

THE EDITOR'S COMMENTS.

THE CITY'S DEBTS.

Now that there is a ray of hope that the conservative citizens of Salt Lake—those who bear the burdens of municipal taxation—will be given heed to in the conduct of city affairs, it is well for them to look the situation squarely in the face, and determine what course will be best to pursue. There has been a great deal said about the present condition of city finances and the impossibility of running another year without greatly increased taxation, except by creating a very large deficit; but we are in a flourishing condition compared to the appalling state into which the next decade will plunge us unless great care and judgment are exercised. Today the bonded indebtedness of the city is \$2,548,000, bearing an interest of \$127,000 annually. The past year's administration cost \$606,484.81, including interest on bonds, or more than \$180,000 in excess of its receipts. The estimates for 1896 show an apparent deficiency of \$114,178.51. The first lot of bond calls for a sinking fund reserve of \$50,000 per year after 1898, and the whole lot will be on the 10 per cent reserve basis after 1904.

The amount received by the city from property taxation at the present rate is \$115,000, or just about what the deficiency for 1896 is estimated to be. To meet the latter and keep even under the proposed economical procedure, will require the property tax to be doubled up on its present figure; and what property holder is ready to welcome that proposition, and keep the rate up from year to year?

Then after three years of this doubled taxation comes the reserve fund operation on the 1888 bonds—\$50,000 per annum for their payment; three years later an additional \$70,000 on the 1891 bonds; one year more and there is added \$54,820 on the 1892 bonds; and two years thereafter \$80,000 on the 1894 bonds. Thus in less than ten years from now, or by 1905, there must be raised \$254,820 annually for the sinking funds on bonds, besides the \$127,000 interest, making a total of \$381,820 per year to be collected entirely outside of regular municipal expenses.

To meet these obligations on the economized basis of the estimate for 1896, which is a hundred thousand dollars below the expenses of 1895, will require an addition of three and a half times the present property tax—this besides the doubling up referred to—so that the property owner will have to pay five and a half times as much as now; that is, if he is paying \$10 in city taxes now his assessment by 1905 must add four and a half times that amount, and he must pay \$55. Or if, in 1896, the city's expenses are out another \$115,000 below 1895, and are kept at that figure for ten years, the property holder will be paying \$45 city tax where he now pays \$10 and considers himself heavily hurried.

These figures partly lift the veil from off what we are coming to in Salt Lake City; unfortunately they reveal only the certainties, and all variations

therefrom will but make the burden heavier. Within the next ten years, and for a long time thereafter, Salt Lake property owners must pay very dearly for the whistling of the city administrations from 1890 to 1895. Such a condition does not appear encouraging for present or prospective owners of real estate, and will go a very long way toward preventing the investment of capital here in that class of property.

This calculation is based on the contract to fulfil bonded obligations as they become due, by clearing off the debt. There is one way to meet the case, and that is by issuing bonds to pay one lot after another as soon as they become redeemable, and in less than the 20-year limit. But that is merely a prolongation of the bondage of debt, though it is probably the only course to pursue to protect the people from being "taxed out of house and home." The burden can be lightened somewhat by a sweeping reduction in current municipal expenses—a relief which it is hoped the City Council will give at once. The cost of administration should be cut down at least to the point that there shall be no deficit for 1896, and if possible to show a little gain. The people never will be content with mayors or city councilors until the city is placed on the road to a better financial situation.

A POOR CURE.

The new constitution of South Carolina contains a provision which, like many a law elsewhere, is excellent in motive and purpose but is liable to prove hideously defective in practice. The provision in question is that officers in charge of a prisoner who becomes the victim of mob violence—that is, is lynched—shall be tried for misdemeanor and if found guilty shall be removed from office and made ineligible to any position of trust or responsibility unless pardoned by the governor; furthermore, that the county where the lynching occurs shall be made liable for damages to the legal representatives of the victim.

Any legislation calculated to put an end to mob murders or to restrain people from their commission, will be warmly welcomed throughout the civilized land; and that this is the intention of the South Carolina legislature may not be doubted. But the plan proposed is open to very serious objections.

In the first place, every officer who may be in charge of a lynched prisoner is by no means guilty of a misdemeanor or anything else, and ought not to be compelled to stand trial on that grave charge.

Secondly, if he is guilty of connivance in the mob's crime, or can be shown to have omitted any proper precaution to protect his prisoner from its fury, misdemeanor is a gentle term for the enormity of his wrong doing; instead of being merely debarred from holding office, he ought to be imprisoned for life or otherwise punished to

the full extent of the law as an accessory to the crime of murder.

In the third place, the payment of damages to the heirs of a lynched person by the county where the crime occurred is unjust in that it visits the penalty—that is, the tax—upon the innocent as well as the guilty; indeed, the perpetrators might every one be a non-resident of the county where the lynching occurred, which would nevertheless have to pay the bill.

Fourthly, the crime of murder is one which by the laws neither of God nor man can be squared off by the payment of money damages. It does not come in the category of finable cases at all. A scramble for damages by the heir-at-law of a mob's victim would be about as unedifying and disgusting a spectacle as could be thought of; and there might sometimes be room for the horrible suspicion that some of these same heirs had themselves a hand in the lynching by reason of the assurance that out of the tragedy they might be financially profited and helped to "raise the wind."

There may be other phases of this extraordinary anti-lynching provision which are open to criticism, but we pass them by for the present. In the meantime it occurs to us that the best remedy for the crying evil would be to provide for the lynchers a swift, strong dose of their own medicine—chase them down and then hang them like the murderers that they are.

THE "WORLD" AND UTAH.

In its reproduction of editorial comments from brethren of the press upon the admission of Utah to Statehood, the NEWS has given a good deal of all kinds, some gratifying, some amusing and some stupid. The occasion seemed opportune to illustrate before local readers the varying degrees of intelligence and perception associated with the newspapers of the land; and we doubt not that many a good opinion as to journalistic fairness and common sense has been destroyed by the exposure thus given. As the crowning feature in this line of advertising we quote today from the New York World of the 22nd inst.—a paper which blows its own praises unceasingly through its own nose, and which, with all its magnificent facilities for news-gathering, is at times guilty of editorial imbecility that is truly pitiable. This is its broadside against "Utah, the Forty-fifth Star:"

The election of two United States Senators in Utah completes the comedy of Statehood for the Mormon Territory.

In the congratulatory telegram of the first Governor of the new State, published in the World a few days ago, it was claimed with evident pride that Utah had been "qualified for admission more than forty years," and also that it had "a population greater than that of the states of Delaware, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming or North Dakota."

A territory with an area of 84,970 square miles, which in forty years has only risen to a population of 252,000, according to the most sanguine estimate, does not furnish any food for hope of growth into real Statehood. Utah will permanently remain in the category of sage-brush states in which she starts. Her admission into the Union is based