

INTERESTING DISCUSSIONS.

Horace Davis on the Decline of Wheat.

The Mexican International Exposition and Other Important Matters Before the State Board of Trade—Necessity for the Export of Our Surplus.

The following report of a late meeting of the State Board of Trade will be found of great interest:

SAN FRANCISCO, October 9, 1894. The meeting opened at 1:30 p. m., with Vice-President J. S. Emery in the chair. The following members were present: J. S. Emery, Colonel J. P. Irish, A. A. Hubbard, L. C. McAfee, Tyler Beach, J. B. Lankershim, W. H. Mills, B. M. LeLong, Captain H. A. Messinger, S. H. Cole, J. A. Filcher, and J. A. Filcher.

The minutes of the last regular meeting were read and approved. The report of the Finance Committee was read and ordered placed on file. The Secretary explained that he had secured a new contract for lighting the exhibit rooms, which would reduce the lighting bill to about \$17 per week.

The committee appointed to meet with Mr. Walton reported that they did not meet, Mr. Walton being otherwise engaged at the time of the appointed meeting.

Mr. Filcher read the following report regarding the Perkins process: To the President and Members of the California State Board of Trade—Gentlemen: At your last meeting, after listening to the able remarks of Rev. A. T. Perkins on his patented process for preserving fruit, I was induced to adopt such a process as may be advisable to report to the board at its next regular meeting which is necessary to be done to secure the value of Mr. Perkins' process, sufficient to test the value of Mr. Perkins' process. I have been instructed to investigate the matter and call to his aid such persons as he may see fit, with the view of securing all needed information on the subject.

By direction of the Chair the Secretary was ordered to comply with the terms of the foregoing motion.

Secretary, gentlemen, I want to work on the lines indicated by Mr. Mills' motion, and am able to report to you very gratifying results.

I found Mr. Perkins was able to raise sufficient funds to construct a car, that A. T. Hatch was willing to provide sufficient fuel to load the car for an experimental trip, and that the Southern Pacific Railroad Company was willing to haul the car or otherwise to have the car hauled to Chicago and return.

Thus encouraging a most interesting view of the view of trying to secure a test through the agencies named before the close of the present fruit shipping season. I was gratified to find the agitation had interested parties anxious to put the process to a practical test, and to find I am able to report to you very gratifying results.

Mr. Mills moved that the report be placed on file and that the Secretary be instructed to keep on with the work.

Mr. Filcher—Knowing that the different Boards of Supervisors would meet about the first of November, I spent last week in the country. I first went to my own county, Placer, and secured from them an appropriation of \$100 for their exhibit here, and also an appropriation of \$50 for a better stand.

From there I went to Nevada City, and secured their promise to appropriate a proper amount to put themselves in affiliation with this board. From there I rode on the stage to Marysville and found that the Yuba County Board of Supervisors did not meet until November; however, I met two of the members, who said they would do all they could to secure the affiliation of their county with the Board of Trade. Then I went to Red Bluff, Tehama County. They had appropriated \$150 for a year's dues. I explained that the regular dues were \$15 per month and they then raised it \$30. I then went to Glenn County. They put themselves in affiliation with this board and appointed Mr. Speck, an energetic young man, to attend to installing an exhibit for them. I went to Colusa to meet them to pay the bill due and to continue their affiliation. They complained a good deal about the hard times, but finally said their Chairman, Mr. Arnold, would come down and see about it. We made six counties in five days and got four out of the six, and think I did pretty well.

The members of the board considered that Mr. Filcher had done very well.

Mr. LeLong—It has been rumored about

that Calaveras County had withdrawn from this board, and I would like to ask Captain Messenger what truth there is in that.

Captain Messenger—I have been very busy and have paid very little attention to the actions of the board. One of the members of our Board of Supervisors happened to be in the city while you were moving and came down to see the exhibit. He inquired of the first man he met where the Calaveras exhibit was to be placed. He was told that Calaveras had no exhibit; this he thought was a shame, but no one seemed to know anything about Calaveras. He reported this to the Board of Supervisors, who were put out to find that, after all they had put into the concern, they should have no place in the exhibit rooms, but they paid up to July. Mr. LeLong—Calaveras County occupies the best exhibit space in these rooms, and if there is any misunderstanding of the case by the Board of Supervisors they should be informed.

