

A MATTER OF INTEREST TO ALL. By the official report of the county auditor, it is shown that Somerset county is not only out of debt but that there is an actual surplus in the Treasury of \$8,587.22. We are informed also, and we believe correctly, that the amount assessed for the present year has not been reduced, and so we may reasonably count upon the same surplus remaining over, after the payment of ordinary expenses, from the present levy, and on the first day of January next, there will be lying in the hands of the Treasurer, for he dare not invest it, about \$17,000.00.

This is a very healthy showing for the Treasury, but is it fair and just to the tax payers? Why not reduce the taxes? But we waive the question for the present, for the purpose of asking an answer to another. What is going to be done with the surplus now in the Treasury? We know what ought to be done with a portion of it, and the sooner it is thus expended the better will it be for the tax payers. The people of this county own a reasonably good Court House, and an unusually bad jail, and we presume do not desire to be taxed for the construction of new buildings for at least some years to come. Within the Court House are all the county offices, and within these the records, papers and documents showing title to nearly all the real estate in the county, and containing the records of the judgments, mortgages, debts &c., of a very large proportion of our citizens. Now it is a well known fact, that all these valuable documents would be as secure in any ordinary farm house in the county as where they are. The vaults which contain them, it is not pretended, are either fire or burglar proof, and at the same time are entirely too small to contain them all, properly arranged. So notorious is the insecurity of these receptacles, that at the burning of the town in May last, the officers were compelled to remove all the records in their custody, and we observe among the expenditures in the Treasurer's account, an item of \$166.30 for adjusting the papers in two of the offices, when they were again returned to the place provided for them. Three or more Grand Jurors have presented the fact of the insecure condition of the public records to the Court, and at each presentation has the Court desired the county Commissioners to provide a remedy for the evil, and yet under the plea of poverty, has this matter of vital importance been deferred. Now that there is this large surplus in the Treasury, the people should sternly demand that this much needed improvement be made without further delay. Suppose the late fire had swept away this building and its contents, and it did those of private citizens, would the Commissioners have slept well a night with the curses of the people, who had been ruined by their penny-wise and pound-foolish economy, ringing in their ears?

But it is not the safety of the records alone that need to be insured, by the erection of better vaults within the building, the Court House itself is in our opinion one of the most insecure buildings—from fire we mean—in the county. With its wooden floors, wooden stairways, wooden roof, wooden cornices, and wooden cupola, containing in it a dozen stoves, under the care of different officers, whose carelessness is not guaranteed—it is a mere tinder box, liable to destruction at any moment, for not a single provision has been made by which the slightest fire within or without could be extinguished. The county owns and occupies the entire square on which the public buildings stand, and yet there is on it but one well, in a remote corner, not yielding water sufficient for the culinary purposes of the jail.

There ought to be an artesian well sunk on this square; but the least that should be done, and that without delay, should be the construction of a capacious cistern between the Court House and jail, to catch the drainage from both buildings, and thus provide some water against the contingency of fire.

As to the county jail, it always was an abortion. If arranged, utterly insecure, and wretchedly ventilated, it ought to be razed and a new one built. But as that is hardly within the range of probabilities for some years to come, it should have been removed upon it a few pots of paint to prevent further rotting of the wooden part of it, and be supplied with an earth closet, to prevent the Commissioners from being indicted for maintaining a public nuisance, as they surely ought to be, if they do not take measures, to abate the stench arising from a portion of that building, and poisoning the atmosphere of the entire neighborhood.

We write this article in no spirit of captious fault-finding with our present Commissioners. They are careful, painstaking men, zealous of the unnecessary expenditure of the public moneys, and tending to a fault in increasing responsibility. But we put it to them as sensible men, if they are not risking more of censure for neglecting to provide for the safety of the buildings under their care, than by the expenditure of a few dollars to make the improvements, of the necessity of which they are as conscious as we are. Our object is to stir up the people, the men whose purses are endangered by the destruction of it, to the necessity of making such provisions as are necessary for its protection. The improvements we have suggested will not cost one third of the money now in the Treasury, and are absolutely demanded by common

OUR WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, Feb. 12, 1873.

