THE EVENING NEWS.

Wednesday, . . Feb. 3, 1875.

DANCE OF DEATH.

MEMBERS OF THE ILLINOIS LEGISLATURE TRANSFORMED INTO LAUGHING HYENAS.

SPRINGFIELD, Ill., January 20th.—The numerous murders and similar outrages which have taken place in Williamson county within the past two years, and which the officials of the county have been powerless to punish or prevent, are matters of record, and are familiar to the readers of the daily papers. These outrages have been so flagrant, and lawlessness has been so unrestrained, as to render necessary some interference on the part of the Legislature. But when this subject was broached in the House yesterday, it was, to the disgrace of the members be it said, treated with derision and contemptuous laughter. The fact that such a solemn matter should be treated in such a shameful manner reflects discredit, not only upon the Representatives there assembled, but also upon their constituents. To L. F. Plater, Representative from Hardin county, belongs the honor of having called the attention of the House to these outrages, and to him must be accorded the credit of having made the first important speech of the present session. During the proceedings this afternoon Plater gained the floor and offered the following resolution:

Whereas, numerous murders and attempts at murder have been perpetrated during the two years past in Williamson county, in this State, a number of the victims of which were respected citizens; and, whereas no earnest attempt has yet been made to bring the assassins to justice and restore law and order in said county; or, if made, has been unsuccessful; therefore, to the end that the people of said county may be relieved of the uncertainty, apprehension, insecurity, and terrorism that now render them unhappy and discontented, and desirous to emigrate to some more peaceable and respectable section of country;

Be it resolved, by the House of Representatives, that a committee consisting of three, from the House, be appointed for the purpose of investigating the outrages and assassinations in Williamson county aforesaid, and to compel the attendance of witnesses to appear before them and testify upon oath the condition of affairs there, and to ascertain, if practicable, the cause of the lawless condition of said county, and what measures are necessary to render life more secure therein, and report the same at the earliest day practicable to the House.

Plater made a most telling and graphic speech in support of this resolution. Already he has acquired wide-spread notoriety by one or two brief efforts, but this, which is really his maiden speech, totally eclipsed all former efforts by himself or others. Those who take the trouble to read it will be impressed with the absolute necessity of some remedy being found for the horrible condition of affairs existing in Williamson county, upon which Plater showed himself well posted, and will doubtless fail to see why the subject should have received such scurrilous treatment at the hands of the House. Plater said:

"I would say that in the county of Williamson there has been in the last two years twelve or fourteen murders. These murders, Mr. Speaker, have been committed by unknown parties. Midnight assassins have come with their shotguns, and have come with their sabers. Yes, gentlemen, they have taken the lives of innocent men who were sitting around their firesides, enjoying the pleasures of home. [Laughter.] The life of these men has been taken by parties unknown. No one knows anything about them. [Laughter.] This House may think this is a laughable matter, but it's nothing for the General Assembly, or people representing them from different sections of the country, to assemble in the State House and laugh over a matter that has been the cause of the death of fourteen citizens of this State of Illinois. This is a matter for you to take under serious consideration, and I ask your hearty concurrence, and that of every member of the House. I offer a resolution for a committee of three to investigate these outrages in Williamson County, in this State of Illinois. Congress sends her committees to Louisiana and the Southern States to investigate these outrages which occur in the the Southern States. Therefore, when these outrages occur in the State of Illinois, in one of our sister counties, the General Assembly should be willing to investigate these outrages. For the purpose of investigating this matter, and finding out who are these midnight assassins who are taking the lives of our citizens—" [Plater here refreshed himself with a glass of water.]

Hopkins of Cook here said: "I move that the water be strengthened." [Uproarious laughter.]

