

The Scranton Tribune

Published Weekly, No Sunday Edition. By The Tribune Publishing Company. WILLIAM CONNELL, President. New York Representative: FRANK S. GRAY CO. Room 45, Tribune Building, New York City.

TEN PAGES.

SCRANTON, MAY 3, 1897.

From May 1 the price of The Tribune will be 50 cents a month, the standard price of morning newspapers in this section.

Too Many Pardons.

An opinion is offered by the Washington Post upon the subject of the pardon in this country of the pardoning power in which most Pennsylvanians, with the example of their own soft-hearted board of pardons in evidence before them, will enthusiastically agree. Our contemporary finds a text for its utterance in the figures offered by a western penologist who recently explored the statistics of executive or other clemency to prisoners under sentence for homicide. That writer averred that in Wisconsin 33 per cent. of the life prisoners are pardoned; in Ohio, 40 per cent.; while in Massachusetts the percentage is 50 and in New York 63. In Massachusetts the average time served by life prisoners who are pardoned is six and one-half years, and in New York it is six and one-half years.

This, remarks the Post, "is the kind of protection which the public gets for the enormous expenditures involved in the maintenance of criminal courts, prisons, and in the great army of officials employed in the prevention, detection, and punishment of crime. It will be observed that these are not new states. All of them are old members of the Union family, and the two that make the most deplorable exhibit were among the original thirteen, Massachusetts and New York have led all other states in prison reform. They have adopted all the latest devices in improved penology. But these figures prove one of two things, either of which is to the last degree, inimical to public safety. Either the courts of those states persistently blunder so egregiously as to convict innocent men of murder, or the executives of those states habitually annul just verdicts and turn murderers loose. To a less extent the same comment is applicable to Wisconsin and Ohio, and to all other states where any considerable number of duly convicted murderers is set at liberty.

We do not believe that the courts are responsible for many of these pardons. It is probable that, for every man unjustly convicted of murder, a dozen guilty men escape. The laws and rules of court almost invariably favor the defendant in a criminal trial. In a case that involves the death penalty or a life sentence very little evidence is required to raise such a "reasonable doubt" as will secure an acquittal. The almost universal opinion is that, instead of convicting too many of the men arraigned for taking life, our courts err seriously in the opposite direction. This puts the blame for such figures as are quoted above on the governors or pardoning boards of the states. It is a serious business in view of the increasing prevalence of homicidal crimes and the growing discontent of the people with the administration of justice. To pardon 33, 40, 50 or 63 out of 100 men sent to prison for life because they have taken life unlawfully, is so palpably outrageous, is such an imputation against the integrity and capacity of the courts, that public sentiment should not tolerate it. The pardoning power is an admitted necessity. Its use is to correct mistakes. When evidence that has not been put before the jury is presented to a governor and proves that a man has been unjustly convicted, it is the duty of the governor to issue a pardon. But executive clemency is out of its place and is a dangerous usurper when it feels called upon to reverse the verdicts by reason of sympathy for the afflicted.

The argument here advanced reinforces, without intending to do so, the contention of those who, in this state call for an intelligently-drafted parole system putting the whole question of clemency on the basis of merit. It is well to give the penitent a chance; but it is false mercy to smooth the pathway of the hardened criminal to the commission of new attacks upon society.

Before Spain can give vitality to any "reforms" in Cuba she will have to make some very radical ones at home. Mr. Calhoun's Mission. One phase of the Cuban situation projects beyond other phases in imminent seriousness, and is believed to be the feature to which Special Commissioner Calhoun will give the closest attention. Shortly after the Spanish forces completed the construction of their two trenches across the island, General Weyler issued an order directing all pacific or non-combatants to concentrate within the fortified points. This order was gradually being obeyed—as the penalty for disobedience is death—until today it is estimated that 300,000 men, women and children, mostly of the ignorant class, are living in compulsory idleness in the forts and fortified towns.