Captain Messenger—When I went to see the board this man, who had been there for some time, they paid \$135 the last time, and to these old moss-back counties \$150 is a pretty big bill. I went around and saw several members of the board, and I felt that I should know what I should do about this. I called to them and decided to come to this meeting, and when they understood matters I think they would have their affiliation with this board, and we pay their bills in full. Mr. LeLong—I have come down here at my own expense for the last two or three years to represent our Board of Supervisors, and do not propose to do so any longer. It was almost impossible for me to come to this meeting, as my time is greatly taken up. I am interested in the resolutions, and devote most of my time thereto.

Colonel Irish—I come here two or three times a week and find three things that attract great attention—the wheel, the electric apparatus and the mining exhibit. The people are interested in mining and notice this exhibit. I have a high opinion of the exhibit myself. I put in \$5,000 there and have a great regard for the county. I see that this board is continually abused because of its connection with the Southern Pacific Company. The newspapers have taken up the subject, and the relations of the board with the Southern Pacific Company are freely discussed. I am interested in this I think the company should give us some passes. Mr. LeLong—A gentleman is here who would like to speak to this board about an international exposition to be held in Mexico next year, and I would like to have the board give him a few minutes to talk on the subject. Gentlemen, I introduced you Mr. Quarre.

Emile Quarre—I have received some letters from a gentleman who is now in Mexico working for an international exposition to be held in the City of Mexico in 1895. He wishes to see the State Board of Trade to get them to induce the people to send some fruits over there as they do to London and New York.

Colonel Irish—The special interest would be our wines; we are specially interested in securing a market for our wine. I am told that the people further south are particularly fond of our wine, that it pleases the palates of the people of Guatemala and Central America, and I would like to see the State Board of Trade itself in Mexico. We desire to find a wider market for our wines. Your suggestion is of very great importance to our wine men, and I am of the opinion that it will be true.

Mr. Mills—I move that the subject of the international exposition be taken up with the State Board of Horticulture, the State Board of Agriculture and the State Board of Viticulture, and that the Secretary be instructed to invite the officers of these organizations to meet with us at our next meeting to consider this subject. I think we ought to ask the State for an appropriation to make an exhibit.

About twenty-five years ago I called upon a railroad President, who lived upon California-street hill; we sat looking out of a window down upon the city

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below us. While conversing and looking into the distance, he said he expected to live long enough to build railroad connections to the City of Mexico from San Francisco. I felt that he should fulfill his prophecies, and looked forward to the time when we should have direct communication with Mexico. A great deal of excitement was created by his statement that \$100,000,000 worth of calico and other cotton fabrics had been shipped to Mexico and Central America. Now we have direct communication with Mexico by the Southern Pacific.

The greatness of a country depends upon its enterprise. I am disposed to think we have more kinds of people in California, one full of enterprise and push, the other lacking energy. On the side of the railroad, between Davisville and Sacramento, is a ranch of 400 acres, on which over \$2,000 an acre has been spent. They began by planting mulberries. There was at that time quite an excitement over the growing of silk. They found that silk could not be cultivated in a large and speculative way. They went into it as though it was a lottery. The difficulty with silk is that nearly everything is done for speculation. In no other country would they have gone into it on so large a scale. Since then they have planted other things, such as oranges and other products. The other day the man came into my office and was quite overjoyed to find that the return on a crop of fruit was twenty-five per cent. He explained that it was the first carload which had not shown a loss of from \$5 to \$8.