Plater resumed his speech as follows: "I desired the water so that the gentleman might hear me better. But, as I said, how does it occur? It seems disreputable for Southern Illinois. We are not in favor of Ku-Klux, we are not in favor of guerilla, we are not in favor of citizens having their lives taken at the midnight hour. We are opposed to any such thing. And that is why we offer this resolution and ask the members of the Assembly to concur with us and appoint a committee of three. We are in favor of State's rights in all the States, of Illinois. We are in favor of a committee going to Williamson county to summon every man or individual that knows anything about these outrages, and make them tell the circumstances of this affair. Let me relate, gentlemen, one little thing. You may go to Williamson county, and you can't find a man that will tell you anything about these affairs. Why? Why? Simply because if he does not more than to-night, when he gets assembled in his own house he will get a load of shot from a double-barreled shot-gun. [Continued laughter.] Let me say that this is no laughing matter. If you have got the heart of a human being in your body you will never laugh at this matter. If you are a man of principle you will never laugh, but take it into deliberate consideration. Why do we find fourteen of our citizens murdered in Williamson county? Nobody knows anything about it. True, we have got a criminal law that protects these parties, but go there and you can't—"

Mr. Chafin—"I would like to ask the gentleman within what time these murders have occurred?"

Plater—Within two years fourteen murders have occurred. Not a single officer in Williamson county will execute the duties the statutes impose upon him. The grand jury won't take any action. Why? Because it is afraid that they will be shot down in their houses at midnight. In the name of God, what kind of thing is this for a civilized country? [Laughter.] Now gentlemen, I have offered this resolution, and ask your concurrence because I believe it is right. Now we are living here in Sangamon county, and in every county, and should take some measures to investigate these midnight murders. Who stands with his shotgun in his hands? [Boisterous laughter.] You may laugh, but I am a State's Rights man. I believe when citizens of our country are shot down at the midnight hour the General Assembly ought to take some action on it. Go to Williamson county to-day and you will find at least twelve or fourteen widows there, with a house full of children, that their husbands have been shot down at the midnight hour. Are you in favor of that? [Laughter and confusion.] I don't wish to continue my argument any longer. [Cries of "Go on" from all sides.]

A member asked if they had county officers in that county.

Plater—I have nothing to do with that county. I don't live there.

Member—Is Williamson county organized?

Plater—The State of Louisiana is organized, and has all the officers.

Member—But is Williamson county organized?

Plater—Yes. I have one remark to say to you, gentlemen. We propose sending a committee to investigate these outrages.

Wilcox—I would like to know if the gentleman thinks it safe for a committee to go down there. I don't want to go. [Laughter.]

Plater (after drinking deliberately)—If that gentleman wants to go there with me I'll guard him down there, or will ask the privilege of the House to appoint "three or more" policemen. [General laughter and great confusion.] I am not much of a talker, but I know how to express my views. I ask you to reflect upon this thing of fourteen citizens being laid in the tomb by midnight assassins.

It was moved to refer the resolution to the committee on militia, which was amended by suggesting the committee on fish and game. Plater objected. Merritt proposed a reference to a committee of one, Plater to be chairman, not wishing the other members to be engaged in such a dangerous business. The resolution was finally referred to a select committee of five, to be hereafter appointed, and Plater's friends hastened to congratulate him on his marked success.—*Cor. Chicago Post.*

The State of Illinois is in a fair way to become the reproach and the laughing stock of the whole nation through the partisanship, obstinacy, ignorance and incapacity of the coalition Speaker of the Assembly. If Mr. Speaker Haines is the only sort of fruit that is likely to proceed from the Democratic Independent conjunction, those two parties, for the credit of the State, had better hereafter take separate beds. It is due, however, to the better portion of Democrats and Independents in the Legislature to say that they are decidedly sick of their Speaker. In fact, his conduct is regarded by all parties as simply villainous. Moreover, it is revolutionary, and unless the Speaker shall see fit to alter his hand, the Legislature is liable at any day to break up in a row.—*Quincy Whig.*

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Grantsville, Saturday ..... 8 00 p m
Bingham, daily, except Sunday ..... 7 10 p m

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Local—Davis and Box Elder counties, daily ..... 10 10 a m
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Rich county, Monday and Thursday ..... 7 40 p m

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St. George and Arizona, alternate days ..... 7 10 p m
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