CREDIT MOBILIER. At last the Poland Investigation Committee has closed the evidence in the Credit Mobilier affair. Nearly the last testimony taken was the examination of Oakes Ames celebrated memorandum book with which he refused to comply. He had been ordered under compulsion, and it was found to be not even a copy of original entries made at the time of transactions noted in it. In itself it would be worthless in any Court of Justice as evidence. The closing feature of the investigations complete the defense made by Vice President Colfax, whose name had been branded with falsehood by Democratic papers and some others too, from one end of the land to the other upon the *ex parte* statement of Ames. It turns out that the check drawn to \$8,300.00 for the Government, by a clerk of the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, not to Mr. Colfax, but to Oakes Ames himself, which accounts for its being in his possession *unadvised* by Mr. Colfax, who positively adheres to his original assertion that he never received the money upon it, or any other check from Mr. Ames.

The letter explained his own contradictory testimony by alleging that in the first instance having used their honorable names for the purpose of making the stock popular among capitalists, he wished to let them off easy, but gives now as a reason for perceiving them as a fraud, that they had tried to prove him a liar. Here was motive for the allegations against the members and Vice President. He confesses to vindictiveness before the Committee, and having prepared accounts in his diary, to show to capitalists that these popular men put money into Credit Mobilier stock how easy would be for him to forget that the payments charged against them as paid were paid to him without their knowledge. That this was the case in his transaction with Mr. Colfax fully appears from that gentleman's testimony, that of numerous witnesses brought forward by him, showing that the \$1,200, deposited in his name in the First National Bank was received in two sums from other sources, and that if he had received the \$1,200 on the check alluded to, the deposit would have been double that amount. Thus all stigma is lifted from the fair fame of the Vice President, and good men and true of every political shade ought to rejoice thereat. The mistakes which Ames confessed to have made in his testimony will go far to weaken it as against other gentlemen assailed. And when the report of the Committee is made, the statement of your correspondent in the beginning, that this expensive investigation was unequalled for and would prove an ignominious fizzle for those who instigated it, will doubtless fully be verified.

Having been induced by Ames to invest in what appeared a fair transaction, the Members withdrew so soon as it seemed likely to compromise them or to involve them in litigation. Up to that time there was no valid reason why they should not own or Pacific R. R. Stock; just as other members own national bank stock, which at any day may be called to legislate upon. There is not the semblance of a case of bribery made out, though there is, perhaps some question whether the admissions of Ames do not show on his part a secret intention to secure, if necessary, in the future, legislation favorable to his interests by improper means.

On Tuesday last week Senator Wilson resigned his seat in the United States Senate, preparatory to assuming the duties of Vice President on the 4th of March next. The resignation took place just eighteen years, to an hour, from the time when this distinguished statesman first entered the Senate.

It is said that the abolition of the Franking privilege will save the United States Treasury over one and a half million of dollars. However, our economical Congressmen propose to indemnify themselves for the loss of this perquisite by raising their salaries from \$5,000, to \$8,000, per annum.

Five counties in this State have voted on the local option question, and on the 21st of the other counties. On the 21st, six other counties will vote on the question, as follows: Schuylkill, Lycoming, Wayne, Susquehanna, Northumberland, and Centre.

KING AMADEUS has abdicated the throne of Spain, and by a very large majority the Cortes has declared in favor of a Republic. Thus one by one, kings and dynasties are giving way to the government of the people, by the people, for the people.

THERE was no business transacted by the Legislature, during last week, until after the funeral of Governor Geary on Tuesday, both houses having adjourned over out of respect to his memory.

Fire at Sea. GALVESTON, February 15.—The steamer "The Forbes" brought to this city the rescued from the burnt steamer Henry A. Jones, among them the assistant pilot named G. Gordon, who was on watch at the time of the disaster. He gives the following particulars: "Fish about three miles over Red Fish bar at 4:50 this morning the watchman on the tower deck called out Red Fish light in sight. The watchman was in the act of casting the lead when an explosion was heard something like the escape of steam, but more resembling the report of a gun. The fish pilot, who was on the roof, ran down to the lower deck and immediately sent out to the assistant pilot to make his escape, as the boat was on fire. Gordon immediately left the wheel and ran down the stairs, when he got below he found the fire had wrapped the whole boat and cargo in a sheet of flames. He had only time to reach the life boat.

