

The Lower Coast Gazette

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SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 15, 1913.

Possible War With Mexico.

THE daily newspapers are doubtless keeping our readers well advised as to the possibility of a war with Mexico and while there is no particular evidence of it thus far, Plaquemines Parish may be called upon with all the rest to furnish volunteer soldiers. It is a pity that the musical element is less strong at Pointe a la Hache now than a few years ago, or we might develop a martial spirit in that way with fife and drum, the old timers coming to the front, but military movements in these latter days are conducted by the bugle call, and we are quite sure that many a son of Plaquemines would come to the front and respond if he thought his services were really necessary.

When James K. Polk was elected president in 1844 and was duly inaugurated in March 1845 war was in the air then as now and actually began in 1846 when General Zachary Taylor, of this state, fought a number of battles near the Rio Grande. He took command of the army in Texas in 1845 and gained the battle of Palo Alto in Mexico May 8, 1846, that of Resaca de la Palma on May 9th and captured Matamoros on May 18th. This was followed by the capture of Monterey in September and the final defeat of Santa Anna at Buena Vista in February, 1847. Zachary Taylor's success made him president of the United States in 1848, when he was elected as a Whig.

It is of course impossible to have any definite ideas as to what will be done, as serious diplomatic changes may occur at any moment, upsetting all calculations. On the other hand, it is manifest that our own government is seriously embarrassed by the dictatorship of Huerta and the latter seems now to be so thoroughly entrenched in his position that it may be difficult to dislodge him. The northern general, Carranza claims, however, that if the United States will furnish him with the munitions of war he will run Huerta out of Mexico in short order. If we are to move our own forces into Mexico they ought to go in very quickly with a view of reaching the city of Mexico early in 1914. In 1846 the yellow fever was prevailing in Vera Cruz, as it is said to do nearly every year. Fortunately for any intervention other routes than via Vera Cruz can now be controlled.

Sell Your Rice on the Plantation.

UP in the west where wheat and corn are the great staple crops the wheat at once is hauled to an elevator in large wagons with tight bodies, the wheat is weighed into the elevator on whatever grade the inspector may class it, receipt is given for so many bushels of a given grade and charges begin on it, but there is no hurry about selling.

Corn retains moisture in the cob so long there is a disposition to hold it in shock and to only shell and store it when unquestionably safe from heating. Once in store it can be held as long as desired and can easily be financed, as is wheat also.

In Louisiana rice is a great staple crop and would become a far larger one if the western grain system of handling it could be applied to it. We see no reason why it should not be done unless it be ignorance of what is done elsewhere, or undue financial strain and distress on the part of the seller. As it now stands the country mills are in perhaps a better shape to buy rice than are the New Orleans mills as there are elevators in the country which will accept rice without sacking we presume.

We know of a car load of rice recently sold in New Orleans. It was carefully sampled by a prominent and doubtless excellent broker, the samples reported to come from about 60 bags, only that number being accessible for sampling in the car. On this sampling the buyer offered \$4.01 per barrel for the Honduras rice, 190 bags, and \$3.06 for the Japan rice, 20 bags, with the proviso that any off Honduras should go in at \$3.66. This looked reasonable but now note the outcome. The rice was duly weighed and delivered to the buyer and taken to his mill and there inspected by him or under his guidance, and anyway in his mill. Of 190 bags of Honduras, in which there may have been a few off sacks, of the 190 sacks of Honduras the buyer found but 82 sacks up to sample and 108 sacks off in quality. Thus this rice sold at \$4.01 per barrel nominally, was actually got by the buyer at \$3.81 per barrel. All the buyer had to do was to buy the rice at two prices, the lower price for any off quality, and then claim as in the case we cite, that the bulk of it was off in quality and pay only the reduced price thus secured.

This rice was sold in the regular way by a reputable broker, but finally passed upon in the buyer's rice mill with no chance to get the rice out of the mill except by legal seizure. On inquiry we learn that such transactions are frequent; that two prices are named, the big one we presume as a lure, the lesser one perhaps as the main dependence of the buyer.

It is a well settled matter of commercial law, that a buyer of goods can reject any or all if not up to sample, but the sampling should be done before taking possession of the goods and rice matters like this not arrange to compel competitors to come into one's rice mill to examine rejected rice. The average rice miller would not go into a competitor's rice mill to buy rice, but would be willing to sample any rice at a railway depot or steamboat landing. This doubtless led to the two price proposition, always safe if the lower price be made to attach to the larger quantity.

It is claimed that sampling facilities are inadequate at the railways. If this be so it should be remedied. It is absurd for a buyer to ask a seller to let him haul a lot of staple produce home to his own mill, for rejection or for reduced price. It reminds of the story of the lion and the lamb lying down together, but the lion inside the lion. It is absurd to say that the city of New Orleans can do business and compel all produce arriving to go into warehouse for examination, or to submit to the lion and lamb process. New Orleans would drive away what rice trade she has if rice must be warehoused for examination.

The moral of all this is to hold your rice at home until sold. Bernard Savoie made a fortune in this parish that way. Rice is a good crop and we should produce far more than we do and become again the chief rice parish in the state. This however can only be done on moderate, conservative lines, not by forcing the crop on unwilling or reluctant buyers.

Some Advanced Views Concerning Assessments.

