

LOOTING THE TREASURY

Bold Work of Fusion Officials in the Soldier's Home at Grand Island.

THE COMMANDANT AND PHYSICIAN

In Charge Indulge in High-Handed Act—Inside Light on the Dissipation of the Drug and Other Funds—A Chain of Scandals.

GRAND ISLAND, Neb., August 27.—The Soldiers' Home at Grand Island adds another long chapter to the history of gross mismanagement of the state institutions under the Poynter administration.

It is a story of fraud, debauchery, criminal negligence, abuse of the inmates and kindred offenses, in which high officials at the Home are directly involved.

The commandant of the Home is L. A. Beltzer. In his efforts to replenish his exchequer he has permitted no opportunity to escape. Beltzer is associated with his son in the publication of a weekly fusion paper known as the Polk County Independent. As a result of this, nearly all the job printing for the institution is done by the Beltzers, for which they have charged their own prices and drawn hundreds of dollars from the state treasury. In many instances the state has paid money to the Beltzers on bills that have not been received, and, so far as this evidence is concerned, there is nothing to show that they have ever been paid, aside from the fact that the warrant record shows that warrants have been issued on the state treasury by the auditor. In many instances, too, claims have been allowed the commandant and the physician in charge, without any bill being rendered. Voucher B42182 is a voucher drawn in favor of Dr. Swigart, the physician in charge at the Home in payment for a \$7 truck which he claimed to have purchased, but no bill from the dealer showing that it had been purchased has ever been filed or presented.

In the last year the Beltzers have drawn upwards of \$500 for printing material furnished the Home, most of which has been paid out of the fund appropriated for "express, telephone and supplies" (see voucher B33342, B33343, B34913, B34914, B36376, B36377, B37532, B40297, B42186, B42598, B43446, B44329, B44915, B45654, B46425, B47050.)

The library fund has also been attacked by the Beltzers and some of that fund has been diverted to the cash drawer of the Polk County Independent. In all, about \$20 was taken from this fund (see vouchers B34915, B43445, and B47049).

The Beltzers not only conduct a newspaper plant, but they also own and conduct a nursery. It is charged that the Star nursery, the one owned by Commandant Beltzer, supplied the trees that were planted on the grounds of the Home last spring, thus providing the industrious commandant with another route to the treasury. In no instance has the state entered into a contract with Beltzer for printing or for nursery stock. He has had no competition, no bids being asked for, and the result is that he has charged the state outrageous prices.

One claim rendered shows that he charged the state \$18.75 for 5,000 envelopes (of poor material), or at the rate of \$3.75 per thousand, a price fully 35 per cent higher than is charged by almost any other printing office in the state to regular customers. The same claim calls for \$7.50 for 2,000 letter-heads (of an inferior quality of paper), or at the rate of \$3.75 per thousand, a price 30 per cent above the average charge.

Voucher B34914 for \$37 was drawn in favor of Commandant Beltzer in payment of a claim for printing itemized as follows:

- 1,000 Morning Report Blanks... \$ 4.25
5,000 Envelopes (cheap quality)... 18.75
2,000 Pass Blanks... 5.00
200 Commandment Reply Blanks... 1.50
2,000 Letter-Heads (inferior quality)... 7.50

In this instance no bill was ever rendered and none is attached to the voucher on file. In fact there is no evidence, beyond Commandant Beltzer's naked statement, that the material was ever delivered.

Nor is Commandant Beltzer contented with drawing \$1,500, furnishing printed material at excessive prices and unloading inferior stock from his nursery upon the state. He has gone farther, and has succeeded in placing the name of his 19-year-old son, C. E. Beltzer, on the payroll as hospital steward at \$30 per month and board, lodging and washing.

SERIOUS CHARGES.

The official most under the ban of suspicion at the Home is the physician in charge, Dr. H. M. Swigart. His record at the Home, as told by the inmates and by documentary evidence, is, to say the least, a shameful one. Apart from dissipation and culpable neglect, it is charged that he is incompetent, and, what is equally as bad, that he has played fast and loose with the funds allotted to his department. Dr. Swigart has been in office a little over a year, and yet he has already exhausted the \$1,500 appropriated for

drugs and instruments, and bills of this character are now being paid out of other funds. The drug fund was exhausted May 18th, or in less than ten months after Dr. Swigart took charge.

