

The San Francisco Call

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Oakland Citizen Exposes Dargie's Despicable Trick to Injure a Political Opponent

Chapter XIII of the Plunderer's Record



Dargie of the Oakland Tribune

The worst thing that ever happened to Oakland and Alameda county was William E. Dargie.

If Dargie had never controlled a newspaper Oakland and Alameda county might have endured him indefinitely; he would have been a rascal without means to make rascality effective or profitable—a burglar without tools. Through his newspaper, the Oakland Tribune, Dargie became at once and has ever since been the evil genius of his community.

The Call has carefully and painstakingly investigated the public record of Dargie. Today it continues the publication of that record. This publication will be kept up from time to time until Dargie and his Tribune are generally known for what they really are—the man as the advocate and associate in villainy and in profit of the political and civic corrupters of Alameda county, and his newspaper as the organ of graft and the tool and weapon of public plunderers.

Fellow Mason Lured With a Lie Into Signing Letter That Is Used for Illegitimate Ends

ONE episode in the career of W. E. Dargie presents him in such light that it would be unbelievable, even of one so sordid, venal and unscrupulous, if it were not for corroborative proof, under oath, by one reputable citizen of the city where Dargie has lived and looted for more than 30 years.

In this transaction Dargie played all ends against the middle, thereby earning his sobriquet of "Oily Bill." In 1886 James G. Fair and his associates, owners of the South Pacific Coast railroad, known locally as the "Narrow Gauge," set out to obtain a right of way on Telegraph avenue in Oakland. To achieve this purpose, in defiance of unanimous opposition by the property owners on the avenue, they sent a numerous and "well heeled" lobby to the legislature, captained by A. E. Davis, president of the corporation. The "solid arguments" of Davis convinced Senator Moffitt that the law governing the operation of steam railroads in the city of Oakland ought to be modified, so he introduced a bill framed to allow the use of certain streets for that purpose. Among these streets was Telegraph avenue.

MOFFITT'S DOUBLE GAME
Senator Vrooman of Oakland, representing the interests of the Central Pacific, was naturally opposed to this bill because, if the South Pacific coast road were granted a right of way through Oakland, the purchase price of the road, then under negotiation, would be jumped to an exorbitant figure. Senator Moffitt unquestionably knew all about this phase of the situation, and he also undoubtedly knew that his bill had no chance of becoming a law. Perhaps it was this knowledge that inspired Senator Moffitt to act upon President Davis' "solid arguments." Among the property owners along Telegraph avenue was Frederick Delger. His holding was more valuable than any of the others and he believed that he would be greatly injured financially if a steam railroad were allowed to occupy the street. Consequently he was the leading spirit in opposition. Notwithstanding a somewhat parsimonious disposition acquired by long habit, Delger, not knowing that he was the Central Pacific policy to defeat the Moffitt bill, spent a large sum of money in hiring lawyers to save his property from depreciation. One of these lawyers was Senator Vrooman. E. F. Delger, son of Frederick Delger, acted for his father in the negotiation with Vrooman, who told him that if Senator Moffitt succeeded in getting his bill on the senate floor it would be hard to stop it; but that if Vrooman had \$2,500 he could "use it in a legitimate manner" and believed that he could defeat Senator Moffitt's intention of forcing it through.

Young Delger reported to his father, who, believing that there was no other way of saving his property, sent the money to Senator Vrooman. Senator Moffitt's bill never reached the senate floor; the Central Pacific bought the South Pacific Coast railroad at a comparatively low valuation; and Senator Vrooman was subsequently accused, at the instigation of his protégé, W. E. Dargie, of enriching himself with a \$2,500 bribe.

DARGIE USES THE EXAMINER
Dargie did not make this accusation in the Oakland Tribune, of which he was at that time, as he has recently testified, "president." It happened that he was opposing Vrooman for the republican nomination for senator from the seventeenth senatorial district, and any such charge in the columns of the paper controlled by him would have reacted upon him at the primaries. The accusation was published in the Examiner of this city. Immediately E. F. Delger denied the charge that the Telegraph avenue property owners' association had paid Senator Vrooman a large sum of money for corrupt purposes at Sacramento during the session of the legislature. This was true, for the money was paid by Frederick Delger, on the assurance of Senator Vrooman that it would be used "legitimately"—Senator Vrooman knowing that the Moffitt bill was stillborn, and probably regarding his own use of the money "legitimate."

Closely following this denial came this document, published by order of Dargie, in the Examiner of this city: OAKLAND, June 3, 1887.

