

THE COLUMBIAN.

BLOOMSBURG, PA.

THURSDAY, MARCH 21, 1907

HARRISBURG LETTER.

Special Correspondence.

Harrisburg, Pa., Mar. 18, 1907.

There will be a rush out of the State or into the penitentiary as the final result of the capitol graft investigation. It has already been shown that glass made in Beaver county has been substituted for glass imported from France as required by the specifications and the substitution necessarily involved fraud. Other bidders for the work estimated upon the basis of imported glass. The favored bidder based his estimate on the price of domestic glass. The difference, something like four-fold, is the advantage which the favored bidder had over his competitors.

These facts were obtained by the examination of sub-contractors who supplied Sanderson with materials. Other sub-contractors will be examined later on and other frauds will be revealed. It will be shown that a considerable part of the walnut furniture of veneered pine and that ornaments which should have been solid marble or metal are putty and paste. By these processes the State treasury has been looted to the extent of at least \$5,000,000. Probably the money can't be recovered but criminal proceedings will run against the perpetrators of the crimes and justice can be thus vindicated.

INTENTION OF THE CONSPIRATORS

If J. Lee Plummer had been elected State Treasurer in 1906 the people of Pennsylvania never would have known of these frauds. It was the intention of the conspirators to fasten upon the public mind the impression that the capitol building had been completed without the appropriation of \$4,000,000, and the literature for that purpose had already been prepared for distribution, when Treasurer Berry made the exposures. Former Governor Pennypacker was the principal promoter of the contemplated fraud. He must have known that it was false and yet he encouraged it in various ways.

In view of these facts it is hardly necessary to point out the obvious advantage of a Democrat in the office of State Treasurer. Mr. Berry's successor will be chosen at the election next fall. The machine will exhaust every resource to recover that point of vantage. It is not only a prolific source of graft, if misused for that purpose, but it is a fountain of secret information. With a quiescent man in that office, even though he be personally above reproach and beyond suspicion, the State funds can be farmed and the accounts of all the Departments can be manipulated.

ANOTHER LITTLE GRAB.

Another little grab into the State Treasury has just been revealed. Four years ago and again two years ago the publisher of the Legislative Record received \$2.88 a page for preparing, printing and publishing that unusually tardy bulletin of the proceedings of the Legislature. The work is let by the Speaker of the House and the President pro tem. of the Senate to the lowest bidder. This year there was only one bidder and his price was \$12 a page. The letting occurred while Henry F. Wagon was Speaker and notwithstanding the obvious fraud no contract was awarded at the exhibitant price.

This has called to mind another suspicious incident. When the contract for the State printing was awarded last there were several bidders the lowest of which was Clarence M. Busch, of Philadelphia, who got the award. The law requires that a bond for the fulfillment of the contract accompany the bid, which is forfeited in the event of failure to make good. Nevertheless Mr. Busch declined to accept the contract. It was then offered to the next lowest bidder who declined. The third lowest bidder adopted the same course and the high bidder who happens to be the publisher of the Legislative Record got the award.

Here is what followed. The lowest bidder withdrew his bond and made no forfeit. The next lowest bidder became Superintendent of the plant for the contractor, the third lowest bidder is said to be in the enjoyment of a rake-off and the result of the conspiracy is that the treasury is being looted constantly by exorbitant prices for the State printing. It has been thought that that operation suggested the plan for getting an extortionate price for publishing the Legislative Record, but instead of taking the chances of losing the forfeit, the

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competing bidders were bought off.

THE STATE CONSTABULARY.

There will be another effort made within a few days to put a bill to abolish the State Constabulary on the calendar and the result will be watched with a good deal of interest. The Pennsylvania Federation of Labor held a convention in Harrisburg last week and not only expressed its interest in such legislation by resolution but did other things. One seldom sees a finer looking body of men than that convention. The delegates had corns on their hands, probably, but they were dressed like bankers and some of them spoke with the fluency and correctness of preachers or lawyers.

On Thursday morning they visited the Legislature in a body, the badges of their organization being conspicuously displayed. They didn't create any excitement during their visit except such as is inevitable, but their presence in such force made people "sit up and take notice." They stood in the lobby and in the space on the floor between the gallery and the bar and talked quietly but earnestly to Representatives in the Legislature. The Senate was not in session at the time, more's the pity, but the incident made a profound impression on the House and if the bill gets on the calendar something will drop.

REFORM MEASURES MOVE SLOWLY.

The reform measures which it was confidently expected would "run like wild fire" through the Legislature, are making slow progress instead. The two-cent a mile passenger rate bill which passed the House just before the Spring election recess has been reported from the Senate committee with an amendment which further weakens it. That is to say as it passed the House imprisonment of officials of the railroad was one of the penalties for the violation of the law. That feature has been stricken from the measure. Everybody knows that powerful corporations don't care much for fines but their officers have a wholesome dread of imprisonment.