DR. SADLER TALKS.

Dr. Sadler, who is a fusionist and who was physician in charge at the Home for four years preceding Dr. Swigart, when asked to explain the cause of the dissipation of the drug fund by Dr. Swigart said:

"There is certainly something crooked about it. I will guarantee to run the department on \$1,500 per year for drugs and instruments, and have \$900 of that amount left over to put in my pocket. I ran the Home four years on \$2,000, and I had money in the fund and a large supply of drugs on hand at the end of that time. When Dr. Swigart succeeded me I turned over to him enough drugs to last the Home for at least two months, and I turned over the balance of money remaining in the fund to the state. I had \$1,000 to run the Home two years, and, as I have said, at the end of the two years I still had some of the money left and a large surplus of drugs. In ten months Dr. Swigart has used almost as much money for drugs as I have used in four years, and that in face of the fact that there has been only a slight increase in the number of inmates with practically no increase in the number of hospital patients.

"Then, too, when I was at the Home, the inmates got all their medicine from me, whereas I know of my own personal knowledge that more than 30 per cent of the medicines now used at the Home are purchased down town by the inmates themselves out of their own private funds. The truth is, on account of the amount of medicines purchased in town at private expense, the \$1,500 which Dr. Swigart had at his command should have been more than sufficient to last the two years for which it was appropriated."

"How do you account for the shortage in the drug fund?"

"I will say frankly that I don't believe that that amount of drugs was ever delivered to the Home. I believe the state has been charged for drugs it never received. It would be impossible to use \$1,500 in ten months for drugs and instruments. Fully half the amount has been diverted. There is fraud somewhere, and that is all there is to it.

"I know of my own personal knowledge that Dr. Swigart was absent from the Home more than one-third of the time in the last year. While absent, his duties were attended to by Dr. Kirby. Dr. Swigart drew his salary just the same and Dr. Kirby was paid—well, if you ask him he will probably tell—but my opinion is that he was paid out of the drug fund and bills were rendered for drugs never delivered, and the money paid over to Dr. Kirby. I think this is where a great deal of the drug fund went, and that this accounts for the funds being exhausted."

DR. KIRBY EXPOSES THE DEAL.

By inquiry it was ascertained that Dr. Kirby had removed to Beatrice and it was at the latter place that he was interviewed. When asked if he had been paid for attending to Dr. Swigart's duties at the Home while he was away, Dr. Kirby said:

"Yes, I have been paid part of what is due to me. Dr. Swigart was absent during much of the last half of 1899 and the early part of this year and I attended to his duties during that time. I usually made out my monthly bill and handed it to him and he would go into the drug store of Tucker & Farnsworth and come out with the money. He did this on eight or ten different occasions. In all he paid me in this way about \$600. I asked no questions, but I had a pretty strong opinion how the deal was worked. This drug firm had the contract at that time for furnishing drugs to the Home, I still have \$185 coming from the Home for services rendered."

An investigation of the official records disclosed the fact that, for some unaccountable reason, with the exception of one-quarter, this same drug firm (Farnsworth & Tucker) has had the contract for supplying drugs ever since Dr. Swigart took charge. Dr. Swigart has absolute charge of the drug supply, he orders what he pleases and he does his own receiving and checking. No account has been kept of drugs received at the Home except by him. Recently, as a result of startling rumors, Commandant Beltzer installed his son as Hospital Steward, but, as he is a young man with no practical knowledge of medicines or drugs, the change provides no safeguard and amounts to nothing more than an increase in the income of the Beltzer family of \$30 per month.

NOT A FIT MAN.

Dr. Sadler and Dr. Kirby both agree that Dr. Swigart is not a fit man for the position he occupies. Both felt restrained by professional courtesy, yet each was of the opinion that the circumstances were such as to justify an infraction of the established rule among professional men.

Dr. Kirby said:

"Dr. Swigart is not a fit man for the position. His professional knowledge is limited and he is addicted to the use of liquor. He is not skilled in surgery nor has he much general knowledge of diseases and medicines. 'I remember one instance where I was called to attend an old soldier inmate named Dye, whom he was attending. On reaching the home I found Dye great pain, and, upon examining him, I discovered that in giving him an enema a pie tumor had been punctured and (what would soon have proven fatal) hemorrhage had resulted. I upbraided him for the blunder and he tried to evade responsibility by saying that not he, but his brother,

did it. Dr. Swigart's brother was not a doctor and the enormity of the blunder was in no way lessened by his attempt to shift the blame.

