

DESERET NEWS

WEEKLY.

TRUTH AND LIBERTY.

WEDNESDAY, - OCT. 23, 1878.

PEOPLE'S TICKET.

For Delegate to Congress,

GEO. Q. CANNON.

THE TESTIMONY TESTED.

THE testimony in the trial of Sylvanus Collett, charged with the crime of murder, was closed yesterday, and Judge Sutherland addressed the jury for the prosecution. The case attracts much attention. The facts demonstrated are very meagre. The rumors, hearsay evidence, and unsupported statements of unreliable witnesses are numerous. It is difficult from the developments of the trial to arrive at the exact truth.

Much has been said and published with regard to the "Aiken murder." It has been repeatedly stated that the Aiken party were murdered by the "Mormons," but so far there has been no satisfactory proof that any of the Aikens were killed, either by Indians or white men, and certainly there is not a tittle of evidence to warrant any accusation in relation to them against the "Mormon" people.

Nothing clear has been ascertained of the fate of the two Aikens who did not return to Nephi after starting southward. Nothing reliable is disclosed in relation to the two who did return, after leaving Nephi for the north. It has not been shown who inflicted the wounds received by the injured men before their return to Nephi, and all that occurred to them afterward is only a matter of conjecture. It is supposed that certain persons who went with the men as escort, set upon and killed two of them and wounded the other two, and that subsequently they also killed the latter and threw their bodies into some springs north of Nephi. But those who have watched the evidence closely and impartially perceive that no definite proof has been advanced of the fate of either of the Aikens. Opinions may be formed, pro and con, but whatever conclusions are arrived at are only matters of conjecture.

The finding of the bodies in a spring a year after the supposed murder, and their identification by Foote, who appears to be subject to crazy spells, amount to nothing in the light reflected by the medical testimony, the preservation of dead bodies under such circumstances for that length of time being declared an utter impossibility. Much of Guy Foote's evidence has been flatly contradicted and disproven, and his reputation for truth and veracity has been shown to be extremely bad.

But there is nothing in the whole case which is in the least damaging to the defendant except the testimony of the Skeens, particularly of William, who declares that Collett confessed to him his participation in the bloody deed. The question is, can the testimony of this witness be relied upon, and if not what was the motive that prompted him to offer such perjured evidence? We will endeavor to answer.

William Skeen's reputation in Weber County, where he lives, may be learned by asking any old and observing resident of any of its settlements. The records of the courts will show the character of the Skeens. William Skeen has been convicted in his own town—Plain City, of a criminal offense. He was also tried and convicted in the Probate Court of Weber County, in 1869, for grand larceny. Below is a transcript from the record of the court, which we produce because witnesses who are his associates and friends, and who are perfectly familiar with his reputation, have endeavored to hold him up as a pattern of honor and verity, in contradiction to the testimony of his immediate neighbors, who bear him no ill will, but have been required to testify in regard to his character:

Extract from the Record of the Probate Court of Weber County, Utah Territory, in the case of the People vs. William Skeen, on indictment for Grand Larceny.

"Ogden City, April 22, 1869.

"We, the jurors in the case of the People, etc., vs. William Skeen, defendant, for larceny, find the defendant guilty of the charge set forth in the indictment, and assess a fine of one hundred dollars.

(Signed)

"WILLIAM ELMORE, Foreman.

April 23.

"The Court rendered the following judgment: You, William Skeen, having been tried and found guilty of the crime of grand larceny by a jury of your country, duly empaneled and sworn; and the judgment awarded by said jury being one hundred dollars fine, it is therefore ordered and adjudged by the Court that you pay a fine of one hundred dollars and cost of prosecution, and that you be ordered and remanded into the custody of the sheriff of Weber County, to be by him detained in the county jail until such fine and costs are paid; and that in default of payment of such fine and costs, you be put to labor as by law in such case made and provided.

