The Scranton Tribune

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UNION LABEL

SCRANTON, MARCH 7, 1895.

THE SCRANTON OF TODAY.

Come and inspect our city.
Elevation above the tide, 740 feet.
Extremely healthy.
Estimated population, 1894, 103,000.
Registered voters, 20,580.
Value of school property, $900,000.
Number of school children, 12,000.
Average amount of bank deposits, $10,000,000.
It's the metropolis of northeastern Pennsylvania.
Can produce electric power cheaper than Niagara.
No better point in the United States at which to establish new industries.
See how we grow:

Population in 1860	9,223
Population in 1870	35,000
Population in 1880	45,850
Population in 1890	75,215
Population in 1894 (estimated)	103,000

And the end is not yet.

The pleasant words of the Scranton Truth, elsewhere reprinted, concerning the resignation of Colonel E. H. Ripple from command of the Thirteenth regiment aptly express a sentiment which Colonel Ripple's business associates cordially indorse. It is not too much to say that the National Guard of the state has long been debtor to the man who has been largely instrumental in bringing its banner regiment to a degree of efficiency placing it among the foremost militia regiments in the United States.

John Dalzell's Obituary.

Congressman John Dalzell contributes to the Pittsburg Times a pithy and vigorous obituary review of the Fifty-third congress. He says: "It lasted longer and accomplished less than any previous congress. It has been a congress of details, not of policies. No legislation of any permanent value can be placed to its credit. It has been marked throughout by bitter feuds and factious wranglings in the dominant party, and by a consequent failure of fruitful results. There has been but little affirmative legislation beyond appropriation bills, and what has been, has been for the most part bad.

"The significant features of the extra session, which met in August, 1893, were the repeal of the Federal election law and of the purchase clause of the Sherman act. The Federal election law was intended to prevent fraud at the polls, and its repeal was therefore to have been expected by a house dominated by the southern wing of the Democracy. The repeal of the silver purchasing provision of the Sherman act was accomplished only by the aid of non-partisan Republican votes. The one feature that will always distinguish this congress is the Gorman-Brice tariff bill, embodying 'party perfidy and party dishonor.' Its depletion of our revenues, its destruction of our reciprocal trade, its odious income tax, its sectional discriminations; the fearful misery and poverty and distress which, in anticipation and in execution, it brought upon our people, will make the Fifty-third congress forever one of evil repute.

"Prominent in its history will be the repeated failures successfully to deal with the financial question. Three times did the president address congress with a view to relieve the government's financial distress, but without result. The Baltimore plan for the reform of our currency was rejected; so was a second plan for a like character, so was a scheme for the issue of bonds. As a consequence the treasury is now leaning upon a syndicate of foreigner bankers, to the syndicate's profit and the treasury's loss.

"Many matters of great importance have been left unprovided for. The Nicaragua canal is still without legislation. The infamous foreign policy as to Hawaii has been legislative as well as executive. The railroad pooling bill and the bankruptcy bill got no further than the house. The bill for the settlement of the Pacific railway's debts failed of passage. In a time of extreme poverty and distress the appropriations are simply tremendous. They far exceed those of the so-called billion dollar congress.

"About the only good things that the Fifty-third congress did that I can now recall, were the repeal of the silver clause of the Sherman act and the practical adoption of the Reed rules. For both of these the country has to thank the Republican party."

The worst thing about the following paragraph from the esteemed Wilkes-Barre Record is that, while we would like to say something back, there is literally nothing that we can say: "It is a matter of surprise that a city of Scranton's pretensions should be content to get along with a volunteer fire department. Wilkes-Barre discarded that system long ago, and is glad of it. We now have one of the most efficient fire departments in the state, and destructive conflagrations within the city limits are practically unknown. Scranton should waken up, get rid of her garden-hose fire department and replace it with one commensurate with the size and importance of that city."

The worst blow that our theory about Boss Platt's being down has yet received comes in the form of an editorial corroboration in the Philadelphia Times.

In discussing the Schaeffer proposition to provide free transportation for children who live a long distance away from school, the Pittsburg Commercial-Gazette very pertinently observes that "under present school laws the directors are required to supply as many schools as are necessary for the public convenience, and accessibility is one of the essential things to be considered. If one building will not suffice, let there be two." This is undoubtedly the proper view of the question. Money spent in building new school houses where needed, is money well invested.

It is an interesting estimate which those persons put on the intelligence of this legislature who insinuate that its action on compulsory education has been "coerced" by "oath-bound cliques." It would now seem to be obligatory on these persons, after this ebullition, to take a rest.

An Appreciated Compliment.

Our esteemed Lebanon contemporary, the Report, is pleased to say: "The Scranton Tribune has valiantly championed the Farr bill upon every occasion with a zeal worthy of a better cause. In this respect, however, it stands in painful loneliness. No other journal has been nearly so vigorous in its support."