"An inmate named Henry Curtis was taken down with small pox and Dr. Swigart, when my attention was called, was doctoring him for chicken pox. He had Curtis in the same ward with twenty other patients. I saw at a glance that it was small pox and I told Dr. Swigart he should remove Curtis at once to the pest house. He said no; that it was simply chicken pox. I told him if he did not remove him at once that I would appeal to the local authorities, get help and do it myself, as there was great danger of the disease spreading to all of the 325 inmates. He then yielded and isolated Curtis. The poor fellow died shortly afterwards. I think it was about the latter part of May of this year.

"Fortunately only one case resulted from the exposure and I was called and attended to that one and pulled the fellow through.

"It is my professional opinion that Dr. Swigart is unfit for that or any other position requiring any great amount of knowledge of diseases, medicines and anatomy."

It is a notorious fact, and it is the talk about town, that a large amount of liquor is bought, ostensibly for the Home, but in reality for other purposes and reasons. It is charged that, not only does Dr. Swigart require it for personal use, but that he has sold whiskey bought by the state to inmates and made no report of the money. One inmate has already made an affidavit to the effect that he purchased whiskey at the Home from Dr. Swigart, and another that Dr. Swigart refused to furnish liquor on a prescription, but told him that any time he wanted to buy whiskey to come and see him. Under the rule no one is allowed to bring liquor into the Home from the outside except on the written permission of the official physician. This gives the physician in charge a monopoly and it also affords him an opportunity to enforce patronage at the dispensary, an opportunity evidently that has not been overlooked.

FEASTING AT THE CRIB.

From the Commandant down, the officials at the Home know a soft snap when they see it. They are not overlooking anything. Those who have relatives seem to take interest in having them live at the expense of the state.

Commandant Beltzer is there with his wife and two sons. One of his sons is on the pay roll as hospital steward.

John H. Powers is there as adjutant with his wife, son and daughter. Until recently the daughter had a horse which she kept there at the state's expense. His son is on the pay-roll as farm hand at \$17 per month.

Dr. Swigart is there with his wife, son and daughter, and, until recently, his brother and his wife. Both Swigart and Beltzer have private turn-outs at the state's expense. Dr. Swigart's brother has had his name on pay roll in one capacity and another until recently, when he was discharged on account of brutality and dissipation.

DISSIPATING THE FUNDS.

It would take an expert juggler to keep track of the way the funds are being juggled. Vouchers have been drawn for drugs against the "maintenance fund" (see Vouchers B47031, and B45643), and repairs have been paid for out of the "fuel fund" see Voucher B43946. The "telephone and express" fund has been drawn on heavily by the Beltzers for printing material. The June salary voucher of this year shows the payment of \$25 to H. M. Swigart as hospital steward, though he is the regular salaried physician (see Voucher B46725). There is an abundance of other evidence of this same character.

SHAMEFUL TREATMENT OF INMATES.

Much complaint is made concerning the mistreatment of the old soldier inmates. One instance is recited where an inmate named J. T. Stewart sickened and died from a cancer in the mouth. He was let go a whole year without having his hair cut or his beard trimmed, and during his sickness he was otherwise shamefully neglected by the physician and attendants. Finally, the old soldier undertook to help him, and upon cutting off his beard it was discovered that all the flesh in the region of his neck and chin was almost one solid mass of maggots. One of the inmates counted 200 maggots which he removed from the sick man's jaws and throat. This same individual said that at one time he was with Stewart continuously for 11 days and nights and that all that time Stewart neither received medicine nor medical attention. Dr. Swigart was repeatedly requested to attend him, but Stewart, in a desperate effort to conquer the dread malady, had committed the unpardonable crime of buying a bottle of some patent cancer cure that had been recommended to him by a friend, and Swigart therefore refused to minister to his wants. The story of this man's suffering and neglect, as related by the inmates, is a terrible one. Many other inmates have been refused medical attention, and the abuse has been carried to that extent that more than 30 per cent of the medicines used at the Home are now being bought by the inmates out of their private funds.

