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CRAWLING THROUGH A KNOTHOLE

Silver was demoted February 12, 1873. I now offer a reward of \$100 to any man or woman who will find a word about it in any newspaper published in the month of February, 1873.

This is word for word the challenge made by Coin Harvey at the Creighton theater. The reward was promptly offered by The Omaha Bee by reproducing the following extracts from its files: Washington Dispatches, Omaha Bee, Saturday, January 18, 1873.—Mr. Sherman called on the bill to revise and amend the law relating to mints, assay offices and coinage of the United States, which was amended and passed.

Washington Dispatches, Omaha Bee, February 7, 1873.—Senate.—The report of a committee on conference on the mint and assay office bill was also concurred in. At the same public meeting Mr. Harvey made a second offer of \$100 reward as follows: The English speculator comes to the United States and buys our silver at 60 cents an ounce. He takes it to India and has it coined into \$1.25 in Indian money. With this he buys two bushels of wheat, thus enabling the American farmer who competes with him to sell his wheat at 40 cents a bushel. I hereby offer \$100 to any man who will depose this assertion.

This banter was also promptly taken up by The Bee and the assertion disproved beyond cavil. The fact that the mints of India have been closed to the coinage of silver for nearly two years is in itself a complete answer that cannot be disputed. Instead of plunking down the coin as any honorable gambler would do who had his bluff taken, Mr. Harvey, through his accredited Omaha organ, tries to crawl through a knothole as follows: The Bee claims Mr. Harvey's reward because its file contains a reference to a certain bill pending before congress in 1873, giving the title of that bill. To be sure, that was the bill by which silver was demoted, but the title did not convey the slightest indication of the bill's real purpose. * * * Mr. Harvey did not challenge any one to show that a bill was introduced in congress and passed. Any fool knows that to be a fact and The Bee has no exception.

Now the editor of The Bee may be a fool, but he knows enough to read plain English. Mr. Harvey offered a reward of \$100 to any man or woman who would find a word about the coinage bill of 1873 in any newspaper published in February of that year. This was an assertion that not one word could be found in any newspaper of the time relating to this measure. The Bee is willing to leave it to any impartial referee whether or not it is fairly entitled to claim the reward.

On the second proposition Mr. Harvey tries to crawl through a still smaller knothole. Everybody who was present at the Creighton theater heard that challenge. Why did the World-Herald suppress all reference to it in its report of the address which it pretended to publish yesterday? Why does it now try to discredit Mr. Harvey what every one who heard him knows he said? Is it not plain that Mr. Harvey has been cornered?

The question is, Will Harvey fork over the coin?

THE ANNUAL APPROPRIATIONS.

The appropriation bills as passed by the house of representatives carry an aggregate amount a little in excess of \$500,000,000. This is somewhat larger than the appropriations made at the first session of the preceding congress, but less than the amount appropriated at the first session of the fifty-first congress. The present house has made a very earnest effort to cut down expenditures and has reduced them in some directions where reduction was practicable without danger of impairing the public service. It would have been able to cut the appropriations below those of the last congress but for two things. There are unusually large deficiencies to be provided for and the interest account of the government has been materially increased. We have not at hand the figures showing the exact amount of the demands, but it is entirely safe to say that they aggregate a sum which, deducted from the total of the appropriations, would place it several millions below the amount appropriated at the first session of the preceding congress.

The house of representatives has kept, as far as it has been found practicable and expedient to do so, its promise of retrenchment in the expenditures of the government. It has kept in mind the fact that the revenues of the government have fallen off, as the result of democratic policy, and that there is no prospect that they will materially improve while that policy continues. During the nineteen months ending with March since the democratic tariff law went into effect the treasury deficiency has amounted to over \$70,000,000 and receipts are still behind expenditures. There is every reason to expect that this condition of things will continue for at least another year and hence retrenchment in public expenditures is absolutely necessary. As was said by a prominent republican representative in reference to appropriations: "The question with us now is not, What is the public demand? The public buildings of the country, partly constructed, are waiting and suffering by the lapse of time and we are unable to make the appropriations for their preservation or maintenance. The public works on the rivers and harbors of the country are wasting by erosion to the extent of more than a million dollars annually and we are unable to appropriate the necessary money either to push forward the work or to providently protect the work already done. The demands of commerce for greater depth of water in our harbors and rivers have to be met by the declaration of our inability to do anything in that direction." This reflects the sentiment that has actuated the majority in the house. It might have cut deeper, but the public service and the public interests would have suffered.

