

The Scranton Tribune

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SCRANTON, DECEMBER 21, 1898.

The outcome of the Chicago street railway franchise fight shows that when the people have the mayor, the press and a determined public sentiment on their side the councilmanic boogymen cannot conquer.

The Debate on Expansion.

In beginning his great argument on Monday in support of the constitutionality of expansion Senator Orville H. Platt, of Connecticut, set forth his thesis in these words: "Expansion has been the law of our national growth, the great law of our national development. I propose to argue that the United States has shown a capacity for government in all trying times and under all trying conditions, and has shown that it is equal to any circumstance that may arise."

The authorities cited by Mr. Platt in support of these several propositions were able and ample to convince any open mind; but by a single illustration he made clear the utter absurdity of the contention that the United States has a smaller legal scope of sovereignty and a narrower limit of power than any other independent and vigorous nation.

Contrasts.

An interesting contrast between American and Spanish methods of law enforcement is afforded by current events in Santiago and Havana. In the latter city, where there is a Spanish soldier for nearly every resident civilian, murders are of daily occurrence, the presence of American warships is necessary in the fetid harbor and among all the clashing between armed Cubans and armed Spaniards there is no record of the arrest by Spanish officers of Spanish instigators of trouble.

In Santiago, on the contrary, the law knows absolutely no distinction as between races or classes or persons. We quote from a Santiago dispatch: "General Wood issued a decree yesterday prohibiting the carrying of weapons of any kind in the city under penalty of confiscation of the weapons and five to twenty days' imprisonment at the pleasure of the commander of the department. Three Americans resisted the attempt of the police to enforce the order this morning. Forty shots were exchanged, but no one was hurt. General Wood put the Americans in jail and complimented the police. He ordered them to kill any one who resisted in the future whether Cuban or American."

It will be desirable for the people inhabiting our new dependencies to realize that where the American flag goes up it inaugurates the principle of absolute equality before the law. This is a condition which they have no immediate means of comprehending because it involves an altogether novel experience. All classes, at the outset, will resent the idea; but they will grow into liking it and ultimately into loving it.

We gladly give space this morning to an instructive letter from Professor Willis L. Moore, chief of the weather bureau, setting us right in matters of fact concerning the severe storm of Nov. 27 in which the steamship "Portland," among others, went down off the New England coast. This letter establishes that the bureau forecast this storm accurately and sufficiently in advance to afford ample warning to mariners; and the natural inference is that to lack of confidence in the warning may be ascribed much of the destruction to life and property occasioned by that great blow.

The report is denied on authority that the peace commissioners are to receive \$100,000 apiece. Their pay is estimated at \$150 a day, or about \$20,000 each; and we doubt if any clean-minded American will begrudge them the money.

General Shafter explains that his recently reported assertion to the effect that the Cubans are no more fit for self-government than hell is fit for a powder factory was made during a private conversation and that its publication was unauthorized.

The czar of Russia intends to visit Siberia next spring and study the condition of convicts with a view to bettering their condition wherever possible.

The announcement that "Coin" Harvey is not working on commission in his efforts to raise a Democratic campaign fund will be pleasing to his friends. Judging from appearances, if Harvey depended on commissions in this case his calamities would soon be real.

Calamity organs should make note of the announcement that pig iron and steel rails are on the rise. They are an unfailing barometer of trade.

General Merritt gained a knowledge of the Philippines in about three weeks that is at least remarkable.

Hobson is in danger of overdoing the kissing business.

NEWS AND COMMENT

Rev. Dr. H. K. Carroll, editor of the Independent, and the special commissioner to Porto Rico a few months ago by President McKinley to ascertain the conditions prevalent on that island, has brought back some views. He says he has no direct knowledge of the condition of the Philippines, but that the inference made in the report of the Hawaiian commissioner that the Porto Ricans are incapable of self-government after this country has established a suitable form of government, is incorrect, and he considers a presumption that the Hawaiian commissioner to take, especially in view of the fact that they have presumably no knowledge of the conditions of the natives quite as capable in every particular to govern themselves as the inhabitants of Hawaii. He says that the Porto Ricans are not savages nor barbarous as some people think. He confesses that there is much illiteracy in the island, but says he believes that by the adoption of the customs and institutions of the United States the island would soon overcome the difficulty, and that eventually the Porto Ricans would evidence a capacity to govern themselves equal to that of either the Cubans or the Hawaiians.

It is an ungracious task to throw cold water on unfounded enthusiasm but that is what the New York Sun does in the article which follows. "Some ill-informed newspaper reporters have started a story that Russia is preparing to offer in this market an issue of bonds. The only ground for the story is that certain banks would not tempt our citizens, who are unfamiliar with investments in foreign government loans and would require strong inducements before they would put their money in them. To make a Russian loan saleable at all, it would have not only to bear 5 per cent. interest, but to be payable, perhaps, in gold or silver."

