

The Scranton Tribune

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SCRANTON, MARCH 30, 1899.

Most people will be contented to forego the greater Scranton boom for a time if we may have a clearer Scranton during the coming season.

The Ananias of Local Journalism.

The Scranton Times has almost from the moment that it came under its present management pursued a policy of sneaking misrepresentation of the Tribune's position, going out of its way to call the Tribune a corporation organ, a defender of monopoly and the like, impugning its motives, questioning its honesty and urging its readers to boycott the Tribune.

The rank of another court martial for Egan does not create any uneasiness on the part of his friends. So long as the ex-commissionary officer avoids his own boat he is safe.

Short Sighted.

All kinds of reports are current as to the efforts likely to follow the experiments of the New York Clearing House association in making a charge for the collection of checks on out-of-town banks.

Mr. Cleveland has refrained from criticizing the country recently, and as he is writing a book it is presumed that his complaints will all be embodied in one volume.

The News That Isn't Reported.

From the remarks made by Postmaster General Smith concerning what he saw in Cuba as well as from other sources of equal reliability the inference is warranted that a good bit of the fuss and bother in our relations with that island indicated in the daily press dispatches from Havana is superficial and able to be received with undue anxiety in this country.

There is one feature of this subject which it seems to us merits careful consideration. The Clearing House association threatens to file heavily or to expel any bank among its members caught violating the proposed charge. In other words, we have here the essential principle of a conspiracy or combination in restraint of trade.

At a time when there is considerable political prejudice against national banks and when a recent political party has recently polled a narrow vote on a platform and by means of arguments and assertions largely aimed at the banks the wisdom of the action taken by the New York Clearing House association is not clear.

There is one grain of comfort left for Colonel Bryan. His cause will no longer be espoused by Mrs. Mary Elizabeth Leary.

Civil Service Reform.

Another attempt is to be made to put the state and municipal governments of Pennsylvania on a civil service reform basis. The Pennsylvania Civil Service Reform association is supporting a bill known as the Woodruff bill, which is substantially identical with the bill passed by the Republican state committee in 1895 and endorsed by the Republican state convention in 1896.

The bill introduced by Mr. Woodruff provides for the appointment by the governor of three commissioners who shall make the necessary rules and regulations and establish and supervise the system of open competitive examinations of a thoroughly practical character for ascertaining the comparative fitness of all applicants and for securing the appointment or promotion of those who are found to be best fitted to perform the duties of the positions to be filled. The act applies to the subordinate employees of the state and of the cities, and of counties co-terminous with cities, and counties containing over 150,000 inhabitants.

In a circular explaining the provisions of this measure the association presents the general argument as follows: "Under the spoils system the head of a department, instead of being free to exercise his own judgment, is practically forced to select those who have the most political influence, and to pay but little if any regard to their ability or fitness. Under the merit system the appointing officer is not only enabled but obliged to select for appointment or promotion those who will give the public the best obtainable service. Under the spoils system each appointment makes more enemies than friends. Under the merit system no unsuccessful applicant can complain of anything but his own deficiencies. Under the spoils system the offices are almost monopolized by men of small capacity and few services, and the most desirable class of employes are unwilling to apply. Under the merit system the ex-

aminations are open to every citizen, and the best are eager to compete because their employment, retention and promotion are made to depend solely upon their merit and fitness, and because the work is honorable, and the pay is certain, and the opportunities for advancement are many. The public should always be able to secure the most desirable applicants, but the plan of selecting employes for any other reasons than merit and fitness for the duties to be performed, would be ruinous to any private corporation, and there is no reason why the public interests should be subjected to a system which is so utterly absurd and unbusinesslike, and so prolific in all kinds of corruption and bad government."

This is the theory of civil service reform. The practical weakness of the so-called merit system as it is exemplified in parts of the federal service is that it has been applied often dishonestly and generally without intelligent discrimination. The advocates of the reform, instead of applying it to minor positions involving routine qualifications such as clerks, clerical positions and the like, have sought to include confidential and responsible positions which should be appointed at the discretion of the administration and in this way they have encouraged unnecessary opposition. Real civil service reform should put the public service under competent supervision. It should give full scope to administrative officers in working out essential features of public policy without establishing an auction block for minor positions. It should encourage conscientious and faithful work but create no illusions as to indispensability. It should, in short, apply the principles which govern the successful conduct of private business enterprise, and neither more nor less. It should go light on red tape examinations with their abundant facilities for fraud or favoritism and place greater emphasis on actual ability as demonstrated by actual work.

