

The Scranton Tribune

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When space will permit, The Tribune is always glad to print short letters from its friends bearing on current topics, but its rule is that these must be signed, for publication, by the writer's real name.

TEN PAGES.

SCRANTON, DECEMBER 12, 1899.

Holiday buyers now throng the city stores, and those who are best equipped to make Christmas purchases with the greatest despatch first consult the advertising columns of The Tribune.

The City's Health.

IN ANOTHER column will be found a statement of the sanitary conditions and needs of this city which deserves the careful attention of every thoughtful man. We have not grouped together this information for sensational purposes, but because it has become necessary for the city's welfare that the people should realize into what a condition the public health has fallen in consequence of general carelessness in the regulation of communicable diseases, and what steps are immediately needed in order that this increasing peril may be halted and eventually overcome.

In the casual talk upon this subject which one hears upon the streets, there is apt to be criticism of the Board of Health. At our request Dr. Allen of that board, has presented a statement showing the limitations surrounding the board in its incessant efforts to arrest these diseases. The board has neither the authority nor the assistance which are needed to cope successfully with an emergency like that now confronting the city. It has performed exceptional work under the circumstances and, despite occasional stray assertions to its discredit, it has behind it a clean and creditable record for hard work without extravagance or scandal. The point to be emphasized now, however, is that it needs more power. Its one officer can no more keep up with the rush of disease in a city covering nearly twenty square miles of area and representing almost every complex population problem that is to be found anywhere than he could don muslin wings and fly to the moon. The board of health needs for at least a considerable time to come not less than the four special officers suggested by Dr. Allen, but also a general strengthening of its hands by the utmost co-operation of intelligent men and women throughout the city.

The diseases now rife are enemies which are liable to levy a tribute on any household in the city. The careful parent is largely at the mercy of the negligent neighbor. There has got to be a death struggle with this enemy and his extermination must come. The question of how is one of the most important and pressing questions before the city at the present time.

The blow delivered by Hon. Billy Mason will probably be the most disastrous to the Boers of any upon this side of the Atlantic.

Mr. Scranton's Letter.

THE LETTER of Mr. Scranton, printed elsewhere, contains the first intimation which we have had that the board of trade committee has had its conference with him on the subject of water rates. The public will now await with eagerness the presentation of the committee's version of the interview. It is a poor story which does not have two sides and profit by the telling of both.

Mr. Scranton's letter places in somewhat peppy and while we give him the chance to say what he wishes to say on this topic of public importance, we wish to add that his letter impresses us as being in a measure unfair to the board of trade. The board does not discuss the affairs of Mr. Scranton or any other citizen in a desire to be officious or to mix into other people's business, but from the wish to further the common interests of this community, and in this mission it is entitled to co-operation rather than censure. Its purpose is to diversify local industry and in other ways promote the industrial and commercial well-being of the town. In pursuance of this object it has a right to give attention to factors entering into the location of new industries in this neighborhood, of which the item of water facilities and cost is one. Statements by individual members of the board, made hurriedly in the process of a general debate, may occasionally go somewhat wide of the line of exact fact, but this does not constitute a reflection upon the board nor justify a spirit of animosity toward the proper purposes of its existence. We are sure that if the Scranton board of trade had never taken a live interest in the development of this city, the Scranton Gas and Water company would today be doing a considerably smaller business than it is now doing and making even less than a 2 per cent. dividend.

These few remarks are in correction of what we take to be an unfortunate view of the board of trade's spirit and aim in this matter. They do not reach down into the merits of the question, which has been raised as to whether the prevalent meter rates are or are not too high. That, as we have all along sought to emphasize, is first of all a question for cool, dispassionate and essentially judicial investigation. We dare say that the truth on this point will be elicited ere the present discussion shall have ended.

The British troops walked into another trap at Stormberg on Saturday and were slaughtered like sheep by the Boers who were possessed of every advantage. From the time of the defeat of Braddock the British officers have persisted in a method of fighting which has proved costly whenever

their men have encountered an enemy properly equipped and under any sort of discipline. Until the English soldiers can be persuaded to adopt the Indian warfare tactics used by the American regulars their victories will be expensive and defeats appalling for loss of life.

The question of social precedence between Mrs. Miles and Mrs. Dewey has at last been decided by Secretary Root, Secretary Long and John Addison Porter. While the admiral outranks the general, yet on official occasions when the army and navy are represented the hero of Indian campaigns will lead the hero of Manila. The same proposition will hold good in regard to their wives. Now that the question has been finally settled it is safe to predict that Mrs. Dewey and Mrs. Miles will seldom attend the same celebration.

Justice for Cervera.