On behalf of the property owners on Telegraph avenue, I hereby agree to pay to the party who collects and returns to me the amount expended by us in preventing the use of steam on Telegraph avenue, 10 per cent of said sum so returned, the said amount approximating \$5,000, and was expended as follows: Amount paid C. C. Minus, \$500; amount paid H. Vrooman for expenses and for services at Sacramento, \$2,500; maps and other expenses, \$2,000. E. F. DELGER.

DELGER SOLVES A CIPHER
The object of this publication was to convict Henry Vrooman, over the signature of Delger, of having used money corruptly at Sacramento during the session of the legislature, to procure the defeat of the Moffitt bill granting a right of way for steam railroads in Oakland. It was a Dargie trick, utterly contemptible even for him, and the inference that Delger or his father had been a party to such a transaction was promptly resented in a speech by young Delger delivered in October, 1888, in Oakland during the Dargie canvass for state senator from the seventeenth district.

Delger, immediately after his address to the great audience that had assembled to hear his explanation, attached his affidavit to the speech, thus making it a sworn statement of all the facts connected with this transaction. He began by saying: "Among the expenditures in the lithographed letter

ture, too often a law unto himself, Theodore Roosevelt would be the most dangerous of men if misled by ambition, or in any wise viciously inclined. He has got himself into some scrapes which might by a little tact and prudence have been avoided. He has a positive genius for impressing the public—irrepressible, unconscious, perhaps automatic. But there is a fixed belief among discriminating people that he is a clean, upright man who would knock you down if you intimated a bribe to him, and a patriotic man who loves his country and is true to its institutions, as he conceives them. He is also an able, practical politician; of surprisingly diverse interests and attainments; deeply read in books of many kinds, including the history of human kind no less than the lore of animal kind.

That is very handsome. In a few short months or ere these shoes are old Kentucky swings from hell to breakfast.

is an item as follows: 'Amount paid C. C. Minus, \$500.' This item is a fraud, and if it is there at all it should read as follows: 'Amount paid A. A. Moore, \$500.' The A. A. Moore referred to is the well known attorney of Oakland."

At the close of Delger's speech Mr. Moore arose, and not denying that he was the "C. C. Minus" of the "lithographed letter," declared that he had been promised \$500 for legitimate legal services rendered on behalf of the Telegraph avenue property owners' association; but that he had received only \$100—both promise and payment having been made by Frederick Delger.

Continuing, young Delger said: "The circumstances attending the existence of this letter are confined to but two persons, myself and W. E. Dargie, who at the time of its first publication was Senator Vrooman's competitor for the republican nomination for state senator. A day or two before the date of the letter Dargie called upon me at my place of business. He asked for a private interview with me. He began his business by reciting the fact that, owing to the inability of the narrow gauge railroad to get the franchise on Telegraph avenue, the Central Pacific had been able to purchase the road for a sum considerably less than it would have had to pay had the narrow gauge succeeded."

DARGIE A RAILROAD EMISSARY
"Dargie further said that he was in communication with the persons in authority at Fourth and Townsend streets, and he could say on their authority that the new owners of the narrow gauge desired for the future a happier and more peaceful state of affairs with relation to the conduct of the road toward the people owning property on Telegraph avenue.

"Dargie said that the people at Fourth and Townsend streets, as an evidence of their good faith, were willing to pay the Telegraph avenue property owners' association and each and all of them any money they had expended in frustrating the scheme of James G. Fair and his associates, who fought so hard to operate steam on the avenue.

"I asked Dargie how it was that the railroad folks had not communicated directly with some of the property owners on the avenue, and in reply he informed me that he was in a measure responsible for the prospective happy condition of affairs. He bluntly told me that if he brought it around so that the \$5,000 or more which had been expended was returned, he would expect for his services in the matter a reasonable compensation, and that he would expect absolute secrecy on my part, as he did not want the railroad fed people to believe that he had taken a commission for performing the job for them, which he represented to the railroad as being for the purpose of creating better feeling between the Telegraph avenue property owners and the new railroad regime in Oakland.

"WALK INTO MY PARLOR"
"I told Dargie that I would have to consult my father, and that I would let him know the result of our conference the next day. I saw my father, and he told me that in his opinion 10 per cent of all money returned would be reasonable compensation for Dargie.

