

WORK OF SHAM REFORMERS

How the Fusionists Are Preying Upon the Interests of Taxpayers of Nebraska.

HOME FOR FEEBLE-MINDED YOUTH AT BEATRICE SCENE OF TURMOIL AND DISCORD

Fraud and Spoilation, Drunkenness, Incompetency, Dishonesty, Treasury Raids and Kindred Offences Committed by Officers High and Low—Public Officials and Employes Held Up for Part of Their Salary Each Month by Party Leaders.

Shameful incompetency—gross perversion of the public funds—use of the appointive power to reward party satellites regardless of merit—management's hands tied by high-up fusion officials—official records in bad shape—and over the Poynter administration in its entirety hangs the shadow of culpable negligence and scandal. This in brief is an epitome of the condition of the Home of the Feeble Minded Youth at Beatrice.

Several years of fusion mismanagement and jugglery have sufficed to bring about a state of affairs in this institution so terrible as to almost challenge public credulity.

Dispassionately recited, if the truth be only half told, it is enough to cause the cheek of every citizen to burn with indignation. Especially is this true, and especially does it become a fit subject for careful and solemn judgment, when it is considered that the victims of these abuses are among the most helpless and defenseless wards of the state.

When the fusionists came into power in Nebraska the republicans relinquished supervision of this institution, bequeathing to their successors and to the public a record of splendid achievements. In selecting officials, teachers and employes for this institution it was the unvarying rule that merit and fitness alone should command recognition. Then, as now, the institute had upwards of 225 inmates. There were few changes in the official family, and in no instance was a change made for political reasons or party expediency.

The last republican in the superintendency held the position for upwards of seven years; and a change occurred at the end of this time only by reason of the fusionists acquiring control of the state government.

How does this compare with the record of the fusionists? The fusionists have been in power about five years, and in that time two superintendents have come and gone and the third one has been compelled to enlist the aid of the courts to keep his official head under the axe. Thus, in about five years (including the recent appointee whose right to the office is being contested in the courts) four different persons have been appointed to the superintendency. This has kept the institution in strange hands nearly all the time, as a result of which, and by reason of other causes hereinafter enumerated, discipline has disappeared, disorder prevails, feeble minded inmates, slow to familiarize themselves with strange faces and restless in their presence, have progressed slowly, if at all, and the state has expended thousands of dollars wholly without compensatory results. Never since the fusionists acquired control has there been harmony in the official family of this institution. This is due entirely to the fact that positions high and low have been acquired through political "pulls" and not by reason of merit. Since the populists obtained control no superintendent has gone in there free handed. All of them have been under the party bane, and no matter how much it impaired or interfered with the welfare of the institution, they have been compelled to accept such teachers and appointees as the party managers have seen fit to give them. On can easily judge of the condition of things by considering that the party bosses have invariably selected for these positions the sons, daughters, or henchmen of leading politicians.

They have done worse than this, they have selected for positions of trust and responsibility persons, not alone mentally incompetent, but morally as well. Making selection giving no particular qualifications, giving no particular persons authority to control, but making each a superior unto himself, thus causing incessant clashing of authority and wrangling among themselves, and placing the party or appointive authority under direct obligation, by levying an assessment monthly on all appointees and compelling them to pay a fixed per cent of their salary to some one designated to receive it by the triumvirate for a corruption fund—combine to account for this sad state of affairs. There are some facts connected with the contemporaneous history of this institution painful to recite. They go beyond the confines of ordinary happenings and trespass upon the domain of scandal and criminality.

Passing by the history of the institution under the superintendency of Dr. Fall and Dr. Sprague (and there is little difference between that portion of the history and that to which reference will be made) attention will be given to the evils, wrongs and outrages prevalent now.

Dr. Lang, the present superintendent, was appointed about one year ago. The next most responsible position—that of bookkeeper and steward—was given to James Millikin, a political satellite from Fremont. Though Millikin knew nothing of bookkeeping, he was entrusted with keeping the records. How he kept them, needs only to be seen to be comprehended. Had the figures been blown upon the pages of the records by a cyclone, they would be just as easily interpreted. The debits are mixed with the credits and there is no way of ascertaining from the record the condition of accounts, of the funds, or whether anybody is debtor or creditor of the state. The undisputed fact is that the records have not been kept at all and a searching investigation would, no doubt, result in startling disclosures. It is an open secret about the institution that Millikin was not alone incompetent, but that he was frequently intoxicated while on duty.