THE BOOK, to be published by Admiral Cervera giving his version of the campaign that resulted in the destruction of his squadron at Santiago will be read with interest by those who have followed closely the important events in the Spanish-American war. It is well known that Admiral Cervera realized the inevitable results of his voyage across the Atlantic and protested against the policy that could only end in the destruction of the remnant of Spain's navy. Stupidly held the reins of power, however, and the brave old sailor could only obey.

The fact that the Spanish government has given the admiral permission to present his case to the world and give a statement looking to self vindication is an evidence that a spirit of liberality hitherto unknown pervades the administration of Castilian affairs. This is one of the most hopeful indications that Spain has profited by the lessons of the recent war and has entered upon an era of progression which will in time neutralize the blind bigotry that has ruined the prestige of that once proud and powerful nation.

A number of university presidents have recently been engaged in arguing the question as to the time of the beginning of the twentieth century. Although it has been generally supposed that the exponents of science and culture had decided to fix upon midnight on Dec. 31, 1900, as the end of the nineteenth century, the president of Wellesley college and the president of Smith college have opened up the discussion again by making the assertion that the twentieth century will begin on Jan. 1, 1900. As only a few days intervene, it is to be hoped that the college presidents will get together before the end of the year and arrange a schedule minus a minority report. No good citizen will be anxious to leap into the twentieth century before it is time, yet most of us desire to get all that is coming.

A peculiar illustration of the elements controlling a strike was given at Altoona the other day when one little girl prevented a tie-up in a silk mill. Eight hundred employees of the mill quit work because demands for increased wages were refused. One girl remained at her loom and in a few minutes 700 of the strikers had returned to work. One hundred of the operatives who first struck remained out, proving conclusively in this as in many other cases that the minority brought about the strike.

The disposition to heap insults upon the daughter of Congressman-elect Brigham Roberts, who is in Washington with her father, is unworthy of the residents of the national capital. Miss Roberts is certainly not on trial and is not responsible for her own condition or the acts of the unrepentant Mormon who is knocking at the door of congress. There is no reason why this young woman should be sneered at or treated like an escaped museum freak whenever she appears in public.

While ferret hunting should not be allowed, farmers will do well not to place too many restrictions upon the sportsmen who kill rabbits upon their premises. But for the efforts of the enthusiastic individuals who are willing to shoulder shotguns and follow small dogs about the deserted clearings and patches of woodland on these chilly days of early winter the rabbit would soon become an intolerable nuisance to the tiller of the soil.

One hundred years ago the total amount of money in circulation in the United States was \$26,500,000, or about \$4.90 per capita. Now its amount is \$235.80 per capita. But people who are inclined to sympathize with the apparent poverty of our forefathers must remember that there were no gas and water and telephone bills or campaign assessments in those days and that \$100 tailor-made dresses were unknown in fashion.

If some large manufacturing establishments could not reduce the wages of its employees soon the Democratic party will be entirely without ammunition for next year's campaign. This wage-raising wave that is passing over industrial centers is most discouraging to the party of discontent.

A son of Oil Magnate Rockefeller has attempted to corner leather in Wall street. Young Rockefeller is \$17,000,000 behind the game and the country is not yet shoeless. "Bucking the tiger" is often disastrous even for a young man with a rich papa.

The Scranton Tribune Year book for 1900 is now in press and will be ready for patrons on Jan. 1. The book has been compiled with unusual care this season and will be up to the standard of the past in excellence as a work of reference.

Brigham Roberts has already achieved notoriety enough to make him eligible for a position on the staff of the New York Journal.

It has been intimated that the "Sorrows of Satan" are nothing when compared to the sorrows of spectators

who have witnessed the dramatic version of Marie Corelli's indigestible book.

The bicycle riders at Madison Square Garden, it is said, have set a killing pace thus far in the six-day race, in violation of the regulations that were necessary to prevent the ambitious young men from committing suicide by over-exertion. Although forced by the authorities to take certain hours of rest on the track, the riders make up for it by passing all records during the time they are allowed to ride. The fact that new aspirants for glory are ever ready to take the places of the athletes who are victims to over-training and over-exertion seems to prove that the fool-killer has been remiss in his duty.

The original Whitelaw Reid-for-vice-president-man has appeared.

Water Question Up to This Date.

Editor of The Tribune—

Sir: I have read with interest the editorial in today's Tribune on "The Water Question," and I cordially concur in its views. After showing the undeniability of municipal ownership in Scranton under present local conditions, and the folly of the other course before the city, the water rates, The Tribune says: "The conditions governing the domestic use of water evoke no complaint. The charges for commercial and industrial, and chiefly for industrial, use are almost in question. The board of trade has undertaken to convince Mr. Scranton that it would be advantageous to his Water company to quote to manufacturers easier terms on a water supply. It is going to send a committee to him, to have a talk on the subject."

