

# The Lenoir Topic

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## INKLINGS FROM IDAHO.

"Oregon Boots"—"Hell Broth" of the Edmonds Bill—The Festive Cowboy—The Dance of Death—Wonderful Springs—Boise City—Two Postscripts.

WRITING AND RIDING ON THE OREGON SHORT LINE R. R., NOV. 6.

To the Editor of The Lenoir Topic:

In running over to Boise City yesterday, I noticed that two of our fellow passengers had on what they call out here "Oregon Boots." These are heavy steel shackles or manacles placed on prisoners to prevent their escape. They weigh each about 18 pounds, and a man with one of these on each foot makes a poor attempt to escape. There is no getting them off (by the prisoner himself) as they are of hardened steel, fire-proof—both lock and boot—and the sheriff just puts the thing onto a fellow's leg, and with the key in his (the sheriff's) own pocket, the prisoner is given the freedom of his surroundings. It is no use to try to escape, unless your friends seize you and put you into a wagon and "get the drop" on the officer in charge. They are so arranged that the wearer can't run even if he jumps a car or a stage; hence when the convict gets on his "Oregon Boots" he may safely calculate that the doors of the penitentiary—"the Pen"—they call it out here, are the next thing that will close on him.

I want to tell you something about Idaho crimes and Idaho criminals. I am on a freight car "caboose," writing with such material as a freight conductor can give me, and as I write "on the run" can't promise elegance of chirography—much less elegance of diction.—The courts in the Mormon counties are in full blast, and polygamists are now being sentenced to "the Pen" by the dozen. Your eastern papers I presume keep you posted as to these proceedings somewhat in a general way only. Out here, we have the matters in full detail. I can't dwell on them. When a Mormon is convicted of living with more than one wife—under the operations of what is known as "Edmonds' Law"—he usually gets a fine of \$100 to \$300, and from 10 days to 6 months in "the Pen"—according to the fellow's purse, and according to the status of his repentance in the law. At a recent court, last week, at Blackfoot, four brickbats were sent upon one day's proceedings. The sheriff is allowed his per diem and mileage en route. So he buys a wagon and team, and puts the fellows in charge of the same, with orders to proceed across the country to Boise City—where the State Penitentiary is located. Of course the prisoners go—without guard—and they are as sure to turn up at the right place and at the right time as if the sheriff or his deputy were with them. The men will serve their accented terms in the Pen and return to their homes, where they are received by their brethren as "martyrs for the church." One very rich Mormon was up for trial. He had paid his attorney \$500 to "fix" him O. K. He pleaded guilty of course, and the judge, being a humane and good man, let the fellow off with a fine of \$300 and 10 days in the county prison, which latter was arranged at the best hotel in town! So the story goes.—Was it Tennyson. I haven't got my authorities here—that said—

"Every door is barred with gold, and opens too to golden keys."—And that "the jingling of the guinea always helps" &c?

But I need not repeat the rest. One of the fellows in our stage yesterday was sentenced to 15 years hard labor for some of his deviltry. The judge put in his words somewhat ruthlessly, when the convict rose and said ironically, "can't you make it more lee-ne-ant, judge—say hanging, for instance?"

"I wish I could," said the judge in reply. There was a cowboy tried for murder at this term of the court. The cowboys are always in some kind of deviltry here—though many of them are gentlemen and scholars that do not participate in actual crimes. Last night my companion in a stage ride was a young English gentleman, a graduate of Eaton and Oxford. You would not have suspected such, looking at his broad brim cowboy hat with leather band, and the wide leathern girdle about his waist. There is no telling a man here by his looks; only the gamblers and the "soiled doves" are said to be the best dressed people that you meet.

One of the amusements and duly recognized "sports" of the cowboys out here is in what is called, "The Cowboy Dance." This is an indulgence that involves two things—the bottle and a six shooter; the last is loaded, but the other has been emptied of its whiskey into the fellow's stomach. And if somebody don't look sharp, the revolver is next emptied—into some other person.

