would like to be shown why. The statement made by Judge Clark in his interview with the Portland papers, that the Columbia County Taxpayers League is composed of people who live in the south end of the county and WERE ONLY THOSE WHO WERE OPPOSED TO THE BOND ISSUE, is rather far fetched and does not conform to the facts in regard to the membership. The president of the League, Mr. J. G. Watts of Scappoose, was one of the most ardent supporters of the bond issue. Mr. Gus Lange, one of the members of the league who investigated Major Bowlby, was a supporter of the bond issue. Mrs. Mildred Watts, another of the signers of the resolution against Major Bowlby, was a supporter of the bond issue. Many others who are members of the League supported the bond issue, in fact there are probably more supporters of the bond issue among the membership than there are those who were opposed to the

bond issue. The membership of the Taxpayers League is not confined to any particular class of taxpayers, but any and all who care to join, so long as they are taxpayers within the county. Judge Clark, if he did not know these facts when he made the statement to the Portland papers, could have ascertained them by a little inquiry.

The movement by the taxpayers of Columbia County was not and is not the work of any particular section or faction. It was brought about by the publication of certain charges against Major Bowlby which required investigation. Those charges have been investigated and have been found true. Major Bowlby has been charged with incompetency and extravagance. The figures to back up those charges have been published and questions have been publicly asked of Major Bowlby, all of which he has passed up with the slighting remark that they were insignificant, and that while there were a few instances where he had underestimated certain work, there were other instances where he had overestimated. His own statement in this connection only goes to prove what has already been charged, incompetency and extravagance. By his excuse he has admitted his incompetency.

If the public charges of incompetency and extravagance are not sufficient upon which to remove Major Bowlby, we are informed that other evidence of a more serious nature is already in the hands of the Taxpayers League and will be submitted at the proper time.

This is not a question of one part of the county against the other. It is a question in which every taxpayer in the county is interested. It is not, as the Portland Journal says editorially, a local quarrel. It is a statewide quarrel with the taxpayers of the state on one side lined up against Major Bowlby and some special interests in Portland on the other.

WHAT MAY WE EXPECT?

Wonder how the taxpayers of Clatsop County like the treatment that has been accorded them by Major Bowlby, State Highway Engineer? Wonder if he made any promises to those people about hard-surfacing that he has not kept? Ask the taxpayers of that county whether or not any promises were made that the State would take over and hard-surface their roads. Ask them about the four or five miles of hard-surfacing that has been done in that county. If our information is correct there were a few miles of hard-surfacing done in Clatsop County this year under the direction and supervision of the State Highway Engineer, at a maximum of cost, and that now the work is completed the bills have been turned into the County of Clatsop to pay. If this information is correct, and we will have verification of it by next week, if it is, what may the taxpayers of Columbia County expect from the promises made by the State Highway Engineer?

\$800.00

was kept by Peter J. Kymys in a small drawer in his desk. He kept the drawer locked. He carried the key on a ring. This ring was attached to a chain. The chain in turn was fastened to a suspended button. Nevertheless the drawer was broken in, and the money stolen. He now keeps his money in Bank. It cost him \$800.00 to learn that a Bank Book is safer than a desk, a drawer, a key ring, a chain, and a suspender button.

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