Foreman Ellis of the brush factory of the institution stated that he had repeatedly seen Millikin with a bottle of whiskey at the institute, and that he did not only drink the liquor himself, but presisted in making other employes drink with him. One of the employes who had taken the Keeley cure and who had not tasted liquor for several years was persuaded by Millikin to indulge. He then again became a confirmed drunkard and finally, to get away from the temptation, had to leave the institute. Superintendent Lang remonstrated with Millikin, telling him that he was setting a bad example for the inmates and employes, but to no avail. Millikin claimed that he was backed by Governor Poynter, by the fusion contingent of the best sugar element at Fremont, and was not amenable to the rules or orders of the superintendent.

NEW BRAND OF "CORN MEAL."

Nor were Millikin's shortcomings confined to traditional consistency. Scarcely had he entered upon his duties when he resorted to methods most questionable. On one occasion Superintendent Lang discovered, among supplies delivered, a choice lot of strawberries. There was no provision in the contract covering supplies for the institution for this quality of food, and, looking over the bill or statement of the goods delivered, he observed that the bill called for corn meal, but there was no corn meal delivered. "How is this, Millikin?" said Superintendent Lang, "I fail to see any entry on the bill for strawberries?"

"There it is," said Millikin, pointing to the entry, "corn meal."

"It was right then and there," said Dr. Lang to the writer, "that I discovered that Millikin would beard watching. I told him that kind of dealing would not do, and that he must stop it. But he paid no attention to me. Only a few days afterward he became possessed of a half dozen boxes of cigars. I asked him how he got them and he said the boys down town gave them to him. I knew that he got them in one of two ways—either by the 'corn meal' dodge, or that somebody was dealing with the institution selling supplies and with dishonest motives had given them to him. I again cautioned him against doing wrong, but he met my warning with a defiant sneer. Finding I could do nothing with him I went to Lincoln and laid all the facts before Governor Poynter."

That ended it; Governor Poynter never stopped to consider the matter for a moment. Millikin followed this up by getting drunk and coming to the institute in a drunken condition and bringing liquor with him. Again I protested to the governor, and again nothing came of it. Finally things became so bad that in desperation I went to the governor and begged of him to act. The governor came down but did not have the moral courage to do anything. Millikin himself told the governor that he was unable to keep the books and wanted to be relieved of it, but still no action. The governor at last concluded that he would get rid of Millikin, and he asked me to hand in my resignation that he might show it to Millikin and have an excuse for asking him for his. He said my resignation was only a blind to fool Millikin, and that he would not consider it as effective, and would use it only to get Millikin out of the way. I regarded it a strange mode of procedure, but I complied with his request, thinking I was dealing with a man of principle. Imagine my surprise when he announced a day or so later that we had both resigned, and subsequently followed this announcement by the appointment of my successor. It was an act of subtle and flagrant perfidy, unworthy of a man of honor. I resisted and the courts will determine whether a resignation obtained in that way shall be effective.

"I lay much of the blame for the condition of affairs in the institute upon Governor Poynter and his henchmen. They have forced upon the salary list of the institute as teachers and for one position and another, persons who are notoriously unfitted for such service. These appointments have been made on the strength of political "pulls" and without regard to qualification or fitness. The governor has done more than this, he has tacitly, if not openly, advised subordinates that his whims and not my rules should be respected. He has encouraged them to resist my authority as superintendent from almost the very commencement of my term. Under such conditions the worst is the best that could be expected.

ROTTEN WITH FILTH.

"When I came to this institution it was rotten with filth. My predecessor had had just such experience as I am having. There was no such thing as discipline. There was constant strife among the employes and teachers. The rooms in the buildings were very filthy and unsanitary. This caused sickness among the inmates and in some instances deaths occurred.

FEASTING AT THE CRIB.

One has only to glance at the pay roll to see to what extent the fusion reformers are milking the public treasury.

Of the Sprecher family, the son and (until recently) the mother are drawing fat salaries and the daughter was until recently living in luxury at the state's expense.

The Sullivan's are represented on the supreme court bench and as marionettes at the institute at Norfolk.

Ex-Senator Mutz has a daughter on the pay-roll at Beatrice (or rather up to a few weeks ago did have, she having been discharged by Superintendent Lang for insubordination.)

Belle Spanogle, of Red Cloud, is on the pay-roll at Beatrice at the instigation of one of Poynter's clerks at Lincoln.

Edith Ross, daughter of ex-Representative Ross of recent fame, is another name on the pay roll.

Several fusionists who have not even been brevetted are on the pay roll as farm hands at the munificent salary of \$25 a month and everything found.