"The next day, before I had time to call upon Dargie, I received a telephone message from him asking me to see him at the Tribune office. I went to the office of the Tribune and was ushered into Dargie's private apartment, where it was agreed that he should proceed to make the collection from the railroad people and that 10 per cent should be his compensation.

"On Dargie's suggestion and in his own handwriting a memorandum was drawn up which is identical with what I have heretofore termed 'the Examiner lithographed letter,' except the portion in relation to Mr. Moore.

DARGIE GIVES THE HIGH SIGN
"Upon his reading the memorandum to me I stated to Dargie that he could not expect me to place my name on the document. He replied that he thought no harm would come out of it, and that if I were acting in good faith with him I would not refuse to affix my name. He further stated that I need not be afraid of its ever being used, for the reason that he was not that kind of a man; that we had always been personal friends; and, further, that it was to go into his safe and not to be shown to anybody, and when I performed my portion of the contract and gave him his 10 per cent commission it should be returned to me.

"Assuming that he was dealing honestly with me I was inclined to sign the memorandum which he presented to me, but still hung back, when he used about this language to me:

"What is the matter, Delger? Are you afraid of me? We are brother Masons and this thing shall be on the square."

"Believing that an appeal of this kind was an earnest one and as free of dishonest motives as a matter could possibly be, and a pledge as sacred as one man could make to another, I signed my name to the document in Dargie's handwriting, which he presented to me and which was the lithographed letter circulated just before the republican primary."

It is only necessary to add to this recital of an infamous transaction, that while, as Delger says, the lithographed memorandum was "identical" with the one which Dargie tricked him into signing on a reminder that they were "brother Masons," it was not a fac simile. The original was in Dargie's handwriting. The lithograph was not. Dargie has never revealed the name of the person who forged the lithograph.

The Insider

Recalls that Laura D. Fair is heroine of Mark Twain's and C. D. Warner's "Gilded Age," which might well be published in new edition

NOW that there seems to be somewhat of an enthusiasm current over novels dealing with California in early days—witness the furor enjoyed by "The Apple of Discord" and other winter outputs of the publishing houses—I should think some of us might like to reread "The Gilded Age," by Mark Twain and Charles Dudley Warner. I read it when I was about 13 and have discussed it later with more adult readers. It was in that novel that the inimitable Colonel Sellers made merry and told us of the nourishment that might be found in turnips if rightly eaten. His "There's millions in it" is still the slogan of the promoters, the men who do—us. But it is the character of the heroine, said to have been taken from Laura D. Fair, a resident of this city, and the celebrated case in which she figured, that would make a reissue of the old work of interest historically.

Charlie Le Gay's Career in Paris
The old timer was reading the Paris correspondence. "Well," said he, "I see that Charlie Le Gay was present at the Thanksgiving dinner given by some loyal Californians in the French capital. They haven't given him the cross of the Legion of Honor yet, but he seems to be enjoying life nevertheless. He was out here a few years ago to see his sister, and he hadn't changed much since I knew him in the fifties. I knew his uncle, who lived here when the great white way was an unknown quantity but when we had other attractions. Charlie ran a hat store where all the dudes of the day bought their headgear. Boyd & Le Gay was the firm name, and the senior partner's sister was Charlie Le Gay's wife. He went to Paris about 35 years ago, and it was not long before we heard of him as the head of one of the largest commission houses there. Americans are his great patrons, and Mrs. Mackay was one of his first customers. Though his name sounds Gallic, Charlie is not French, but I suppose it gives that impression to Americans who praise everything Parisian—just because it isn't a home product."

Follows Example of "Tom Sawyer"
I feel assured that "Tom Sawyer" is known and loved by at least one member of the local school department. Some benighted educators seek enlightenment in Spencer's "Education" and works by modern collegians; Mrs. M. M. Fitzgerald, principal of the John Swett grammar school, did not disdain to take a tip from Mark Twain. Where else could she have found such a brilliant idea as that which illuminated her understanding when she succeeded in getting her school yard newly tiled without troubling the department for skilled workmen? As a special recognition of excellent department, we are told, Mrs. Fitzgerald let the boys in three grades gather old bricks and sort them and then lay them in their place in the yard, mortaring and cementing them into a beautiful new tiled yard floor. Was Tom Sawyer's whitewashed fence a more stunning inspiration?

The Smart Set
The guests of honor will be Miss Martan Newhall and Miss Elizabeth Newhall.

MRS. WILLIAM THOMAS entertained a dozen of the smart set's matrons yesterday in her delightful apartments at the Fairmont hotel. The guests composed friends who have played cards together for several winters and meet fortnightly on Tuesday. After the game yesterday they enjoyed an informal tea.

