

Ink Stings.

They say Justice is blind. So keep this in mind, And you'll understand how she got lost. Mist the wiles and the schemes Of the Quay machine And said "not guilty," but "pay the costs."

Democratic Watchman

STATE RIGHTS AND FEDERAL UNION.

VOL. 47 BELLEFONTE, PA., FEBRUARY 14, 1902. NO. 7.

That Libel Suit.

Whatever may be the opinion of others as to the result of the finding in the HARRIS libel case, the editor of the WATCHMAN certainly has just reason to be gratified over the result, and to accept the verdict of "not guilty" as a complete vindication of the course of this paper.

The case, brought as it was at the home of the prosecutor, where if he had friends, or admirers, or local influence, they could be called into service, and by one prominent enough to be selected out of all the other adherents of the State ring for the responsible position of State Treasurer; the prosecution backed by the power and influence of the Republican state machine; tried before a jury drawn by the friends of that machine and by a court whose sympathies and support it has always had; compelled to submit to "judicial rulings" that prohibited the presentation of the most convincing evidence, and confined to the narrowest limits a biased court could prescribe for such testimony as could be given to the jury; to win in the face of all this was a victory for the truth, and the right to criticize corrupt public officials, greater than a score of triumphs under circumstances where fair play could be given, or political necessities did not require the hiding of the truth in order to hide the shame of a great party.

What State Treasurer-elect HARRIS may think of the ending, is a matter for himself. This paper had charged that he could, as a member of the Legislature, well lay claim to the title of "king of the crooks" and that "from betraying his constituents in 1899 he became an unblushing bribe taker in 1901." These were the expressions he charged as being libelous, and to show that there were good grounds for these assertions and "probable cause" for their publication was the duty of the defendant. An innocent man in Mr. HARRIS' position would have said: "Tell all you know to establish the truth, bring all the witnesses you can and let them testify as they will. I feel that I am innocent and now ask that the fullest and freest investigation of all my official records be made."

It was not so in this case. While four-fifths of the witnesses subpoenaed were personal and political friends of the prosecutor—men who knew of his official actions and who were interested in his vindication—their evidence was objected to and every avenue of information closed by technical objections presented, at the instance of the prosecutor, by his attorneys. In fact every scintilla of evidence, except that which could not under any rule of court be excluded, was ruled out at the request or upon the demands of the individual who regarded himself as libeled, and yet in spite of these efforts to hide the truth, the verdict came—"not guilty."

What must be the inferences that will be drawn from these facts? On the rulings of the court the WATCHMAN has neither censure to offer nor criticism to make. These may have been in accordance with the technical rules governing the presentation of evidence. We do not know. They may have been right, but if they were God help the opportunity the courts furnish to get the truth and the facts to a jury! Such rulings in a case to determine the truth of the resurrection, would eliminate all teachings of the bible; all knowledge of its truths; all beliefs and all evidence that christianity could produce, unless it could put upon the stand the doubting Thomas who thrust his hand into the bleeding side of the resurrected Savior. They were sufficient, however, for the purposes of the machine, that profited by them.

er. of Philadelphia, the opportunity to keep hidden from the public the exact amount it cost to secure from a Republican Legislature, franchises for which a citizen of Philadelphia openly offered \$2,500,000.00. They relieved the Attorney General of the State and prospective Republican candidate for Governor from explaining the conditions that were imposed upon Mr. HARRIS in return for a check of \$250 sent him by Mr. ELKINS, prior to his election as a member of the Legislature, and denied him the opportunity of telling why an individual not sworn as a clerk and responsible to no one, was placed in charge of the corporation desk in the transcribing room of the House of Representatives and why he should pay him for work done in that position.

They relieved Representative VOORHEES, a leading Republican member of the Legislature, and who is said to know all about the transactions of that body, from explaining on the witness stand why he told, in the presence of a number of persons in the Commonwealth hotel, that the prosecutor had "held his party up for a political office in return for his betrayal of Col. ED IRVIN, for whom he was instructed to vote for United States Senator, and in addition had the gall to demand a "divvy in everything that was going."

They exonerated Representatives BLISS and STRUB and Speaker MARSHALL from telling the cost of defeating game bills and how the fund furnished by the cold storage people disappeared, before reaching the individual for whom a goodly portion of it was intended. They also served the purpose of keeping from the public information, that these gentlemen are said to possess, about the rackets from charitable appropriations, and the whereabouts of shortages that certain hospitals in the State have reason to complain of.