Real civil service reform is bound to come in this country, but not until a good bit of the present sham masquerading under its colors is cast away.

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Sherman's Entry Into the Cabinet

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The president-elect sent his cousin, William McKinley Osborne, now commissioner of Land in Washington, to ascertain whether Mr. Sherman might be induced to consider a proposition to transfer his sphere of usefulness from the state department to the land office. He arrived at 5 o'clock one afternoon in January, 1897, took a room at the Arlington hotel, got his dinner, and then called at Mr. Sherman's house. The latter, in view of the peculiar and delicate circumstances of our intervention in Cuban affairs, but what we do not hear about in adequate detail or comprehend appreciatively is the quiet but steady progress in sanitation, public education, public conveniences and economic reconstruction and rehabilitation which, though not exploited in the public press, is after all the great fact in the whole situation. Here, for example, is just one instance: "Assistant Secretary of War McKeljohn," says a dispatch from Washington, "has received an official report from the customs service at Havana. In a commercial sense the report shows flattering conditions. The opposition to the more honest and exact system of doing business inaugurated by the United States government, which first manifested itself on the part of importers when the customs houses of the island passed into American hands, is gradually passing away. The subordinate places in the entire customs service of Cuba are filled by natives. On the customs rolls of Havana are carried 238 employees, at an aggregate monthly salary of \$19,840 in American gold. During the month of January 217 vessels of all kinds, of a total tonnage of 219,97 tons, entered the port of Havana, and 181 of a total tonnage of 196,799 tons, cleared from that port for foreign ports. The total collections for the port during the month of January, 1899, amounted to \$743,518."

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lieved in all sincerity that the Americans were simply going to steal the revenue in bulk without sharing a penny of the spoils. The most information from Cuba now is to the effect that this misconception, natural enough in view of the prior conditions, has practically been overcome. The same merchants who a few months ago made it their business to bribe the custom house employes systematically now make it their business to help the American overseer to keep a strict watch upon his subordinates. The "one price, one treatment for all" plan of administering the customs is seen to give a stability to business hitherto lacking. The merchants of Havana no longer fear that their rivals over the way are getting better deals at the port of entry; they can figure duty charges in as a fixed factor in the establishment of selling prices, and as they come to realize this they appreciate the change in systems.

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abuse of alcohol in its evil results. The manufacture of new chemical products is supplying the public with endless carbon derivatives of high molecular power, and impeding the progress of the medical profession. Some are most dangerous, and their continued indulgence leads to confirmed neuritis or hives, and the medical profession tends to alcoholism, that of the public is manufacturing it.

NEWS AND COMMENT.

In the April Scribner's Senator Hour thus is how he came to get into politics. He entered the house in the spring of 1855 of the United States at the spring session which began March 4, 1856, at the expiration of Grant's administration. I can almost say with truth that my nomination and election were against my own will. My life has been a singular instance of the fate of early plans of the current of life into strange regions. I expected when I was admitted to the bar, that I should be a lawyer, and I was called "chamber counsel" and in making instruments, but never to take much part in the conduct of trials, or to conduct them at all, had not with the help of senior counsel. I supposed I had an incurable incapacity for speaking in public. After I got along a little farther, and had some early professional successes, it was my whole desire and ambition some day to become a judge. It always seemed to me that the most delightful human occupation would be to go about the state, with four or five able lawyers, hearing and deciding questions of law, and to be a judge. I was broken down by overwork. My brain was so affected that I sometimes could not remember for two minutes an important conversation. I would meet a client in the street. He would say something to me about an important case, and I would say to myself, "What was it that that man was talking with me about?" I engaged a passage for a summer journey in Europe. Just before I went some friends expressed a desire to nominate me for congress, to which I gave a half-hearted assent, supposing that to go to Washington to form a committee would be to get rid of the burden of professional care and to recruit my judicial faculties. But as soon as I was out of sight of land and the load of responsibilities was off my mind, my health and vigor instantly came back. I returned from Europe ready to begin my career as a judge, and I was again elected to the senate. The matter had gone too far. I could not honorably retreat without leaving in the lurch the friends who had engaged in an arduous campaign in my behalf. So I was nominated over five or six competitors, after a severe struggle, and was elected.

