

THE RIVER PRESS

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WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 1888.

The senate is now quite earnestly engaged in discussing the republican tariff bill introduced in that body before the late election. The programme of the majority seems to be how not to pass it and still make the people believe they are in favor of it.

The split in the G. A. R. promises to be a more serious one than was at first apprehended. A very large and influential body of members, believing the organization has been prostituted for political purposes, proposes to form a separate one, avowedly political in its make up.

Poor, old De Lesseps will not live to see his Panama canal scheme carried to a successful completion. The great enterprise has received a permanent check for want of funds and more cannot be obtained in France without the guaranty of that government which is refused. De Lesseps' only hope now is to make the building of the canal an international undertaking in which the United States and England are to pool with France. Slight hopes of that.

HELENA has been enjoying a tourment of song in which many of the sweet warblers of the territory have taken part. The capital papers regard it as the finest array of home talent ever heard in Montana. This may be so from a Helena standpoint, but the music loving people of the capital city have never heard a northern Montana opera sung by the Romes and Julietts of the gray runners of the ranges. Ah! there is music that will keep one awake o' nights.

In view of the 80,000 majority cast for Harrison in Kansas last month the significance of the following from the St. Paul Globe may be readily seen: "The committee of experts who have examined the county records of Kansas find the land mortgages to amount to \$235,000,000, bearing eight per cent interest, and making a total in excess of the value of the wheat crop of about 50 per cent. To this private indebtedness should be added a vast burden in the way of state and county debts, giving an impression not provocative of much glowing enthusiasm. Still the voting there indicates that high taxation is popular in that state."

SPRINGER'S ULTIMATUM.

Congressman Springer is chairman of the house committee on territories. In western parlance, he "holds the top hand" in determining the fate of all bills concerning the admission of the territories. Others may propose, but it is Springer who disposes, and here is how he proposes to dispose of the question. He says:

I am willing to consider the division of Dakota and the admission of two states, but I shall insist upon the admission of New Mexico at the same time. We cannot accomplish anything in this house without respect for the opinions and beliefs of others. Dakota and her friends are right in claiming what they deem their rights, but they should not forget that other territories also have rights that they cannot ignore. New Mexico, Montana and Washington must not be forgotten, and I shall not permit New Mexico to be especially designated for political emancipation.

The republicans, according to Senator Platt, are willing to consider favorably Congressman Cox's suggestion that the question of the division of Dakota be submitted to a vote of the people of that territory; but it appears they are not inclined to admit New Mexico. It is not held that that territory has not sufficient population to entitle it to statehood. These facts are admitted, for New Mexico has a population of 175,000 and taxable values, amounting \$130,000,000. This showing overcomes all objections on that score; hence the ground for opposition must be looked for elsewhere. It probably may be found in the report of a republican member of the committee on territories who objected to the admission of New Mexico, "because the agriculturists of the territory were so far sunk in superstition that they asked the priests to bless the seed time and the harvest."

Here, then, is the ostensible cause of the opposition to New Mexico. Spanish Catholics compose a majority of the agriculturists of the territory. This, we say, is the ostensible cause, but the real cause is New Mexico is democratic, and if admitted as a state it would elect two democratic United States senators. And that is a contingency which cannot for a moment be serenely contemplated by our republican brethren.

But as has been stated Congressman Springer proposes that New Mexico shall be admitted with the rest of her sister territories now applying for statehood. This is his ultimatum and we believe he will not yield it to whatever pressure may be brought to bear against him. The house will, doubtless, adopt his views, pass his amended omnibus bill and throw the responsibility of rejecting it and hence of keeping out the territories or delaying their admission, upon the senate. This will be about the size of it.

CLERK BARCLAY EXPLAINS.

HELENA, December 15, 1888.

To the Editor of the River Press: Sir:—In the Butte Inter Mountain of December 5th I notice a clipping from the River Press, headed "A Rotten Mail Service." This article surprised me somewhat, for though I cannot claim personal acquaintance with the editor of the River Press, I have always considered him, judging from the few copies of his paper that I have had the pleasure of reading, a gentleman of good sense and good judgment. Permit me to say that in all the twelve months of my residence in Montana I have not had one complaint against the mail service from Benton.