The Jones had four hundred and forty-two bales of cotton, lot of hides, &c., on board, and a large wooden tub. About the time Gordon reached the barge it caught fire, was cut loose from the burning boat, and floated away. Murphy, the engineer on board, did not escape, and fell in consequence regarding the cause of the disaster. The probabilities are that the fire was caused by a spark from the boiler, and that the report heard by Gordon was caused by his fall. It is certain that the vessel and cargo was in flames with five minutes after the first alarm. The following are known to be lost: J. J. Price, first clerk; James Hogan, second clerk; Wm. Murphy, first engineer; Peter Turner, cooper; J. Cummings, D. Turner, Jno. Calahan, Christopher Shelby, Jas. Brown, W. Hughes, A. Hardy, Wm. Chasely, deck hands; Rob. Gille, fireman; McGuire, first cook; Wm. Bishop, second cook; Alfred, cabin boy; A. Bates, cabin boy, and two stokers, names unknown; twenty-seven saved. Loss about \$50,000. She belonged to the Direct Navigation Company. No insurance.

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HARRISBURG.

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SENATE. The Senate met this evening at 8 o'clock. In the absence of the Speaker, Senator Strong called the Senate to order.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF EX-GOV. GEARY'S DEATH. The Governor, by message, officially announced the death of Ex-Gov. Geary, and recommended that the Legislature take charge of the funeral. Senator GRAHAM offered resolutions lamenting the sudden death, and otherwise eulogistic of the deceased, and that the Legislature cause entire legislation until next Monday evening, and that they attend the funeral in a body.

The Senate was addressed in a feeling manner by Senators Graham, Wallace, Weakly, Humphreys and Davis, of Philadelphia. The Governor and the Speaker and five members of each House, together with Col. Jordan, are to act as a committee to carry out the funeral arrangements.

At nine o'clock the joint committee, consisting of Governor Hartranft, Adjutant General Russell, Col. Jordan, Speakers Anderson of the Senate and Elliott of the House, together with Senators Wallace, of Clearfield, Weakly, of Cumberland, and Graham, of Allegheny, with Mitchell, of Tioga, Judge Lawson, of Clarion, Mahon, of Franklin, and Smith, of Fayette, met in the speaker's room. The minute guns were being fired through the capitol building, and the hurrying of crowds through the long corridors, with serious faces, forcibly reminded one of the troubled days of the war, when from the capitol hill we could see the sky red with the burning barracks of Carlisle, and the frightened people cowering in the streets.

Early had crossed over the border. The pall-bearers were draped and craped as became the occasion. First came Gov. Hartranft and Speaker Anderson of the Senate; then Senators Rukan and McSherry; then Speaker Elliott, and the Hon. George Bradford; then Latta, of Westmoreland, and Darragh, of Bucks. It is estimated that over ten thousand persons visited the body while it lay in state yesterday at the capitol. The crowd was still greater this morning near his late residence on Market street, which had been appropriately decorated. Quite a time was consumed before the services were commenced by Rev. T. H. Robinson, formerly of Pittsburgh. The officers of Knapp's Battery followed immediately after the family mourners. All the public schools were closed, and the number who attended the funeral was large. The City Grays of Harrisburg were detailed as the immediate escort.

What was the loss in its place and the friends all seated. Miss Briggs sang the beautiful dirge written by George H. Baker on the death of Gen. Phil. Kearney, entitled, "Lay Him Low." The officers of the better protection of cemeteries. By Mr. Rukan, to compel railroad companies to furnish railroads, especially the Pennsylvania Railroad, with a special law, relative to the care and keeping of criminal insane. The House resolution relative to the obituary of Ex-Governor Geary, was postponed for the present. On motion of Mr. Graham the Senate proceeded to the consideration of the private calendar. Senate adjourned until ten o'clock Friday morning.

The House proceeded to the consideration of private calendar. There are one hundred and fifty bills on the calendar. There was a lengthy discussion over the divorce bills, one of which Mr. Brookway called for the testimony and the reporters and pages were put out of the Chamber. THE DEAD EX-GOVERNOR. The Death Scene at the Breakfast Table. A correspondent at Harrisburg writes to the Press, of Monday, that on Friday afternoon at four o'clock Ex-Governor Geary returned from New York, where he had been for several days attending to business. He was in the dining room, and was called and remained in pleasant conversation for several hours, and after they departed the deceased and Mrs. Geary retired, the family also retiring for the night. Nothing unusual was noticed in the appearance or bearing of the ex-Governor. 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