President McKinley's welcome at Augusta, Ga., the birth-place of General Joe Wheeler, was the most cordial and enthusiastic of all received by him in the south. The cheering awaiting him numbered 15,000 persons and it could not curb his enthusiasm. The president, among other things, said: "What a wonderful country we have! With what pride the contemplation of its history fills us all! When Washington was here, we had a little over three millions of people; we have nearly 75,000,000 today. We have added vast territory to our territory. We are today the largest manufacturing and the largest agricultural nation of the world. Our commerce floats on every sea and only the day before yesterday I saw that a thousand tons of ship's plates had been landed in Glasgow, Scotland, and we are even more significant in that a steamer on a ship bearing the American flag, my fellow citizens, I congratulate you upon the prosperity of the country. I congratulate you upon the progress it has made in the last third of a century. But I congratulate you even more because, as a people, we are now more and more devoted to national purpose and more imbued with the true national spirit than we have been since the formation of the Federal Union. There are no more wars now. We stand united in front of a foreign foe. We will stand united until every triumph of that war has been realized."

The Schenectady Locomotive works has received its first order for locomotives for an English railway. The order is for the construction of ten mogul freight engines for the Midland railway. The machines will be built after the American pattern, with cylinders 18 inches in diameter and 18 inches stroke. They will be fitted with all modern appliances, and will be very large and heavy. Twelve-seven engines have recently been shipped to the Nippon railway of Japan from the same shops. There are large orders on hand for several American railways, and 2,000 men are working day and night.

A feature which, for unique effectiveness, promises to attract all eyes, has been seen at great fairs is to be introduced at the coming centennial exposition of Ohio. The idea, which originated in the fertile brain of J. E. Connelley, president of the Toledo centennial commission, is to have a building devoted entirely to pleurocentric subjects, built in the shape of a huge fish and baby from foundation to backbone.

WEATHER FORECASTING.

Editor of The Tribune. Sir: I have noticed the following statement in your editorial columns of the 21st instant, relative to the loss of the Portland during the severe storm of November 27, 1898: "Had the meteorological bureau given timely warning of the impending hurricane, it is impossible to conceive how all those ships, big and small, could have been innocently caught in it. There seems to have been no such warning, or no anticipation of a tempest from the point from which it sprung." An occurrence like this, which had its origin in the east, while our meteorologists have their heads turned towards the west, is not very creditable to their scientific procedure. It is quite evident that a majority of the coasting ships which were caught at sea in such lamentable numbers would not have ventured out were it not for their dependence on the accuracy and foresight of the weather prophets. But this storm proves conclusively that for once the students of it were caught napping.

I feel sure that the writer of the above was not in possession of the facts in the case. The first anticyclone burst gave ample warning of the coming of this storm, taken from at least 200 of like tenor.

The storm did not come from the east, as stated, but developed in northern Minnesota on the 25th of November. It was carefully watched by the bureau and ward over the Great Lakes, and on Saturday morning, the 26th, its dangerous character was realized. It was on the morning of the 26th when weather conditions on the New England coast were serene, that urgent warnings of the coming severe storm, coupled with a forecast for the 26th, were sent to every port on the Atlantic coast from Virginia to Esport, Maine. The danger signal was flying in the New England ports nearly twenty-four hours before the storm's fury was felt. Hundreds of vessels obeyed the warnings and escaped wrecking. The loss of the Portland was a result of a forecast for the 26th which was not issued until it was too late.

Records show that this storm was more violent than the one that caused the loss of the Portland, but this disaster was fresh in the minds of vessel masters and vessel owners, causing them to pay greater heed to the danger signals. As a result there was but little destruction of life and property.

Severe storms of the character of those referred to are more easily forecast than the less marked conditions that cause slight changes in temperature and light rains and snows. It is a fact that no decided cold wave or destructive storm has passed across the country during the past four years without commerce and shipping being warned well in advance. No West Indian hurricane in the past few years has moved up our Atlantic coast without danger signals being displayed twenty-four hours, or more, in advance. As a result of the accuracy of the meteorological reports, the accuracy of the observations and the skill of the forecaster. As the forecasts are but the expressions of human judgment it is possible that a destructive storm may catch our lakes and seaboard without adequate warning being given, but records show that such has not been the case for several years.

I have written thus fully because, having given so much space to your editorial of the 21st instant, I feel certain that you desire complete and accurate information. Very respectfully, Chief of Weather Bureau, Washington, D. C., Dec. 19.

WILLIS L. MOORE.



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