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THE ONE GRAVE QUESTION.

"The City Council says the taxpayer will make his choice of a \$250,000 bond issue or a 7-mill special tax. That's the kindness of the executioner who says his victim may be shot or hung, as he pleases."

That paragraph is from our esteemed morning contemporary, the Herald. We copy it because, apart from the intended reflection upon the City Council, it puts the question of choice to the taxpayers in a pertinent way. A great deal is being said for the purpose of blocking the way of the bond issue, which is very misleading, and some of it is entirely partisan and outside of the real question. But that paragraph presents the issue as it is—bonds, or an extra special tax.

That overshadows all the queries and objections and doubts and accusations which are made to figure in the contention. It boils the whole aggregation down to the essence of the question, which is, shall we authorize the bonds, or shall we shoulder the burden of a big extra tax?

The figure of the executioner does not fit in very well in this case. The executioner does not ask the "victim" as to his preference. It is the law that gives him his choice. It is the judge who declares it and puts to him the option. So it will not do to liken the City Council in this case to the "executioner." But even if the comparison used by our contemporary holds good, what would be the use for a person on whom sentence is about to be passed, to raise questions as to the validity of the law, the value of the evidence and the failure of the pleadings of counsel in his behalf? The simple question would be, shall it be hanging or shooting?

In this case the people are not asked to pass on the power of the city to issue bonds, for increasing and improving the distribution of the water supply. They are not required to give their opinion as to the wisdom or otherwise of the City Council, in its financial policy. They are not requested to show their partisan feelings at the polls. They are not expected to endorse or condemn the course of the present or past civic authorities on the water question.

They are simply to decide whether they will authorize bonds to be issued for purposes already decided upon, or would rather have a heavy extra tax levy, which they will have to pay with their regular taxes. Call it "hang or shoot," if you please, it is a very sharp issue, and all the rest of the talk that is made is outside of the one thing to be decided.

Contracts have been let for much of the work to be done. A great deal of it is under way. The projects in view for increasing the water supply will be carried into effect. Money will have to be raised to pay for it. If the people will not agree to the issuing of the bonds for this purpose, the Council has the power to levy the special tax. The Herald places it at seven mills. The only question then, is which shall it be bonds or heavy extra taxes? Railing at the City Council, deserved or undeserved, will not alter the situation. Raising a party cry will not do a particle of good. It is below the standard of good citizenship and only begets the object to be kept in view. It is not a party question. It is a water question. It concerns the whole people. The Council has taken legal opinion on its power to issue the bonds and its authority to levy the tax. All that is settled, so far as it relates to present affairs.

Let the taxpayers understand this: A vote against the bonds, means virtually a vote in favor of a big extra special tax. The rich may afford to vote that way for personal, party or other reasons. The poor cannot afford to do it, for it would mean to most of them a burden they could not bear. They will have to scratch for very life to make up enough cash to pay their regular taxes for this year, and an extra seven or even five mills would swamp them entirely. Bonds or special taxes? That is the question, and it ought not to be obscured by party cries or queries that are irrelevant to the one definite and easily understood proposition—Bonds or extra special taxes?

THE FOREIGNERS IN PEKIN.

London dispatches from Shanghai give some hope, that the foreigners in Peking, with the exception of the German minister, are still safe at the British legation, although their condition must be highly critical. It is in fact, the Japanese troops may possibly reach the Chinese capital in time to save them from a horrible death. The dispatches, however, are so vague, that no conclusion, in the absence of official news, can be formed safely.

The number of foreigners in Peking is estimated at about 700. Of these the following are named as belonging to the United States legation: Edwin B. Conger, minister; Herbert G. Squires, secretary; William E. Bainbridge, sec-

ond secretary; Lieutenant Albert L. Key, naval attaché; Fleming C. Cheshire, interpreter; Mrs. M. S. Woodward and Miss Ione Woodward of Chicago, the guests of Mr. and Mrs. Conger.

The foreign guards are given as 26 officers and 380 men, distributed among the powers as follows:

	Officers.	Men.
American	2	56
British	2	72
German	2	36
French	2	72
Russian	4	71
Italian	2	39
Austrian	2	39
Japanese	2	24

NEW JERSEY GILLS' TROUBLE

There is, it appears, in New Jersey, an institution known as the Association of Amalgamated Lady Bachelor clubs. Naturally, the members of this association are interested in the work of the census takers, particularly as far as it relates to the ratio of marriageable men to women similarly qualified. Consequently, they have secured some advance information as to the coming report of the chief census taker, and it is claimed by a writer in the New York Evening Sun of June 30th, that what they have learnt on this subject has caused consternation. They have heard that in twenty-four or twenty-five States of the Union there are thousands of women in excess of the male population, thus considerably reducing the chances of marriage.