The subtraction of these people from agriculture and the massing of them in crowded blocks away from the accustomed means of gaining a livelihood have brought on a social condition of the utmost gravity. At first the Spaniards maintained the semblance of an appointment of rations among these pacifics, but as the exchequer became depleted this appointment grew less and less satisfactory, until now, in many parts of the island, the non-combatants are face to face with absolute starvation. As a result of insufficient food, shelter and sanitation, 20,000 pacifics have already perished since Weyler's order directing their concentration was promulgated. The possibilities of further suffering, disease and decimation in this direction are so appalling as to constitute a humanitarian duty of the first magnitude. It is worthy of recollection that when, during the revolution which preceded the present one, a similar order was issued by the Spanish captain-general, this government protested in such vigorous terms that the programme was abandoned, and the pacifics were permitted to remain on the plantations at their own hazard. Should Special Commissioner Calhoun find by personal investigation that conditions in Cuba now are as represented by the above testimony, there need, we think, be little doubt that President McKinley and Secretary Sherman will act with as much effectiveness in behalf of humanity as President Grant and Secretary Fish acted under similar circumstances during the Ten Years' war.

The Free Press charges The Tribune with partisan animus in its reference to the present city administration. To its specific accusation—that our report of the Davis arrest was "a tissue of lies"—we reply elsewhere. As to its general assertions, we have only to say that if the mayor of Scranton doesn't appreciate the consideration and forbearance with which this journal has uniformly treated him, he is even less of a mayor than we now consider him.

The Manly View. There are few frills on Secretary Alger. This fact has lately been indicated in many ways, but in none to greater advantage than in his order substituting in the war department among the clerical force the honor system for the former regulations which required chiefs of division to keep tabs on the attendance and work of their clerks. The latter plan, we are told, "saved too much of the primary school to suit the taste of the secretary. He believes that black marks should not be given grown men and women because they happen to be a minute or two tardy, and will trust to their honor to report any delinquency on their part. Of course shirking of duty will not be tolerated and frequent tardiness will call for complaint from division chiefs. But the measure of each clerk's efficiency will not be determined by black marks, or white marks, or any other kind of cut-and-dried merit system."

The government pays a sufficiently liberal price for clerical labor to insure the services of ladies and gentlemen. These should be secured and the disreputables of both sexes fired out. Such a system would be the truest kind of civil service reform. It might not rest on written examinations and it might upon occasions result in unjust dismissals through the spite work of superiors. But upon the whole, under the eye of a vigilant chieftain such as General Alger has always proved to be, it would unquestionably work for the betterment of the service. Anyhow, it merits a trial.

The bill making voting compulsory in Pennsylvania has passed second reading in the senate, but if a sober second thought is ever given to it, it will be killed.

An Instructive Incident. The May Century contains a most interesting paper by General John M. Schofield embodying a lesson which may well be studied by those entrusted now or hereafter, with the conduct of our foreign affairs. It concerns the withdrawal by Louis Napoleon of the French troops from Mexico, prior to the ignominious downfall of the unfortunate Maximilian's brief career as emperor of that country; and gives for the first time the history of a confidential foreign mission with which General Schofield was entrusted immediately following the termination of our civil war.

It will be remembered that in the summer of 1865 the French were still in Mexico, despite the pointed protests of the American government; and there was a disposition in many quarters to throw a portion of the yet undisbanded Union army across the Rio Grande, to undertake the forcible expulsion of the foreign invader. Indeed, in July of that year, General Grant, with the president's sanction, conferred written discretion upon General Schofield and addressed to General Sheridan, then in command of the military division of the Gulf, a broad letter directing him to co-operate with the former in a plan to permit our disbanded soldiers to take the necessary equipments and supplies and volunteer under Schofield to go to the assistance of Juarez. The idea was that such voluntary action would relieve the government at Washington from the responsibility of an open war against Napoleon, yet effectually accomplish the desired result of Maximilian's overthrow.

But the more General Schofield considered this project, the less favorably was he impressed by it. Secretary Seward also opposed it, and soon afterward requested Schofield to go to France on a confidential diplomatic mission, the aim of which was to convince Louis Napoleon by peaceful representations of the fact that the people of the United States would never permit the empire in Mexico to be established at the point of French bayonets. "This proposition from Mr. Seward seemed," writes General Schofield, "to put upon me the responsibility of deciding the momentous question of future friendship or enmity between our own country and our ancient ally and friend. I had, on the one hand, full authority from the War department and the general-in-chief of the army, given with the knowledge and consent of the president of the United States, to organize and equip an army for the purpose of driving the French out of Mexico, and on the other hand a request from the State department to go to France and try by peaceful means to accomplish the same end."