They locked the lips of record clerk BUSCH, who was present to tell of the open payment of money in the corridors of the capital for legislative work; of the debauchery that he witnessed in the committee rooms; of the falsification of official records under the orders of the Speaker and chief clerk; of the shamelessness with which Legislators boasted of the price they obtained for their votes, and of other acts, that should make a Pennsylvanian blush to think they were committed within the Commonwealth.

They gave the representatives of the great newspapers of the State no opportunity to tell of the crookedness they had witnessed, or causes that led them to write the last Legislature of Pennsylvania down as the most venal and corrupt body of lawmakers that ever disgraced a Commonwealth, or to explain why they always counted the prosecutor as one of the chiefs in the debauching and disreputable work of that body.

It was facts like these that "judicial rulings" kept from the jury and the people. Possibly as a whole the Republican state ring may imagine it did well in keeping the lid tight over the caldron of official corruption it has made. It backed the prosecution in the hope of securing a verdict—not for HARRIS' vindication—but for the purpose of frightening Democratic papers into silence about the public pillage it has been guilty of, and the disgraceful wrongs it has been perpetrating. Its failure to make a victim of this paper is only notice that the fight for decent government, with honest men at the front, can and will go on, while the verdict of the jury can be read by all as meaning there shall be no muzzling of a newspaper in Pennsylvania because it honestly seeks to do its duty to the people.

Democratic Convention Delegates.

The apportionment of delegates to the next Democratic state convention has been completed by chairman CRESAY and announced. It reduces the total membership of the body to 311 and takes from Philadelphia and Pittsburgh the vast power of control which they have hitherto exercised. For example in the last convention Philadelphia had upwards of sixty delegates and Allegheny county about thirty, making an aggregate in the two counties of about 100 out of a total of a fraction more than 400. This year Philadelphia has twenty-nine and Allegheny county thirteen, a total of forty-two out of 311, or a fraction over seven per cent of the whole now, instead of a fraction less than twenty-five per cent.

Senator J. H. COCHRAN in the past eight years has won a reputation for honesty, faithfulness to public duties and true manly acts which is unsurpassed by any member who has ever had a seat in the Senate Chamber at Harrisburg. Such a record for a member of Pennsylvania's law-making body is indeed hard to find, and it is not surprising the electors of the Lycoming-Columbia district are practically a unit for his return to the Senate. It is predicted that Mr. COCHRAN will win in November next by a phenomenally large majority.

There are times in a man's life when he would give a great deal to know who's who and what's what. Now there is next Tuesday, for instance.

OUR EXCHANGES ON THE VERDICT.

A Stinging Rebuke for Harris—A Vindication of Meek.

From the Pittsburgh Post. Mr. Meek, of the Bellefonte WATCHMAN, is to be congratulated that the Clearfield county jury found him "not guilty" as to criminal libel on State Treasurer-elect and Legislator Harris, and to be consoled on the money question that the jury found that he should pay the costs. On the whole, however, it is a stinging rebuke of Harris and a vindication of Mr. Meek, that there was strong "probable cause" for his publication, and that it was not made maliciously or negligently. If the lid could have been lifted, and the witnesses in court allowed or compelled to testify as to the bribery and corruption at Harrisburg during the first six months of last year, the trial would have been an epoch in the history of the State, and impressed facts on the people it is well they should know to govern their future action. But the rulings of the court shut out his testimony, confining the evidence to acts in close relation with the prosecutor, Harris. This, of course, is most difficult to secure. Bibeby is not committed in the open market as beef and potatoes are sold, but is the outcome of secret conspiracy and bargaining. The facts can only be reached or judged inferentially or by circumstances. It must be admitted, however, that in Harris' negotiations with the Phillipsburg hospital, money influence directed his legislative work was brought closely home to the prosecutor, and justified the jury in finding that Meek's allegations that Harris was "a king of crooks" and "unblushing bribe taker" were in the nature of frozen truth. If levying toll by a state legislator on the state's charity to the unfortunate, sick or maimed is not unblushing bribery it would be difficult to define the difference between the commonplace of knavery and its most despicable methods.

An Unwelcome Reminder to the Machine.

From the Philadelphia Times. The acquittal of the editor of the Bellefonte WATCHMAN upon the charge of libel brought by the State Treasurer-elect is an unwelcome reminder to the machine managers of one of their failures in the recent Legislature. The repeal of an act which secured the constitutional liberties of the press was the very first measure under duress of the session. Even subversive party organs were compelled to protest against this scheme, and it failed. Such changes in the existing libel laws as were finally enacted, as a sequel to this attempt, did not impair their general character, but defined rather more clearly than before the general and responsibility of public criticism of public officials.

