

THE BANKS OF NEBRASKA CITY.

THE CONSERVATIVE with pride and satisfaction gives to the reading public the following sensible and plain statement of facts from the cashier of a Nebraska City bank. It is a clear statement and comes from a young man who has grown up in this community, and by industry, truth and honesty, combined with ability, secured the esteem and confidence of all who know him:

"Let us consider banks from a local standpoint and see if the system is to be commended or condemned. We have four banks, three national and one state, with a combined capital and surplus of over \$300,000.00. This amount is but a small part of the wealth both real and personal of our city, but we find on the tax books that the total banks assessment is over \$60,000.00, or about one-twelfth of the total assessment, paying unto the city fully \$3,000.00 and to the county about \$2,000.00. Still, if you listen to some of our politicians, you would think that no local tax was paid at all by the banks. What do they offer the public? A safe place to deposit their money, a place for the merchant, the manufacturer and the farmer to borrow money to maintain and carry on their respective business enterprises.

"The combined deposits of the Nebraska City banks aggregate about \$750,000.00 contributed by about 2500 individuals. The banks in turn have loaned about \$650,000.00, supplying the wants of from 1500 to 1800 borrowers. Thus you see the banks have brought together the idle and surplus money of the city, offered with their capital security for its custody, and in turn loaned it to the community. By so doing, allowing the factory wheel to turn, the merchant to carry his stock, the farmer to tide over the period of the putting in and harvesting of his crop. Can you detect in the above anything that should bring upon the banker the avalanche of words decrying his business and almost threatening to wipe him from off the face of the earth? Rather he is a servant of the people, living by their sufferance, withdraw their support and his business is taken away. He is prominent as a taxpayer. He is solicitous as to the growth and prosperity of the community, for the depositors' money for which his capital is security is loaned to them, and success or prosperity is his also, as in turn would be disaster to him should the community he loans to, fail or lack prosperity. He is public-spirited, recognizing that anything that tends to improve the moral tone of the people, to elevate their standard, will add to his security in doing business with them.

"What as to the moral effect or benefit of a bank? Let us consider. We are good or bad largely as opportunity presents or environments influence. The bank in its deposit feature takes from the business house, the home and the individual, the money that, were the banks

not in existence, would be lodged in their respective places and be an alluring prize to the thief and murderer, rendering one's business unsafe and jeopardizing his home and life. This danger the bank removes, rendering life and home so peaceful and safe that by comparison the moated castle seems a form of barbarism and not the protection absolutely required there.

"If it removes dangers it also in a like degree reduces the per cent of crime, thus elevating the moral tone, contributing to the security of life and to man's possessions, forcible arguments indeed for the existence of banks."

A BUGLE BLAST FROM CROKER.

The redoubtable chief of Tammany Hall denounces the 16 to 1 department of the silver question which he supported in ninety-six as a "dead issue." The war is now on. The Pacific States, and Iowa, and Kansas, and Wyoming, with Nebraska, depressed into an almost fatal slump on the issue now denounced by Mr. Croker as "dead," indicate that it will not be much of a war when the day for fighting arrives. But for the fear of negro rule in the South there wouldn't be enough left of the silver question in nineteen hundred to make a respectable shadow in the national convention. Mr. Seltzerwater, who thrummed the cheap-money, repudiation banjo in Omaha a few nights ago, will have abundant excuse for holding on to his pretty hair on his return to New York. The sachems and braves of the Iroquois democracy are evidently on the warpath.

COST OF LOCAL GOVERNMENT.

The excessive cost of local governments and the consequent high rate of taxation which it imposes, repels from some of the best portions of our commonwealth the highest character of thrifty and intelligent immigration and the most desirable capital and enterprise.

Cass county makes a better showing for inexpensive local government than any of the older counties of the territory and state, as her annual levy has averaged only 1 per cent from 1865 to 1895, and in the latter year was only a little over 1 cent on the dollar.

Douglas county has averaged over 14 mills on the dollar during the same thirty years. But Washington county, which began with 14½ mills in 1865, has now a tax of 23⅝ mills, and makes an average of annual taxation for thirty years of 21.49⅞ mills.

Burt county began with 10 mills on the dollar in 1865 and closed with 14.4 mills in 1895, making an average of 12.294, including and between the two dates.

In 1865 Dakota county had a tax of 13 mills, and in 1895 of 19 mills on the dollar's valuation, and shows an annual

average during thirty years of 20¼ mills.

Throughout the state, during the "boom" period, and for the purpose of continuing an artificial energy of development in most of the larger cities, the fallacy of making public improvements, merely for the alleged purpose of giving employment to the idle, quite largely prevailed. Many big sewers which were unnecessary, and miles of expensive pavements in streets which needed no pavement at all, have been levied for, with the avowed purpose of raising funds with which to employ idle muscle. It has been deemed a duty of government by a majority of the voters in many localities to furnish compensatory employment to all seeking it. Following out this economic fallacy, those who have been temperate, industrious, self-denying, and acquisitive have been compelled, by the power to tax, to furnish the means of livelihood to those who have been largely during their whole lives intemperate, improvident, and indolent. Paved streets—vehicleless, trafficless, and almost peopleless—running out from Lincoln, from Omaha, and from other metropolitan points towards impossible additions, attest the futility and folly of such expenditures. The transitory and almost vagrant population in behalf of which such alleged public works were undertaken left each one of those towns so soon as the artificial excitement and unnecessary expenditure of public money subsided, or, by force of depleted exchequers, finally came to an end.

It is not the business of governments to furnish employment to citizens. But it is their business to protect the lives, liberties and properties of citizens within the areas which they cover. Having afforded this protection, they may rightfully tax for the service thus rendered, and a tax for any other than such a public purpose is licensed larceny.

The question arises now: How shall the good people in the various precincts, cities and counties

The Question. of the commonwealth of Nebraska hereafter avoid unnecessary extravagance and burdensome taxation in local government?

This is a very serious problem. It must be answered therefore, with careful, thoughtful deliberation. There is one absolutely certain method of correcting the evil of extravagant administration in local affairs, and that is, to recognize, respect, and exalt individual merit and personal worth in selecting public servants. Eulogize good character and denounce bad; choose for official places only those citizens who are peculiarly qualified, fitted and adapted to those places. The best method to accomplish the selection of that class of citizens, and thereby put a premium upon acknowledged ability and clean character, is to repeal every statute in the state of Nebraska which requires