

## Newspaper Decisions.

1. And person who takes a paper, usually it is in the post office whether directed in his name or another's, or whether he has subscribed or not, is responsible for payment.

2. If a person orders his paper discontinued he may pay at the office, or the Publisher may continue to send it until payment is made, and then collect the whole amount, whether the paper is taken from the office or not.

3. The courts have decided that refusing to take newspapers or periodicals from the post office, or removing and leaving them uncollected, is a case of intentional fraud.

## THE ACTON FREE PRESS

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ALBERT MOORE, Editor.

TUESDAY MORNING, Nov. 14, 1878.

## OUR CRIMINAL SYSTEM.

What to do with criminals has generally been a perplexing question. In olden times the people did not seem to puzzle themselves very much as to the best means of disposing of them. For any petty crime, such as stealing sheep, or even articles of lesser value, the culprit were hanged without mercy. Public executions were a very ordinary sight, and so common were they in literature that they had their effect. But later on more humane views began to prevail, and punishment to some distant penal settlement was next tried.

In time, this also was given up, and penal servitude was next tried. The plain meaning of this was that the convict was condemned to a kind of slavery and obligation to work under a system of rigorous discipline for a certain number of years—five, ten or for life, as the case may be. A gleam of hope was, however, held out to the convict on entering the prison. Provided he conducted himself in a proper manner, and observed the rules of the institution, a part of his servitude would be remitted, and he would be allowed to depart.

In a great number of cases men convicted of murder and sentenced to be hanged have had their sentence commuted to imprisonment for life. While there is life there is hope, and the murderer who has had his sentence commuted looks forward to release in a few years. In many cases a person thus sentenced has been released after serving from fifteen to twenty years, and persons sentenced for a lesser term have been released after serving a small portion of their term.

As an instance of the clemency of the Executive, we might refer to the release of Luis Sturdy from the Penitentiary, after serving one year—she was sentenced for two, and there is every likelihood of her father, who was sentenced for ten years, getting a pardon before one-half, or even one-third of his time has expired.

Although we were pleased to hear of the release of Miss Sturdy, and would like to hear of the speedy release of her father, yet we do not advocate the principle of dismissing convicts before the term of their sentence has expired. A person may commit a serious crime and be sentenced to serve a term of years in the Penitentiary. Perhaps the first thing he does is to resolve to conform to the rules of the Institution, and work with a will, having in view, if he does so, a pardon after serving part of his term. Now, it may be considered very humane, and such like, to release a prisoner before the expiration of his term, but that is not the question.

A person is sent to prison, not altogether as a punishment upon himself, but also to serve as a warning to others, and if the warning is intended to be effectual, those who have been sentenced for life should be kept for life, and those for a term of years should be kept until their term expires. The influence of friends interferes too much with the ends of Justice. If murderers, and criminals of every description are to be sent again into our midst before paying the full penalty of their crime, society in a short time will be in a fine mess. Not that they are going to turn round and commit the same deeds again, but their return has a certain amount of influence over others whom the errors of the law hold at bay.

J. E. McGARVIN, druggist, Acton

As a casual glance this modern system of treating criminals, with its leniency looks as if it were no punishment at all—a mere retreat for a king from society. In practice, convicts feel it to be otherwise. They suffer no cruelty; but, the regulation and discipline, the absolute loss of name and individuality are terrible, and, we believe, whole some. Those who have never thought before are liable to think, if they are capable of thinking at all, and, with thinking, come a proper sight of past errors, and resolutions of amendment. A conviction is allowed to work at some impairment, but otherwise he has nothing to occupy his mind, or prevent him from dwelling upon his miserable position, and the gloomy future that is awaiting him for many years.

Although some people may regard prison life as too light a punishment for certain individuals who are sent there, yet it is a fact that very few of those who have once been there have the least desire to return, and very few who have been there do return. This is, perhaps the best indication of the success of our prison system; but these pardons, we believe, are proving to be failures, not regarding the public interest, but as regards the public at large. We hold that if justice was meted out as it should be, there would be fewer of these horrible murders, and crimes of every description that are read of every day in the newspapers.

## The Local Legislature.

The elections for the Local Legislature may be held at any time before the 1st February, 1880. A writer in the *Mail* argues that they must be "very near at hand," because the last election took place on the 18th of January, 1875, and he cites the Confederation Act, which limits the continuance of each Legislative Assembly to a period of four years. But, here is another provision of that Act which he has overlooked, viz. the 6th section. The case stands thus:

The "day of the return of the writs" for choosing the present Assembly was the 2nd of February, 1875. Therefore the present Assembly dies by effluxion of time on the 2d of February, 1879. Its last session must be held and concluded before to release in a few years. In many cases a person thus sentenced has been released after serving from fifteen to twenty years, and persons sentenced for a lesser term have been released after serving a small portion of their term.

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## LOCAL MATTERS.

How beautiful! How eloquent those choruses at C. W. Hill's.

There are over fifty applications for the situation of Head Teacher of the Acton Public School.

