SCRANTON TRIBUNE

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General Manager.

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THE SCRANTON TRIBUNE.

SCRANTON, APRIL 21, 1894.

THE EXACT difference between the Reed rule for counting a quorum and the rule which this congress has chosen is one. Mr. Reed did his own counting, whereas Mr. Crisp will have two tellers, and yet not be happy.

Burying the Wires.

Boston's board of aldermen evidently disagrees with representatives of electrical companies who contend that underground wires are a practical impossibility. It has just ordered not only the Western Union Telegraph company, the New England Telegraph and Telephone company and the Boston Electric Light company to place their wires in buried conduits, between this date and Nov. 18 next, upon pain of forfeiture of all franchise rights, but it has also extended this command to cover all the feed and return wires of the West End Street Railway company's overhead trolley system. And what is more, these companies are preparing to obey.

This action renews attention to one prominent feature of advanced municipal government, that is to say the feature which emphatically dissents from making sweeping free grants of city franchises to companies that afterward interpose their sullen opposition to measures of street reform. Whatever they may say for publication, it is an undisputed fact that most electricians really favor underground wires as offering the best kind of service with the smallest need of repairs. They frankly confess that the old, overhead system, with wires constantly breaking under weight of wind, sleet or snow, and subject to disarrangement with every variation of the barometer, is a costly old nuisance, as much out of date as is the stage coach or the old style jaunting car that ran on our first steam railroads. Electrical science has advanced far ahead of such primitive methods, and wherever public sentiment has had the courage to insist upon protecting its rights, the overhead system has been satisfactorily abolished in favor of well-insulated conduits.

In our own city we already begin to see partial concessions to the growing demand for underground wires. Instead of great net works of sizzling and hissing live wires, ready to snap at any instant and, dangling down, to set fire to property or carry a menace to life, we are gradually getting large cables, by which the liability to breakage is almost entirely removed. As yet these big strands are stretched, as before, over the heads of passers by and supported by poles that deface the streets and occupy valuable room. The service is improved by them, but it is not yet freed from atmospheric influences, and it seemingly does not occur to the electrical companies that by the time they get their overhead cable system into smoothly working order they will, in all probability, have expended more than enough money to have paid for the one ultimate improvement of buried wires which, anything now go will sooner or later represent a heavy additional expense.

CERTAIN JOURNALS in Luzerne want to abolish the Bible-kissing oath in court, for fear it will disseminate disease germs. That book, come to think of it, never was really popular down there—especially the decalogue.

REPRESENTATIVE HOOKER, who recently locked horns with Lemuel Ely Quigg, Gotham's ex-journalist congressman, is nursing a severe feeling of disappointment. Not only was Lemuel able to hold his own, but he actually turned all the tables on that veteran Democratic swashbuckler, amid deafening applause. It doesn't pay to be too belligerent.

CONGRESS UNDOUBTEDLY does right in declining to pry into the private characters of its members. Their public shortcomings are plenty large enough to occupy all possible criticism.

Our Fish Preserves.

It is evident to all who are interested in the preservation of game fish in our few unpolluted Pennsylvania streams that unless radical action be soon taken, the day of trout fishing will quickly pass. Already the streams that used to give freely of their shining treasures to expert anglers with bait or fly have begun to manifest an extreme stinginess. Not even the annual efforts at replenishing these streams, begun after most of the finny inhabitants had been extracted, are adequate to stay the ruthless decimation; and it is a question with serious students of this problem whether any action on the part of the state can avail to avert a total extinction.

As with our forests and minerals, the early lavishness of which seemed to defy all possible extravagance, we have permitted the natural resources of our once well-stocked streams to slip gradually away, regardless of occasional warnings, until poachers and bipedal hogs have achieved well nigh their perfect work of waste. The laws which exist today would perhaps be adequate to stay this slaughter if they could be adequately enforced; but from the very circumstances of the case, their enforcement is next to impossible. There is no fish warden, however vigilant and determined, who can be personally present at all the centers of violation; nor is there any practical plan whereby a force of deputies can be maintained sufficient to patrol the waterways, unearth the secret fish traps and discover the seines that constitute, in spite of legal prohibition, the great menace to our fish preserves.

The difficulty, if it can at this late moment be solved at all, will need to be approached from many sides. A strengthening of present laws would be one good step; but behind these statutes it is necessary to place a vigilant public sentiment awake to all the violations and ready to make personal sacrifice in order that the violators may be apprehended and brought to justice. The man who chuckles because he has caught trout out of season, or by illegal means, should be made to feel that instead of having done a clever and a smart thing, he has committed an act that carries with it general contempt and forfeits for him the general esteem of all his honest neighbors and friends. Such a sentiment does not exist today among the masses, and until it does, all legal steps will be futile to reach the real root of the evil.

THE INDIVIDUAL who started the baseless rumor that Secretary Gresham would resign is responsible for a terrible quantity of popular disappointment.