General Schofield was one of the best and bravest officers of the army and his training and associations had all been military; yet he promptly decided for peace, undertook the Paris mission, and in due time, no doubt partly in consequence of his representations and efforts, without war and

without ill will, the French troops were withdrawn from Mexico and Maximilian's bubble burst. The incident is instructive in many ways; but in none more so than in its refutation of the charge that a military training is necessarily inimical to peace. Admirers of the acting of James Young, whose presentation of "Hamlet" at the Academy of Music last fall will be remembered as one of the artistic triumphs of the local theatrical season, will be gratified to learn that the advice of friends has influenced him to abandon, for the present at least, the heavier forms of tragedy, and has decided him to employ his marked talents in the romantic drama. His repertoire for 1897-98 will, it is true, include "Hamlet," in the interpretation of which Mr. Young shows the fullest measure of his ability; but instead of "Richard III.," "Macbeth" and "Richard II." the public will have opportunity to witness him in "Beau Brummel," "David Garrick," "Tom Maak" and a new romantic play now in preparation. That the change of fields will result satisfactorily to all concerned cannot be doubted, in view of the public's very manifest predilection for romantic acting.

The Athens correspondent of the New York Press cables as the result of a personal investigation that there was no fighting at all at Larissa. The Greeks, he says, retreated in obedience to mistaken orders issued by an incompetent commander. The material point, however, is that they retreated. The way to win battles, after inviting them, is to fight. Let us hope the next engagement will have a more creditable termination.

President McKinley has declined to interrupt the normal course of events in the case of Joseph H. Dunlop, the Chicago editor who is under sentence of two years at hard labor in the penitentiary for publishing an obscene newspaper. This decision extinguishes Dunlop's last hope and he will have to go to jail. Dunlop deserves all he will get in this direction. He was intelligent enough to know better.

Some of these fine days the influential daily papers of this city will take a hand in the affairs of this city and when they do you may make up your mind that there will be some fun.—Providence Register.

We shouldn't be surprised.

Gossip at the Capital

Washington, May 2. The treasury flourish for the month just ended confirms Chairman Dingley's statement made a few days ago that there is likely to be nearly a year's supply of foreign goods in the hands of the new tariff bill gets into effect. While the retrospective clause, so called, of the Dingley bill probably prevented some of the new contracts which would have been made, and the new orders which would have been given, it did not reduce the amount of goods brought in during April as compared with the preceding month. That clause of the bill provided that the new rates of duty should apply upon all goods coming in after April 1, which had been purchased prior to that date. This of course permitted all goods contracted for or ordered prior to April 1 to come in under Wilson law rates and also let it largely in the hands of the importers to indicate by their own statements whether goods coming in after April 1 had been purchased or ordered prior to that date. Some of the importers have also clung to the belief that this feature of the bill would not pass the senate, especially in view of recent publications so indicating, while still others have chosen to take the risk upon being required to pay the extra duty in case this feature of the bill should become a law.

The result of these conditions is that the April importations have been phenomenally large, as large, indeed, as those of the month preceding and larger than any other month since the Wilson law began to pour forth its flood of foreign goods into the country. The importations of foreign goods during the month of April will foot up a total of probably \$80,000,000 in value. Those of March were in value \$76,372,681, and while the figures for April have not yet been received there is no reason to believe that the total will exceed that of March. The customs collections for the month ran about the same as for March and it is estimated that the importations of non-dutiable merchandise, especially wool and hides, has increased very much during the month of April. The estimate of \$80,000,000 for April is a low one.

The following table covering importations into the United States during the past nine months indicates the hot haste with which foreign manufacturers and home importers have been preparing to the advance of duties contemplated by the new tariff.

Table showing Total importations of foreign merchandise into the United States, Aug. 1, 1896, to May 1, 1897. Columns include month/year and value in dollars.

is shown in the percentage table of the Bureau of Statistics, which indicate the percentage of the total importations which come in free of duty. The relative increase of importation of non-dutiable goods is shown, with especial clearness by the table.

Table showing the proportion of foreign importations brought in free of duty from Aug. 1, 1896, to May 1, 1897. Columns include month/year and percentage.