Miss Mary Keeney's luncheon tomorrow for the debutantes will be in honor of Miss Alexander Hamilton. The guests will be 12 in number and all are prominent in the younger set.

Two Sausalito girls who are visiting in town are Miss Frances Reed and Miss Edith Lowe. Miss Reed is the guest of Miss Marian Wright in the Wright home in Pierce street and Miss Lowe is spending a week with Miss Ernestine St. Goar. Both attended the last meeting of the skating club.

Mrs. A. N. Towne and Mrs. C. E. Worden came up from Del Monte a few days ago and are spending a week in this city. Both are great favorites here and many affairs are being given in their honor.

Mrs. Linda Bryan will give an informal tea on Friday next in honor of Mrs. Walton Hedges, who is here from Santa Barbara for a month. About 60 guests have been bidden to this affair, which promises to be one of the most attractive events of the week.

San Rafael society people are interested in the plans for a leap year dance which will take place there on February 23. About a dozen of the prominent society matrons of San Rafael, with Mrs. A. W. Foster at their head, have charge of the details, which are to be in keeping with the date. The girls, 80 in number, are to ask their men friends to this affair and to see that their dance cards are full. So the affair is sure to be a very merry one.

Mrs. Willis E. Davis, who resided so long in Burlingame and who went a year or two ago to Santa Barbara, will close her handsome southern home in a few days and leave for New York on her way to Europe. Mrs. Davis will be accompanied by her two daughters, Miss Sidney and Miss Edna, who are great favorites in society here. They plan to spend two years abroad and will be most of the time in England. Miss Sidney Davis was the guest of Mrs. Eugene de Sable in San Mateo for several months last fall and came up to San Francisco for many of the early dances and dinners.

Mrs. Henry C. Campbell and her daughter, Miss Frances Reed, will be hostesses at a dance on the evening of January 29. The event will take place at the Campbell home in Sausalito and be attended by many of San Francisco's young people. Sausalito girls are awaiting this affair with eagerness, for since the yacht club rooms have been closed there have been no assemblies in the little town. Two dances were to have taken place this spring and it is the first time in many years that the new year and mardi gras have not been marked by a dance.

Mrs. James S. Webster and her daughters, who have been in Europe for several months, have returned and have reopened their home in Clay street.

On Tuesday next Mrs. J. Leroy Nickel will entertain a dozen of the debutantes at luncheon.

Mrs. Russell Wilson will be hostess this evening to a "dinner" to which a number of the girls and men of the younger set have been bidden.

Jan Kubelik
From woodfolk mad with joy of spring. Pan-led and crazed with song. He caught the frantic notes that fling themselves in frenzied throng From strings that 'neath his flexile hand

Make stormy melody— Of none but Bacchanalian band Was born such ecstasy.

He heard the children's laughter sweet, Their chatter while at play. The patter of their busy feet— And stole the notes away.

He brings to us the mother's voice In twilight lullaby— Through songs of lovers who rejoice His notes ring sweet and high.

The sob's uncheck'd of men bereaved, Of women worn with grief, Of girls who hearing vows, believed, But found love's season brief— All these he heard, and all of these Tear-tempests of the heart Live in the melody he frees And crown his vibrant art.

W. J. WEYMOUTH.

Conditions in California
The California Promotion committee yesterday wired the following to its eastern bureau:

California temperatures for the last 24 hours: San Francisco.....Minimum.....33 Maximum.....35 San Diego.....Minimum.....48 Maximum.....60

The building operations in Berkeley, Alameda county, for 1907 amounted to \$3,006,000, a slight gain over 1906 and a gain of 65 per cent over 1905.

Work on the Orland, Glenn county, irrigation project, which has been commenced by the federal government, has so far progressed that the ditches constructed will irrigate 1,000 acres this season, double the amount now under intensive cultivation.

The Levi Strauss buildings at First and Battery streets, class A and class B structures of five stories each, are being completed, the interior work having progressed rapidly.

Pitiful Plea
(From the San Bernardino Sun.)
The great charter for blackmailers promulgated by the court of appeal is a most disastrous document for California. Under this extraordinary interpretation of the law any and every corrupt official is given license to extort money, favor or influence from the citizen as long as he employs no unlawful means. In a word, if he does not assist his official powers with a sandbag or a shotgun, his industry in blackmail is legitimized by the court. It is a pitiful plea that the court makes.