Crooks and Costs.

From the Philadelphia Press (Rep.). The illogical Clearfield jurymen who thought Meek was justified in calling the State Treasurer-elect a crook, and who after traveling on a free pass, would make the editor pay the cost of proving it to their satisfaction, saved a few dollars to Clearfield taxpayers at some expense of consistency. Either Harris or his constituency should have been made to pay the costs. Sending such representatives to the Legislature is an aggravated offense against the public well-being which might well have been punished by direct pecuniary reclamation.

As to the probable cost of witness fees and mileage The Press, commenting on the case yesterday, said: "The great men who play so large a part in the government of this Commonwealth, who were summoned to Clearfield to tell the truth, but were not permitted to do so, will surely waive their claim to witness fees and mileage in view of the fact that all these costs fall on the innocent editor. The legislator who charged an attorney's fee for getting an appropriation for a hospital is very little nobler than the statesman who after traveling on a free pass, would make Editor Meek pay him mileage for testimony he did not give. It is a pity this testimony was ruled out. The whole State is eager to hear particulars from Lieutenant Governor Gobin of the purchase of votes that he says he saw going on in Harrisburg last winter. They wanted to hear from ex-Recorder Brown about the money that he says was in Governor Stone's hands to pass the "Ripper" bill. They want to hear from Thomas S. Bigelow about the money he expended for legislation in Harrisburg. They would like to hear Governor Stone explain more in detail about that charge of bribery that some-body made against him."

Mr. Harris was part of this outfit. He voted for all the dubious measures, but the inexorable rule of evidence, born of a compassion for human weakness, did not permit the truth to be told. Only the smallest part of it came out, and it so balanced the minds of the jurors that they tell Harris that Meek had excuse for thinking him a crook, and is therefore innocent of libel, and they tell Meek that for expressing his thought so boldly he must pay the costs of the suit.

A Gain to the Cause of The Freedom of the Press.

From the Philadelphia Record. A verdict of acquittal, or at worst a disagreement of the jury, is what was generally looked for as the result of the Harris-Meek libel case. Such is the character achieved by the late Legislature that it would be next to impossible to secure a jury in the Commonwealth to convict a jurymaster of criminal libel for accusing of corruption and crookedness an individual member who habitually shared in its conjunct iniquities. This was perhaps as favorable a case as could have been offered the Machine for wreaking vengeance on its enemies and for deterring them from future assaults upon its agents and adherents in the Legislature and State Government.

The prosecutor, Frank G. Harris, is the State Treasurer-elect, and in the last Legislature he voted without a variation for each and all of the measures upon which the public has put a stigma of corruption. The defendant was a veteran Democratic editor whom the Machine would have rejoiced to punish with an imprisonment and a heavy fine for defaming the character of one of its prominent adherents. The prosecution if successful in landing P. Gray Meek in a county jail, was expected to have a most wholesome effect upon the coming campaign for Governor and State Legislature.

A reason for anticipating success was in the belief that no actual money bribe could be traced to the prosecutor. Although the defendant had summoned a numerous array of members of Legislature and of beneficiaries of corrupt legislation none of them was bound to deliver any testimony tending to incriminate himself. Nor was it likely that a bribe taker or a bribe giver would balk at perjury to save a confederate from the consequences of a jury verdict of act of corruption was not necessary, to secure for the defendant acquittal by an honest and intelligent jury. With the whole history of the last Legislature and with the record of the prosecution before it the jury made no nice distinction between a sordid money bribe and the corrupt motive of bribing official preferment through subversion to the Machine. If Harris were not proved guilty of taking money he got the Machine nomination for State Treasurer as a reward for his uniform support of iniquitous Machine measures of legislation. This in the estimation of the jury justified Editor Meek's charge of crookedness and required a verdict of acquittal. The impartiality of costs upon the defendant for no other offenses than that of serving the Commonwealth is one of those inconsistencies that sometimes detract so much from the virtue and excellence of the jury system.

This is the first prosecution for libel that has arisen from the scandalous history of the legislative session of 1901, and it is likely to be the last. Harris has a civil suit for damages against the defendant, Meek; but this verdict will not afford him any encouragement to persevere in it. Though newspapers throughout the State have held members of the late Legislature up to public opprobrium for corruptly betraying their constituents not one of them besides Mr. Harris has sought vindication at the hands of a jury keen as has been their humiliation over exposure. On the whole the result of this Clearfield county trial has been a gain to the cause of freedom of the press. The journals of the State will be less afraid of becoming involved in the technicalities of the libel law when they dare to defend the Commonwealth against Machine misrule.

