

WOODMEN CIRCLE CENSURED

State Auditor Barton Makes Report of Examination of Order.

LAWS OF STATE ARE VIOLATED

Mrs. Emma B. Manchester, Supreme Guardian, and Other Supreme Officers Are Charged with Many Irregularities.

(From a Staff Correspondent)

LINCOLN, Neb., Nov. 7.—(Special Telegram.)—That the heads of the Woodmen Circle violated their own laws, that they used arbitrary power in the adjustment of many of their affairs, and that they generally disregarded the precedents of the order to which they belonged, is set out in a severe censure of Mrs. Emma B. Manchester and other officials in a report made today by Auditor Barton of this state, and Auditor Bleakley of Iowa.

The report follows upon investigation made by these two officials as a result of complaints by half a dozen members of the Woodmen Circle who charged that lax methods were in vogue under the present regime. The complaint was made just prior to the election of officers which occurred early in September at Rochester, N. Y.

In the report Auditor Barton says:

"We beg to transmit herewith a copy of the report on the joint examination of your order made by the examiners of the insurance departments of our respective states and request that the same be immediately submitted to the executive council of the order for their serious consideration. To the end that the reforms so undeniably necessary in the conduct of affairs of the order may be promptly and efficiently effected.

Payment of Fees to Examiners.

"Charge 1.—Inasmuch as the attorney general of Nebraska has ruled that there is no special statute governing the payment of examiner's fees, except for the examination of foreign fraternal societies, we hold that as the precedent has been established by the Nebraska department in past years as to the fee to be paid for examining this class of associations, which examinations are required to be made the same as any of other class of insurance companies or associations, the payment of a fee of ten dollars per diem and actual expenses is not excessive for an association of your class to pay an individual of the required ability to direct examinations of this character.

"Charge 2.—The first matter of importance is the admission to your society of seventy-two members over age, 65 under age, no dispensation, and 216 under age with dispensation granted by the supreme guardian, and we are of the opinion that the aggregate of similar cases would be largely increased if the period was extended beyond that named in the report.

Law of State Violated.

"In these admissions you have not only violated the law of your state, but, the law of your order, and have placed yourselves in position to be severely criticized by your members. If not actually involving question as to the legality of the certificate. Such conduct in the offices of a concern which expects their members to obey its law, is unexcusable. We feel that it would be unjust to these members to insist upon the cancellation of their certificates, as they themselves are innocent of any wrong-doing, but desire to state that any repetition of these irregularities on the part of the management will meet with most drastic treatment on the part of your home department.

"Charges 4 and 9—While the evidence submitted in connection with these charges would indicate that in some instances the end attained justified the means, there has evidently been a manifest disregard of the laws of the order governing the respective matters, as well as a centralization of power in the supreme guardian, which, in our opinion, should be carefully veiled in and confined to the proper departments. Such practices should be discontinued in the future, and, while we recognize that the supreme guardian possesses certain general prerogatives under the law of the order, the power is not given her to set aside the laws specifically applying to its various departments.

Supreme Physician Censured.

"Charge 5—We believe that the supreme physician is to be condemned for her action in accepting the applicant who had been previously rejected by her as a local examiner, despite the claim that her action was the result of duress."

Finding of Examiners.

Accompanying the findings of the auditor's report of the examiners, a voluminous record which dealt first with the financial condition of the order and then took up the charges in detail. The order is found to be in a flourishing state. Last year the income was over \$1,000,000, and the disbursements a little over \$500,000. It has net assets of nearly \$2,000,000.

As to the charge that Mrs. Manchester paid the state examiners \$10 a day and had repeatedly informed members that the men would arrange the reports to her liking, the evidence is stated to dis-

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close only that the fee was a fair and reasonable one and forms the minimum basis of charges in most states. The examiners say they found no evidence to prove the charge that Mrs. Manchester suppressed a report with objectionable features in it. They find that the supreme guardian has admitted persons over and under age, some with and some without dispensations. They find that Mrs. Manchester and Clerk Kuhn did overrule the rejection of some thirty-seven applicants by the action supreme physician, but that the regular physician afterwards approved them.

Mrs. Manchester Uses Order's Funds.

A number of the charges are dismissed as apparently trivial and involving purely matters of administrative judgment. They find that notwithstanding three persons who sought transfers were blackballed, the supreme guardian ordered the clerk to receive their assessments and dues; that she also ordered certain reports that the laws of the order say should be sent to the supreme clerk to be sent to her; that she paid express, telephone and silverware bills, properly chargeable to herself out of the fund of the order to the amount of \$333.67; that it is not clear that the bills for repairing and cleaning jewelry were not properly chargeable to the order; that the bills for silverware and namesake cups for Mrs. Manchester were added to the bills against the order, but the amount has later been returned by the clerk who did the adding.

Also that the supreme guardian accounted properly for all the alleged illegal payment of large sums to members of the order, except in a few instances specifically given; that she did remove to her private rooms furniture that had been used by the order, but this was given her by a vote of the council; that it is true the supreme banker did receive per diem in item to her salary; that the state manager for Minnesota presented an \$84.55 expense claim that was held up for a time, but afterwards paid, the charge being that at the time she was visiting the supreme guardian; that in three years \$1,200 was paid for photographs, principally of the supreme guardian, at prices ranging as high as \$50 a dozen and one with electric fixtures costing \$23; that while erroneous figures of membership, were given for Texas, there is nothing to show it was deprived of any rights of representation, the charge being that she tried to prevent a large delegation, fearing the vote thereof in the convention; that there is no foundation for the charge that Mrs. Manchester signed checks for large amounts without the knowledge or consent of the supreme clerk; that the supreme guardian did not accept the payment of a fee of ten dollars per diem and actual expenses is not excessive for an association of your class to pay an individual of the required ability to direct examinations of this character.

"Charge 3.—The first matter of importance is the admission to your society of seventy-two members over age, 65 under age, no dispensation, and 216 under age with dispensation granted by the supreme guardian, and we are of the opinion that the aggregate of similar cases would be largely increased if the period was extended beyond that named in the report.

Monopoly in Supplies.

They find that Mrs. Manchester did bend all of her efforts to give one firm furnishing lodge supplies (the last year \$17,000) without particular regard to whether good stuff could be secured from other firms. In one letter she said that anyone furnishing a list of groves to a rival firm, that was hot after business, would be minus a position; that one firm of brokers had a practical monopoly of the "bond" business; that Mrs. Manchester admitted she had accepted presents of a parasol, flowers and a set of furs and that it appears she was favored in the purchase of a bond for her personal use; that the complaint with reference to having proceedings printed and never distributed should be properly directed against the supreme clerk; that the payment of part of the Frizzell Judgment was laid before the order; that differences arose between Jennie Colfax, supreme physician, and the supreme guardian, and that the latter was paid \$7,200 to resign; that there is no evidence to prove Mrs. Manchester insisted her age when applying for admission; that both sides were guilty of looseness in the way of selecting delegates to the Nebraska state convention; that while the evidence shows the order to be somewhat autocratic in government, Mrs. Manchester is entitled to much credit with reference to having proceedings printed and never distributed should be properly directed against the supreme clerk; 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