The cowboy tried for his life at the Blackfoot court had killed his friend and comrade in a dance. They were both drinking and could not wait for an innocent victim.—"I'll dance," says one "and you hold." The fellow danced till he was growing tired, but he knew

there was no relief till the caprice of the man who held the loaded revolver upon him was fully glutted. He began to beg, saying his legs were tired. "This arm is tired, too," says the villain, who was pointing the six shooter, his finger on the trigger, and "I am going to change to the other hand." He changed the pistol to his left hand, and in the act of doing so, the thing went off and put a ball through the dancer's heart.

Of course we eastern folks would say this is murder. The court—rather the jury—held that in this instance there was no malice or ill will; it was all in cowboy fun, and so the fellow "went up" for 10 years in the Pen, instead of being hung—as it should have been.

Only a few nights ago a cowboy in the same cow rode right up in the front of a freight train and shot a hole into the head light of the engine, put out the light and made the engineer stop his train. The engineer knew what was "up" and so he came to a halt. He got out of dancing, however. But the young devil in spurs and pistol determined to have "the dance" by some one. The first man showing himself was the village blacksmith. The cowboy leveled on him with his pistol cocked and shouted "dance."

The man danced good-humoredly for he knew it was good for him—who had no railroad kings behind him—to protest. He, too, soon grew tired, for the fellow kept urging him to dance faster. At last he told him he must quit. "Hold on," he says, "strip off your clothing and dance a little in the street."

The poor blacksmith had to obey this diabolical behest, even at the expense of the revolting indecency it involved. And, so far, the young scamp has gone unpunished for either of the crimes mentioned.

There are out in this country the forms and ceremonies of law and order—and of good society also. But public sentiment either upholds or condones crimes here that in the east would meet with swift and severe punishment. It occurs to me that there is more effort and more money expended here in the arrest and conviction of horse thieves than any other class of criminals. When a genuine horse thief is caught it is very seldom that the order of a court is stood upon. A rope and a limb, or an extemporized scaffold, and there is short shrift, before his honor, Judge Lynch.

Withal, Idaho has numerous attractions. But, like its neighbor, Nevada, it is simply, geologically speaking, an immense basin, the bed of an extinct sea, where, in the pre-glacial period, great volcanoes spread lava, basalt, alkali and ashes over magnificent plains. Dig down here nearly anywhere and you find volcanic remains. Today I have been running along the line of the Oregon Short Line R. R., where it is built near the banks of the great Snake river—the Indian Shosh-a-na (Shoshone). Nearly every cut is through a lava bed, with its white seam of overlying or intermingling alkali—the volcanic ash. In one place, there is a long stretch of road bed through a sand hill near the river bank. The strata here shows that once counter currents beat over the country, and the sand formations, partially petrified into solid sheets, show wave marks indicating one period, while above or below may be another wave mark exactly the reverse, showing still other periods.

The most remarkable of all the natural phenomena on this railroad—the Oregon Short Line—are found at Soda Springs, just west of the Wyoming border, and where the great Bear river was arrested in its northward flow toward the Columbia and made to turn suddenly and pour its sullen waters into the Dead Sea of Utah. Here, as I say, at Soda Springs are some intensely interesting and wondrous phenomena. There are numerous fine springs of natural soda water. There is one about 100 yards from the depot, and from which, you see, as you look out from the cars, the volumes of soda water spouting up into the air—geyser like—and falling back, to run over the rim of a crater upon the summit of a high mound built up by the deposits of solid matter once contained in the waters as they rolled away in all directions. Now, the waters are collected into one channel, and by means of a pipe or trough, are turned into the adjacent bath house. These baths, it is said, are an infallible cure in all cases of rheumatic affections, that is, where "cures" are possible. There is one spring with water that is 90 per cent of pure soda. This water, when drunk, cures all diseases resulting from "cureable" dyspepsia. This spring is also possessed of most remarkable powers otherwise. If a bird flies near its waters the noxious gases kills it at once, and the bird falls into the vortex or on the bank immediately by. You submerge birds, eggs, any kind of flesh or vegetable matter into these waters, and let it remain a week or 10 days, and it is a perfect petrification. I have seen some of the most beautiful specimens of petrified matter from these waters.