KILLING YOUNG STOCK.

For some reason, presumably to make a better showing in the expense account or to keep that account from reaching enormous proportions, the management is killing off young steers for meat for the Home.

and means for... Those in position to know say that this is false economy, as it will result in the destruction of what was until a short time ago a very fine and profitable herd of cattle. The old soldiers say, however, that the young stock is killed for the officials only, and that inmates have to put up with saw-belly, bread and butter. This, they say, is their diet—sick or well.

PET CONTRACTORS COLLAPSE.

The contract for constructing a new hospital building at the Home was let to Blake & Company of Lincoln for \$12,500. They are the pet contractors of the State House ring, and in the last two years they have been identified with the construction of several public buildings. At this point, after absorbing much of the amount named in the contract, they threw up the contract and their bondsmen are now completing the building. At best it will be a poor structure, as a large quantity of second grade material has been used and nearly all the wood work is of inferior material.

L. W. Pomerene, another favorite contractor of the State House ring, who has had quite a monopoly of the plumbing in new public buildings the last two years, has cut off another large slice of pie at this place. His vouchers call for more than \$2,000, but it is stated that the work of setting the boilers and making the necessary changes and repairs, for which he received over \$2,100, could have been done profitably for 33 per cent less. (See Voucher B43946.)

The superintendent of construction of the new hospital is J. W. Emberson, a fusionist carpenter from Lincoln. His knowledge of architecture is limited and he has had little experience with brick and stone work, yet he is paid \$5 per day and that, too, out of the money appropriated for the construction of the building proper. Inmates of the Home say that he spends much of his time playing croquet and cards. Since October 1st, 1899 to May 8th, 1900, he has drawn out of this fund \$620. (See Vouchers B37825, B39178, B40080, B40967, B42150, B42554, B43077, B43491 and B43780.)

The strange part of the whole matter is, that not one bill has been audited nor a voucher made out at Grand Island, where the material is being delivered and the work is being done. All the auditing, all the checking and figuring, has been done at Lincoln. In this respect this is the single exception throughout the state, and why it is nobody at Grand Island seems to know, though some people are doing a great deal of abstract thinking. This is scarcely less strange, however, than the building of a barn costing \$1,200 without advertising for bids, something that was done here the last year.

ON STATE GROUNDS.

John F. Scott, a fusionist, enjoys the distinction of being about the only man in Nebraska who has been set up in business at the state's expenses. Scott has a private store building, owned by himself and situated on the public grounds within 30 feet of the main building, where he deals in tobacco, cigars, cigarettes, fancy groceries, pop, soda water, etc. The building was piped and furnished with radiators at the state's expense, and it is lighted and heated now at the state's expense. He also gets ice during the summer for use in his store from the supplies bought for the state, and pays nothing for it. Scott has been doing business at this stand for about four years and the state is paying the bill.

One thing is strange about the bills of expense of the members of the Visiting and Examining Board. Though the distance traveled, the work done, and the legitimate expense is the same each time, not a single member in the last two years has presented two bills alike in amount. Each time the amount differs, though why, is a mystery.

The last legislature appropriated \$94,870 for the Home, but it is apparent now that there will be a large deficiency at the end of Governor Poynter's term. Upon the whole, the management has not only been extravagant, but it has been that extravagantly as to indicate unmistakably downright dishonesty and fraud.

Not long ago an old soldier came to Grand Island direct from Canada. Under the law, before an applicant can be admitted to the Home, he must be a resident of the state at least two years. The County Board of Hall county refused to entertain his application, but he went back to the Home, told the officials that he was a fusionist and, not only received a suit of clothes at the expense of the state, but was put to work on a salary, an act clearly illegal.

BRYAN SYNONYMOUS OF SILVER.

In 1896 when Bryan got control of the democratic party he made free coinage of silver the paramount issue and has since waged an unsuccessful campaign along this line. He misjudged the intelligence of the "great common people," and it would seem that he has not as yet been able to get in touch with them, for in the Kansas City platform made (made public) last July, the silver plank is reiterated and the country is again threatened with the dire consequences that would attend the enactment of a free silver bill by a democratic congress and president. Referring to the election of Bryan in 1896 we reproduce the following from Hon. Carl Schurz. What it meant then it means now, for Bryan and free silver are again the issue.

