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VOL 30

BLOOMSBURG, PA., FRIDAY, JULY 12, 1895.

NO 28

ELECTRIC LIGHT IN BLOOMSBURG. THE VOTE THEREON.

To the Editor of the Columbian:

The election on what is advertised as Ordinance No. 84, of the town council, is immediately impending. It seems that but little interest has been felt or exhibited on the subject, and nothing has been said editorially by the newspapers thereon. Now, on so important a question as that of increasing the debt of the town \$20,000 or upwards for a new electric plant, there ought to be full information and due consideration given to the subject. And besides, we ought to understand whether the popular vote, as proposed to be taken, will be a lawful and fair vote.

By the Act of Assembly of 1891, P. L. 90, boroughs are authorized to manufacture electric light for commercial purposes, but upon the express condition that in case of an existing electric light company in the borough, authorized to furnish and "already furnishing electric lights to such borough or the public," the borough shall purchase the works of such electric light company upon agreement, if practicable, otherwise upon assessment, with the right of appeal by either party to the proper court. This is the present law upon this subject and it will be seen that in the case of any borough where an electric light company was in operation at the date of the Act, it could not manufacture and sell electricity to the inhabitants of the borough or for private use therein, without taking and paying for the works of the existing electric company.

Now, the "Bloomsburg Electric Light and Power Company" was incorporated by letters patent from the Governor of the Commonwealth, on the 11th of December, 1889, and was at the date of the Act of 1891, engaged in furnishing electricity to the inhabitants of the town. So that if the Act of 1891 applies to Bloomsburg, the town authorities cannot furnish electricity to the inhabitants upon rates of charge, or as the Act expresses it, for commercial purposes, without taking and paying for the works or property of the Electric Light Company.

As the Light Company claims to have expended \$50,000 for their property, it is plain that an appropriation of their works would be costly to the town, and would require another popular vote to authorize it to be made.

It follows that the establishment of electric light works by the town will not cheapen electric light to the business men and other citizens of the town, but the operation of such works will be confined to the street lamps and town hall. There would then be three costly establishments or works for lighting in Bloomsburg, viz: The works of the gas company with underground pipes extending to all parts of the town, the electric light works with poles and wires for the exclusive supply of electricity to the inhabitants and business places of the town, and lastly the town works with a second set of poles and wire threading all of the principal streets and some of the by-ways of the town. We assume that neither the authorities of the town nor the people thereof would ever agree to buy the works of the existing electric company at a cost of \$50,000 or upwards, or submit to an assessment therefor by a jury at an extravagant rate such as commonly prevails in damage cases against towns and corporations.

By the Constitution of Pennsylvania, Art. IX, Sec. 8, it is provided that no municipality (which would include Bloomsburg) shall incur indebtedness exceeding seven per cent. up on the assessed value of taxable property therein, nor shall it incur any new debt or increase its indebtedness to an amount exceeding two per centum without the assent of the electors thereof at a public election, in such manner as shall be provided by law. By the Act of April 20th, 1874, Sec. 5, P. L. 68, relating to municipal indebtedness and the increase of the same, it is provided that "The word 'indebtedness,' used in this Act, shall be deemed, held and taken to include all and all manner of debt, as well floating as funded, of the said municipality; and the net amount of such indebtedness shall be ascertained by deducting from the gross amount thereof, the moneys in the treasury, all outstanding solvent debts, and all revenues applicable, within one year, to the payment of the same." The 3rd Sec. of the same Act which provided that when the corporate authorities propose to increase the debt two per centum or more, within the seven per centum limit, they shall submit

the question of such increase to the electors of the municipality, is substantially re-enacted by Sec. 3, of June 9th, 1891, P. L. 252.

It is plain upon the face of the constitution and these statutes that the only question to be submitted to the electors of a municipality is the increase of the public debt thereof above the gross or total amount of the existing debt, and that by express provision the existing debt will include any floating debt or obligation of the municipality as well as the bonded debt. In brief, the question voted upon must be upon a specific increase over and above any and every form of existing pecuniary obligation, less the amount of money in the treasury, &c., as above cited. It follows that the submission now made to the electors of Bloomsburg is unlawful as well as unfair, by its inclusion of several questions relating to the present debt along with the question of increasing that debt by an electrical light investment, and requiring a single affirmative or negative vote upon the whole. The constitution and the statutes very evidently do not contemplate or authorize a combination of distinct and separate questions in one vote, so that an opinion held by an elector on one question shall control his vote upon the whole.

It is idle to expect that electrical works to light the streets of Bloomsburg, spread as the Town is over an extended surface, can be secured at a cost of \$20,000—we mean works sufficient for their purpose and fitted to endure. The first investments of the Town will no doubt be doubled afterward, as in the case of the Bloomsburg electric light company which began with a plant of \$16,000 and has expended twice that amount in changes, renewals and improvements. And it will be found that the cost of running the Town plant and works, including fuel, skilled and other labor, oil, waste, with an estimated ten per centum annual depreciation of the working plant, added to interest upon the investment will considerably exceed the amount now paid for lighting the streets of Bloomsburg. Finally, every intelligent person understands that it is highly inadvisable to charge upon Town authorities the management of water works, gas work, steam heating works or any like business employment on behalf of the Town whenever it can be reasonably avoided. Local patronage is thereby increased, disputes are created and fostered thereby, the selection and change of employees depend upon fluctuating annual elections, and more or less of abuse in management may be expected. It is found by experience that such business is best conducted by individuals personally interested in the due and proper management of the same. X.

