

ON LOCAL MATTERS

District Bills Considered in the House.

MEASURES PASSED WITHOUT DEBATE

Proposed Regulation of Street Railway Taxes.

CONSIDERABLE WORK DONE

This was District day in the House, and business was commenced as soon as the journal was read.

House 1865. To extend the charter of the Franklin Insurance Co.

Senate 91. To authorize the public printer to use government telegraph poles on the Capitol grounds.

House 5885. To amend the law relating to carrying and selling deadly or dangerous weapons.

House bill 8041 was then called up. It is to amend the criminal laws of the District of Columbia.

The bill was passed. It is as follows:

That persons charged in the Police Court of the District of Columbia in cases in which the only penalty upon conviction for the offense is a fine not to exceed \$50 may give security for their appearance for trial or for further hearing, either by giving bond to the satisfaction of the court or by depositing money as collateral security in such amount as the court may direct.

Section 2. That all cases in the District of Columbia where a defendant is sent to jail or to the workhouse in default of the payment of a fine shall be released upon the payment of the balance of the fine due by him, after crediting thereon the amount equal to the proportion the time thus served by him in jail or workhouse bears to the whole time he was to serve under the sentence.

Railway Legislation.

Mr. Babcock then called up the bill (House 5149) to authorize the Capital Railroad Company to use the double overhead trolley system on the Navy Yard bridge.

The bill was passed without debate.

Senate bill 824 was then called up. It authorizes the Washington and Annapolis Railroad Company to extend its tracks one-half mile within the District lines.

The following provision of the bill is of interest: The company shall furnish suitable and convenient houses, with suitable conveniences for the public, as required by the Commissioners of the District of Columbia, and shall run the same in connection with the public improvements for the convenience, comfort and safety of passengers, and shall run cars as often as the public convenience may require.

Section 2. That the bill be approved by the Commissioners of the District. Every failure to comply with the conditions of this section shall render the company liable to a fine of \$50, to be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction at the suit of the Commissioners of the District.

The bill was passed as it came from the Senate.

Mr. Babcock called up Senate bill 2764, for the relief of the heirs of Pom K. King.

This bill provides that the title to the property of the deceased shall be granted and conveyed to the heirs of the said Pom K. King, in trust for the heirs of Pom K. King, subject to the dower of the widow of the said Pom K. King.

The bill was passed without debate.

The next measure considered was Senate bill 1081, to vest the title of certain real estate in the District in its owners, the heirs of Jane Hall.

The bill was passed.

Mr. Babcock, relieving Charlotte J. Gottwald from the duties of the office relating to the alien ownership of land in the District of Columbia.

The bill was passed without amendment.

Taxes of Street Railways.

Then Mr. Babcock called up House bill 8121, to regulate taxes upon street railways in the District.

The bill is as follows:

That every street railroad company operated within the District of Columbia shall annually pay a franchise tax to the tax collector of the District of five-eighths of one percentum of the entire gross earnings of such company. There shall be levied and collected, in addition to such franchise tax, upon all of the real estate of said companies, a tax in the same manner and to the same extent as upon all other real estate in the District of Columbia.

The following named companies, to wit, the Capital Traction Company, the Metropolitan Railroad Company and the Columbia Railway Company, shall each pay, in addition to the franchise tax, an annual tax of 4 per centum on their entire gross earnings. All other street railway companies in the District shall pay an annual tax of 2 per centum upon their gross earnings, in addition to said franchise tax.

The laws now in force in the District with reference to the collection of taxes, the creation of liens therefor, and the time and mode of making assessments and collections, are hereby made applicable to the subjects of this act, except in so far as the provisions hereinafter made are incompatible therewith; and all laws, parts of laws or provisions in any charter of any said companies to the contrary or inconsistent with the provisions hereof, are hereby repealed. This law shall take effect from and after the last day of July, 1898.

Mr. Babcock explained the inequities existing in the law relating to the taxation of street railways in the District, and said the bill proposed to correct these and put all the roads upon an equal footing.

He stated that the bill would yield \$2,000,000 annually in excess of the amount now received from street railways.

Mr. Hepburn said this bill does not present a fair method of taxation. He said the Capital Traction Co. is capitalized at \$12,000,000. The stock of the Metropolitan is at \$10,000,000. This value stands at \$1,000,000 in property and \$10,000,000 in franchise.

Under the present law, the Metropolitan will pay taxes to the amount of \$120,000, if the franchise paid taxes at the rate of the other property it would yield \$300,000. He said the system of taxation proposed by the bill was therefore inadequate.

Mr. O'Connell of New York defended the bill. He said there was no city in the country where the street railroad tax system was so faulty as in Washington.