The outflow from these springs has in the process of ages covered the whole valley around with a layer of calcareous and metamorphic formation. You can take a rail or pole and with it punch a hole right through this thin crust all over whole acres of the valley. Just below is a bottomless abyss, and yet people live right upon the top of this brittle crust. There is quite a town and city there, and where congregate the lame and the halt, and dyspeptic hordes from various parts of the world. Some English families from London have been there all the past summer.

The carbonic acid gas that escapes from these springs is very deadly in its effects. I have alluded to the fact that birds are instantly killed when they attempt to pass over the "90 per cent spring," as it is called. Some time during the summer, a drunk man from the town reeled and fell by the spring, his face over the waters. He was dead before he could be pulled away! Nevertheless the waters possess very efficacious properties when drunk from a vessel away from the crater where the gas escapes.

Among other named springs there is one called "the Steamboat Spring." The waters come up with a puff, puff—the noise like the escape of steam from a boat's boiler.

I may add that on arrival of the passing trains at Soda Springs, you see half a dozen or so of little girls in tidy frocks, with pitchers and buckets, ready to sell the thirsty passengers all the soda water he wants for a nickel. You take it "straight," that is, without sweetening, unless you carry your "syrup" with you! Some folks give the little ladies the nickel just for the pleasure of having a word with the bright-faced carriers of water so anxious to cool the thirst of weary pilgrims across the lonely desert here. Woman always has some charm, or joy, or blessing, that may be obtained for love or money. But this is *honi soit*, &c.

But see what a letter I have spun out, most of which has been written—as you see—with the car upon which I am seated, going 20 miles an hour. I want to tell you some day in a future letter about my trip to Boise (Boya-sa, as it is called out here), the beautiful capital of this Territory, sitting under the morning shadows of bleak and grassy mountains, at her foot an immense sage plain 50 miles across—yet her streets lined with stately Lombardies and cotton woods that grow by swift river and irrigating ditch, and where you see a single school house of brick and sandstone walls costing fifty-four thousand dollars, and where you hear the bubble of five hundred and eighty-five daily scholars as they go through "recitation" to nine new-fangled teachers, and where you may see also the most wonderful equestrian statue on earth.

This statue is the work of a young German who was snowed up, or snowed in, in the mountains near by some four or five years ago. He had nothing with him in the way of tools except an ordinary pocket knife and a small hatchet that he carried in his belt. With these two he has cut and carved out of wood, the most perfect equestrian statue of George Washington that is in existence. It is life size—rather heroic, perhaps—and it has every essential element of cut and contour to make it a perfect work of art. It was presented to the Capital City, and is now the sole monument of the higher arts that ornaments the public grounds about the swiftly growing capital, in this gem of Desert cities. But this—as it relates to the letter about Boise City—is perhaps like the "story of Billy Gory."

I must bid you good night, for the shades of dusk have come, and the brakeman is lighting lamps.

POCATELLO, Idaho, Nov. 8.  
P. S.—I have another P. S. which I must incorporate with the above. There has just passed on to the penitentiary, through the place from which I mail this letter, the last of the prisoners "sent up" from the Blackfoot U. S. Dist. Court. There were 19 in all—in addition to those that had previously gone forward from this Court.

I was standing at the door of the hotel where I stop, as the men came out from supper, going into the car standing just by. I therefore had a good opportunity to see them all—and to study their faces. There were two of the men that were the objects of more than ordinary interest and curiosity to the great crowd gathered around. These two were the cowboy convicted of the killing referred to in my letter, and a young gentleman of high social business position in the country and who was sent up a year for resisting a Federal officer in his effort to arrest another man—a friend and neighbor—both Mormons. The gentleman I refer to, en route to the Pen, is a fine-looking, good-faced man; and he had concealed his friend in a cellar beneath his house, and refused to let the officer in pursuit search the premises. For this the judge—Judge Hayes, the new appointee—sent him on for a year in the penitentiary. In common with a large crowd of the man's friends, I felt sorry for the poor fellow—and not sorry for him but for various others. A large crowd of friends had gathered to bid the men good bye; and it reminded