From this I perceive that the city press is not aware that the interview with the board of trade committee referred to in the editorial, which occurred last Friday morning, 8th inst. I am not surprised that the papers have not heard of it. Indeed, I do not wonder that the board of trade do not care to say much about the matter, since the committee, Mr. Lansing, stated that he had been on the board of trade's committee on manufactures for many years. When asked to give the name of some of the companies presently operating in the city, who pay water rates, the vast and mysterious cotton mills referred to by young Mr. Henshaw, the dates, the amount of water they would have used, the number of hands they would have employed, whom they have since employed, and the water rates in their present locations—in short, the data necessary to sustain the allegations of the board of trade's secretary in his letter of Nov. 20 to the 5th inst. on which the board's resolutions were based, namely, that "the water rates in Scranton are almost prohibitive to its further development along industrial lines," he could not give one single name. It will be three weeks tomorrow night, when the board of trade held its historic meeting. Though repeatedly called upon to do so, they have not yet given the public one single fact to prove their assertions so materially affecting the value of property which have cost millions under the circumstances. I respectfully submit that the board of trade at present stands in the eye of the public in an even worse predicament than Colonel Boies, for it must be based upon the giant Colonel Boies did at least attempt to back up his speech.

When pinned down, the board's committee could only say, "somehow, they had a feeling that our meter rates were high. Now, while the water company's directors are entirely open to conviction in this meter matter, they really must ask for something a little more definite on which to base reductions than that sort of airy talk. The whole community also has a feeling that the price of butcher's meat is high. But that doesn't seem to have much weight with the market men, nor does it diminish the cost of bringing most of the goods that are so carefully prepared list of the meter rates prevailing in the fifty-four largest cities in the country, from New York down to Hartford, shows that in a few more favorably located or receiving city aid, were lower than in Scranton, and there were many more in which rates were higher, the committee could not show that meter rates were in any way excessive when fairly compared with those of other places, nor had they any right to suggest, except to say that they wished rates were lower.

The only thing at all approximating a real point which Messrs. Lansing and Dale tried to make, was that they thought we ought to give new manufactures coming here, a specially low rate. One reply to this is that we do not think it would be good policy or fair to our other customers. For instance, would it be fair to our customers, the Saugott or Harvey's Silk works, that we should give a lower rate to a new and the silk trade institution. The new manufacturer coming here, depending for its success on charity, will be of no value to this community. As for any mill, employing 1,500 hands, being deterred from coming here by a water rate, which may be equal the business of two or three workmen, every business man knows that is nonsense. We cannot ask whether our customers are, or are not, making money. In Scranton, as everywhere else, meter bills are large or small, according as the customer uses more or less water. How much water does a customer use? That is all we do, or can, or ought to look at. Whatever other changes this company may from time to time make, one thing may be considered settled. We do not propose to change our policy of treating all our customers alike. Neither shall we give a lower meter rate to one man than to another of the same class. Neither have we now, nor shall we hereafter have, any free list. And the customer who don't pay his bills within a reasonable time will have his water cut off, and it will be his own fault whether he is a judge on the bench, or mayor of the city, or a councilman, or a member of the board of health, or the owner of a newspaper, whether he is rich or whether he is poor, whether he is pious or whether he is an Athlete. I hope this is plain.

The real fact is that meter rates here are not high, have not prevented manufactures locating here, and are in no way whatever an hindrance to the city's growth. All such statements are absolutely false, and mainly put out by parties who hope to gain a little popularity by fomenting, through misrepresentation and lies, the temporary scare, which has invariably at first attended the introduction of meters everywhere, till the justice of the meter system is seen, and the fact made clear that no one is hurt by it. We were told that the brewers here would be heavily injured by it. Though

not put on meter rates till the first of December, we find, had they been put on in November, that the bill of E. Robinson's Sons would have been less by \$7.26 than was the case. The Casey & Kelly Brewing company's bill would have been less by about \$14.00. The Scranton Brewing company would have been less by about \$2.85. Tying all the city brewers together, though not on meter rates in November, and, therefore, not stimulated to prevent waste, we find that their bills by meter rates would practically have been about the same as by the old barrel rate. The same state of affairs applies to many other customers. Of course, in a place so large as Scranton, meters will cause changes in proportions heretofore given specific rates. Some will be higher, others lower; according as men are careless of waste or otherwise. But even our most careless customers, the restaurants and saloons, will find, if they go to work and have their plumbing made tight and needless waste stopped, that they are not going to be hurt. Most of them don't go on meters before the first of January, won't know what their bills are till February, and, in fact, it will be March or April before any of us know enough of the effects of the meter on either diminution of waste, or the company's receipts, to form any opinion of value in regard to the expediency of changing rates. I again respectfully recommend our customers to keep cool and not get frightened before they are hurt, and to remember the company's record during the past twenty years in regard to voluntary reduction.