In no instance has there been an appointment made on the grounds of merit. Indeed, it is an open secret, that not one of the teachers has a certificate, and it is admitted by those who are familiar with the facts that none of them could pass a teacher's examination.

DOCTORING THE BOOKS.

As has been said before, the accounts of the institute are in very bad shape. The records are so badly mixed up and confused that no one knows anything about the status of the funds. Goods have been bought and sold, but for what, or what became of the money, nobody can tell. When the governor removed Steward Millikin, who was bookkeeper, he then learned of some of the fruits of his blunders. He dispatched a bookkeeper from his office at Lincoln named McIntee to Beatrice to untangle the mess. McIntee proceeded to arrange the records as he saw fit, and before Superintendent Lang knew what was going on he had changed about 60 accounts. Fearing the governor and his representatives had ulterior motives the superintendent ordered the "expert" out of the building, and he departed.

The records as they now stand are in a bad way, and constitute a sweeping indictment of the fusionists, being mute yet unimpeachable witnesses to glaring incompetency and possible fraud.

It is due to Dr. Lang that he has been exculpated from all blame. His hands have been tied and he has been a superintendent in name only. At no time has he been free to administer the affairs of the institute without interference from sources involving a higher power.

SUSPICIOUS REVELATIONS.

Steward Ball and Superintendent Lang are hard at work rectifying errors in the records and about the institute. One thing is already noticeable and that is a decrease in the cost of groceries for the institute. The grocery bill for the month of May is \$157, less than for April, and \$172 less than for March. Millikin retired about April 1st, but his errors did not cease to bear fruit until recently. He used to permit the contractors to bill goods in bulk like, say for example, he purchased a sack of flour or sugar. It would be billed "one sack of flour or sugar \$1.50," or whatever it might be, without giving the quantity in pounds or the quality. This left an opening for fraud, and a rectification of this practice has resulted in a large decrease in the expenses and in the complete cessation of presents, such as cigars and other luxuries which used to be sent to the steward by parties selling goods to the institute. Why the cigars were sent and why they stopped coming, and why the cost of the groceries dropped nearly 30 per cent, is a problem carrying with it the odor of suspicion and fraud, and is a problem which Steward Millikin might experience some difficulty in satisfactorily explaining.

CORRUPTING THE PUBLIC SERVICE.

Every month all the employes of the institute from superintendent down to farm laborers are required by the fusion leaders at Lincoln to give up a portion of their salaries. The amount which they have to give up varies all the way from three per cent to five per cent. The rule is that this money must be paid over or those who fail must step down and out. Last year the demands for money were heavy, and one of the employes, an engineer named Adams, rather than submit, handed in his resignation. In this respect the present year reveals no disposition to reform. Already the officials and employes in the various state institutions are being bled by the committee on extortion. Under date of April 2nd, 1900, the following letter, which shows very clearly how the work is being done, was received at the Beatrice institute:

LINCOLN, Neb., April 2, 1900.
Gentlemen:

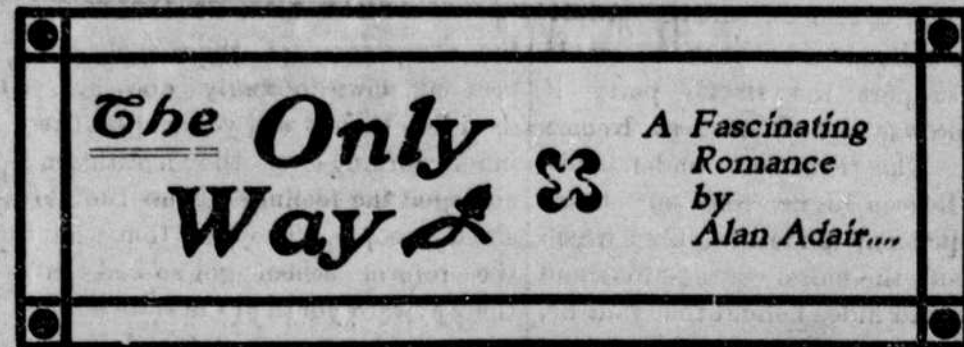
We, the Finance Committee appointed by the populist, democratic and free silver republican state central committee, do hereby call on you for the amount of assessment due from your department, or office, as provided for by the resolution sent you. The amount due at this time from your department is \$148.84. We desire to say to all who are called on for funds, you have been recognized and honored by our forces and placed where you are drawing revenues from the state, and we shall expect you to contribute the small amount asked for monthly.