"The mere apprehension of a possibility of Mr. Bryan's election and the consequent placing of our country upon the silver basis has already caused untold millions of our securities to be thrown upon the market, scores of business orders are already recalled, a large number of manufac-

turing establishments have already stopped or restricted their operations, enterprise is already discouraged and nearly paralyzed. Many works of public utility by industrial or railroad companies have already been ordered off, thousands of workmen are already thrown out of employment, gold is already being hoarded, capital is already being sent out of the country to be invested in Europe for safety. And why all this? Not, as the silver men foolishly pretend, because the existing gold standard has made money scarce, for capital is lying idle in heaps, scores upon scores of millions, fairly yearning for safe employment. No; ask those concerned why all this happens, and with one voice they will tell you it is because they apprehend serious danger in every dollar ventured out through the change of our standard of value in prospect, through the debasement of our currency threatened by the free silver coinage movement. And if these are the effects of a mere apprehension of a possibility, what would be the effect of the event itself? There is scarcely an imaginable limit to the destruction certain to be wrought by the business disturbances that Mr. Bryan's mere election would cause."

Ab's Full Name.

The full name of Abdul Hamid, the sultan of Turkey, is: Abdul Hamid, the Beloved Sultan of Sultans; Emperor of Emperors; the Shadow of God Upon Earth; Brother of the Sun; Dispenser of Crowns to those who sit upon thrones; Sovereign of Constantinople, and the great city of Brousa, as well as of Damascus, which is the Scent of Paradise; King of Kings, whose army is the Asylum of Victory; at the Foot of Whose Throne is Justice and the Refuge of the World.

Millions in the Tea Industry.

More than 100,000,000 people in China are engaged in the tea industry. Some of them are very wealthy, though they know little beyond the cultivation, marketing and sale of teas. It is also a fact that many of these tea raisers and tea merchants are members of the secret societies in the empire that are responsible for much of the present trouble among the nations of the universe.

Venerable Solicitor Whyte.

William Pinkney Whyte, ex-governor of Maryland, has just completed his seventy-sixth year. In addition to being chief executive of the state, Mr. Whyte has been mayor of Baltimore, United States senator from Maryland and is now city solicitor of Baltimore, in which capacity his services have been of great value.

A Hundred Terms at Heidelberg.

Kuno Fischer has served just an even 100 of terms as instructor first and then professor at Heidelberg. Though he celebrated his 70th birthday last month he still gives six lectures a week on "Goethe" and on the history of philosophy.

A Good Cough Medicine.

It speaks well for Chamberlain's Cough Remedy when druggists use it in their own families in preference to any other. "I have sold Chamberlain's Cough Remedy for the past five years with complete satisfaction to myself and customers," says Druggist J. Goldsmith, Van Etten, N. Y. "I have always used it in my own family both for ordinary coughs and colds and for the coughs following la grippe, and find it very efficacious." For sale by Keeling.

25 Cents to 1901

That big state paper, The Semi-Weekly State Journal, will be mailed from now until January 1, 1901, for 25 cents. This is the biggest offer of reading matter ever made in the west and is done for the sole purpose of introducing the paper to thousands of new homes. Here's your chance to get an up to date, reliable state paper for a mere song. Send in your quarter and you'll get the paper all through the remainder of this year. Address The State Journal at Lincoln, Neb.

Farm Journal, 5 years (1900-1901, 1902, 1903 and 1904), to every subscriber who will pay one year in advance to The Advertiser; both papers for \$1. No better paper than the Farm Journal. This offer is made to you.

It Saved His Baby.

"My baby was terribly sick with the diarrhoea, we were unable to cure him with the doctor's assistance, and as a last resort we tried Chamberlain's Colic, Cholera and Diarrhoea Remedy." says Mr. J. H. Doak of Williams, Ore. "I am happy to say it gave immediate relief and a complete cure." For sale by W. W. Keeling.

That Throbbing Headache

Would quickly leave you, if you used Dr. King's New Life Pills. Thousands of sufferers have proved their matchless merit for sick and nervous headaches. They make pure blood and build up your health. Only 25c. Money back if not cured. Sold by W. W. Keeling druggist.