

The Scranton Tribune

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SCRANTON, MARCH 6, 1895.

THE SCRANTON OF TODAY.

Come and inspect our city. Elevation above the tide, 740 feet. Extremely healthy. Estimated population, 1894, 103,000. Registered voters, 20,000. Value of school property, \$300,000. Number of churches, 12,000. Average amount of bank deposits, \$10,000,000. It's the metropolis of northeastern Pennsylvania. Can produce electric power cheaper than Niagara. No better port in the United States at which to establish new industries. See how we grow: Population in 1800, 8,223. Population in 1850, 25,000. Population in 1880, 45,500. Population in 1890, 75,215. Population in 1894 (estimated), 103,000. And the end is not yet.

The voters of the Sixteenth ward cannot better show their respect for the memory of Captain William Kellow than by choosing as his successor in select council a representative who will be the captain's equal in integrity, fidelity and sterling citizenship.

Compulsory Education Wins. The substantial triumph yesterday won by the Farr bill to enact compulsory education in Pennsylvania is a notable victory for common sense. There have been times in the history of mankind when education has been regarded a crime hurtful alike to politics and to morals. We gladly believe that not only has this time passed, but that it has given place to a time when, to be without an education will be deemed the crime, in which the indifferent parent and the indifferent state will be joint criminals.

Let there be no mistaking the meaning of this victory. Try as they might to becloud the issue with a fictitious clamor about the inviolable rights of parentage, the opponents of this bill are now notified, by a commanding majority of the legislature, that no parental right transcends the right of every boy and girl in free America to an equal start in life; to an equal preparation, so far as the state can ordain that, for the responsible duties of intelligent citizenship.

To the representative from this city who has so steadfastly championed this measure, in the face of a vindictive opposition that was seldom too scrupulous to descend to personal misrepresentation and abuse; as well as to the members from Lackawanna county who supported him by their votes, The Tribune this morning offers congratulations. They have done a day's work which will take rank among the wisest legislative achievements in the annals of our commonwealth.

Mayor Strong, of New York, having successfully smoothed out the little frills in the mental equipment of the autocrat of Tioga, is recommended to reap another harvest of popularity by putting his official sickle to the tenure of office of Superintendent Byrnes.

As To Honest Ballot Reform.

It would be interesting to know precisely upon what grounds the Pennsylvania legislature bases its obvious disinclination to make such amendments to the Baker ballot law as are admittedly needed to strengthen that law with respect both to the secrecy and to the purity of the ballot voted under its provisions. It would be instructive to ascertain, from some prominent member of either the senate or the house, why the large Republican majority in both branches seems to be unwilling to respond, in these particulars, to a request from the people which is dissented from only by ward workers of unscrupulous habits and by party whippers-in.

The amendments asked of this legislature are not revolutionary. They do not strike at any political party which is content to rest its battles for supremacy upon a fair and honorable expression of the electorate's will. Omitting minor details, the two points concerning which improvement by amendment is sought are: (1) the wiping out of the group system of marking, except for presidential electors, a change desired because it is in the line of simplicity and of popular custom; and (2) the more effective restriction of the "helper" to his proper duty of assisting such voters, and only such voters, who are unable to properly prepare their own ballots without such assistance. Of these modifications, the latter is by far the more important, yet it is the identical amendment which has received, first in the senate and very recently in the house, conspicuous set-backs from the Republican majority.

In the utter absence of an intelligible and honorable explanation for these adverse actions, we are forced to believe, with the utmost reluctance, that the Republican majority at Harrisburg does not desire to see ballot reform perfected. But will that majority dare

face the people upon such a platform? Will it dare go before the enlightened citizenship of this commonwealth, committed, whether through inadvertence or design, to the proposition that the Pennsylvania ballot booth must be private and pure in theory only; and that it shall, in practice, be public and corrupt whenever that kind of booth appeals to the purposes of the party managers or of their unscrupulous subordinates?

The Republican press of the state should warn the Republican legislature of the danger it is needlessly incurring.