You can always tell what a man is by the thing of which he boasts. I had the honor of being introduced to one Mr. Sullivan, and the force of the grip when he shook hands was almost enough to crush my hand. I spoke of his strength and, greeting him, he said, "I can get away with any of them." If a man boasts that he knows a horse, you will find a horseman; if a man boasts of being an edge of caris, you find a gambler; if a man boasts of his judgment of whisky you know what he is. It is the business of every-day life to be a judge of California enterprise. Now this suggestion of Mexico is a very important one to this board. If we can send our products to Mexico, why do we send them to London? We have a people at our door, in South America, consisting of 50,000,000 inhabitants. American articles have the preference with them. They use American edge-tools, American carpets, American wallpaper, English wallpaper is not desired, because they have the same pattern they have in our country. American patterns are changed every year. Now California has direct communication and shipping connection with 6,000,000 civilized inhabitants, and we do not master the opportunities afforded by that country. We are not an enterprising people—we are a speculative people.

Captain Messenger—I second Mr. Mills' motion, and it is something very important. It is certainly worthy of great consideration from this board. Colonel Irish—A number of great enterprises have originated in this board. In this board was devised the sending out of "California Whiskeys" throughout the United States and Canada; in this board the Midwinter Fair had its inception; in this board the exhibit of California products was fostered until it was something worthy to show as the products of California. Now we have the promise of a market easily accessible to our every-day growing land in California. The California wine market has lost in trade the produce markets, and what we want to do now is to recover some of that lost trade in a distant country. We must export our products. In a recent letter from Fresno an indictment against the Southern Pacific Company for giving a low rate on a long haul. They were supposed to give a low rate to San Francisco to El Paso, Texas, at a lower rate than they were shipping from nearer points, and this letter was a bitter indictment against the Southern Pacific Company. In this board the price paid on the proposition was one-half of one cent per ton per mile. It is only the hauls that the transportation company makes anything out of, and when the company will give a low rate on a long haul to get our goods to market, the people should be willing to pay a little higher rate on a short haul. But it is the fashion now in California when a man says anything about the Southern Pacific Company to back him up. I think we stand in need of a correction. I am inclined to impeach the transportation company. We are taking the people sufficiently into their confidence. I think they should give the people the facts. The 1,000,000 tons of goods we produce on our soil must find a market outside of this State. Now we must gain our profit on these exports by getting from the railroad company a low rate on a long haul. As for the transportation company, they must do as every one else does, make up the profit lost on a long haul by charging more on short hauls. It is something which is done in every line of business. A man sells an article to catch customers and may not make anything out of it, in the many even lose it. It is something which will get a higher price on some other article to make up that lost profit. He cannot sell all his goods without profit; if he runs his business that way he would soon go into bankruptcy. It is absolutely necessary that our people should be educated on this proposition. The more our surplus we export, the better it makes them. In my judgment there is a true and friendly feeling toward the producers by the transportation company, and it is something to be appreciated by the people because they have interests in common. We want to get our produce to outside markets; we are solitary cannot do it unless we get a low rate on a long haul. For that reason when I read this indictment in the letter from Fresno, I seemed to read an expression which was entirely in the interest of California. We should will that the transportation company should save itself from loss by securing a higher rate on a short haul. It is a highly commendable effort to secure a market in Mexico, and hope we will carry to this sister republic what they need and what we want to find a good market for.

Mr. Mills' motion to discuss the Mexican exhibit at the next meeting was then put before the board and carried.

The Secretary was asked how many people visited the exhibit rooms.

Mr. Filcher—The register shows an attendance here for the month of September of about 100,000. I would like to visit these rooms which hold very many of the products of the State, and I would like to see the State, as shown by the register, averaged forty-three and a fraction per day.

Mr. LeLong—The floor near the front door is completely worn out and will have to be replaced; if you will notice the nails are all sticking up out of the wood.

Mr. Filcher—We have fitted two large and two small registers since we have been here, and the remarks of the people have been invariably extravagant, such as "Magnificent," "Wonderful," "Superb," etc.