Last week Wednesday night, as Richard Stiles was crossing the bridge at Benton, he was seized by two men, and while one held him the other rubbed tar on his face. They had some feathers, but did not use them, as they were frightened by the approach of Lloyd Freas, and ran away. They were not recognized. Mr. Stiles is a man well along in years, and has but one arm. His home is in Philadelphia, and he was on a visit to his son. This attack on him was dastardly and cowardly, and has met with the strongest condemnation. The miscreants who made it should be hunted down, and be punished by the highest penalty the law can inflict.

This matter has been made the subject of comment by a number of republican newspapers, which have done some prating about the "Fishingcreek confederacy," &c., and the impression is given that a spirit of lawlessness pervades the community where it happened. Mr. Stiles declares that he did not know his assailants, and there is not a particle of evidence to connect them in any way with the events of thirty years ago. There is a bare possibility that the act may have been committed by men who still bore a grudge against him for the part he took in the occurrences of long ago, but there is no evidence of it, and it is obviously unfair to cast a stigma upon a peaceable and law-abiding community for the acts of two miscreants. Whatever the motive for the attack may have been, it was wholly unjustifiable. If it is true it arose from what happened more than a quarter of a century ago, it is all the more reason why the perpetrators should be punished, for men who will bear a grudge for thirty years, and then seek to revenge themselves in so cowardly a manner, are dangerous men to be at large.

The Presbyterian Sunday School and congregation will hold their annual picnic at Wynona Park on Thursday, July 18th.

SHOT TO DEATH IN THE STREET.

A PROMINENT NANTICOKE BUSINESS MAN KILLED IN THE PRESENCE OF FRIENDS.

Frederick F. Bittenbender, one of the most prominent business men of Nanticoke, a director of the First National Bank and member of the school board, was shot and instantly killed at noon Saturday, by Abram Eckert. The shooting occurred on the main street, Bittenbender being in his carriage in front of the bank. Eckert was captured. The cause of the affair is hard to determine, although it seemed that Eckert believed Bittenbender had a grudge against him and wanted to do him injury. Eckert is janitor at the high school, and Bittenbender, as chairman of the Building Committee of the board, had the power of supervising and directing Eckert's work.

Bittenbender and another director, George W. Gruver, went to the school on a tour of inspection and found Eckert was not there attending to his work. They were annoyed and drove to Eckert's house, where Bittenbender inquired: "Why don't you do your work at the school house? You are paid for it and should do it."

The men have been friends for some time despite their different stations and Eckert laughed as he replied: "All right, Fred, I'll go down and finish up." They chatted a while, all being in good humor, and then Bittenbender drove away.

The men did not meet again until noon. At that time Bittenbender, with his father and George W. Flock, another bank director, were driving up the street. In front of the bank Eckert was standing. He called out that he wanted to see Bittenbender, and the latter drove to the sidewalk. Eckert looked very angry and said:—

"Something has been troubling me for a week or more; it seems you have a grudge against me. What do you mean by treating me the way you have been doing?" Somewhat surprised, Bittenbender replied: "You are paid to do the work and must do it." Hardly had the last word left his mouth when Eckert sprang backward from the carriage, drew a revolver, and taking deliberate aim, fired.

The bullet entered Bittenbender's right eye and caused instant death. The body plunged forward and fell over the wheel of the carriage at the feet of Eckert, who despite the cries of Bittenbender's father and Flock, who were trying to jump from the carriage, and the approach of people, calmly stood over the body and fired two more shots. The first shattered the bone in the left arm and the other missed. Then he started to run, but had gone only a few steps when he was overpowered by school director Thomas Callary and John Reagan.

A crowd gathered immediately and some of the friends of Bittenbender cried, "Lynch him; string him up." Callary and Reagan, however, ran with the prisoner to Burgess Powell's office and there he was secured and brought by constables to jail in Wilkes-Barre.

Eckert is 48 years old and has a wife and seven children. He has always been a quiet, good natured fellow and had many friends, who are unable to account for the sudden change in his disposition. It appears that he had some deep-seated grievance against Bittenbender. Two weeks ago he was heard to remark: "If Fred does not stop treating me as he is doing he will be sorry."

Bittenbender was proprietor of the Bittenbender Machine Shops and the inventor of many mechanical appliances. He leaves a wife and four children.

TEACHERS' INSTITUTE.

