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A Wisconsin attorney has just been arrested in Chicago charged with being concerned in one of the most extensive land swindles operated in this country in years. The lands were presumed to be located in the state of Texas, and hundreds of thousands of dollars have been flung from the pockets of credulous victims under false representation. The swindle was carried on systematically in Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas and Nebraska. The parties implicated in these fraudulent land deals have managed to carry on their traffic in imaginary land titles and paper town lots for years and the recent arrest is only the beginning of the breaking up of the confidence game that caused such a brisk movement in the direction of the Gulf region from this section of country two years ago. The requisition for the arrest of members of the gang who are supposed to be in Illinois reads as follows:

Hon. John P. Altgeld, Governor of Illinois, Springfield, Ill. Dear Sir: I beg herewith to hand you copy of letter recently received from the commissioner of the general land office of this state, from which you will see that there is a well organized gang of land sharks located in Chicago who pretend to deal in Texas lands. You will readily observe the injury done to this state and to the people of Illinois who are imposed upon by these swindlers, and this letter is sent for your information and such action on your part as may be deemed necessary to protect the people of your state against the imposition. I have the honor to be very respectfully your obedient servant.

C. A. CULBERSON, Governor of Texas.

According to the Chicago Inter Ocean, a number of civil suits are already pending in Nebraska against the Wisconsin attorney whose arrest was made by Chicago detectives, and startling developments about the Texas and swindlers may be looked for. It is to be hoped that the Texas authorities will keep on in the good work they have begun and run down the fraudulent land deals so they may be fully exposed and justice may be meted out to every man who has been knowingly implicated.

THE AGE OF CONSENT.

Nebraska is not the only state which has recently by law raised the legal age of consent. The legislature of New York has just passed an act making the age of consent of girls in that state 18 years instead of 16 years, as at present. The New York law will not go into effect until September next, but owing to one peculiar provision it has called forth from one of the judges of the superior court a warning to clergymen and magistrates that would not be amiss elsewhere. The section to which reference is made provides that any person who shall take a female under the age of 18 without the consent of her father, mother, guardian, or other person having charge of her person, for the purpose of marriage, is guilty of abduction and punishable by fine and imprisonment.

The law does not declare in terms such marriage void, yet, being in violation of law, it may be voidable. The judge, therefore, announces that no magistrate or clergyman should after September 1 perform the marriage ceremony where the female is under 18 without the consent of her parents or guardian. If he does he may unconsciously become accessory to a criminal offense. He furthermore learnedly declares that the age of a female is always problematical. The polite way to determine it is to let the woman speak for herself and to accept her statement, but this will not satisfy legal requirements, and no official will be safe in performing the ceremony under the new law without first consulting the bride's parents or guardian unless age has made its impress in such a manner as to defy deception.

The new Nebraska age of consent law is materially different from that of New York, yet a timely caution to clergymen acting in this state is not out of order. It is a question still to be determined how far the penalties therein prescribed will apply to a person who marries a minor female without the consent of her parents or guardian. The marriage laws of Nebraska permit the marriage of females over 16, but require, to make the contract perfectly valid in the case of minors, that the persons legally responsible for them signify their approval of the union. Should marriage with a minor without the necessary consent be adjudged under the new law to be a crime, the magistrate or clergyman negligently aiding in the ceremony without reasonable inquiry to ascertain the ages of the parties may have rendered himself liable as an accessory. Clergymen cannot be too careful in exercising their authority to solemnize marriages.

A MOST PROMISING MOVEMENT.