If the service is so hopelessly "rotten" why have not some of the intelligent citizens of Benton had the good sense to complain to the department and give us a chance to correct the evil? To quietly let a matter of this kind run on, and then "open up" on the service in the language indulged in by the editor of the Press is an insult to the department and an injustice to the local agents entrusted to the management of the service in this district. Such attacks are worse than useless. If the River Press has ever before had occasion to refer to the "rotten mail service" on this portion of God's footstool, such reference has escaped the attention of the department; it being impossible for the agents of the department to carefully search all the papers in the country for editorial comment on the mail service.

Every complaint referred to the department—through its local agents, or otherwise—is given prompt and courteous attention and thorough investigation provided such complaint contains the necessary information and such data as any man of ordinary intelligence would give in making a complaint of this sort. But the delay, or even the loss of one small paper, among the thousands of similar packages sent daily through the mails, is not "evidence of more than rotten mail service;" not so much as the lurid rhetoric indulged in by the editor of the River Press is evidence of unholy joy in the discovery of an opportunity to prejudice the people against the local officers of the department.

When a man has worked a year, as I have, to give the people of Montana a good mail service; when he promptly answers and investigates all complaints referred to him, it hurts him to find himself the object of unjust newspaper attacks. If the editor of the River Press cannot understand this let him imagine himself in the place of

Yours Respectfully,

ROBERT J. BARCLAY, Chief Clerk.

In justice to Mr. Barclay and in order that our territorial contemporaries and readers may understand how anxious the gentleman is to correct the evils of our mail service we publish the letter in full. The article which called it forth appeared in this journal the 23d of last October. It was headed "A Rotten Mail Service" and set forth the fact that on the 17th of that month a letter had been mailed at Sun River Crossing to a party in Benton requesting him to inform a certain gentleman that his brother was lying at the point of death in the hospital at Fort Shaw and that if he wished to see him alive he should lose no time in reaching the Fort. That letter was five days in reaching Benton, and was received the day following the burial of the young man at Sun River Crossing.

In commenting upon this fact the River Press, after stating that the distance between Sun River Crossing and Benton is less than eighty miles, said:

We do not know who is responsible for the inexcusable delay in the transmission of the mail in this instance. Some one is and whoever he may be he should be bounced from his position and then kicked out of the territory. Trains are running daily between Benton and Ulm and mail is carried from the latter place to Sun River Crossing in two or three hours, therefore no valid reason can be given why five days should be required to pass mail matter between points which should be covered in one or two days at the furthest. Some of the servants as well as the service, need the attention of the authorities. The service is rotten."

The River Press has nothing to retract in the above; on the contrary, it reiterates the opinion therein expressed. It was not aware, however, that Mr. Barclay is in any way responsible for the short comings of the mail service in that particular instance. Had it known where to fix the responsibility there would have been no hesitancy upon the part of the River Press to name the officer or officers, or place or places at fault.

Mr. Barclay is mistaken if he thinks the River Press deals alone in isolated cases, or that it has quietly let this condition of things run along and then suddenly "opened up" on the mail service. He certainly has not been even a casual reader of the River Press during the past year, nor has he read any one of the other territorial papers to much advantage if he labors under the delusion that our Montana mail service is not a most wretched one. Complaints are being made in every portion of the territory concerning it. Democratic as well as republican journals join in making them. The latter have charged the fault to the indifference of the present administration to the welfare of the territories, and promise that a different order of things will be inaugurated when Mr. Harrison directs the machinery of the government. This is pure and unadulterated nonsense.

The fact is the government does not understand the situation here. Its knowledge of the great northwest has not kept pace with the growth of the country. It seems to labor under the impression that we are a slow-moving people and that our wants are few and easily supplied. It appears to overlook the fact that Montana has added nearly 15,000 voters, or about 60,000 souls to its population within the past four or five years, and that it is now the leading precious metal producer in the United States, and adds over \$30,000,000 to the wealth of the country during the current year. We say it appears to overlook these facts, and hence gives us about the same mail service we had several years ago. The

offices at Helena and Butte are not provided with sufficient clerical help, and the result is that the overworked employes at those places cannot promptly handle the immense amount of mail matter forced upon them. The cause of much of the complaint throughout the territory doubtless may be traced to those places. A little of the immense surplus in the United States treasury expended in strengthening the Montana mail service would remedy the evils complained of.