"Defendant paid the fine, one hundred dollars, and cost of suit, seventy-nine dollars and fifty cents, to the deputy sheriff, and was thereupon ordered to be discharged from custody to go hence without day."

"UNITED STATES OF AMERICA, Territory of Utah, } s.s.
County of Weber, }

"I, the undersigned, Clerk of the Probate Court in and for said county, do hereby certify that the above and foregoing is a true and correct extract from the record of said Probate Court now in my office,

In witness whereof I hereunto set my hand and affix the seal of said Court, this fourteenth day of October, A.D. 1878.

F. S. RICHARDS, Clerk of Probate Clerk.
By C. C. RICHARDS, Deputy Clerk."

Collett swears he never had such a conversation as Skeen relates. And the evidence of the Salmon River settlers goes a long way to show that he could not have been in the south when the murder is said to have been committed. Whose word will be preferred under the circumstances? Collett's whose character is unimpeached? or Skeen's, who has been convicted for larceny, and for personal violence?

The moving cause for Skeen's desire for the conviction of Collett is deadly revenge. His brother E. D. Skeen, a notorious horse thief, was shot while attempting to escape from custody, in Cache Valley, several years ago. William charged Thos. E. Ricks with the shooting, and unjustly suspected Sylvanus Collett of complicity therein. He failed to procure the conviction of Ricks, after working hard to destroy him, Ricks's justification being complete. He then swore revenge against Collett, and is now trying to wreak it in this story about the Aiken murder. This accounts for the animus he has shown in the trial, with its thin covering of pretended regard for the prisoner.

We present this matter as it appears to us. If there are persons who know any facts in relation to the fate of the Aikens, we are unacquainted with them. We are dependent upon the trial for evidence in relation to the whole matter, and it does not appear to us that there is anything therein to fasten the crime upon the prisoner at bar. It is important that rumor, conspiracy and the false coloring of legal pleading percolated with prejudice, should not have such effect upon the public mind as will shut out due consideration of the accused man's probable innocence. For, though the jury may acquit him, it would be a serious matter for him to live under a cloud of suspicion, and to be shunned by his neighbors and friends as one who had stained his hands in human blood. We therefore make these comments, with the hope that an innocent man may not be legally convicted of crime, and that public condemnation may not be passed upon Sylvanus Collett upon such fragile testimony as that produced in the District Court at Provo.

THE INDIAN COMMISSION.

GENERAL CROOK has been testifying, at Omaha, before the congressional investigating committee on the Indians. He is in favor of the transfer of the Indian bureau to the War Department; says that cheating Indian agents are never punished; believes in putting the red men to work on farms; and thinks if each Indian is given land that he can call his own he can be induced to till it, and thus the Indian troubles will soon pass away; but that it is useless to teach the savages anything on an empty stomach. Gen. Crook has had great experience among various tribes of the natives and his suggestions are worthy of grave consideration.

The "Mormon" policy is to teach the Indians agriculture, and show them how to be self-sustaining. Where they have not been prevented from carrying out this policy, the results are highly encouraging.

The natives have been robbed, swindled, treated as wild beasts, driven from place to place, and made to feel that no reliance could be safely placed upon the word of the whites. A radical change in the methods of treating the primal owners of the soil must be inaugurated, or the country will never rest from Indian uprisings unless the whole race is exterminated. But the savages can be tamed, and the pest of roving, vagabond, thieving marauders be turned into profit to the country. Let judicious measures be taken to establish the various tribes on lands of their own, to teach them agriculture and establish their faith in the honor of the pale-faces, then schools and churches can be established among them, and the massacres and terrors which have hitherto marked their career will soon become only incidents in history.

THE PLOT EXPLODED.