The sound money movement in the south appears to be making vigorous progress. The convention to be held at Memphis next week, to give expression to the sentiment of the business interests of that section in favor of a sound currency, promises to be very largely attended. The commercial organizations of nearly every southern city will send delegates to the convention and the fact that Secretary Carlisle is to deliver the principal address will attract a popular attendance which cannot fail to make the occasion a notable one of its kind. Representative Patterson of Tennessee, one of the very few members of congress from the south who took a firm stand against free silver coinage, has been speaking in a number of cities to large audiences and doing excellent service in the cause of sound money. The most influential southern newspapers, such as the Louisville Courier-Journal, the Atlanta Journal, the New Orleans Picayune and the Charleston News and Courier, are zealously and ably championing sound money and showing up the fallacies of the advocates of free coinage. The task of converting the people of the south to the principles of a safe currency, after the work that has been done by the free silver propaganda, is not an easy one, but there are abundant indications that a change of sentiment is taking place, justifying the belief that if the campaign of education in the interest of sound money is vigorously pushed the majority of the voters of

A letter is published from a southern cotton merchant, said to be perhaps the most extensive dealer in the country in the great southern staple, who says that if congress should pass a free coinage or silver bill it would be impossible to keep on a gold basis, because this country could not keep silver on a parity with gold. Referring to the assumption of the free silver advocates that the low prices of commodities are due to the demonetization of silver, this practical man of affairs declares that they are due to the overproduction and restricted demand. "As to cotton," he says, "the decline was due to the enormous crop of 1894-5. Our cotton planters could desire only the best money for their crop; that which has the greatest purchasing power, which is gold or its equivalent." It is practical men of this kind who are making the fight in the south for sound money and there can be no doubt that they will exert a great influence. The southern people will listen to the views and counsel of men having business interests in that section and directly concerned in its development and prosperity when they would turn a deaf ear to the opinions or advice of northern men on the currency question. It is therefore reasonably expected that the Memphis convention will have a most important and salutary effect and the result of its deliberations will be regarded with very general interest.

WRINGING OUT THE WATER.

Dispatches from Milwaukee announce the impending transfer of the street railway system of that city from the control of its owners into the hands of receivers. The reasons given for placing the corporation that owns the Milwaukee street railways under the guardianship of the courts and leaving it to be exploited by expensive lawyers embody the same old story. The street railway company is insolvent because it is stocked and bonded for three or four times its actual cost. The bonded debt alone exceeds \$11,000,000, when the plant probably could be duplicated for less than half that sum.

In this respect the Milwaukee street railway wreck is only the counterpart of every other corporation that has been placed in the hands of receivers. The corporation was a huge balloon, inflated by fictitious capitalization. Every dollar honestly expended for labor, materials and equipments is represented by \$3 to \$5 of fraudulent evidences of indebtedness. The corporate balloonists who floated its debt abroad played a confidence game that has reacted disastrously upon American securities and credits. In the first place the actual outlay for building the road was exaggerated and in the next place its future earning capacity and value of its franchise were magnified. The confidence men who negotiated the bonds at a discount doubtless pocketed the usual handsome commission and the proceeds of bond sales were divided among the rapacious speculators who held the stock, after reimbursing themselves for the money advanced for construction and equipment. What should be called a gigantic swindling scheme, punishable with involuntary service in the penitentiary, is regarded and treated under our peculiar system of financing as simply a shrewd piece of American financing. The punishment merited by the promoters of such legalized rascality is visited upon the whole American people instead of falling upon the heads of the guilty offenders.

The penalty has been sure and severe if it has not been swift. It comes in the shape of periodic panics and financial distress, as a consequence of the destruction of confidence and withdrawal of credits. The crash of 1873 was brought on by the stock jobbing swindles of giant corporations that had been exploited by Credit Mobilier construction rings and confidence sharps who had flooded the money markets with worthless securities. The crash of 1893 was brought on by colossal mortgage frauds, perpetrated by corporations engaged in every species of speculative enterprise. Like the Milwaukee street railroad company, each of these corporate promoters had borrowed millions upon the future, with nothing with which to meet their obligations. When the knife was inserted into their inflated balloons and the gas and water rushed out there was a smashup. The wringing out of the water by liquidation and foreclosure is the inevitable consequence of widespread commercial dishonesty fostered by our fast and loose corporate system. Unfortunately the common people suffer, while the robbers and plunderers who brought about the disaster live in grand style upon the proceeds of their corporate ventures.