me of war times, with the great bundles of clothing and appurtenances for the winter—and the farewells to loved ones not to be seen again in years—perhaps never. Many of the convicts were old men sent away from their wives and little ones—gone to the felon's pen for the commission of what they believed was a religious right. But this Democratic Administration is putting its foot down on polygamy—and that feature of Mormonism is certainly doomed. You can rest assured of that fact. And though we grieve for these deluded individuals in their suffering the penalty of violated law, we can but rejoice that a great curse is going from among us. Like many other great evils, it has to be wiped out in tears and sufferings. Offences must come; but woe to them upon whom the retribution falls.

The young man I referred to (the cowboy murderer) is but a beardless boy. He looks as though he had been well raised—but gone astray. He had what would have been a fine face under culture and restraint. It is said he is exceedingly thankful that he escaped the gallows; and it is to be hoped he has learned a lesson which will make him a better man when he emerges from the prison walls. But such men rarely rise above the ignominy which attaches to the felon. This boy entered the cars with his cigarette, amid the hand shaking and good byes of a score and more of comrades. The poor fellows—the convicts I mean—know me; but there is one above who does know that the crimes of these men, and their consequences, have brought not only sorrow to my heart, but a flood of tears to my eyes, as the scenes burn upon my memory in the prayers of this blessed Sabbath evening. But what about the tears of others, dearer to these men than the stranger in this land? M.

## WASHINGTON LETTER.

WASHINGTON, Nov. 13.

To the Editor of The Lenoir Topic:

As the members of the Forty-Ninth Congress assemble in the city, it is interesting to note upon the faces of Republicans an expression of discouragement. They feel that the Democrats have come to reign a long time. They have ceased talking about candidates for 1888. Before the elections there was so much said on the subject here that the country was on the eve of another Presidential election.

You hear nothing more now about a war in the Senate. Republican Senators are in a measure subdued, while the talk of the Democratic Senators is conservative and loyal. The defeat of Mahone causes the Republicans to regard the Senatorial contest in Ohio with great anxiety. Their majority in the Senate is getting beautifully slim. In case a tie occurs as it did a few years ago, Vice President Hendricks cannot be caught sitting on the fence sometimes, as was Uncle David Davis. Mr. Hendricks' vote can always be counted in advance.

The forecast of the position to be taken by members of the new Congress on the silver question, recently published, is not regarded as likely to prove true after Congress has met and received the President's message and the report of Secretary Manning. The President and the Secretary are not likely to occupy different ground from that taken by Mr. Cleveland last spring. It is thought he will appeal reasonably to both Houses of Congress to support his views and try them in practice.

Though you may not hear a great deal about it, changes in the offices have been going on here since the fourth of March. They go on gradually, but any one going into the Departments after an absence of nine months would find but few familiar faces at the desks of the higher officials. In the Treasury, for instance, both of the assistant Secretaries are Democrats. The Solicitor of the Treasury is a Democrat, as is also the Commissioner of Internal Revenue, the Treasurer, and the Register of the Treasury. A Democrat has succeeded the old commissioner of Customs, and the new director of the mint is a Democrat. The first and second Controllers are Democrats; all six of the auditors are Democrats; a Democratic Appointment clerk files away applications; a Democrat signs the report of a Bureau of Statistics, and there are many changes lower down the line. The new appointees have been good men, possessing qualifications that snited them for their duties.

There are few men in the service of the Government who work harder than the head of the Treasury. And as one of the subordinate officers said, "The worst of it is, he expects every body else to work." The same officer continued; "Manning is a great big fellow, full of blood and as strong as a horse. He can sit up all night at his desk and be as fresh as a daisy next morning, but we can't stand it." Mr. Manning has no respect for old-time methods, or official hours. One day he asked for a certain report to be made out. A chief of the division told him that he would begin the work next morning, as it was then three o'clock in the afternoon. The Secretary looked at him for a moment and calmly

said, "I must have the report in the morning," and he got it. It is certain much more activity is displayed now than ever before in the discharge of business at the Treasury. The Secretary's energetic touch is felt in every branch of it.