Mr. Barclay may not have been apprised of Benton's miserable service by any of its citizens, but our delegate in congress has been informed of it. In fact he has been overwhelmed with letters of complaint, yet the postal department has turned a deaf ear to his prayers in our behalf. It is quite possible our people have addressed their complaints to the wrong person. It may be Mr. Barclay can do more toward rendering the service more efficient than Mr. Toole can, and the River Press respectfully suggests that its readers and territorial contemporaries hereafter direct their complaints to Mr. Robert H. Barclay, Chief Clerk of the Railway Mail Service, Helena, Montana.

And now while we are speaking of this matter we respectfully call the attention of Mr. Barclay to the fact that he could render Montana a signal service if he would secure a mail car and the necessary complement of postal clerks to be run on the Manitoba eastward from Great Falls. For some unexplained reason the mail car and postal clerks are dropped at Great Falls and all mail matter for points eastward upon the line of that road is entrusted to the care of the baggage master. Not infrequently Benton mail matter takes a run as far as St. Paul before it is turned into the office at this place. Probably Mr. Barclay who has "worked a year to give the people of Montana a good mail service" will see to it that this rather novel way of forwarding the mails be discontinued and Benton and other points in northern Montana be treated with the same consideration that the department treats its sister town of Great Falls. There is nothing unreasonable in this request.

The River Press has no desire to injure Mr. Barclay or to belittle his services. It has not made him "the object of unjust newspaper attacks," nor does it now charge him with dereliction of duty. It has simply stated cold facts in calling attention to Benton's "rotten mail service," and it will continue to "kick" right along until a change for the better shall take place.

AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY.

It is absolutely necessary that a flouring mill be erected at Benton at an early day—the sooner the better. There is too much at stake to delay its construction. The farmers in the surrounding country are prepared to sow a large acreage of wheat in the spring but they will hesitate to do so unless assurance be given it can be turned into flour that will successfully compete with the best Minnesota and Dakota brands. They want no snide mill—no cheap John affair, but one fully equipped with all the latest improvements to manufacture a first-class article. A large mill is not as necessary at present as a complete one. Its capacities may be extended as demands upon it increase.

There are but few who realize the immense acreage in Choteau county which may be profitably employed in raising wheat. The Highwood country abounds in excellent wheat lands, and as fine wheat soils as can be found in the most favored sections are awaiting the husbandman's plow within a radius of ten miles from Benton, while the great reservation contains millions of acres of land well adapted to wheat culture. Until within the past two or three years it was thought impossible to raise cereals of any kind upon them without irrigation. Continued experiments have dispelled that idea and the fact is now recognized that a prime article of Scotch Fife can be harvested upon them in the absence of artificial moisture. The peculiar character of the lands—a rich sandy loam, resting upon a clay subsoil—admits of this as the clay retains sufficient moisture to perfect a crop.

The presence of a number one flouring mill at Benton would stimulate the wheat growing branch of agriculture upon these lands. The farmers who occupy a portion of them would seed with that cereal while hundreds of settlers would be induced to locate within the county and engage in the same business. In fact we believe a good flouring mill at this city would do more toward settling the county with a hardy, industrious, law-abiding and thrifty people, and add more to the trade and commerce of Benton and, at the same time, to the taxable wealth of our community than all the boom literature that could be published for the next five years. If the citizens of Benton are thoroughly alive to their own interests they will see to it that a first-class flouring mill be erected in this city before the roll of the reaper is again heard in the land.

Several eastern journals are agitating the Canadian annexation scheme, and seem to regard it as one which will materialize in the not very distant future. When it can be shown that Canada and the United States would be benefited by pooling under a common government it will be time enough to talk about the matter. At present words are wasted in discussing the scheme. A majority of the people in both countries are doubtless opposed to it. Neither country is yet ripe for it.

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