A QUORUM which was visibly present in the house of representatives but which, for partisan purposes, refused to respond to the roll call, was first counted by the speaker on Jan. 29, 1890. Mr. Reed, on that occasion, simply substituted the evidence of sight for the evidence of sound; and the supreme court, in subsequently passing on the validity of legislation enacted under the operation of this rule, ratified the substitution as one fully as proper in law as it was fair and necessary in fact. The Democratic party usually requires more than four years and three months in which to bring itself around to the adoption of Republican precedents; but under recent expert tuition it has evidently acquired a more rapid capacity for learning.

BASE BALL, like pugilism, is a creation of the newspapers; and like pugilism, it often does its best to show how little it appreciates the favor.

Hoguery's Twin Triumphs.

One year ago the legislature of Michigan enacted a bill which imposed a tax of 5 per cent. on all property of the value of $500 and upward, inherited by corporations or collateral heirs, and a tax of 1 per cent. on inheritances of lineal heirs amounting to $5,000 or more, said revenues to go into the state's general fund. After the state had, under this law, collected $150,000 at the expense of those persons so unfortunately fortunate as to have had rich relatives or friends, a test case was carried to the Michigan supreme court, which in a unanimous opinion, has just declared the Doran inheritance tax law unconstitutional.

The grounds upon which this finding was granted are technical, rather than ethical. The constitution of Michigan provides that the proceeds from all specific taxes shall apply in payment of interest upon the educational fund. Inasmuch as there is today in Michigan no educational interest debt to which this $150,000 revenue can be applied, the court is under the obvious necessity of declaring the tax unconstitutional. Were the next legislature to create an educational debt sufficient to accommodate the revenue from an inheritance tax, the Doran bill could be re-enacted and under the terms of this supreme court ruling would become a valid law.

But what is to be said of the ethics of a law which, for the sole purpose of despoiling these persons in every community who have the thrift, economy and genius to succeed in business, would levy a ghoulish blackmail over the coffins of deceased testators? In what respect does such a law differ morally from the outcast who furtively pries open the vault of the tomb for the purpose of robbing the jewelled dead? Take the inheritance tax, hitch it to the income tax, and you will have as vicious a pair of legalized schemes of theft as knavery ever devised withal.

NEW YORK has had six constitutional conventions, and not one of them has had the good sense to relegate the government of cities to the taxpayers thereof. It is time home rule got a foot-hold in the Empire state.

IF THE citizens of Mr. Breckinridge's district want a cad, a hypocrite and a moral leper to represent them in congress, he will be triumphantly reelected. But it is to be borne in mind that the talk in his behalf has as yet emanated principally from himself.

One Question Asked.

It is the Philadelphia Record which asserts that—"There are mills in Pittsburg in which the English language is not heard among the workingmen from one week's end to another. The barbarian hordes that invaded Italy under Alaric and Attila carried with them their wives and children. But the modern Huns and Vandals leave their wives behind them. In their invasions of the industrial fields of Pennsylvania these nomads refuse to be encumbered with the social impediment of a family. Instead of making permanent settlement in the conquered regions, after the custom of their ancestors, they return home with their spoils in a few years, and are succeeded by fresh irruptions from Hungary and Sarmatia. Whilst the moral sense of the country has been terribly shocked by polygamy in Utah, the twin evil of polyandry in Pennsylvania seems to excite no concern." "If the importation of this forbidding element cannot be arrested" adds the Record, "the laws of this commonwealth at least can be so amended as to limit the suffrage to such persons as may be capable of its exercise."

This is gospel truth. But it has a strange sound coming from the organ of a party which has let slip no conceivable opportunity to play on the prejudices that arise through immigration, and which has for its creed the theory that government dare not be made effective, when necessary, through centralization or abridgement of the personal liberties of the people. An amendment to the constitution of Pennsylvania excluding from the suffrage, after a sufficient preparatory period, all citizens who cannot read and write the English language and interpret intelligently the constitution of the United States, might enjoy the support of the Philadelphia Record, but would it be equally acceptable to the Democratic party?

THERE IS NO disposition among those who favor the raising of what is called the Cameron issue to do any injustice to Pennsylvania's senior senator. All they want is for him to stand up and take his medicine like any other candidate.

VIEWS OF One Woman.

There is one man who comes into our office pretty often and who knows more gossip than any five girls I ever met. Now, if there is anything I positively loathe it is a mean gossip. Fortunately I am able to state that I don't know many, but if the truth were admitted there is a very little number composing this class who were never correctly labeled, but whom the title would fit nevertheless. You know if ever there is a woman who knows a particularly risky story and repeats it to her woman friends, it was always her husband who confided it to her first. So the men are really more responsible for gossip than they generally confess.