Our contemporary, perhaps without intending to do so, pays this journal a signal compliment. It testifies to the fact that The Tribune is not afraid nor ashamed of its opinions. We do not feel at all lonely; for we have the happy companionship, in this matter, of thirty state legislatures; of the most eminent educators of Europe and America, and of very many of the leading newspapers and magazines in Pennsylvania and elsewhere. But even if we were alone in our advocacy of the rights of children to a free school education, we should not feel deterred from speaking what, according to our conviction, is the gospel truth on this subject.

An honest opinion, even when wrong, is infinitely preferable to a milk-and-water straddle or a voice muffled by expediency.

Representative O'Malley's bill to require the examination and registration of journeymen plumbers aims to retire incompetent workmen. This end ought to be accessible without the intervention of the state; but if state intervention is indispensable, then let us have it.

Amend the Libel Law.

The law which Representative Fow proposes for enactment in lieu of the present libel law in this state is eminently just and reasonable. It provides that "before any suit shall be brought for publication of a libel in any newspaper in this state the aggrieved party shall, at least three days before filing or serving the complaint in such suit, serve notice on the publisher or publishers of said newspaper at their principal office of publication, specifying the statements in said articles which he or they allege to be false and defamatory. If it shall appear on the trial of said action that the said article was published in good faith, that its falsity was due to mistake or misapprehension of the facts and that a full and fair retraction of any statement therein alleged to be erroneous was published in the next regular issue of such paper, or in case of daily papers within three days after such mistake or misapprehension was brought to the knowledge of such publisher or publishers, in as conspicuous place and type in such newspaper as was the article complained of as libellous, then the plaintiff in such case shall recover only actual damage; provided, however, that the provisions of this act shall not apply to the case of any libel against any candidate for a public office in this state, unless the retraction of the charge is made editorially in a conspicuous manner at least three days before the election, in case such libellous article was published in a daily paper; and in case such libellous article was published in a weekly paper at least ten days before the election."

The merit of a law like this, as has been experimentally proved in Wisconsin, where it has for some months been in force, consists of the fact that it puts an effective bar to the activities of pettifogging lawyers who incite libel litigation for the fees there are in it. The foregoing law, as will be seen after a close scrutiny of its provisions, offers no protection to journalists who utter malicious libels. The man who uses the far-reaching opportunities of the press to deliberately slander an enemy or gratify a personal spite would be as much subject to prosecution under the proposed statute as he is under the existing law. Honorable publishers seek no relaxation of the statutory penalties provided for journalistic hyenas and ghouls.

But at the same time, they think they have a right, clearly founded in both justice and morals, to be dissociated before the law from such wanton violators of the power of the press. They think they have a right to be regarded as innocent of criminal intent until they shall be proved guilty. They imagine that the honest effort to undue an unintentional injustice, committed during the inevitable haste and confusion of modern journalism, ought in common fairness to weigh in the scales of justice to the defendant's credit. Under the present laws relating to libel in this commonwealth, such manly act of reparation counts for nothing. Although the publisher of a libel may be, in intention, as innocent of evil as the new born babe, he is adjudged, by the very fact of an erroneous publication, to be a criminal of the blackest dye; and there is nothing but the uncertain common sense of the jury between him and condign punishment. So far from resting content with the protection of one class of citizens from injustice, the libel laws of Pennsylvania go clear through to the opposite extreme of piling injustice on another class, without even the decent excuse of a public demand for such exaggeration of legislative intervention.

The Fow bill is moderate, just and fair. It puts the case on a true basis. Its enactment is demanded by every consideration of equity and fair play.

Had Captain Delaney been the custodian of state buildings and grounds at the time of the acceptance of the remodeled capital, it is safe to believe that the present hall of the house of representatives would not resemble, in its acoustic properties, a modern Cave of the Winds.

When Mr. Reed was speaker, Mr. Crisp refused to offer a resolution of thanks; and when Crisp came to relinquish the gavel, Reed found no time to participate in the routine vote of thanks. It is a poor Crisp rule which will not work both ways.

The spectacle presented by the Reading railroad in attempting to intimidate the Lehigh Valley and New Jersey Central, under all circumstances, is what Artemus Ward would have characterized as "amuzin."

The appearance of the local street crossings yesterday betokened a distinct improvement, for which the street commissioner's department is respectfully requested to accept the public's thanks. May the good work go on!

The Quay county bill having received a favorable report by the house committee on new counties, it is proper to remind the opposition that if it has anything further to say, now is the time to say it.

LEGISLATIVE TOPICS.

The Practice of Farming Out Jobs Has Has Not Yet Ceased.