There will be some changes made by the senate in the appropriation bills yet to be considered by that body and it is not improbable that the total appropriations will be somewhat increased. It is the habit of the senate to be more liberal than the house and therefore it is to be expected that it will adhere to this habit in the present congress. But in any event the total appropriations will not be far beyond the half a billion mark and will probably be somewhat less than the amount appropriated at the first session of the fifty-second congress, when the house was democratic.

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Mr. Russell believes with Secretary Carlisle that the matter of defining the policy of the democratic party at Chicago is of greater importance than that of selecting a candidate, and like the Kentucky statesman Mr. Russell would not in the least embarrass the convention in reaching a decision respecting the party policy by engaging in a contest as to a candidate. It will hardly be questioned that this is a commendable position, under existing circumstances. Mr. Russell makes entirely plain the kind of policy which he thinks the party ought to declare for at Chicago and he frankly says that nothing else will be acceptable to him. He speaks for the democracy of the east and foreshadows what the party in that section will demand of the Chicago convention. It will insist on an explicit declaration in favor of maintaining the gold standard.

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The last three questions seem to have stumped the city officials. After delving into the records for two weeks they informed the reporter that it would take three months of hard work to compile the desired information. The only figures bearing on the subject that they could furnish were: Total uncollected paying taxes, \$572,002.49; alley paying taxes, \$2,388.64; curbing and guttering, \$50,867.93; grading, \$110,540.19; street improvements, \$370,041.82; total uncollected special taxes, \$1,106,490.08.

The first rule of every well regulated railroad firm is "Be sure you are right, and then go ahead." This rule applies with equal force to all important transactions in municipal government. It is not safe to go ahead until you know you are right. Is it safe for the mayor and council to issue bonds under any plan unless they know that every dollar of the amount comes within the charter limitations relating to the issue of matured bonded debt?

Proposals have been invited by order of the council for \$227,000 of renewal bonds. What date do these bonds bear? The mayor and council have clearly no right to issue any bonds without a vote of the people to ratify them except such as are expressly exempted from this provision by charter. The proposed bond issue is said to be for renewing district paving and improvement bonds for which no taxes have been collected. But the meager information that is available to the public shows conclusively that the mayor and council have no definite knowledge as to what portion of the proceeds from the sale of the so-called renewal bonds is to go to make up delinquent street improvement taxes and what portion is to make good money taken illegally out of the sinking fund or debts created for purposes that do not come within the charter provisions authorizing bond issues without popular ratification.

The fact that it would require three months to ascertain what, if any, districts are entirely free of improvement debt and to what extent prepayments of installments of taxes not yet due have been properly credited and applied to the liquidation of district bonds, shows that the council is groping in the dark and is recklessly determined to mortgage the city whether it has authority to do so or not.

The Massachusetts supreme court has just adjudged unconstitutional the law passed in that state to give veterans of the late war of the rebellion the preference in selecting men for official positions under the city and state governments. The principle laid down in that case is a republican form of government there can be no discriminating qualifications for public employment. The veterans of the war certainly have claims to special consideration in connection with the distribution of such positions, but the claim rests on gratitude for past services rather than on legal right.

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RUSSELL OF MASSACHUSETTS. The political career of ex-Governor Russell of Massachusetts has been a character to justify entire confidence in the sincerity of his declaration that he is not seeking nomination for the presidency, does not desire to be the democratic candidate and does not wish any movement made in any state in his interest. Mr. Russell has always shown himself to be a high-minded politician and while he would undoubtedly accept the nomination for the presidency if it came to him he is not the sort of man who would enter into a scramble for it or who would compromise as to any of his convictions in order to secure it.

