

The Omaha Bee.

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The BEE PUBLISHING CO., Props. E. ROSEWATER Editor.

Congress has been seized with another spasm of civil service reform, but a spasm is of very short duration generally.

The republican organ of the Union Pacific is trying to put in an anti-monopoly stop, but the tunes ground out are on the same old key.

SCARCELY a day passes without some anti-monopoly measure or resolution being introduced in congress. The "red-handed socialists" appear to be on the increase.

TWO MORE dark horses are announced for the senatorial race. It begins to look as though an enlargement of the track will be necessary before the legislature convenes.

MR. VALENTINE will be paired at Washington about the time that the Nebraska legislature meets. Valentine always had a way of "drawing to pairs," but he won't "fill" in the coming senatorial contest.

SEVERAL of the small piped railroad organs are echoing the tune that the railroads are paying more than their share of taxation. That is doubtless the reason the railroad companies run a tax department at headquarters. It is a board of public charity in which every clerk is a philanthropist.

NOTHING better shows the effect of the election than the reef which Mr. Hiscox's committee on appropriations have taken in their sails and the prompt dispatch with which they are rushing their bills before the house. The Indian bill has been passed with a decrease of a million and a half from the estimates, and the consular and diplomatic bill has been reported with a substantial reduction of \$80,000 from last year's figures. This is a business like reform which, if followed by a common sense reduction in taxation, will meet with universal approval.

The leading woman rights managers have taken up their quarters at the national capital, which is to become the seat of war this winter. A national convention is to be held at Washington January 23, 24th and 25th. This convention is specially designed to bring pressure on congress in general and Senator Saunders in particular, to have the word "male" stricken out of the constitution of Dakota before she becomes a state. Poor Dakota will be in a bad way when the woman suffrage crusade strikes her in the middle of her constitution.

THE BEE calls the attention of the city council to the dangerous sport of coasting on our public street. Last winter no less than eleven serious accidents took place from this cause, and not a night passes after a snowfall when the lives and limbs of men, women and children crossing any of our streets, from Harney to Cass, are not endangered by the sleds which come shooting down the roadway from Capitol hill. No coasting ought to be permitted within the city limits, and strict instructions should be given to the police to suppress the nuisance by arresting all offenders.

THE GATHERERS and retailers of petty scandrels in New York have worked up a nasty sensation, in which Mrs. Langtry and Mrs. Labouchere are the principals. Both these ladies came to this country as strangers. The one is a famous beauty and an amateur actress; the other as the wife of one of the most brilliant and distinguished of English journalists and a member of parliament. Common decency and a fair regard for that chivalry which we boast of as one of the distinguishing marks of American manhood ought to have secured for both delicate and generous treatment. With the woman's quarrel between Mrs. Labouchere and Mrs. Langtry the public has no concern. There is nothing in it to reflect upon the character of either. If Mrs. Langtry thinks it not imprudent to accept the attentions of hair brained New York fops against the advice of her friends that is her business alone. It certainly is not a subject of national importance and gives no cause for the scandalous insinuations which irresponsible scribblers have put into public circulation. And it is a disgrace to American love of decency that such reflections are retailed and expanded and padded in reputable newspapers.

THE LAND GRANT CASES.

The supreme court has at last given its opinion on the Knevals and Burlington and Missouri land grant cases. The decision, as was expected, is against the right of the settlers claiming title to the land. Both cases, which have often been discussed in these columns, have been decided on the same ground.

This ground, briefly stated, is that title to land grants passes to the grantee with the filing of the map of the lands in the land commissioner's office at Washington, and not with its record on the books of the local land office adjacent to the land so donated. In the Knevals cases, thousands of acres were preempted in good faith by actual settlers, who consulted the land office maps and found no evidence of title resting with the railroad companies. In many instances their titles were perfected and patents issued to them by the government. The supreme court now decides that the title had passed out of the hands of the government into that of the corporations, and that the patents issued are void on this account.

Nearly twenty thousand acres of land, a large part of which is occupied by homesteads and highly cultivated farms are, by this decision, transferred over to Knevals, who purchased the St. Joe & Western claim, and to the Burlington & Missouri land department. Nothing remains for the settlers but to make such a compromise as they can with the owners and to await the action of congress on their behalf.