That the members of the Lady Bachelor clubs regard the situation as extremely serious may be judged from these paragraphs of the correspondence to the Sun. The writer says:

"The clubs composing the Amalgamated Association have long discussed, in secret, this serious condition of affairs and the present institution of marriage. The association took the liveliest sort of interest in the case of Congressman-elect Brigham H. Roberts of Utah, and the ousting of that applicant by Congress because of his plural marriages. And it was said to have been only because of the great scarcity of marriageable men that the association did not adopt ringing resolutions preface by numerous 'whereas,' denouncing Roberts."

This should be of special interest to the well-meaning agitators who nearly succeeded in creating a panic at the time among hysterical women, especially when these statements are added:

"Had the officers of the clubs deemed the public mind in a sufficiently receptive mood calmly to digest arguments favoring plural marriages as a future necessity, based upon actual statistics, the discussions at the Lady Bachelor clubs would have been made public. It was truthfully pointed out then, in the discussion by one Lady Bachelor, that the men would not now go round at the rate of one to each woman, and that the census of 1890 showed that twelve States had thousands more females than males. * * * This member also predicted that the forthcoming census would show an overplus of females in at least twenty-five States. * * * This member said she based her prediction largely upon the reports of various bureaus of vital statistics which she had studied, and which showed that there were born annually from 15 to 18 per cent more females than males. These same reports showed the death rate to be about 3 per cent more females than males, leaving an annual excess of females from 13 to 15 per cent over the number of males. These figures conclusively prove, said this member, that it is but a question of a few years when there will be in this country so many more women than there are men that no one woman will have the right to claim a whole man to herself."

Another influential lady, a member of the association, is quoted as having given vent to her feelings in this strain:

"What in the wide world are we ever going to do? I'd like to know. It is a condition that confronts us and we must meet it somehow. 'I am sick and tired whispering about it in the club-room, and so I'm not afraid to talk.'"

Still another is credited with this little speech:

"Of course I don't believe in this plural marriage business, but in all seriousness, now it's really awful. I don't see what in the wide world the women of twenty years from now are going to do, I don't, really. It seems to me the legislatures talk pretty freely about stopping various classes of men from immigrating to this country but I do certainly think it would be most reasonable if they would turn their attention to letting so many foreign women come here. You may not believe it, but it's a fact that our American marriageable men, like these foreign women because you know they don't care so much for many things that we girls regard as an absolute necessity. It's true. And it's true that, after some of these men pass a certain age, they look upon marriage as they look upon an unnecessary business transaction, and they go over the bargain counter like a woman at a dry-goods sale. It's so. We've discussed this subject at the club often. I honestly believe that this question will be most seriously and seriously before many years. Of course, girls cannot travel West to find a husband and the men out West either cannot afford it or will not travel East in any considerable numbers to find wives."

We have no comments to offer on the question that has become a source of trouble to the New Jersey ladies. It is more than probable that it will force itself upon the attention of the public in the future. It seems to be a law that when land is under the process of reclamation; when food is scarce and life is composed of hardships and struggles, or when by wars a considerable portion of the male population has been exterminated, nature furnishes the means of restoring the equilibrium, by supplying an excess of males by birth. The fact was noticed particularly in Finland after its devastation by wars and famines. When, on the other hand, prosperity and peace reign, the female population seems to predominate.

If this observation is correct the fears of the Lady Bachelors have a solid foundation. The time must come when the question of marriage will become a problem in this country.

Of course the women that are fortunate enough to be heiresses can generally "buy" a husband, as some of them are doing now, but the great multitude must always be barred from this expediency, unless the "commodity" should fall so low in price as to be within the reach of the wage-earning girl.

Nobody can, as things now are drifting, foresee all the possibilities of the future. May there not yet be "farmers" for raising husbands? And husband trusts, and a husband stock exchange with its bulls and bears? There is no folly of which human wisdom is not capable, when it deviates from the laws of nature and the Creator.

The German East Asiatic squadron sailed for China this morning. This is

an earnest of the emperor's promise to sail in on China.

Thus far Lord Roberts has been unable to swamp Dewet.

Is a man who wears an imperial necessarily an imperialist?

The conflicting reports from China are only exceeded by the conflict in China.

In politics, it is very much easier to foretell results than to foresee them.

A bicyclist on a crowded sidewalk does much more damage than a bull in a china shop.