Mr. Russell believes with Secretary Carlisle that the matter of defining the policy of the democratic party at Chicago is of greater importance than that of selecting a candidate, and like the Kentucky statesman Mr. Russell would not in the least embarrass the convention in reaching a decision respecting the party policy by engaging in a contest as to a candidate. It will hardly be questioned that this is a commendable position, under existing circumstances. Mr. Russell makes entirely plain the kind of policy which he thinks the party ought to declare for at Chicago and he frankly says that nothing else will be acceptable to him. He speaks for the democracy of the east and foreshadows what the party in that section will demand of the Chicago convention. It will insist on an explicit declaration in favor of maintaining the gold standard.

At present the outlook is not favorable to the success of this eastern view of what the party should do and in the probable event of the honest money democrats being beaten at Chicago the very interesting question is, What will Mr. Russell and those who think with him then do? Will they split the democracy by nominating a sound money man on a sound money platform, or will they either support the republican candidate or refrain from voting? One thing may be regarded as certain. The free silver democrats cannot be held to the support of a gold standard candidate and platform.

SETTLING A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT. More than two weeks ago the city hall reporter of The Bee was directed to procure answers to the following questions from the offices of the treasurer and comptroller: First, Do you keep a separate record of bonds issued for each paying district? The response to this question was, Yes.

Second, Do you credit each district with the amount of paying taxes collected in that district? This was also answered in the affirmative. Third, What is the aggregate of delinquency in the districts for which renewal bonds are to be issued? Fourth, How much of the proposed issue of renewal bonds is to cover delinquent paying taxes? Fifth, How many districts have paid up all of their paying taxes and have the bonds issued for said districts been taken up? If not, what amount is still outstanding?

The last three questions seem to have stumped the city officials. After delving into the records for two weeks they informed the reporter that it would take three months of hard work to compile the desired information. The only figures bearing on the subject that they could furnish were: Total uncollected paying taxes, \$572,002.49; alley paying taxes, \$2,388.64; curbing and guttering, \$50,867.93; grading, \$110,540.19; street improvements, \$370,041.82; total uncollected special taxes, \$1,106,490.08.

The first rule of every well regulated railroad firm is "Be sure you are right, and then go ahead." This rule applies with equal force to all important transactions in municipal government. It is not safe to go ahead until you know you are right. Is it safe for the mayor and council to issue bonds under any plan unless they know that every dollar of the amount comes within the charter limitations relating to the issue of matured bonded debt?

Proposals have been invited by order of the council for \$227,000 of renewal bonds. What date do these bonds bear? The mayor and council have clearly no right to issue any bonds without a vote of the people to ratify them except such as are expressly exempted from this provision by charter. The proposed bond issue is said to be for renewing district paving and improvement bonds for which no taxes have been collected. But the meager information that is available to the public shows conclusively that the mayor and council have no definite knowledge as to what portion of the proceeds from the sale of the so-called renewal bonds is to go to make up delinquent street improvement taxes and what portion is to make good money taken illegally out of the sinking fund or debts created for purposes that do not come within the charter provisions authorizing bond issues without popular ratification.

The fact that it would require three months to ascertain what, if any, districts are entirely free of improvement debt and to what extent prepayments of installments of taxes not yet due have been properly credited and applied to the liquidation of district bonds, shows that the council is groping in the dark and is recklessly determined to mortgage the city whether it has authority to do so or not.

The Massachusetts supreme court has just adjudged unconstitutional the law passed in that state to give veterans of the late war of the rebellion the preference in selecting men for official positions under the city and state governments. The principle laid down in that case is a republican form of government there can be no discriminating qualifications for public employment. The veterans of the war certainly have claims to special consideration in connection with the distribution of such positions, but the claim rests on gratitude for past services rather than on legal right.

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It is not improbable that the total appropriations will be somewhat increased. It is the habit of the senate to be more liberal than the house and therefore it is to be expected that it will adhere to this habit in the present congress. But in any event the total appropriations will not be far beyond the half a billion mark and will probably be somewhat less than the amount appropriated at the first session of the fifty-second congress, when the house was democratic.

CLAIMS AGAINST SPAIN. The latest statement regarding the claims of American citizens in Cuba against Spain places the amount at \$100,000,000. Previous statements named a much larger amount. Accuracy in a matter of this kind is, of course, impossible, but it is of little consequence what the amount of the claims may be, since it is