THE good people of Baton Rouge who have always been averse to any excessive or avoidable taxation, have found themselves in sore need of more money than has been available to them. The parish of East Baton Rouge carries on the business of the entire parish and does its share of the work and we believe without any serious complaint. In the city, however, the need of more progressive work has been felt, but the costs of street paving, the improvement of public buildings, additional school houses, etc., have been a somewhat paralyzing future for the Baton Rougeans to consider. This led to a careful consideration of the matter of the assessments and a self constituted committee of ten or fifteen gentlemen undertook the revaluation of the city property free of any charge. They were engaged in this work for a couple of months and found that it was a very serious undertaking, in which all parties would have to be given careful consideration and they now claim that the final result has been quite satisfactory. The plan of action was to determine by comparison etc., the front foot value of the property on the various streets, allowing higher values for the corner lots than for the intervening ones. All possible data as to recent sales and the judgment of the most skillful real estate men in the city of Baton Rouge were called into requisition and the whole job when finished has been generally considered a pronounced success.

The chief obstacle in the way was unimproved property of the well to do people. Such property, although well located would be assessed at prices that seemed ridiculously low as compared with adjacent improved property and yet the improvements on the latter were not sufficient to account for the difference in values that existed. Much complaint came from these comparatively well to do people, but the desire to do exact justice in the end even convinced them of the propriety of the line of proceedings. The assessed value of the property was doubled in many instances and the final result was that such an increase in valuation has yielded the city an increase of \$10,000 in taxation and based upon this it is proposed to issue \$100,000 of bonds, to be retired in due course, the money however now to be used at once in paving the streets of the city and in other such improvements.

The method of procedure involves to some extent the Henry George single tax idea. Henry George however carried his views so far that he held that visible property was the only thing that should be taxed because evasion of taxation was sure to result insofar as invisible property was concerned. Of course land owners and others would resist the Henry George idea and endeavor to collect the taxation on such invisible property as bonds, money, merchandise, etc., and in our own state we go so far that we have license taxes, taxing people for doing business, a method of securing revenue unknown in most of the states of the union, but under which we are collecting some 3-4 of a million of dollars in this state.

The separation of the values of the land and the improvements it would readily be seen would have the effect of compelling proprietors of highly taxed lands to put adequate improvements thereon at once in order to get sufficient revenues from the property to pay the taxes and interest on the investment. It is reported that more houses are going up in Baton Rouge than ever before in the history of that city and that this is being done because of the improved method of assessment adopted. Some of the finest pieces of real estate in the city were found to have old shacks thereon, rented at extremely low rents and all this because the final result was tolerably satisfactory considering the low taxes and the rent secured. With the taxes raised at once above the rental, the owners of such property were compelled to think seriously as to whether or not they should sell the property or erect adequate improvements and get better returns therefrom. We understand that the Baton Rouge people are so proud of their success that they are willing now for

every other town and city in the state to follow in their footsteps and the Baton Rougeans believe that all such followers would find themselves very handsomely remunerated if they would adopt this style of assessment first considering the value of the land alone and then the present value of the improvements thereon and assessing the property accordingly.

This may open a new era of assessments in Louisiana, as it has been reported on good authority that in the city of Shreveport much of the property is only assessed at one-third of its market value. In New Orleans it is reported that nearly all of the property is assessed for as much as its current market price. The Baton Rougeans, however, adopted a 60 per cent standard which they found was adequate to produce the necessary revenues and this 60 per cent level of values is generally considered safe in financial circles. The savings banks in many of the states were restricted in lending their money on any property to an extent beyond 50 per cent of its market value. Therefore 60 per cent valuation would seem to be a conservative one. After one of the panics that occurred since the civil war we heard testimony given in the supreme court in the state of New York as to the value of considerable property and that testimony was to the effect that savings banks that had been loaning money on real estate to the extent of 50 per cent of its market value were then only just covered, owing to the great depreciation in real estate caused by the panic.

We learn that in New Orleans since the panic of 1907 much real estate has been sold at and below its assessed value. In considerable testimony given at Baton Rouge under Gov. Blanchard's administration concerning the valuations of property on the Lower Coast Sheriff Meyers stated to Gov. Blanchard that scarcely a piece of property that was brought to sale brought even its assessed value. This was done at a time when Governor Blanchard was seriously bent on doubling or tripling the assessed values of properties of the state and from what we have learned since, we are led to believe that knowing as he did the values that were utilizing in the city of Shreveport he of course assumed that the rest of the state was equally incorrect in its assessments and that a general correction should be made. He accepted the statements made by the gentlemen representing Plaquemines parish and expressed great surprise that the conditions were as they were represented.

The general gist of these comments however is to call attention to the idea of assessments based upon the market value of the naked lands and then to allow fair assessments for the improvements, separating the ideas entirely until the final combination should be reached. Twenty years ago Plaquemines parish had twenty or thirty sugar houses. These have nearly all disappeared, leaving but one sugar house in operation in Plaquemines parish on the east bank and but one on the west bank and none in St. Bernard. Some of the planters of a generation ago would turn over in their graves if they could note the conditions in Louisiana. They would be astonished to find what changes have occurred in the last two or three decades.

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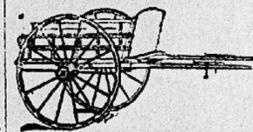
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