The bill giving trolley roads the right of eminent domain got a bump on Thursday. It was recommitted for general amendment. It needed some alterations and if the action was taken in good faith there may be no loss either in time or any other way by the action. But those of us who have watched the various processes of stifling legislation invariably take a recommitment as an omen of death by strangulation. The friends of the legislation in question may prevent that result, if it is intended, by vigilance and courage and it is absolutely certain that both will be required.

SOME OF THE SURPRISES.

The progress of Mr. Creasy's anti-trust bill is one of the wonders of the session. The very mention of the bill spreads consternation among the trust magnates and still it moves onward toward final passage without the least interruption. While it was on second reading the other day a motion to recommit was defeated notwithstanding a

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strong assertion that its passage would impoverish widows and orphans whose funds were invested in such securities. The interest which agents of the trusts take in widows and orphans under certain circumstances is pathetic.

The bill to tax companies is also moving forward with surprising celerity. In the old days when the Penrose-Durham machine and the United Gas Improvement company of Philadelphia, were running the Legislature for their joint profit and advantage such a bill would have been jumped upon with both feet before it had reached the centre of the committee room. But this year it was not only promptly reported from the committee, took its place on the calendars of first and second reading but was considered in its regular order. Maybe the intention is to brain-clout it later on.

HIGHWAY BUILDING AND IMPROVEMENTS.

The proposition to borrow \$50,000,000 in order to create a fund for road construction and improvement would "take one's breath away," probably, if he didn't know how prolific in graft the State Highway Department is. With such a vast sum of money to come and go on that department could easily supply the machine with ample funds for ordinary party work and give every party boss sufficient to provide strawberries for breakfast in mid-winter, which I understand, is the highest aspiration of those statesmen. It would be almost equal to State ownership of the railroads as a party asset.

Nothing can be justly said against generous expenditures for the construction and maintenance of highways. Good roads are a help to the farmer, an advantage to the mechanic, a boom to the business man, and a beneficence to everybody. But the method of creating them should be completely changed before another dollar is appropriated by the legislature to the State Department of Highways. It is not only wasteful but corrupt and it is safe to say that every foot of road built under the direction of the Department has cost double its real value. In other words half the money disbursed goes in graft and folly.

SPECULATING ON ADJOURNMENT.

People about the capitol are beginning to speculate as to the length of the session and predictions are made that the final adjournment will be about the middle of May. That would give about eight weeks for work and a vast amount of legislation ought to be perfected in that time. I am inclined to think that it will be impossible to complete the work a couple of weeks earlier than that. But to accomplish that result it will be necessary that better order be maintained in the House. At present it is very much like a primary school and the Speaker would be a good understudy for a teacher of such an establishment.

G. D. H.

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The yellow-haired girl can wear red. The greens, too, are delightful on her, also certain yellows and black. White is less becoming, but she must be brilliant in complexion or else most delicate as to tints to wear grays and blues to advantage. Blues, particularly the pale and cold blues, are best adapted to brunettes, says Woman's Life.

The woman whose hair is a dull brown and whose complexion and eyes lack brilliancy may still be most attractive, but she should avoid bright hued or glittering hats. Dull browns, neither yellowish nor reddish, should be selected. Avoid the satin straw. Take the dull finish.

A Flower and Fruit Holder.

For formal table decoration a silver centerpiece which serves the purpose of flower holder, meets with the ideas of many housewives. The flower-holder may be had in different sizes the demand being for those of moderate height. Occasionally a tall centerpiece is selected and one such as here illustrated is the latest type



and is an exceptionally ornate piece of workmanship. It differs from the generality of tall flower holders in that three silver dishes are attached which may be used independently when desired for bon-bons, or almonds. The combination flower-holder makes an especially effective decoration for an elaborately arranged dinner table.

Coal Counties to Form Pool.

Purpose is Fight for Increased Taxation on Fuel Tracts.

The big coal companies of the anthracite region having united in an appeal to the Courts to prevent taxation on their coal tracts, the Commissioners of Schuylkill and Northumberland Counties, at a meeting held at Pottsville Tuesday, took steps which will probably be joined in by all the coal counties to pool their issues just as the corporations have done. The companies will strongly contend that the increase of their taxation 200 or 300 per cent. on some lands is unjustifiable.

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Demand for Farm Lands.

There is a good demand just now for farming properties, the first of April being the time of transfers of tenants and owners, and there is a probability of many old farms being worked again as well as the cutting up of the larger farms into smaller plots. This large increase in the price and demand for farms is because the farmers are making more money these days than ever before in the history of the country. Farm lands were quite a drug on the market up to recent years and could not be sold at any price, lands that were from \$20 to \$50 an acre have very largely increased in price, so that it is a poor contract that is not quoted at from \$50 to \$100 an acre. Farming pays big these days and the farmers are all prosperous.

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