The increase in importations, especially since because known that congress was to meet immediately after the inauguration of President McKinley and take up the tariff bill, is shown by a comparison of the customs receipts of March and April of the present year with those months in the three preceding years. This is shown by the following table: Customs receipts during March and April—1894 to 1897, inclusive: 1894 \$21,535,676; 1895 \$27,383,573; 1896 \$25,159,947; 1897 \$45,832,556.

While the increased importations in dutiable goods is shown by the above table, that of the non-dutiable goods is not indicated by the figures which it contains. The following table, however, gives the importation of articles of dutiable goods in March and April during the past three years.

Table showing Importation of non-dutiable goods in March and April—1895 to 1897, inclusive. Columns include month/year and value in dollars.

The Edison General Electric company last year made 11 per cent. net increase in business done, at a profit of \$50,657. A great increase in manufacturing exports is noted. For March they increased 25.8 per cent. as compared with March, 1896.

This year's coffee crop is estimated at 8,750,000 bags, one of the largest ever, and still the retail price remains unchanged. It is a noteworthy fact that most of the market letters from Wall street mention further general improvement in business upon the early passage of the Dingley bill.

The directors of the Western Union Telegraph company say that out of \$100,000,000 of their stock which has been issued less than \$5,000,000 is in the hands of Wall street brokers.

One of the most interesting and comprehensive daily exchange reports issued in New York comes from Macy & Fenwick, bankers and brokers, 45 Broadway. It is sent free to those who care for it.

The receipts of foreign wool at the port of Boston last week passed all previous records, 900,600 bales, worth perhaps \$2,700,000. This is one-half the total year's domestic production, and one-fifth as much as has been imported in any one year of the past decade.

The balance of trade in 1896, that is, the excess of exports, for which foreigners must pay us, over imports, for which we must pay foreigners, was \$25,322,000. But a change has come and the excess of imports over exports at New York from Jan. 1 last up to April 26 was \$41,100,000. The total imports for this period at New York were \$282,840,000, an increase of \$10,431,000 over the imports in the same period of 1896. The increase is in large part due to the pending tariff bill.

A goodly number of the goods could be shipped from the United States now without making the slightest difference in New York. The expectation is that \$20,000,000 will go out during the present shipping movement. The sum would not be missed. The United States treasury holds more than \$100,000,000 of specie, of which almost all is gold. There is \$21,000,000 of it in gold in the Clearing House vaults.

"CHRISTIAN" FOR CASH ONLY. From the St. Paul Pioneer-Press. The attitude of the so-called Christian governments of Europe towards Greece, from the beginning of the troubles which have at last caused the flames of war to burst forth along the Balkan borders, has been such as to make many an observer exclaim, "If this be Christianity, give me a healthy heathenism!"

STINGY TRIVIANION. From the Philadelphia Telegraph. Our legislature appropriates but \$3,000 per annum for the relief of the poor, compared with \$18,000 devoted to this object by New Jersey, \$30,000 by New York, and \$50,000 by Massachusetts. If our population now reaches 5,000,000, this appropriation amounts to one-tenth of a cent per capita. It is at all events a sum not to be considered in making provision for the preservation of the public health. In case of an epidemic it would be found that \$5,000 would be simply so much money thrown away.

Entertaining. Professor Goner—"Indeed, Miss Sweetie, the lower animals have language. I have heard monkeys entertain each other by narrating pleasant stories." Jack Hunter—"Yes, and only the other day I saw a snake get off a rattling good thing in the shape of a tail."—Life.

HE WORRIED ABOUT IT. When the weather was murky he gazed at the sky. And he worried about it; He watched the gray cloudlets go scurrying by. And he worried about it; "I'll bet it will rain," he would say to a friend. All manner of dire disaster portend; His life was one fret from beginning to end. For he worried about it.

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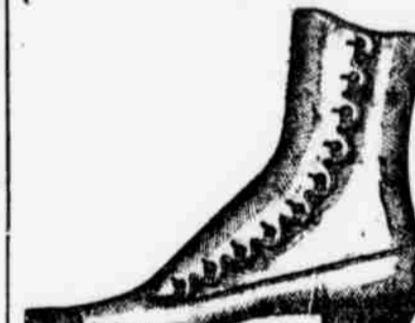
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