The President is working at his first message to Congress, securely shielded from the distracting annoyances of place-hunters. He finds time, however, to come down in the East Room at a certain hour, three times a week, and shake hands with several hundred callers. Some amusing and characteristic incidents occur at these public receptions. Guests are not all willing to pass Mr. Cleveland with the conventional "How do you do." Many of them are intent on exchanging a few words for memory's sake. At his last handshaking a young girl said to him, "I was a prohibitionist, that is why I did not vote for you." "Well, I forgive you," said the President to see and shake the hand of a Democratic President, but with emphasis, "you want a wife." The President said he knew it, and with her good advice ringing in his ears, went upstairs to work.

## Letter from Old Hal.

BOONE, N. C., Nov. 17.

To the Editor of The Lenoir Topic:

After some delay I thought I would scribble a few more lines and give a few brief items from the county and perhaps other localities.

Our people are very busy now gathering corn. Corn shucking and pumpkin pie are now in order, with an occasional fat possum. Plenty of fat beef on hand. Hogs are getting fat on chestnuts and acorns. Corn is a good crop this year. Everything plenty except wheat and money.

We have dismissed the idea that we will have much sale for our fat cattle this fall and consequently are disappointed in raising the usual money crop to supply our wants, and the report is that cabbage is dull about your city.

Now, the Republicans say to the Democrats, where are the good times we were to have when Grover took seat as President of these United States of America? The Democrats say, wait until we have turned all the rascals out, which Grover intends to do immediately if not sooner. Republicans say the cause of hard times is that the Democratic party has got into power. Mr. 4-acre of Ohio made speeches in this wise and told his people that when Grover was elected it ruined the country. It seems that a majority of Ohioans believed what this man said. He tried it on the New Yorkers but they said, go back to Ohio; we will hear you at a more convenient season. Col. Fellows over there in N. Y. said to the people in answer to the Ohio statesman that he was but "a 4 acre lot" and not to hear him. Well Mr. Republican how did N. Y. go, any way? It endorsed Grover and elected Hill by ten thousand; have you heard from the old Dominion? For she had the same opinion. Lee for Governor, over 20,000 majority against Mr. Wise. And what does the colored friend say? Niggers are voting the Democratic ticket in Virginia. What will become of the country? Revenue Democrats, no sale for property; no money; New York and Virginia gone Democratic, Iowa almost gone, Connecticut a-going, Maryland gone—Oh! how sad. It is even hinted that John Sherman will not be returned to the U. S. Senate from Ohio. His "bloody shirt" speeches nearly made the State Democratic, only lacked 3 or 4 of having a Democratic Legislature. Just think of it, my friends, and behold what manner of evil await the G. O. P. Where is the forty acres and the mule? Gone glimmering; sad and so solemn. Where, oh! where are the mugwump friends and allies? Are they able to stand? No, they have fallen also. New York is clean Democratic now and from hence forth, and the mugwumps are left with no eye to pity nor no party to save them.

Grover Cleveland is the President but so far he is only executing the laws passed by the Republicans as he is sworn to do. No legislation has been made since he became President and we are still under the old laws and no others. Wait and see what Congress will do, and observe the block game the Republican Senate will throw in the way of reform and prosperity that the Democrats will try to carry out as they have promised the people to do, and then judge ye between them. I look for better times.