THE Oneida County, Idaho, schemers, as we predicted, have made a miserable failure of their raid upon the "Mormon" sawyers and tie cutters, and the Judge, Attorney and their assistants have accomplished nothing by their unwarrantable severity in dealing with the men who were made the objects of the wrath of the "ring." "Mormon"-eaters generally overshoot their mark. They are so rabid that they lose their judgment. And usually, whether in Court or Congress, they furnish the weapons for their own defeat. The penalty imposed upon John D. Merrill, if even he had been proven guilty of cutting timber from the public lands, was out of all proportion to the magnitude of the offense. And when it is considered that no evidence whatever was adduced in support of the charge, but that all the testimony merely showed that he sawed timber at a mill, the sentence appears indeed outrageous. So with the case against Hyrum Smith, the tie-cutter, and the affair of the wholesale arrest of men whose chief offense was refusing to answer the questions of a person claiming to be a Deputy Marshal. The whole affair was infamous, and we are pleased to say, will result in no permanent injury to any one but those who prompted and participated in it.

A private telegram states, in effect, that the Railroad Company has arranged to pay into the United States authorities at Washington for the timber cut for the Utah and Northern, and that the penalties imposed in these cases will be remitted by the President. This will relieve the men selected as the targets for the shafts of the "ring," and will reflect great discredit on the prosecution and the Judge who have been their willing tools. It is a fitting rebuke to Judge Hollister, who, in permitting his anger and bigotry to still the voice of justice, formed a potent reason for executive interference, and offered a very poor recommendation for any future appointment.

The Secretary of the Navy has power under the statute, as we showed in a previous article, to remit the penalty in whole or in part. But the Presidential act will be more satisfactory, and set the seal of the disapproval of the government upon such extra-judicial proceedings.

We hope our friends in Oneida County will go-a-head with their preparations for securing a full, free and fair election in November, and the instalment in office of the choice of the majority, that the "ring" that have ruled the county without right and in defiance of the will of the bulk of the people, may find their schemes vain and their infamous course brought to a full and ignominious end.

OPIUM SMOKE.

THERE has been a great deal said of late about opium smoking in this city. It has been reported that opium dens, managed by Chinamen, were extensively patronized by white people; that respectable persons of both sexes habitually frequented these haunts of vice; and that during the witching hours of night they were crowded with confirmed and hopeless opium smokers, among whom were scores of young boys. A complaint was made last Tuesday evening by one excited individual, to the City Council, who alleged that not only his own son had been enticed into these dens of shame, but that at the same time forty or fifty boys were to be found in those places. Gambling, it is alleged is an accompaniment of the opium vice, but we are told that only the Chinese themselves are admitted to the gambling holes, one of which is described as a sixteen foot cellar, with thick walls erected ten feet from the bottom, and roofed over with six feet of earth on top, where the heathen Chinese assemble nightly, but no white person is admitted and no sound below can be heard above.

We have taken pains to investigate this matter before making any remarks upon it. We set our faces and raise our voices against the suicidal practice of opium-smoking, and will use our influence as determinedly as any other persons or papers in lawful efforts to prevent its introduction and spread in this city. But we are forced to the conclusion that a vast volume of fumes have been made to arise out of a very little opium. Those who have the very best facilities for obtaining reliable information on this matter, declare that there is small truth in the exaggerated stories that have been set afloat. At the time when it was stated there were between forty and fifty boys smoking opium in the Chinese houses, only three persons were to be found there besides the son of the complainant. One of these was a well-known gambler, another a court-zeal, and the third a spectacled man unknown to the police. As to the gambling hole from which no sound can emanate and into which no white man is permitted to enter, the whole hole is believed to exist only in the imagination of the describer. The police say no one can tell where it is, produce anybody who has seen it, or give any clue to its whereabouts.