The supreme court suggests that the remedy for the settler lies in the court of claims, but a bill which has been favorably reported is now pending in congress whose object is to reimburse all settlers on the land grant through the treasury department. This will undoubtedly be pushed forward to a speedy passage. The decision of the supreme court may be strictly in accordance with the law but it is not equitable. And the government is bound to protect its own title which it transferred to innocent parties through a misinterpretation of the law on the part of its agents.

REFORM THE JUSTICE COURTS.

The constitution of Nebraska provides that justices of the peace and police magistrates shall be elected by the people and shall have such jurisdiction as may be provided by law, the only constitutional restriction being that their jurisdiction in civil cases shall not extend to controversies where the amount in dispute shall exceed \$200, nor in criminal cases where the punishment shall exceed three months imprisonment, or a fine of over one hundred dollars; nor in any matter wherein the title or boundaries of land may be in dispute. In other words it gives to justices of the peace control over fully three-fourths of all civil and criminal cases which come up for judicial decision. Under our laws each precinct in the State and each ward in cities of the first class is entitled to two justices of the peace. Omaha, with six wards and a population of 40,000, has twelve of these officials, beside a police judge whose jurisdiction extends only to criminal matters.

The time has come for a reformation of our justice courts. In Omaha they have become a standing reproach to our judicial system. The business of the city thrown into the hands of our twelve justices is not, if honestly administered, sufficient to maintain more than four justices courts. Their income is derived entirely from fees. In several courts in this city it is notorious that judgment invariably goes to the side where the costs are certain to be paid. It is equally notorious that many of our justices courts are controlled by pettifoggling attorneys who boast that they own the court in return for throwing all their cases into that particular channel. THE BEE can name justices of the peace who are so flagrantly corrupt that no responsible attorney will prosecute his cases before them, preferring to take a change of venue and to pay the costs of transfer rather than to prejudice in advance the cases of their clients. Corrupt collusion of unscrupulous lawyers and the heads of these cost mills is of such frequent occurrence that it scarcely excites comment among members of the bar.

The remedy for this evil lies in decreasing the number of justices of the peace in cities of the first class. Four justices would be sufficient to meet every requirement in Omaha. The income of these courts would be sufficient to induce honest and capable men to run for the office whose character would be a guarantee that their decisions would not be a travesty on justice. The reputation of the bench no less than the best interests of the public would be the gainer by such a change, and the poorer classes, who appear most frequently as litigants in minor courts, would then stand some chance of having their cases fairly and honestly decided according to the law and the evidence.

KINGSTON, Jamaica, has been visited by the most destructive fire that has ever occurred in the West India islands. The loss is estimated at over thirty millions of dollars, and thousands of people have become homeless and destitute. Fortunately the climate in the tropics will reduce the suffering from want of clothing and shelter to a minimum, and aid will soon reach the sufferers from all parts of the world.

THE STATE FAIR.

An Effort to be Made to Secure it for Lincoln Next Year.

After assembling at their rooms last evening, the board of trade resolved itself into a citizens' meeting to discuss the question of securing the fair for the coming year. There was a strong feeling present that Lincoln ought to make an effort to secure it, and the prevailing opinion was that it could be easily accomplished if our citizens were ready to offer reasonable inducements. The city has such an advantage over Omaha as to location and railroad facilities that equal inducements in other particulars will settle the subject in our favor beyond dispute. Mr. Jacobs presented a proposition offering to lease land and erect buildings equal to the accommodations provided at Omaha last year, for a rental of \$2,500 the first year and \$1,000 for four succeeding years. He also offered to sell 151 acres adjoining the county fair grounds for a reasonable sum. These propositions were favorably received and discussed. Some were in favor of advising the purchase of the land and others preferred to lease. The feeling was strong among a few that the land ought to be purchased and gradually improved and transformed into a park and drive for the city. After considerable discussion a committee consisting of Messrs. Druse, Imhoff, Walsh, Quirk and Clark was appointed to receive bids from all parties having suitable lands for sale or to lease, and report to a meeting of citizens to be held at the board of trade rooms next Tuesday evening--Lincoln Journal.

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