HARRIMAN IN NEW YORK AND CALIFORNIA

NEW YORK dispatch declares that Harriman has issued orders to his man, former Governor Odell, to support Hughes for the republican nomination and, if possible, secure for him the New York state delegation. The motive assigned for this strange conjunction is that Harriman hates Roosevelt and by consequence wants to beat Taft. The theory has a certain plausibility owing to the bitter quarrel between Roosevelt and Harriman; but, going a step further, it becomes obvious that any alliance between Governor Hughes and Harriman is impossible. It takes two to make a bargain and no man can tie up Hughes. But more important is the fact that the consistent history of Hughes in public life demonstrates that he is radically opposed to everything that Harriman stands for in financial wizardry or in politics. Any support that Harriman may give to Hughes is not sincere and is directed to some ulterior purpose.

This matter has direct bearing on the politics of California. Through W. F. Herrin, Mr. Harriman controls the republican organization of the state; but no effort is made here to commit the party to the support of Hughes. It is known that Odell has backed the movement for Hughes in New York. Why, then, do we not see Herrin working on similar lines in California? A great many answers to that question might be suggested, but one that appears reasonable is that it would not be practical politics to tie up with Hughes in California because he is not sufficiently well known to the party constituency on this coast. Neither is that course necessary to the fulfillment of Harriman's object, which is not to nominate Hughes, but to beat Taft. Harriman's support of Hughes in New York falls in line with the policy of pledging state delegations to favorite sons. If a sufficient number of the state delegations can be taken from Taft through the appeal to local pride, a deadlock in the convention would result, and that is the opportunity of the politicians. This theory would explain why Harriman appears to be operating on diverse lines in New York and in California. It is not because he loves Hughes a little bit, but because he hates Roosevelt. If he can have his way about beating Taft he will throw down Hughes the next minute.

CRITICISM OF THE BENCH

RECENT meeting of the Nebraska bar association strongly deprecated any sort of adverse criticism of the courts. The argument was rather confused, but the general tenor was that, no matter how repugnant to morals or justice a decision might appear, it should be accepted without debate or criticism except such as might formally and professionally be presented in court. Some lawyers went so far as to declare that lay criticism of judicial rulings should be made the subject of contempt proceedings and severely punished.

The argument scarcely seems to call for rebuttal, and yet it, or something like it, is very commonly urged by lawyers in other states besides Nebraska. The answer is stated with cogency by the Omaha Bee in these words:

But there are two sides to this question, much as some lawyers might like to see only one. Freedom of speech and of the press is even more essential to our form of free government than is an independent and fearless judiciary. Let the bench become corrupt or arbitrary and the power of the press voicing public opinion will soon cleanse it. Let freedom of speech be throttled by judicial despotism and nothing is left to lift the yoke of servitude from the people but revolution.

California offers a recent case in point. No decision ever made in the state courts has encountered such damaging and widespread criticism as that of the district court of appeal in the Schmitz case. In California and in the east there is virtually unanimous condemnation, with a single suggestive exception. Dargie says the decision is all right. It is quite in accord with the morals of Dargie that official blackmail should be judicially decreed no crime. It can scarcely be agreeable to the justices of the appellate court to find themselves the objects of Dargie's approval. It should put them on suspicion of the train of reasoning that led them into that boat.

It is a good thing that courts should once in a way be made to see themselves as others see them—others besides Dargie.

A COLONEL'S MAD SWING

COLONEL HENRY WATTERSON takes it all back and apologizes like a man. Roosevelt is not the traitor he suspected. Colonel Watterson lays the blame for his blooming error on the magazine habit of preparing the Christmas number about fire cracker time in July. His opinion of Roosevelt published in a recent magazine, under the unfortunate title of "A Midwinter Fantasy," was written under the fervid sun of July, when the blood is hot and the Kentucky imagination aflame. Then was Roosevelt a traitor, a conspirator, the man on horseback and other monsters that may be seen through the bottom of a mint julep. The disturbance was all on account of the supposed third term ambition. It would have made the finest kind of summer reading, but the wicked editor of the magazine held it over for chill December, and it reached the reading public about the same time that Roosevelt definitely set at rest all the nonsense about a third term.

This was very trying. If the stuff had been printed when it was written it would have been forgotten long before Roosevelt spoke, and Colonel Watterson would not have felt compelled to make a Kentucky apology in two columns of words. We quote a small part:

In many ways exceptional both in his mental and temperamental struc-