I am always interested to read the excellent pieces of M. V. M. "over the Rockies" hope he will continue to enlighten the readers of THE TOPIC about that interesting part of the country. M. V. M. is a Democrat, "died in the wool." He has fought many battles for Democracy. It seems now befitting for him to be appointed by a Democratic Administration to a responsible position in the public service. I am truly his friend, but I am very uneasy. He says he is now in a very cold part of the country. Then what about those pipe-stem legs of his? He has the bone, but the flesh is weak, those legs and arms of his can't survive

such a climate. Then I move that he be removed to a more salubrious clime at once. Think of a man whose legs are the size of chair posts out in that cold bleak climate trying to run uncle Sam's government. Let him be removed at once. Come South, young man; come South. May his shadow grow larger.

In Ashe county, on north Fork, two peddlers were fired upon by two men who aimed to rob the peddlers. One of the peddlers got badly shot. They have the shooting parties in jail at Jefferson. Names of parties and full particulars not known to me.

The road hands on Middle Fork are getting along pretty well. This is a new road from Boone to Blowing Rock and when done will be the finest road in the county, but if cabbage don't get a higher price we will not need it so much.

A rumor has come to me while writing that the late Wm. Bingham, a brother to Maj. H. Bingham, who died 11 years ago, was killed by some drunken men. It was known at the time of his death that some mysterious facts were connected with his death. Owing to one of the party statements a few days ago that he (Wm. Bingham) was murdered, has caused some excitement on Cove Creek where the Mr. Bingham lived and died. Parties now say his head was broken by a lick with a deadly instrument. There is now a general talk of taking up the corpse for the examination of the head. I know nothing about the fact. The matter has just come to light and what will be done or made of it I cannot predict.

Prof. Spainhour just from Ashe county reports that a young man by the name of McMillan was drowned a few days ago in New River.

OLD HAL.

## A Wonderful Spring.

GLADE SPRING, VA., NOV. 13.

To the Editor of The Lenoir Topic:

I have just returned from a trip to your State in Ashe county, where I met with your paper, which pleased me. I call it a live paper. I have heard much of the mountain scenery, trout streams, &c. Also of the vast mineral wealth still undeveloped, and other mineral interests which have been partially developed, but the half has not been told, nor have I the ability to tell it. (On the trip I passed through Taylorsville, by way of Mr. David Worth's, who hospitably entertained me, thence down New river and up Buffalo to Jefferson. Thence over the hills down Linville creek, around a mountain of the same name, on to the springs—Bethesda Healing Springs, which is truly a wonderful water.

But of this I will not speak, as I am an interested party, only to tell you that I have purchased the property, about 20 acres of land including the springs, and am now trying to form a stock company with a capital of \$50,000 which amount will be sufficient to improve it. I am confident of success, as at this time accommodations for 100 persons are needed there. The waters have already a wide reputation in Virginia, which will grow as the water becomes better known. Some cures are (as expressed by one who used it) wonderful and mysterious. I would like very much for parties in your county and Ashe and all over the State to take stock in it. We think it is destined to become a great place of resort. All it lacks is improvement. I am a paralytic since 12 years (55 years old) and unable to attend business properly; therefore I would like for some energetic go-ahead young man, who can command capital, to take hold at once and push things. If I do not get a stock company or partner or partners, my intention is to improve all I can with my limited means and have accommodation ready by June next for a few visitors. I have already commenced shipping the water which ships well. I am not able at present to supply the demand but will increase my facilities for shipping as fast as I can. In a few years no doubt there will be a railroad at or near the spring. That alone will increase the value 4 fold of this property.

My reasons for expecting a railroad are the vast mineral resources, to say nothing of the valuable timber, of this part of N. Carolina and Johnson county, Tenn., which I think will find an outlet down New river by railroad to connect with what is now called the Cripple Creek road, up New river in Virginia, or with a narrow gauge road from Danville, which is already pushing its way to New river.

What Ashe county now needs is a good wagon road from Jefferson to the Virginia line in Grayson county. I have been told there is a road contemplated and a charter for it already granted, which will come near Bethesda Springs. This road, if built, will add greatly to the value of the springs and to the traffic of the county generally.

Senator Ransom I am told recently paid a visit to Bethesda and expressed himself much pleased with the water. I only wish it were more generally known among prominent men and capitalists. The water will sustain its reputation.

H. V. THOMPSON.

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