The Free Press will be given to new subscribers for now till the 1st of January, 1880, for \$1.00. There is lots of room in our subscription books for new names.

It was not until I was dressing to come away from that place of wretchedness and misery that I could really believe the good news.

I was told one three weeks before I was liberated. I had an interview with father the day before I came away, and he was glad I was going. He was hopeful, too, for his own future. During this interview with him he said he thought his sentence an unjust one, and trusted to get out soon—at the right time. He looked forward yet to reconciliation with his beloved wife. He loved her very dearly, and thought constantly of her. He does not blame her for the present unhappy condition. He sent his love and blessing to all his children, and he would have liked to send a message to Annie, but I did not think I was necessary. The young man is recovering as fast as could be expected.

On Monday morning, as Alfred, a boy of Mr. Soper, was mending a break in a belt in Harris' Woolen Mills, Rockwood, he in some way became entangled in the shafting and was very seriously hurt. Dr. McCullough of Rockwood, and Dr. Keating of Guelph, were immediately called in, and examination found that both his arms, and one leg had been broken; one arm so bad that it was necessary that it should be amputated. The entire community sympathized with Mr. Soper, and his family. The young man is recovering as fast as could be expected.

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say to charge him with political bias, and interpose prejudices against them. We must say it is deplorable that the partisan red of any journal should lead it to attempt to shield an adherent of its party from the retaliation justly due, when the wrong-doing is generally admitted, and when such an unwise policy can only redound to the discredit of the party in whose service they are.

We are further surprised at the announcement that the accused are the victims of an infamous conspiracy, got up by some scoundrels who are bidding themselves, and that the convicted will suffer no injury from the effect of the verdict. This is strange, and also mystifying.

We confess that if it means anything the meaning is unintelligible.

## LETTER FROM MANITOBA.

Big Potatoes,  
Wheat, Yield.

To the Editor of the Free Press.

DEAR SIR—I noticed in your very valuable paper an item saying that Major Allan had shown you some very large potatoes, three of which weighed three pounds seven ounces; and you wished to know who could beat that. In reply, I would say that we can beat it, as we can go to our potato patch and pick out a large number of potatoes that will weigh two pounds each, and one of our neighbors picked up one which weighed four and a half pounds. This may be hard to believe, but nevertheless, it is the truth.

There was a great crop of wheat here this year. We brought out bushel of a new kind of wheat here, and we raised eighteen bushels of it. This wheat was not sown until April, and a prettier sample of it could not be found. Mr. John Hill, of the violin, and Mr. Chas. Hill with the organ, will give a concert at the church hall. Miss Nicoll, organist, will play a solo piece.

Village Council.

Council met in Matthew's Hall, pursuant to adjournment. Members all present.

Not meeting's minutes were read and confirmed.

After considerable conversation concerning the purchase of a site for a cemetery, it was moved by Messrs. Carter and D. Hill, and the Hon. J. C. Hill, to committee to ascertain where a suitable site 10 acres in size, and a plot of land 100 feet square, may be purchased. Carried.

The council then talked for some time on the advisability of building a continuation to the sidewalk on Main street to about 50 rods above the railroad track, and it was finally moved by J. B. Carter, seconded by C. T. Hill, that the Council authorizes the Street and Sidewalk Committee to expend the sum of \$75 for the above purpose.

The council then adjourned until Monday evening, December 1st, to meet at 7:30 o'clock.

One year in Recitation.

One day last week representatives of the Guelph papers interviewed Miss Study, who has returned home, after serving one year in the Provincial Penitentiary, for assisting her father in the detection of Miss Carr, which affair will be remembered by all our readers, and for which, crime she was sent down for two years.

Miss Study was quite cheerful, and willing to give the desired information. She related her trying position when she heard the sentence passed on herself and her father; their awful agony at parting with those at home; the annoyance caused by the pitiless gaze of the crowd assembled at the scene of the trials on the way down; the feelings of anguish as the prison walls loomed in sight; the terrible position they felt themselves to be in when the doors closed behind them; the awful agony which both felt when compelled to part inside the prison walls, and, lastly, her stay behind these walls, from the first, when she was put into the sewing room, where she remained about three months, when she was given work more suited to her about the house.

She vividly described the routine of which all have to keep close observation, and also showed how her leisure hours were spent. Her father and herself were allowed to converse once a month, in the warder's room, when they had a good long chat over the good days past, and cheered each other as best they could. Speaking of her father, she said he was at first put to breaking stones, but afterwards was allowed to work at his trade, and now he is foreman of the paint shop. He painted, in his leisure time, a scene on the River Speed, and also numerous poultry scenes.

She says, "when the glad tidings of my release were told me, I could hardly believe it was true."

At Knatchbull, on Monday inst., Mrs. Ross, widow of the Methodists' son, Mr. Ross G. McCracken, aged 41 years, Elizabeth, 4th daughter of Mr. Wm. Langerhill, postmaster, aged 22 years.

In Rockwood, on the 10th inst., Mrs. Ed. Barrie, aged 26 years.

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