It should be remembered that we work under precisely the same conditions as all other water companies in this coal field. All alike have to bring their water from small streams outside the coal measures. Our family rate is \$6.00. Outside of Scranton, from Forest City to Nanticoke is \$6.25 per cent. higher. Outside of Scranton, the meter rates of the Spring Brook Valley Supply company rule. A manufacturing concern in Scranton using say, 1,500,000 gallons of water a month pays \$90.00. Outside of Scranton in this valley it has to pay \$122.50. Now, I am far from saying that the rates of these other companies are too high. I say nothing of the kind. They have been passed on by the court. Judge Edwards on the bench. I agree that they are moderate and fully justified. Yet why rates in Scranton with its immensely varying heights and dependent on two little streams should be inordinately high, is a question. Is it because with the rates of Buffalo, a town that is as a pancake, and supplied by Lake Erie, instead of with the far higher rates prevailing everywhere else in this valley, is rather difficult to say. Is it because Lieutenant Governor Vatter, Mr. Watkins and other gentlemen at the head of these concerns are members of our board of trade? If the courts have declared the rates of the Spring Brook Valley Supply company justified, what about ours, which are so much less?

I have been asked, what about the council's fixing rates for us? I may object that this never has been used to paying blackmail, nor to bribing councilmen, and don't propose to begin now. If the council choose to pass their silly rate ordinance, we shall not raise a finger to prevent it. Perhaps it may as well be settled now as later, whether the council have the right to confiscate and ruin property costing millions, under the guise of fixing rates. The gentleman now leading the select council in the matter of the rate ordinance, the proprietor of the St. Charles hotel, was so fortunate, lately, as to have his meter reversed by some kind friend or plumber in a very common trick to defraud, but he is not so lucky as to have his meter for water in November, we appear to owe him \$19.72, and we have begun suit to find out how this miracle occurred. And yet it is under the leadership of such a man that the city is asked to spend millions in the experiment of municipal ownership!

When it comes down to the bottom fact it is difficult to see what there is in all this commotion concerning the water rates, except that the president of the great octopus happens to be an unpopular man and yours truly.

Scranton, Dec. 11. —W. W. Scranton.

PERSONALITIES.

Richard Croker, when he sailed for Europe, was aided by the fireboat Patriot with a round of 21 guns, the salute usually given to presidents of the United States.

Lieutenant Henry Cahill, who was a member of the staff of General Canby of the Cuban army, has entered the law school of Boston university, intending to take the three years' course.

J. Pierpont Morgan has a taste for red. His private room in his place of business is covered by a superb red carpet especially woven on an English loom. The mountings are in dark hardwood.

John Garland Price, who represents Alaska in congress, is a lawyer in St. Ignace. He was born in Iowa 29 years ago, and is an enthusiast on the subject of Alaska. He believes that a territory should be made of Southeastern Alaska.

General Lew Wallace has purchased a tract of land near Crawfordville, Ind., and will make a fish preserve of it. The land is watered by a number of excellent springs, and creeks, which will be dammed for the purpose of trout breeding.

In a quiet part of Kensington resides Dr. Samuel Butler, now in his 86th year, whose books have been read and signed by millions. His name has been so long familiar to everybody that it will probably surprise many people to know that he is still working and living in London.

Dr. Seiler, who was recently appointed professor of American ethnology and archaeology at the University of Berlin, is one of the foremost men in his line in Germany. He made his chief reputation by his investigations of Old Mexican life in the states of Puebla, Chiapas and Yucatan.

Occasionally we get a little reminder that John Ruskin is still with us, although his working days are over. He now lives at Coniston, a beautiful place in Lancashire, where he has decided to spend the remainder of his days, interesting himself in his books, pictures and music. It is said that of late the great philosopher has become strangely silent and uncommunicative.

Count Leo Tolstoy, the famous Russian novelist, is a remarkable example of a present day genius living the life of a hermit. This man resolutely refuses for the sake of his principles to accept the honors of nobility to which his works have entitled him. Instead of enjoying the delights of society in St. Petersburg he is content to live in seclusion among the peasants of Russia, working hard at manual labor as well as mental.

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FINLEY'S HOLIDAY GOODS. A Fine Silk Umbrella As a Christmas Present for Either Lady or Gentleman. is as appropriate as anything we can suggest. We had this in view when we made our selections and the goods fully meet our expectations. The handles, of Natural Woods, Plain and with fine Pearl, Sterling Silver and Gold Mountings, are the most artistic and unique of any line we have ever shown. "The wearing qualities are beyond question." The "Golf," "Tally Ho" and "Automobile," are among our latest handles and these we are showing in exclusive designs, and in regard to prices, you can take your choice from \$3.75 to \$17.50. Select now, while the line is unbroken. Should you want the Best One Dollar Umbrella procurable, our \$1.35 quality will be yours at this price for just ten days. Fine line of Children's Umbrellas from 50c up. 510 and 512 LACKAWANNA AVENUE

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