Spawns from the Keystones.

It is estimated that only about eighty million feet of logs will reach the Williamsport boom this year. This will be 45,000,000 feet less than last year. Mrs. Francis Gallo, the Mt. Pleasant woman convicted of arson, and who was sentenced to the penitentiary for eighteen months, tried to commit suicide in the Westmoreland county jail Friday afternoon, but was prevented by the other women confined therein. Shooting himself through the breast, Lucas Blazovsky, aged 20 years, committed suicide Tuesday night in the Shenango hotel bar at Sharon. He left a letter, in which he gave as the reason for the deed that his sweetheart, Mary Klerbarra, had rejected his offer of marriage.

The general conference of the United Evangelical church—the law-making body of that church—will meet in Williamsport this year, convening during the month of October. It will be composed of about sixty ministers and sixty laymen, the most distinguished members of the church throughout the United States. The explosion of a lantern caused the destruction of the barn of George Haas, four miles southeast of Mechanicsburg, Westmoreland county, Saturday evening. A calf and two pigs were burned, and all the owner's grain, hay, harness and machinery, entailing a loss of \$1,000, which is about half covered by insurance.

When Mrs. Thomas Rickert, aged 45 years, of South Allentown, was ready to go to bed Tuesday night, she blew down the lamp chimney in order to extinguish the light. The lamp exploded, scattering the blazing oil over Mrs. Rickert. The unfortunate woman lingered in agony for several hours, dying from the effects of her injuries early Wednesday morning. Zane B. Gray and James B. Graziop, of Tyrone, has secured a patent for a spike puller and car mover. The merit of the machine is its rapidity and accuracy in the performance of the work for which it is intended. They claim for it great superiority over all devices now in use for such work. They will place the right for its use in States on market at once. They have applied for patents in Canada and in Europe. A Greensburg dispatch says: Wolves from the mountain districts in this county are playing havoc with sheep, hogs, chickens and other fowl. Scores of the gray species are sheltered under the rocks, and as a result very few people venture out after midnight. Their howls can be heard for miles at night. Vestry Egan, a farmer, set a trap recently and caught a gray wolf of unusual size. A Williamsport woman is bringing suit against that city to the amount of \$25,000 for her husband's life. The man was walking on a boardwalk in the city, in company with a friend, when the latter stepped on a loose board, which flew up and tripped the other man, inflicting injuries which ultimately resulted fatally. The widow has a strong case, as the boardwalk was in a very bad condition. Forestry Commissioner Rothrock has announced that the forest property in the South Mountains required by the State would be turned over March 15th. It comprises 40,000 acres in Franklin and Fulton counties. The Barre lands in Huntingdon county, comprising 8,000 acres, have been purchased. Negotiations for the purchase of the 28,000 acre tract, in Union, from which timber has been cut by ex-Congressman Kulp, are concluded. James C. Begley, ex-editor of the Windber Journal, has received through his attorney, nearly \$16,000, damages allowed, with interest and costs, in his suit against the Pennsylvania railroad company for the loss of his child and wife and injury to himself in an accident at the Johnstown depot July 18th, 1900. He has been in a sanitarium near Pittsburgh for some time and is reported to be getting along well, but it is said that between the 15th and 20th of every month he is attacked with fits of insanity and has to be carefully watched at those times. The following officers were elected at the Odd Fellows' home, near Suburg, for the ensuing year: President, W. H. Holman, of Patterson, Juniata county; secretary, E. C. Wagner, Watson county; treasurer, S. B. Hillard, Watson county; vice president, Emanuel Malick, Shanokin. Superintendent Burgess was re-elected and his salary increased from \$700 to \$800 per year. Mrs. Burgess was re-elected matron and her salary increased from \$300 to \$400. The delegates were pleased with the excellent condition of the institution, which reflected much credit on the management of superintendent Burgess. There are at present forty-six children inmates, all of whom are making rapid progress in their studies. The report of treasurer Malick showed the receipts for \$7,435.91, expenditures \$7,285.11, leaving a balance of \$150.80 in the treasury with no debt outstanding. During the past year \$76.59 in outstanding bills were paid. From the farm were gathered last year 387 bushels of wheat, 92 bushels rye, 1,400 corn, 225 oats and 435 potatoes.

(Concluded on page 4.)