T. H. TIBBLES,
J. E. COAD, Jr.,
L. L. CHAPIN.

This letter throws the white light of truth upon the hypocrisy and false protestations of the sham reformers. It not only reveals the inside workings of the machine, but it strongly corroborates the charge often made by populist officials who have felt the blighting curse of this evil, that one of the primary elements entering into the contamination and demoralization of state institutions is the practice of extorting contributions to a campaign corruption fund. That this is the practice, now a axed policy of the fusion campaign managers, the foregoing letter abundantly proves. Much of the insubordination and consequent disorder which exists in state institutions among the officials and employes is due largely to the fact that having contributed to the corruption fund, everybody feels that he is at liberty to do as he pleases. This has greatly impaired the public service and has lowered it to that level where the money expended in the maintenance of these institutions is practically dissipated.

His Wife, Too, is an American.

Baron Mumm von Schwarzenstein, the new German minister to China, married an American, as did his predecessor, the murdered Von Ketteler. The baroness, though born in London, is the daughter of a New Yorker, Mr. Le Vinsen, a cousin of Governor Roosevelt. Her husband was formerly connected with the German embassy at Washington.



CHAPTER V.

A dirty, untidy lodging in an English slum. An unkempt man, with all the signs of drink and dissipation upon his low face; such was the man and such was the surroundings of a man whom Alan Mackenzie used to visit in his beautiful estate of La Paz. His had never been an honest, attractive face; but now there had come into it a look of such devilish cunning and dissipation had given him such a bloated appearance, that it was evident he would soon reach the lowest depths of degradation.

Alan Mackenzie's denunciation of him had been his ruin. He had tried to retrieve himself, had speculated, and had floundered deeper into the mire. He made even Rio too hot for him, and returned to England. Veronica's disappearance meant nothing to him. He would have got rid of her to the highest matrimonial bidder, that was all. She was not his daughter, as he had told her, only the orphan child of a man he had ruined, and whom he had brought up because her beautiful mother had been the one woman he had really cared for. But for Veronica herself he had not the slightest affection. She was too quiet, too affectionate. Her mother, who had jilted him, had been a coquette, and had thus won Hutchinson's love and admiration.

He was just now sitting at the corner of a very dirty bed, with a glass of some spirits at his elbow. He looked pleased with himself. "So he married her!" he said, and burst into rude laughter. "He married her and she got drowned! Who would have thought it of them, both so innocent! Now there is only one thing to be considered. Shall I let him marry the other, and bleed him afterwards, or shall I stop it now? Which will hurt him most, I wonder? I think he loves this girl. Shall I separate them?"

He thought a moment. A look of cunning came over his face. "No," he said, "they shall get married. I will give him six weeks, and then he shall either bribe me or be exposed!"

He rubbed his hands with glee and then pulled himself up again. "But he isn't going to cheat me of my revenge!" he cried. "That would be nothing—a man soon forgets a woman. After all, it will be the woman who suffers most; but he—he has beggared me! He has deprived me of my very life! He shall suffer for it. I shall never rest until my knife is driven into his very heart!"

Hutchinson took a draught at his glass. "There's nothing left me but this," he said—"nothing! And I have so much—carriages and horses, and fine living and everything going well. I should have been the richest man in Rio, the most powerful Englishman over there. There is no need for me to prompt my memory lest I forget; the wonder is that I did not come across him before. Let me see, he is such a soft, he will have told this girl all about it before. No, no! My best plan will be to wait until after the marriage—his second marriage! And Veronica?"

"Well, she does not know where to find either him or me. I can drop her for a week or two. She has more cunning in her than I should have thought possible, for she never mentioned Mackenzie's name to me. I had no idea that he knew anything about her. It was the merest guesswork; but what a chance! I haven't had a chance for more than four years. Perhaps the luck has turned, and the man who ruined me is destined to put me on my legs again. But no quarter! Whatever he does I shall still take my revenge!"

Meanwhile, the object of all these plots and plans had gone home a little disturbed. Alan Mackenzie could not look unmoved at the picture of the wreck of a man's life. He knew that he counted for something in Hutchinson's ruin—nay, for a great deal. Hutchinson had never been a good man; but there had been a difference between the man who schemed at La Paz, surrounded by every luxury, and the dirty, drunken scoundrel he had met in the streets of London.

Then, too, the mention of Veronica disturbed him. He had never thought so much about her as he had lately, perhaps because he had never understood before what love meant. Now, in his love for Joyce, he began better to understand the poor dead girl's feelings. He did not regret that he had not loved her better; he rather rejoiced that his best love should go to Joyce. And he knew that he had always been perfectly kind to her, as he was to most women; but he knew now what the separation from him must have meant to Veronica, and how, when she was drowning even, her one regret would be that she should see his face no more!