The next annual Teachers' Institute of Columbia county. Arrangements have been completed for the next Teachers' County Institute to be held in Bloomsburg October 21-25. The best talent has been secured for instruction and entertainment. The day instructors are Dr. Arnold Tompkins, of Chicago; Miss Margaret McCloskey, of Lock Haven; Miss Gertrude Edmund, of East Stroudsburg; County Superintendents, B. R. Johnson, of Union Co., and J. George Becht, of Lycoming; Dr. J. P. Welsh, of Bloomsburg, and Prof. J. A. Sprengel and others.

For evenings the following have been engaged: Dr. James Hedley, Byron W. King, Thomas Dixon, Jr., and Hall's Schuman Lady Quartette, of Chicago.

C. B. Chrisman has sold his fruit stand to Hervey Furman.

BRIEF MENTION.

About People You Know.

G. S. Robbins and family are at Ocean Grove.

J. G. Wells bought a bicycle of W. S. Kishon on Tuesday.

Mrs. Bellas of Philadelphia, is the guest of Miss Sade Sloan.

Miss Lilla Sloan is entertaining her friend Miss Kendig of Lancaster.

Hon. L. K. Krickbaum spent Saturday in town. He is still hale and hearty.

Robert Young and sister Miss Kate, are taking a trip in New England.

Dr. Honora A. Robbins is away on a trip to Boston and Ocean Grove.

E. W. Drinker and family, of Wilkes-Barre, spent Sunday in town with relatives.

Rev. and Mrs. B. C. Connor are spending this week at Mountain Lake camping.

R. Rush Zarr Esq., has moved to J. D. Shaffer's new house on Market street below the railroad.

Recent information from Rev. W. C. Leverett is to the effect that his condition is not materially changed.

Bruce Jones sprained his ankle in getting out of the bus, and is confined to his room at the Exchange Hotel.

Warren Beddoe, of the Normal class of '94, now residing at Buck Mountain, spent the 4th in Bloomsburg.

Miss Harriet Sharpless and her three nieces, Julia Sharpless, Edna Wilson and Helen Vaniersloot, are at Mt. Gretna.

Mr. and Mrs. J. M. Gidding left on Tuesday for a ten days trip, which will include New York, Philadelphia, and the sea-shore.

Elmer E. Person, city editor of the Williamsport "Grit" called at the COLUMBIAN office on Monday. He is one of our graduates.

Miss Ida Herring, Miss Martha Powell, Miss Brown and J. J. Wagonseller left for Boston on Tuesday to attend the C. E. Convention.

M. C. Woodward, the long time collector of this town, is confined to the house, from a cancer on his nose. He has been quite feeble for some time.

Mrs. Rev. I. M. Patterson and daughter, Miss Eleanor, went to Boston on Tuesday, where they are the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Patterson.

William R. Campbell, son of James I. Campbell of near Orangeville, is at home on a visit. He has been in Utah for the past nine years, as a Presbyterian missionary.

Mrs. M. H. McKinney, Mrs. W. M. Reber, Miss Josephine Barkley and Miss Maude Runyon went to Boston on Monday to attend the convention of Christian Endeavors.

Rev. T. H. Cullen, who was rector of St. Paul's Church from 1862 to 1870, has fallen in health, and is in a state of melancholia. When last heard from he was in a hospital in Philadelphia.

Miss Florence Montgomery, daughter of Dr. Montgomery of Millinville, who has been attending the New England Conservatory of Music at Boston for the past year, has returned home. Her musical ability is of a high order.

The mother and brother of Rev. D. N. Kirkby are visiting at St. Paul's Rectory. The former will remain some time, but the brother will return to Buffalo on Saturday, to meet his engagements as rector of an Episcopal Church.

COURTESY TO SENATOR HERRING.

On the day that Collector Herring left home to sail for Europe a communication came from the Executive chamber at Harrisburg, containing a letter of commendation signed by Governor Hastings. It is handsomely engrossed on parchment, with red, white and blue ribbons attached, and attested by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and reads as follows:

"It having come to my knowledge that Hon. Grant Herring an Attorney-at-Law, Ex-State-Senator of Penna., and at present United States Revenue Collector of the Twelfth District intends travelling in Europe for pleasure and information I commend him to the special confidence and courteous attention of all authorities, officials and others whom he may meet, especially the representatives of the United States Government, as a person of high standing and character and fully entitled to and worthy of the greatest respect and regard."

The document arrived after Mr. Herring's departure, but was forwarded, and will reach him in London. Coming entirely unsolicited, it is highly appreciated.

The following letters are advertised July 9, 1895. Miss Emma Becker, Miss Sophia Dirks, Miss Lilly Everitt, Miss Margaret M. Harper, Mrs. Harry Knob, Miss Bertha Merkel, Mrs. Dr. E. B. Warner. Will be sent to the dead letter office July 23, 1895.

JAMES H. MERCER, P. M.

Patrick Baley of Centralia was killed by an explosion of gas in Lytle colliery near Pottsville, on Monday. He was employed as pump engineer, and went in the slope to oil the machinery, carrying a naked lamp. The explosion followed, and he was blown to pieces. He was 32 years of age, and leaves a widow and several children.

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