The bill was passed.

The Be-Line.

The next bill (House 5541) (prints of March 11), defining the rights of the purchasers of the Belt railway. This bill was published in full in The Star last week.

Mr. Grosvenor offered an amendment to the Be-Line bill providing that all indebtedness of the company shall be paid before the road can be equipped and operated. It was adopted without debate.

Mr. Hepburn offered an amendment authorizing any street railway company in the District to purchase any intersecting road and equip and operate it, providing but one fare is charged over the entire line.

Bailey and Mr. Coward opposed the Hepburn amendment. Mr. Coward said the consolidation of street railways usually operated to the economy of the railroad.

Mr. Bailey thought it would be unwise to incorporate a general consolidation feature in a bill of this character.

Mr. Newlands of Nevada made a speech of some length to explain, as he said, "the general railroad situation in the District." He reviewed the history of the consolidation of the Rock Creek and the Capital Traction railroads.

Mr. Hepburn's amendment to the Be-Line bill was defeated.

The Eckington Bill.

The bill was then passed, and Mr. Babcock called up the Eckington bill.

BECK WAS MURDERED

Verdict of the Jury in the Case Rendered Saturday.

Detective Making a Thorough Investigation to Ascertain the Perpetrator - But Slight Clues.

The autopsy and inquest held Saturday in the case of the aged baker, Ernest Beck, whose body was found in the river after he had been absent for nearly two months, as published in Saturday's Star, showed that the old man was murdered and his body afterward thrown overboard. It is the belief of the doctors and the police that the body was thrown in the water soon after the murder was committed, but members of the dead man's family are a different opinion. They believe the remains were deposited in the river but a few days ago.

Inspector Mattingly yesterday afternoon detailed Detective Muller on the case, and he is making a thorough investigation. The autopsy made by Deputy Coroner Glazebrook showed four distinct wounds on the head, as well as a number of broken ribs and other evidences of violence about different parts of the body. It is possible that these wounds were made by a dull hatchet or some similar weapon, or by a blackjack or slingshot, and after being knocked down he was doubtless stamped upon by those who assaulted him.

It is certain, Dr. Glazebrook said, that death had taken place before the body was thrown in the water, but just what length of time he could not say. He expressed no doubt about the cause of death, the condition of the lungs showing that it did not result from drowning. Dr. Glazebrook said that the injuries to the chest were inflicted after the victim's death.

Testimony of Witnesses. Clarence Rowland, who found the body in the shallow water near Giesboro' Point, appeared before the jury and described the position of the body when he first saw it. Policemen Reagan and Dyer, to whom the body was reported, told how they got the body ashore. The condition of the clothing on the dead man may help the police in the efforts to establish a motive. Part of the trousers had disappeared, as the water and mud had rotted the woolen material. But there was the coat left, and in the inside pocket of this garment the dead man's pocket watch was found. They had evidently not been disturbed. Beck carried no pocket book.

Henry Beck, son of the dead man, told the jury about his father's movements the night of January 15, and said the latter only took 40 cents from home with him when he left early in the morning. He said he had told him that several colored men had held him up on the bridge crossing the canal about two weeks prior to the night of his murder. He expressed the belief that his father was killed and his body thrown in the James Creek canal, from where it was afterward washed out in the river.

Detectives at Work. Mrs. Beck, widow of the murdered man, was visited by Detective Muller and she told him all about her husband. Her husband, she said, had been crossing the canal for forty-two years and never before, she said, had he been troubled. About his experience on the bridge two weeks before he was killed, she said, he had been drinking and when he stopped at a man's wagon he was ordered away. Even this experience, he had told her, he excused him for working regularly at Berger's bakery. During the week he never drank anything, but he would have his beer Saturday night.

Had it not been that he was so badly beaten up, Mrs. Beck declared, she would believe he had fallen into the canal accidentally. She believes the body was kept in a shed or house somewhere in the vicinity, and thrown in the water after she had seen it. She says her husband's life was insured for about enough to defray his funeral expenses and pay the remainder to her. She said she had a child, as heretofore published in The Star. Mr. Beck had visited several friends in the neighborhood of 45 and W streets in the month of this year. It was on a Saturday, while before the hour of midnight that he was seen to start home.

He had probably started to walk through M street, a direct route to his home, and it is presumed he started home this way on the fatal Saturday night. No one seems to have seen him after he left 4 1/2 street.

A Singular Feature. This is a singular part of the night's transaction, for M street is the principal thoroughfare in that section, and a number of pedestrians are usually to be seen between 4 1/2 street and the bridge, as well as east of the bridge.