Few men in public life gain anything by hesitating to take an open stand on controversial issues of the day. Those of the fifty-seven members of the legislature recorded as not voting on the Farr bill who were present, but silent, would have lost nothing by showing their colors, and they might have won respect for frankness and courage. The American people have a happy knack of standing by men who in turn stand by their convictions.

The Oleomargarine Issue.

The oleomargarine question, concerning which a good deal is said just now, may be presented in a very few words. Good cow's butter costs today, in Scranton, from 30 to 32 cents per pound. Good oleomargarine costs, in states where it is permitted to be sold at all, only about 20 cents per pound. The best cow's butter, such, for instance, as comes from Wayne or Susquehanna counties, is perhaps better than the best oleomargarine. At this time of year, we doubt if one man in a hundred could detect any difference; but in the summer, when the genuine butter possesses the flavor of tender grasses, it is undoubtedly superior. But it must be said for "oleo" that, if not invariably so good as cow's butter, it is, upon the average, from one-fourth to one-third cheaper.

Before the anti-oleo law was passed in this state, it was claimed by the dairy interests that "oleo" was being palmed off upon purchasers, in lieu of butter. The logical way to correct that imposture would have been to require that "oleo" should be sold as "oleo," and to have provided severe penalties for deceit. The legislature, however, did no such sensible thing as this; it set up the false plea that "oleo" was hurtful to the public health, and flatly prohibited its manufacture and sale. The supreme court, in passing on this law, held that it could not judicially review the legislature's premise; but that, without passing upon the merits of the law, it could affirm that the prohibition of the manufacture and sale of a substance hurtful to the public health came within the legislature's police powers. The law accordingly stands, a thing constitutional but without truthfulness and foolish.

Not Extravagance, but Economy. As an instance of the exaggerated talk current among ill-informed persons touching the Harding administration's sweeping extravagance, some facts concerning the bill with which the name of Capt. John C. Delaney has been connected will be found to possess interest. It is charged that this bill simply increases expenses by abolishing the office of superintendent of public buildings, the salary attached to which is \$1,600 a year, and creating the office of custodian, with a salary of \$2,000 a year, besides adding to the number of employees and thirteen employees. The annual salary list amounts to \$12,150, and the contingent fund is \$15,000, or a total of \$27,150. Under the present system, the number of employees remains exactly the same—fourteen in all—while the salary list and contingent fund amount to but \$25,500, or an annual saving of \$1,650. The salary of the head of the department is increased from \$1,400 to \$1,600, but, as in the case of the commissioner of banking, the duties and responsibility are largely increased. He is required to give a bond for \$25,000 for the faithful performance of his duties and the safe keeping of all state property. Instead of the present loose-ended system of caring for and dealing out supplies to the departments a business system approximating that in force under the United States government is substituted. Now there is little system, no bond, no responsibility. In the recent fire at the state printing establishment \$10,000 worth of state paper was burned. It was not insured because it was nobody's business to insure it. An official responsible for the property under his care, and under a \$25,000 bond, would see to it that this did not happen. It is estimated that the saving to the state in supplies, under the system of dealing them out contemplated in this pending law, might amount to from \$10,000 to \$15,000 a year.

Washington News, Via Harrisburg. One of the political rumors recently brought here from Washington has it that Mr. Reed will not take the speakership of the next house, for presidential reasons; and that John Dalzell will inherit this mantle. It is further stated, by way of dramatic climax, that Dalzell and Quay have "made up," and that the latter will assist the former in his speakership aspirations. No one assumes to say where this adjustment of affairs would drop Senator Quay's good Sharon friend, Major Alex. McDowell.

LABEL LAW REFORM.