A Havana correspondent of the Chicago Record gives the following interesting description of a Cuban railroad. A journey into the country in almost any direction from Havana is full of interest. There are a number of railway lines, each operating independently of the others. Some of these are fairly modern and well equipped, and also fairly well operated. Others were built "before the war"; not only before the struggle just ended, but before the ten years' war, even before the civil war between the states, from appearance and condition even before the revolution. Just before the war there were no railroads. At the Field Columbian museum can be seen railway carriages quite like those in use on some of the lines entering Havana from the interior. The earliest periods are not quite up to those in use here, but the passenger coaches of the middle of the century drawing to a close are fair samples of the coaches in use on the morning trains of the Villeta Nueva railroad, running out in a southerly direction to Guanajay, thirty-five miles from this city. The coaches of the Pinar del Rio boundary. These coaches are low-collared, have narrow doors, and windows with glass, only shutters being in use; the seats are low, primitive, wooden structures, without adornment or possibility of comfort; the floors are worn, splintered and splintered; the conductor is without uniform, unless a dirty cap with a tortoiseshell or celluloid visor may be considered an insignia of his office. The personal appearance is almost as untidy as that of the humblest passenger riding on the cheapest fare, and after he has made his round he lounges idly with the smokers, smoking the omnipresent cigarette, whether in the cuboose or the ladies' car. All the employees smoke while on duty as when off duty. They all smoke cigarettes. Most of these are vile. A non-smoking passenger has no right, which applies in this country as in the land, to be bound to observe. Women passengers smoke with the men. Not that all ladies smoke; but some do. And the dirty, close, low-collared seats are so arranged that the vilest of fumes from the vilest of words being smoked by the vilest of human beings, as well as by those whose station in life is undignified.

The postoffice department is, says the Sun, preparing to issue a special set of stamps for the island and the stamps have been approved by the postmaster-general. The issue will consist of one, two, three, five and ten cent stamps. The one-cent, or one-centavo stamp, has the word Cuba across the top, with a "1" in each of the lower corners. In the center is a picture of the great historical figure of Cuba, which stands in the plaza of Havana, a woman seated on a throne. It is called "La Cubana." On either side of the figure are the figures 1 and 2, and at the bottom the word centavos. The five-cent stamp has the picture of a merchant steamer at full speed, typifying commerce. On the side is a wealth of palms and tropical foliage and at the top the word Cuba. Across the bottom is "5 centavos." On the 10-cent stamp is depicted a factory scene in Cuba. A "Cuba" is driving two oxen harnessed to the primitive plough in use in the island, with the long oxen being led by a man. It is guided. The word Cuba appears at the top, with the figures "10" on either side and "centavos" in a semi-circle above the picture. The plates will be prepared and the stamps printed at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, Washington, and their cost charged against the Cuban revenue. They will be used on the island until Cuba is declared free, when the Cuban government will be at liberty to continue their use or not as it sees fit.

The project to establish a professorship of the Welsh language at Marquette college is making headway. The Welsh citizens of Boston have pledged \$2,000 toward the endowment. In New York \$10,000 has been pledged, and in Pennsylvania \$20,000 more. Preparations are being made for a public meeting to be held in about two weeks in Cincinnati, when it is expected that the project will be presented in the endowment. The Welsh residents of Cleveland, Columbus and other cities are also being urged to act in the matter. The new professorship is to be known as the Cambrian professorship, and the amount of endowment it is expected to secure is \$25,000. All lovers of the old Cymric land and its language are rejoiced at the success that has so far attended the movement, and it is believed the project will be in operation with the next college year.—Utica Herald.

It is announced in a City of Mexico dispatch that Professor Angelo Helprin of the Philadelphia Academy of Natural Sciences has completed his calculations of the heights of the five principal Mexican mountain peaks in Mexico. The results of his measurements are as follows: Orizaba, as measured by the DeLorme tables, 15,200 feet; Popocatepetl, 17,200

feet; Iztaccihuatl, 15,800 feet; Nevado de Toluca, 14,800 feet. It has long been said that Popocatepetl was the highest mountain peak in Mexico.

Admiral Dewey's rank is not equal to that of any naval officer in the world, as is generally supposed. In the British navy there are seven "admirals of the fleet" who are superior to ordinary admirals and hold the rank corresponding to that of "field marshal" in an army.

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