It was ascertained this morning that on the night of the murder, or early Sunday morning, the story of Leonard A. Ehrman's fraud, on M street not far from the bridge, was robbed, and if Beck was murdered near the bridge the burglars may have committed both crimes.

A Star reporter learned that people in the vicinity of the canal had been indulging in some gossip about an occurrence on M street the night the two crimes were committed. One report was that two men had been seen standing on the street acting suspiciously. One of them, the report had it, climbed a ladder to the roof of the store, and the other was standing at the corner of Half street opposite Ehrman's store. At the approach of a policeman, Mr. Ehrman's store was closed, and the man who was standing at the corner of Half street and the other disappeared.

John Bean's Story. A colored man named John Bean, who was reported to have seen the man, was interviewed by a Star reporter. He said he had seen but one man. This man was standing at the corner, and asked him for the time. Before reaching the corner, however, he saw a man standing in the street near an excavation, but he had disappeared when he reached the corner. He was unable to describe the man, but he was white or colored. This happened at a late hour, he said, but he could not tell just what time it was.

Reason of Motive. Detective Muller has found nothing in the case as yet to show a motive for the crime. It may have been robbery, but in this event it is thought that the inside pocket of the victim would have been rifled, and it is not believed that the man's assailant would stop to examine the books and papers that were in the pocket. It is suggested that when on his way home Beck reached Half street about the time the burglars were operating.

He had probably said something to the burglars. The latter, fearing identification and a term in prison, put off the old man's life in order that his lips would be sealed.

Hands Across the River. S. E. Kiser in the Cleveland Leader.

"In times of peace it is a Democrat."

"But at present I ain't thinkin' much o' that."

"When there comes a foreign enemy to slay And the stars and stripes are waved by Uncle Sam, An American's the kind o' chap I am."

"The President who's name's things is mine, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line."

"At present I'm a Yankee through and through, My politics is old red-white-and-blue, Hurrah for Uncle Sam and for Bill McKinley, too."

"Here's a hand for you, my brother, put 'er there, You're the kind of stuff I honor, so you air, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line, He'll find your kum-buddy right in line."

"I'm a good Republican until the day, When our foreign enemies go to gittin' gay, I'll stand with the stars and stripes and put politics away."

"The Consul at Havana town is mine, He's the sort of chap we need in our line, He's the sort of chap we need in our line, He's the sort of chap we need in our line."

"We're a big crowd now on which we can agree, Hurrah for Uncle Sam and for Pittsburgh Lee, Hurrah for Uncle Sam and for Pittsburgh Lee, Hurrah for Uncle Sam and for Pittsburgh Lee."

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NEARLY COMPLETED

The Kearsarge and Kentucky to Be Launched This Month.

POWERFUL FLOATING FORTRESSES

Have Been Built in a Remarkably Short Time.

TREMENDOUS BATTERIES

By dint of great industry the Newport Navy Shipbuilding and Dry Dock Company will launch the finest of our new battle ships on the 21st of the present month—not quite twenty months from the day the keels were laid. The ships could have been launched two months ago, but, to facilitate their final completion, they have been kept purposely on the stocks till a magnificent new crane of great capacity could be erected to handle the armor and other heavy weights yet to go in the vessels.

The dual event of two ships of such magnitude being launched on the same day will mark an era in the history of our new navy, while each ship in itself will be the heaviest mass of the kind ever moved from keel blocks to water in this country. Five thousand tons of steel—the equivalent of a couple of blocks of good-sized houses—is a tremendous mass to transfer under any circumstances, but to do so without the slightest strain on the structure, is something calling for skill and careful forethought, and yet that is the sum of only one of the unfinished details.

The ships were provided for by act of Congress approved March 2, 1895, and on the 21st of the following January their construction was awarded to the Newport Navy Company for the individual contract price of \$2,250,000, without the usual increment of a bonus for excess of speed.

The "Kearsarge" and the "Kentucky" are navigable fortresses of a formidable type, and in action would render a good account of themselves in both of Old Glory. The dimensions of one apply equally to the other, and their general data are: Length on load water line, 308 feet; beam, extreme, 42 feet 5 inches; draft, normal displacement, 11,225 tons; maximum displacement, all ammunition included, 12,225 tons; maximum indicated horse power (estimated), 10,000; maximum speed, required by contract, 16 knots; normal coal supply, 400 tons; normal range, 1,210 miles; complement, officers, seamen and marines, 511.

The novel characteristic of these ships is the fact that they are a true draught of water—twenty-five feet when fully laden, by which they may enter practically any harbor of importance along our coast. The eight-inch guns, which are pointed in the same general direction and swing from side to side by the one great turning gear, engaging the lower half. The design has been seriously questioned here and abroad, and