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## OUR LEGISLATIVE ECONOMY.

Hear me, ye venerable core,  
As counsel for poor mortals,  
That frequent pass doth Wisdom's door  
For glaukitt Folly's portals!  
I, for their thoughtless, careless sakes  
Would here propose defences,  
Their donsie tricks, their black mistakes,  
Their fallings and mischances.

-Robert Burns.

If you would understand the *pretext* for some of the strange freaks of our present Legislature, whose session has just closed, "go to the grasshopper, thou sluggard, consider her ways and be wise." The *bonafide* reason therefor could not, in all cases, be so easily discovered.

It is frequently the case, that, in the great misfortunes and calamities of states and nations, which over-ruling Providence sees fit to inflict upon them, the attempted remedy only hastens the catastrophe.

Nebraska has been sorely afflicted, doubtless on account of her sins, and a proud spirit that goes before a fall. Her woes have excited the sympathy of the whole sisterhood of states; and, that her sufferings are real, is too apparent for contradiction. The people looked forward, with earnest and childlike confidence, to her legislature to lighten their burdens, and fill their depleted larders and granaries. We United States folks always look to our legislators for the remedy of every evil which public flesh is heir to. Our legislative chambers are our great apothecary shops, and our statutes our standard prescription books.

Far be it from our purpose to insinuate that the poor people, in the present, or in most cases, have been the victims of misplaced confidence. But we fear the humble, but excessively industrious grasshopper would be wonderfully amazed could he gain a clear conception of the remarkable spasms of economy which, on account of his playful meanderings, have convulsed our legislative body corporeal. Whether the remedies, which have been prescribed for our troubles, will eventually prove to be greater evils than the afflictions themselves, facts will indicate, and time reveal, possibly, to the cost of some of our would-be economists. Many of our new-fledged

Solons and tyro statesmen came to the Capitol chock full of virtue, with "economy," written in unmistakable characters upon their stern features. They fully expected to find every State official, from the highest to the lowest, and every poor official appointee with his hands up to the elbows in the public treasury. They had stuffed their mental nostrils with metaphorical cotton, lest the festers and public corruption, which they fully believed to exist, and which they *would discover* whether or no, should sicken their sensitive stomachs. How our ears yet reverberate with the eloquent and virtuous appeals, "to guard the treasury at all hazards," when a few dollars were asked to aid an institution of learning, or to extend the cause of popular education! What fiery denunciations, what scathing vituperations were heaped upon the heads of good men, unjustly and without proof charged with corruption by men whose prurient hands were eager to clutch the public bounty!

Every citizen of our State has just reason to be proud of our advancement and standing in popular education. These advantages for securing an education to their children, even in the far western portions of the State, have been the greatest inducement to immigration. The inhabitants of our western counties are poor, mostly homesteaders. Our State school fund has been a rich blessing to them. From actual statistics, it is shown that nearly two thirds of the school districts of the State, and nearly all of the western districts, are wholly dependent upon the State aid for the support of schools. Were this fund suddenly cut off, many of these districts must close school for one or two years at least; and in the west, where there is little property subject to taxation, for an indefinite period. Is this, then, the place for retrenchment? Does not our intelligence and intellectual development imperatively demand, that our school fund should remain inviolate, as the constitution requires, that the advantages of education may not be denied the youth of the State? It would seem to an ordinary common-sense thinker, that now, more than ever before, does the West need the aid of the State school fund. She can no more do without schools, than she can do without grain and clothing. And it does seem that some plan might be devised, in this civilized age, by which *neither* would be necessary. But we are not a political economist, as are our honorable legislators. They have seen proper to appropriate about \$80,000 from our annual school revenue to defray the general expenses of the State! Must the West exchange her school privileges for bread? Surely such a necessity should not exist in our great Nation. And it does *not* exist. Such an economy is only worthy of the dark ages. But our legislators were consistent. On the very day the above retrenchment (?) was effected, they appropriated an immense and extravagant sum—one mill on the assessable property of the State—for the completion of the State Penitentiary. What remarkable prescience! That astute body, in its wisdom, plainly foresaw that the more they crippled the cause of education, the more need would they have of a commodious penitentiary. The Legislature could relieve, with heroic fortitude, the burdened people, groaning under heavy taxes, by refusing to allow the State Supt. of Schools a single dollar for postage, stationery, travelling expenses, office expenses, &c., requiring the appalling sum of, perhaps, six or eight hundred dollars, thus destroying the whole

efficiency of the State department of education. They could also appropriate twenty-five thousand dollars for their own expenses, (\$10,000 more than was appropriated by the last legislature,) salaries, &c., while in session, with equal complacency. They could wrangle and quarrel, and well nigh close their Normal School, which ought to be the pride of the State, as it is of the whole West, for fear twenty or thirty thousand dollars would be squandered in sustaining it. But no extravagance could be discerned in the bill greatly increasing the fees of sheriffs, which were already large, thus implying an additional outlay throughout the State of many thousands of dollars.