* * *

The man above mention gossips so prettily, however, and so entertainingly that he probably doesn't get all the condemnation he deserves. He is a chronic growler about something or other, only somehow he doesn't growl with enough ferocity to disturb his listeners. He it was who complained the other day in my hearing about the temporary quarters of the high school, and yesterday he was wondering what some mothers must be thinking of to allow young girls of 14 or 16 years of age to linger around the railway stations of the central city at the hours when the principal passenger trains are coming in and going out. He said that there are many of these girls who seem to have no other aim in life than to be on the platforms at such times and that it is a dangerous amusement. He declared with positive assurance that these foolish creatures were already pretty well known by the traveling men who make frequent trips to Scranton and that if the average traveling man were not a heap whiter than he is painted there would be more ruined homes than are chronicled already. Traveling men have more opportunities for flirtation than the girls who haunt railway stations would be willing to confess; so said our friendly gossip, and when we teasingly accused him of not being an unwilling object of attention from young girls, he shook his head decidedly, and remarked: "Nixy! but I know the names of several of these girls, and I can tell you what, even if I am middle aged and getting gray at my temples, some of them would be perfectly ready to flirt with me if I gave 'em the slightest encouragement. Girls need watching," and after uttering this seditious sentiment he went out and took the elevator before any of us could shy a book at his head.

* * *

Then we have a political gossip. If you had him on the editorial staff of THE TRIBUNE you would gain the reputation of being the greatest prognosticator of our times. He knows the secret motive actuating the inmost heart of every aspirant for office, past or present, in this city. He doesn't care anything about girls, and wouldn't notice the difference if he saw a group of them standing in front of the Young Women's Christian association or at the door of fashionable billiard parlors, or beheld them promenading up and down the Lackawanna and Western platform in defiance of Officer Shafter and W. E. Hallstead combined. If they blockaded his way too much so that he couldn't go up to M. W. Lowry's office, or anywhere else, he might happen to be headed for, he would say absent-mindedly and coaxingly, "Run home to your mamma, Sissy!" and that would be the last he would remember, whether it was your pretty daughter or only a typewriter like myself, and, too, even if we were so silly as to make eyes at him; but just let him see Mr. Wormser and Prothonotary Pryor talking together mysteriously and solemnly in the shelter of a big telephone pole, where they fondly imagine themselves to be out of sight, and he immediately begins to wonder what they are fixing up. Generally before night he knows. Just let him behold Mr. Fellows or any other politicians in a carriage belonging to a funeral procession and he will straightway tag after the line to find out who the corpse is and if there are any provable delegates in the bereaved family. That's the kind of a gossip our political friend is, and I tell you he knows a lot.

* * *

He knows who is related, to whom and is prepared to state, whenever he spies an office-seeker talking with a politician as to what the outcome of the conference is going to be—says he can tell by the attitudes of the two men. He knows just how long John Thomas is going to continue in that court house, which is more than John knows himself, and he can divulge—but he won't—just what some man by the name of Powell will do with a few of the men who are hanging around him at the present time. But I tell you all this keeps him hustling; and I don't see that he makes much by it. Now, if he would devote some of his efforts to getting points on stocks or the next spot where a real estate boom will break out, he might be of some use to his day and generation, but at present he is a trifle of a bore, and as my employer is only a sort of a politician at odd spells he doesn't care for political pointers to any prodigious degree. Hence we welcome the visit of the gossip who talks about girls more than the other fellow who is "up" on politics.

* * *

I, for one, am glad that Scranton is to have base ball this year. I don't care anything about base ball, consider it fast and vulgar to go to see games, but my employer and his assistants and most of the men with whom he does business hold to a different opinion, and he is apt to say on hot summer afternoons: "Miss Helen, I find I have to go to Providence on urgent business, and I don't believe there'll be anybody in this afternoon, so you may lock up early and go home." I notice there's something about base ball like Christmas time—it sort o' makes a man feel at peace with all mankind. That's the way my employer acts when he is setting out. I'm never around when he comes back, but have been told that in the history of base ball in Scranton there have been times when my employer was not the sweet tempered and courteous gentleman he usually appears to be, but that he has been known to "ramp and tear," to use the expressive phrase of my informant.

* * *

My theory as to this universal sweetness and light that seems to pervade the atmosphere about a man just as he is going to start off to see a game, is that in his heart he knows it to be a sort of silly way to spend his valuable time and his quarter of a dollar, and that like the boy who is about to play truant and steal a holiday, he feels it his duty to be particularly adorable before disappearing so as to ward off any possible criticisms of his imaginary motives. I'm glad we are to have base ball even if our club never amounts to anything until about the next to the last game of the season.

HELEN WAYNE.

Due to Laziness and Stinginess.

Wilkes-Barre Record.

While the past year has been unusually fruitful of crime in this country, and although the authorities have not been able to catch and punish as many of the criminals as they could wish, it does not by any means prove that reign of terror exist in the community. Neither does it prove that that the local authorities do not possess the necessary means to turn down these criminals and punish them. Their slowness in this respect is not through lack of funds. It is the lack of energy and false economy that halts at the outlay of sufficient money to provide for the rest and conviction of the wrongdoers.

Overproduction of Professions.

Philadelphia News.

The medical colleges turn out doctors at a rate of 5,000 per year. The growth of population is about 3 per cent. per annum, against 8 per cent. increase in the number of doctors. As the public health remains unimpaired, it is evident that the medical department of professional business is overdone. There are too many lawyers and doctors, as all the lawyers and doctors are ready to admit.

Dwells in Audible Silence.

Washington Post.

Senator Gorman is spending considerable time keeping quiet.

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