Roosevelt's friends say that he is cool-headed, at the same time declaring that he is the modern Hotspur.

"Does government service pay?" asks a writer in the July Forum. It does if one is fortunate enough to secure it.

The sidewalks were made for man and not for bicycles. Let them be preserved to their original and proper use.

The presidential and vice-presidential situation may be summed up in a few words: Many are called but two are chosen.

So familiar is the term "allied armies" becoming that by an easy step one might imagine himself back in the days of 1812-15.

Assistant Secretary of War McKelvie, in speaking of affairs in China and the duty of the United States in the premises, talks a la Emperor William. It is a catching style and easily imitated.

Queen Elizabeth's famous pun: "My lord, though you be Burleigh, you make less stir than my Earl of Leicester," might not inappropriately be paraphrased to read, in view of recent events, "you make less stir than my Lord Astor."

The report of Minister Conger on the Chinese situation as it was May 21, is a most interesting document. It is clear, cool and conservative, and because of this is more truly thrilling and impressive than the excited press dispatches. This report (the nation and the whole world will hope it is not his last) shows Mr. Conger to be a man who fully realized the danger and the importance of the situation in which he found himself. He and Admiral Kempff seem to be the coolest and most far seeing of all the foreigners at the front in China during the present crisis.

There will probably be harmony and concert of action among the powers in China so long as they confine their operations to the protection of the lives and property of foreigners, or to the enforcement of demands for indemnity for lives lost and property already destroyed and for guarantees for the safety of both in the future. When this has been accomplished, dissensions and jealousies are bound to come in and divide the powers if it shall be proposed to dismember China or seize provinces. In a measure the proposed aims of the allies are like the aims of the Crusaders, but at last they fell out among themselves; the Holy Sepulcher was not redeemed; the followers of the Prophet were finally triumphant and the Star and Crescent flag floats over the Holy Land. There are lessons in the crusades for the allies in China.

THE HOBOKEN TRAGEDY.

The Hoboken wharf and shipping catastrophe is as extraordinary in kind as in its appalling magnitude. If the ships which burned had caught fire at sea in ordinary weather, even though much more heavily loaded with human beings, the loss of life would probably not have been anything like what it is. That so many persons could have been caught and burned with the vessels lying by their docks and with every means of rescue at hand just outside the blazing hulks, seems inexplicable, and not to be accounted for on any reasonable assumption as to the rapidity with which the fire spread. The property loss will prove staggering to the insurance companies, which had already been experiencing for one year they have known in a long while.

Boston Transcript.

The loss of property reaches a highly sensational magnitude. Already the fire loss for the first five months of the year had attained a record-breaking proportion when the \$1,000,000 addition came as June's final great contribution. The loss must fall somewhere, either on the fire or marine underwriters, or the company, or perhaps on all three. The Elbe of this same line was lost at sea not long ago, and the Elbe on the English coast, and now the chapter of misfortune is crowned with this triple disaster. But sympathy can hardly be spared for fire or sea losses, however great and distressing, while more than two hundred lives are lost and more than three hundred injured are in the hospitals, many of them to speedily add to the death list. It is too early yet to say with certainty where the blame lay, if blame there was. Relief for the suffering and burial of the dead is the first duty. Investigation is the next.

Milwaukee Wisconsin.

New York City had a narrow escape last Saturday, when sparks from a burning steamship towed into the Hudson from their docks at Hoboken started a blaze on the east side of the river. A fire getting a good start during the prevalence of a brisk wind might lay all the river property along West street in ashes. To a Milwaukeean, the combustible character of the freight sheds and docks in the Gotham metropolis seems a reckless flying in the face of Providence. The lake steamers lying at their docks in Milwaukee, alongside of freight houses built of brick or corrugated iron, are far more secure in their surroundings than are the immense craft thrust into slips flanked by huge wooden sheds in the greatest harbor of America.

Baltimore Sun.

The delay in moving the ships from the piers after the fire began was partly the cause of the loss of life on board the vessels. Perhaps it was impossible to get them away from the burning docks more quickly than was done. But with the flames spreading from pier to pier and every indication that the progress of the fire on the docks could not be checked, it appears that tugs were not available until too late to move the vessels out of the reach of the flames. In view of the circumstances attending the appalling disaster it is doubtful whether adequate provision has been made at the greatest port in the United States for the safety of its shipping and piers.

Troy Press.

The magnitude of the Hoboken horror is such as to defy description. Fearfully does it illustrate the helplessness of humans in the presence of calamity. Earthquake, holocauste, famine—which is the power of the wisest or strongest

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