Harrisburg, March 6—The promise at the opening of the legisature that the practice of "farming out" places would be abolished has not yet been fulfilled. If the roll of employes of either body were to be called unexpectedly any day not 20 per cent. of those drawing extravagant salaries would be in their places ready to respond. Except the most important positions, as chief clerk, resident clerk and sergeant-at-arms, the offices are filled by substitutes who do not receive anything like the pay provided for by the state. The salary of the employes who have "farmed out" their jobs is not drawn in person, but letters of attorney and orders are given or signed by them to their substitutes on the auditor general who issues warrants for their pay in the name of the attorneys, in fact, or those to whom the orders are given. In this way the employes need never present themselves to the auditor general and they are no more present in person to draw their pay than they are to do the work for which they are paid. There is a secret movement on foot for the introduction of a resolution in the house to abolish this practice, direct the attention of the auditor general and state treasurer to these facts and request them to see that these employes hereafter at least present themselves in person for their pay.

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Are Members Implicated?

It is believed that certain members of the legislature share in the pay of some of the employes. The custom is for them to secure a position like paster and folder or janitor of a committee room, the salary of which is $6 a day, for a political worker in their district, and then employ a ward politician in this city to do the work for a dollar or two a day. The balance is divided between the member and the man for whom he gets the place. It is no secret that there are men now in the employ of the state outside of the legislature who, in connection with their own work, are performing the duties of a fireman or janitor for somebody else for 20 or 25 per cent. of the pay allowed by the state for this work. There are at least a half dozen substitutes at the capitol who are doing the work of three or four men each.

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The Division of Salaries.

In the small counties where there are three or four applicants for place and the member is allowed only one by the state committee the matter is compromised by giving the appointment to one and he dividing his salary, exclusive of what he pays to his "sub," among the others. This has frequently been done and is being done at the present session. There are on the pay roll of the house and senate the names of employes who have not been in Harrisburg since their appointment and who will not come unless they are forced to. Auditor General Gregg is anxious to abolish this practice, but he cannot do it without the assistance of the legislature or the attorney general. When General McCormick's attention is called to it he will probably act.

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The New House's Echoes.

The board of public buildings and grounds has engaged Captain Louis R. Walters, of Phoenixville, to work out a plan for the improvement of the acoustic properties of the hall of the house of representatives. He has made careful measurements of the room and is convinced that the defect can be remedied. A similar defect in the capitol at Des Moines was corrected by changing the pitch of the ceiling. Captain Walters says the problem is a difficult one and will have to be worked out scientifically. He believes the most feasible plan for a permanent improvement of this defect is to change the ceiling, but this would involve a greater expenditure of money than the board would care to authorize at this time. The heavy lambrequins which have been placed in the windows have made a slight improvement in the acoustic properties of the room.

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The Useless House Gallery.

Another defect in the house that is not likely to soon be remedied, is the gallery which not only destroys the symmetry and beauty of the room, but is practically useless. It is so arranged that only the speaker and the members in the front row of seats may be seen from it. There ought to be a gallery in the house patterned after that in the senate chamber at Washington. This was the intention of ex-State Treasurer Boyer, the framer of the bill passed by the last legislature, appropriating $125,000 to remodel and improve the hall of the house. This idea was not carried out, however, by the architect and the result is a useless appendage which is rarely occupied.

Looseness of the Ballot Law.

From the Philadelphia Press.

That feature of the present law which permits a voter to have assistance in marking his ballot has been grossly abused. This has been shown in every inquiry made. It was never intended to permit any one capable of marking his own ballot to have assistance. The other conspicuous fault of the existing law is the provision which enables the voter to mark the whole ticket by a single cross in a circle at the top. This will do well enough for those who want to vote blindly some party ticket, without regard to whom the candiates are, but it does not encourage the scrutiny of each name which is so conducive to intelligent and proper results. With the exception of the ticket for presidential electors every four years the voter should be required to mark individually the name of each candidate for whom he desires to vote. In that way he will know just what he is doing, and we are likely to get much better results in some of our purely local and non-political elections. The names on the ticket in any one year are not so numerous as to make the separate marking very much of a task. There is very little hope that these desirable changes will be made very soon—there is not the least indication of it at the present session of the legislature—but they ought to be made at once.

An Eloquent Compliment

From the Scranton Truth.

The resignation of Colonel E. H. Ripple from the command of the Thirteenth regiment, deprives that splendid organization of the services of a capable and judicious officer as well as a gallant soldier who enjoys in a marked degree the confidence and esteem of every member of the regiment. Colonel Ripple brought to his duties as commander of the Thirteenth regiment, with which he has been connected for seventeen years, the experience of a brave soldier who served his country nobly and suffered for her sake in the stormy days of the civil war, so that his ideas of military life were not merely theoretical. It is gratifying to know that he does not retire from the National guard of the state, as he has accepted an appointment to the office of commissary general on the staff of Governor Hastings.