From the Philadelphia Times. The time has come when reform in the label laws of Pennsylvania is imperatively demanded by every consideration of justice, alike to journalism and to the public. Our present label laws simply offer a premium to pettifogging attorneys, who show vexatious litigation upon newspapers at enormous costs to the publishers, and not one in ten is proved to be justified if the case ever reaches trial. In a vast majority of instances the purpose of such action is to blackmail publishers, and chiefly for the benefit of shysters rather than to do justice to injured citizens. There is a very simple method of reform in the speakership aspirations to every citizen who shall be wronged by a public journal, and at the same time avoid the costly and vexatious litigation of shysters and blackmailers. This reform has taken tangible shape in the label laws in two prominent states of the west, Minnesota and Indiana. In those states every person who feels aggrieved by a publication in a newspaper must call the attention of the publishers to the alleged libel, and if the publication shall have been made in good faith, and a retraction made if the charges are unwarranted, the plaintiff in a libel action can recover only such actual damages as he has sustained, which must be specifically stated and proved in court. This law offers no privileges to those who prostitute the powers of the press to licentiousness. The restraint of such a law upon licentious newspapers would be just as effective as are the laws of today, but it would end the vexatious litigation of the shysters and the blackmailers who take advantage of the present libel law to cause newspapers to incur enormous costs, even when there is no

possibility of obtaining verdicts against them. Pennsylvania Benefactions. From the Philadelphia Times. Asa Parker founded Lehigh university and endowed it with a million dollars, Arto Pardee twice built the great Pardee hall for Lafayette college, giving a million dollars to the work. The Moses P. Taylor hospital at Scranton is a magnificent memorial of a man whose fortunes were built up in that prosperous section of the state. The Osterhout Free library is the result of a \$500,000 bequest given to Wilkes-Barre, whose millionaires have caused the Wyoming valley to blossom as the rose. Instances of munificent gifts from Pennsylvanians multiply in Carnegie's enrichment of Pittsburg, in the Patterson endowment, which gave to Ursinus college the Bomberger hall memorial, and in William L. Scott's liberality to Erie. There are instances to the contrary, it is true, but they are not numerous.

Time for the State to Act. From the Pittsburgh Chronicle. Can education be forced upon the people? is asked by those who have doubts as to the beneficent results of compulsory education. One thing, however, that can be said in favor of compulsory education, is that if a parent is so grossly negligent of his child's mental culture as to have no thought for its education, but to permit it to grow up in utter illiteracy and ignorance, it is high time for the state to introduce a tinge of its paternalism into that household. If father and mother forsake their child intellectually and leave it to grow up in rank illiteracy, it is high time for the state to take it up.

During the recent Mardi Gras festival in New Orleans, the Picanys of that city issued lithographic supplements that not only reflect with accuracy the beauties of that unequalled spectacle but supply a new triumph for the enterprise of clean-minded American journalists.

The authoritative statement is made in a friendly Pittsburg paper that neither Senator Quay nor his son Richard has urged or even favored a Lexow investigation for Philadelphia. We always credited the Quays with this much common sense.

A good many Pennsylvania friends of Hon. J. Sloat Fasset, of Elmira, fancy these days that they can perceive in him the raw materials of a first class United States senator.

Representative O'Malley deserves the thanks of his constituents for his vote on the Farr bill.

LEGISLATIVE TOPICS.

Some of the More Notable Educational Bills Under Consideration. Harrisburg, March 6.—One of the numerous bills before the education committee of the house is known as the Hermann bill and provides for the transfer of children to school at the expense of the districts. It applies to such children as by great distance or difficulty of access are at present inconvenienced in attending school, and only to the pupils of schools which in the discretion of boards of school directors have been closed by reason of small attendance. Another bill, which the education committee recently referred to the judiciary general committee and pulled out with an affirmative endorsement, authorizes the board of directors or controllers of any school district to discontinue the use of public school houses for election purposes and regulates the fixing of new election places in such cases. This measure is known as the Hawkins bill, in deference to its author, the gentleman from York. Still another bill of interest to teachers is the Hammond bill, which places the examination of teachers applying for permanent certificates under the direction of the state superintendent of public instruction, thus insuring the impartial making of all papers. Lastly, the education committee is considering a proposition to require the reading of the Bible in all public schools at least once a day.

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