The State University barely escaped the effects of their withering economy, and the operation of the Agricultural College was narrowed down and circumscribed for the want of sufficient funds to manage it satisfactorily, and build dormitories for the accommodation of students on the farm. Thus fared our State institutions; but on the other hand the Legislature experienced no compunctions of conscience in bestowing with prodigal hand nearly all the public lands still possessed by the State upon a railroad corporation!

If we may be permitted to indulge in a bit of prophecy, we will predict that the effect of this winter's legislation will be, to make the Legislature of 1875 famous as the enemy of education, and for grossly misdirected economy. By the way, it is our private opinion, that this is a sample of Granger legislation, and we might further add, if we thought it policy, that we think the nation should celebrate, with due splendor and rejoicing, the death of that institution, whenever it may occur. "God speed the day!"

Should you enquire why a body of lawmakers would thus mercilessly attack the educational interests of their State, we would assign this as the reason:—The age is essentially utilitarian. The practical is sought after by all classes. Here is the difficulty. What is of the most practical value? Men of inferior culture immediately respond; "That which returns an immediate pecuniary reward." That profit which increase of educational facilities will bring, is not comprehended by the mass. It is in the distance. It looks unreal. Hence the legislator says, for we do not always have educated men in our chambers of State—"We can curtail this or that expenditure, or stop this or that portion of the machinery of our school system, for a certain length of time without much loss." Such argument is dangerous as well as fallacious. Who can estimate the peril, and the loss to the State incurred by restricting, even in a slight degree, the advantages we possess for securing intellectual culture? We are still more firmly convinced, that students should prepare themselves for political life while in college.

## A VISIT TO THE NORMAL.

We enjoyed the privilege, a short time since, of paying a visit to our State Normal School, situated in the village of Peru, on the Missouri River. The Peruvians at this time are especially happy. They are rejoicing in the possession of a railroad, which they have long and patiently expected. To possess railroad communication constitutes the wildest ambition of a western town. As we alighted from the comfortable coach, and commenced clambering

our way among the hills, for which the burg is celebrated, many and pleasing memories were awakened by scenes so familiar when we ourselves were a student of "old Normal." Involuntarily our step became more elastic, and our heart beat quicker as we approached the grounds of the Institution. It was too late in the evening when we arrived to find the school in operation; so we searched out an old chum, the initials of whose name, in common parlance, are "JOHNNIE SWAN," at present the Principal of the city schools of Peru. After partaking of a few creature comforts, and discussing the dear old times that are past, but not faded, and boring him, we fear, with a torrent of interrogations, we sallied forth in the evening to visit the "boys." O, those terrible hills! We found that we had lost the "hang" of peregrinating the streets of Peru. It takes a two years' residence or so to teach one how to preserve his equilibrium for more than three consecutive minutes while traversing them. Peru is not a good place for fluid refreshments either. But through many dire perils to our store clothes, our uncertain steps being supported by the strong arm of our experienced guide, a native, we accomplished our mission. It would not be generous to delay the reader with an accurate account of all our visits. We will simply mention that, among others, we found our old friend and class-mate, I. L. BURCH, present correspondent of the HESPERIAN, deeply engrossed in a thrilling narrative of the strange adventures of one, AENEAS, and his associates; while for an invigorating exercise, he unearths a few Greek roots.

Perhaps we might as well mention here, as elsewhere, a fact that speaks volumes for the efficiency, and the correct management of the Normal school—the students are hard workers; though there are nearly three hundred in attendance, during study hours, it is a rare thing to find a student on the streets. The rigid application of the Normal students to their text books amounts almost to a fault—a very good one it must be confessed. Time should be allowed for thought and general reading. There is danger of narrowing ones views, and prescribing one's ideas by a too rigid application to the text book, or a too implicit reliance thereon. We do not say this is the case in the Normal, however, as we were informed that much attention is paid to rhetorical and the study of general literature.

On the following morning we were present at the opening of the school. Dr. AZEL FREEMAN, than whom a more agreeable and polished gentleman we have never met, and the various members of the faculty, gave us a hearty welcome and spared no pains to give us an insight into the operations of the school. The students meet in two rooms for the morning exercises; the Normal students in the "Normal Hall," and those in the Preparatory Department in a chapel below. The majority of the students are young men and women among whom are many experienced teachers. The young men are *homely* enough, goodness knows, but the girls! We verily believe that the fair ladies of the Normal for beauty and intelligence can safely challenge the world—the University, of course, excepted!

It is a real treat to listen to the class exercises in the Normal. We heard several recitations which were as pleasing and instructive as many a high toned entertainment at the Academy of Music. The system and discipline of the Normal school