The preparations for the wedding went on apace. Joyce was very popular among her friends, and quite recognized to be a pearl among womanhood. Old General Grenville, her father, had a large acquaintance, who were all disposed to make much of the beautiful, bright girl. Not a few men were envious of Alan's luck. There was quite a little stir in the circle of which Joyce was the ornament. It only wanted a fortnight to the wedding,

and blood could contain our love? No; we belong to each other for always, and—Here comes our lunch, and you will have to eat it."

And he did eat it, cheered by the sunshine of her eyes and the music of her voice. And after lunch they sat up in one of the balconies and watched the boats go down the grimy but sunlit bosom of Mother Thames, for the hotel looked out upon the river. And Alan smoked, and they made plans for the future. Where they would go, and what they would do, and what they would see, together, together, together always. And they talked of the folly of married men and women who go their separate ways, not recognizing the divinely blessed link between husband and wife. And when they rose to go they knew that they were nearer to each other than they had ever been before. It had been a golden afternoon, although now the sun had gone from the river, and the mist was rising a little. Still, as Joyce said, "No mist can blot the sun out forever." She meant it as an allegory, and as an allegory Alan understood it.

And then they drove home again together, and that evening Alan spent quietly, doing a little work which was necessary, seeing that he had spent a good many hours doing nothing but making love to Joyce. And on the morrow he had forgotten the strange turn that the woman had given him. Nothing happened during the next fortnight, which went all too slowly for him, until his wedding day. On the contrary, each day his heart became lighter, and he looked forward each day to that which would see the consummation of his dearest desires.

And so the wedding day came, and Alan forgot everything but that the sweetest woman in the world was going to belong to him from that day forward forevermore. His responses rang out clear and fluent, as did hers. He forgot Hutchinson and Hutchinson's enigmatic prophecy—that there might be a strange wedding guest—though he could not have known that Hutchinson had changed his mind, and that there would be no strange wedding guest that day.

He forgot everything, save that the time was coming nearer and nearer when the carriage door would be closed behind him and Joyce, and he would whisk her off, his own dear bride. And it is no exaggeration to say that the sun had never shone on two happier people than Alan and Joyce Mackenzie.

(To be continued.)

Could Not Be Fooled.

Miss Elizabeth Alden Curtis, the talented niece of United States Attorney General Griggs, and one of the latest versifiers of the Rubaiyat, has a penchant for scientific pursuits, and takes great pleasure in mountain climbing, forest searching and geologizing, says the Philadelphia Post. Last summer, while rusticiating at Lake George, she went walking with a party of friends, chiefly college men and women, and came across some of the beautiful minerals which abound in that district. They picked out a number of specimens which they carried back to the hotel. Here they exhibited their treasure-trove to the other guests, more especially a piece of rose quartz, in which were many flakes of plumbago. Miss Curtis, after explaining, left the veranda, giving the quartz to a benevolent-looking, spectacled old lady. She had scarcely departed when the latter, who had been scratching the specimen with her scissors, broke out: "That girl is either fooling us or else she is crazy. Plumbago, indeed! It is nothing but an old stone with some black pencil lead in it!"

Born Among the Bullrushes.

There is a variety of grebe (columbus minor) which hatches its young on a regular raft. Its nest is a mass of strong stems of aquatic plants closely fastened together. These plants contain a considerable quantity of air in their cells and set free gases in the process of decaying. The air and the gases imprisoned in the plant make the nest lighter than water. The bird usually sits quietly on its eggs, but if any intruder approaches or any danger is feared the mother plunges one foot in the water, and, using it as a paddle, transports her floating nest to a distance, often dragging along with it a sheet of water plants. A naturalist who frequently watched this remarkable removal says: "The whole structure looks like a little floating island carried along by the labor of the grebe, which moves in the center of a mass of verdure."—Cincinnati Enquirer.

Famous Echoes.

Most people are familiar with the famous whispering gallery in St. Paul's, but there are other instances of curious, if less well known, echoes in churches. In a Sussex church there is said to be one of the most remarkable ever known, while in a Hertfordshire church the tick of a watch may be heard from one end of the building to the other. It is also stated that the cathedral of Girgenti, Sicily, the slightest whisper is borne with perfect distinctness from the great western door to the cornice behind the altar, a distance of about 150 feet.

Powerful Ruhmkoff Coils.

Two of the largest Ruhmkoff coils ever made have been ordered in the United States for a foreign government, and will give an electric spark forty-five inches in length expending energy amounting to three or four horse power, and having a potential of half a million volts.