Mr. LeLong—Mr. McAfee and myself were appointed to review the Midwinter Fair Commissioners, and I presume Mr. McAfee has seen to them, as I have. We were not able to go together, for we had the opportunity the other was busy. I have seen

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Indian merchants and they laid down all their surplus wheat in England. In 1887 and 1888 prices began to drop considerably. I remember distinctly because I lost a good deal of money in the proposition. Prices ranged from \$1.25 to \$1.50 per hundred, rarely falling below \$1.20; rarely going above \$1.40, between 1888 and 1890. Still the producers kept up pretty well. Now when you come to 1891 and 1892 prices began to drop again. The railroads carried the wheat over the prairies and the steamship companies brought it to England. The surplus population of Europe flocked to Argentina, and then we had to compete with the cheap Italian labor. This was greatly felt by the American wheat-growers, and in 1893 prices began to drop again. When I went into business, wheat was raised on high-priced land. English land was high priced, and in England was raised in England. Now, from that time until to-day the price of wheat, which has been raised on cheap land with cheap labor, has been steadily increasing, and we cannot stand up against it with high-priced land and high-priced labor. Now, what are our chances here? We are raising our price, and we are increasing the growth of what is relatively on the decline, and I think the wheat shipments from this State will show a decline. We raise annually 1,000,000 tons of wheat, and only about 500,000 tons are used here; about 300,000 tons are used for flour, then we use an average of about 80,000 tons for the seed requires about 120,000 tons, making in all about 500,000 tons, which is about one-half of the crop. We have about 300,000 tons left, and we raise annually 1,000,000 tons of wheat, and we export to England, and that makes the price for the rest. Suppose we did reduce the production, Oregon raises a large surplus, and would keep the wheat down to Liverpool rates. I do not see that there is any bright prospect for the future. If we go south, we meet Chile, who is trying hard to get that market; he has a surplus of wheat to sell, and you meet Oregon and Australia; go to Kansas, and you meet California. I am not a pessimist, but I do not see any reasonable prospect to-day for any great expectation in the future of the grain business. Our position to-day is this: we have a crop of 1,000,000 tons of wheat, with a surplus of 500,000 tons, which must find a market in England, and no where else, and you have got to land upon the English market all the extra production of wheat. Mr. Mills—The low price of wheat has been attributed by some to the low price of silver; do you consider that this would have an effect upon the wheat market? Mr. Davis—Well, take for example India and Argentina; everything in India is raised on a silver basis. What is paid for a silver piece, and what is paid for a silver price and labor is paid for in silver. If the Indian grain-raiser gets 25 shillings, he gets exactly what he got 25 years ago; he gets his price in silver, and silver has not changed there in value. Go to a silver country and you will find that prices are the same as they were thirty years ago. Mr. Filcher—You think the price of silver has not deteriorated in those countries? Mr. Davis—In India the prices for labor and land are substantially the same as they were thirty years ago. Everything in Japan, except articles of import from the export, brings about the same price it did thirty years ago. If a man is able to sell his wheat for twenty-five shillings, he takes the result of his production in gold, and goes back to his country and gets twice as much silver for it. Mr. Hubbard—Why can't we sell wheat in France? Mr. Davis—France has a protective tariff and is often an exporter and importer at once. Mr. Mills—How far north is wheat grown?

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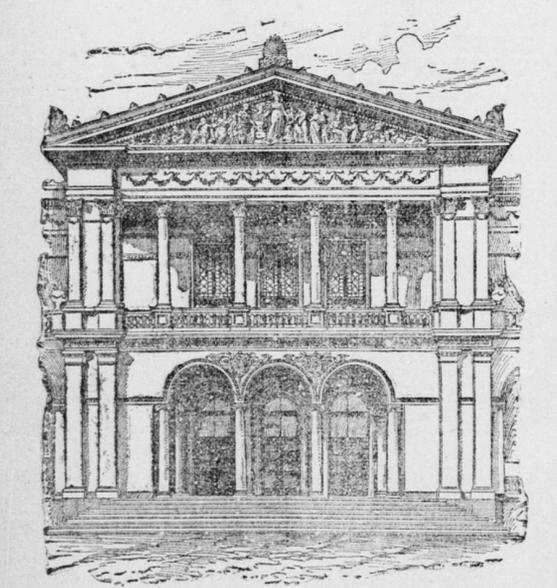
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