We confess to an unwillingness to believe that respectable people frequent these dens of insanity; or that Chinese and white people, male and female, lie around in the disgusting manner portrayed in the sensational accounts which have been circulated; or that so many boys and youths could indulge in opium smoking and conceal the fact from their friends and the public. But we are open to conversion, nevertheless; only, proof must precede conviction. The opium habit is an expensive one. It costs considerable money to indulge in it. The expense increases as the habit becomes confirmed, for the quantity that serves at first has little effect when constant custom habituates the system to its use. The story that the Chinese furnish opium gratis for great numbers of boys to smoke, is unreasonable. A boy or a man who can get something for nothing from one of those moon-eyed Mongolians would be valuable in the Deseret Museum as one of the greatest of living curiosities.

It may be necessary in attempting to suppress a great evil, to use strong language and place facts in extreme prominence. But we do not believe that any public good is accomplished by gross exaggeration, nor that the interests of society are subserved in misrepresent-

ing any of its dark doings. The naked truth, divested of all fabricated raiment and imaginary ornament, is simply this: Many of the Chinese in the city are addicted to opium smoking; a very few white people, and they persons of doubtful or known bad reputation, visit the Chinese quarters and participate in the vice; two or three boys have been known to enter those places; the keepers of the dens charge for the opium they furnish to smokers; at present the vice, so far as Caucasians are concerned, is confined in a very narrow circle; the City Council are investigating the matter, and framing an ordinance to meet the evil. We hope and have every reason to believe, that the civic authorities will take hold of this matter with all the energy that its importance demands, and that their best wisdom will be exhibited in measures to prevent the spread of an evil that is doing immense damage in the great cities of the land, which is increasing as a fashionable vice, and which is destroying the vital powers of men and women, who foolishly seek in its dreamy solace relief from pain, grief, distress or remorse, but only aggravate their sufferings and hasten the day of a dishonorable death.

EDITORIAL NOTES.

The crops in Morocco have been a total failure, and thousands of human beings, as well as herds of cattle are in a famishing condition. Relief is being afforded by the English residents at Mogador, but the deaths from starvation average from 40 to 50 a day.

The Pacific Christian Messenger having been called a "liberal" paper, thus repudiates the charge: "We make no claims to being liberal. Truth is never liberal, but exclusive. Christ and his apostles were not liberal, but denounced in the strongest terms those who failed to accept their teachings, and have taught to Christians, who should follow after the same lesson. In religion, as a rule, the more of error any people embrace the more liberal they become, down to those who wholly discredit the Bible, who style themselves pre-eminently 'liberals.' All of which is as true at the everlasting Gospel.

On the 12th inst., Bill Longley, the most notorious desperado in desperate Texas, was executed for the murder of a man named Anderson. Longley was the reputed slayer of no less than thirty-two persons. His first feat was to shoot a negro in the head at one hundred yards distance. This crime being allowed to go unpunished, encouraged the young murderer to proceed in his lawless career. He was only twenty-seven years old when he suffered the extreme penalty of the law, and is described as tall and graceful, with a handsome face, a mild and pleasant eye, and a sweet and gentle voice. He made a speech on the gallows, and warned the young against following in his path. It is a strong comment on the laxity of the law that such a career as Longley's was permitted to run to such an extreme and terrible length.

A substitute for white lead as the "body" of paints has been discovered. It is obtained by precipitating zinc chloride or sulphate by means of a soluble sulphide. Sodium, barium and calcium sulphides have all been used for the purpose, but special precautions are taken to prevent the precipitation with the white sulphide of any iron that may be present in the chloride of zinc. The precipitate of white sulphide is collected, dried, and transferred to a furnace, where it is calcined, being carefully stirred to bring all parts into contact with the air. While still hot it is raked into vats of cold water, where it is levigated, and is then subsequently dried, the product being a white pigment of great beauty, which is proof against the action of sulphureted hydrogen. Anything that will answer the purpose of white lead, without its danger to health, will be a great boon to the painting fraternity.

Local and Other Matters.

FROM FRIDAY'S DAILY, Oct. 18.

Spectacles Found.—If the person who lost his spectacles on the Temple Block, will call at Brother C. J. Thomas' office, he can get them.