

# TROUBLE COMING FOR THE "COURTHOUSE GANG"

## The Law-Abiding Citizens of Contra Costa Are Tired of the Hoodlum Tactics.

**I**NTEREST does not abate in the condition of things at Martinez that makes possible such a scandal as that over the new Courthouse, or such an outrage upon public decency as last Tuesday's cowardly assault upon Reporter Rowe.

The "Chronicle" is abundantly assured that the taxpaying, law-abiding citizens, who are in the majority in Martinez as they are in Contra Costa county, are growing more and more irritated over the offensive tactics of the "Courthouse push." They are sick of the hoodlum element that has swarmed about Martinez ever since the building of the new Court-house began. The breaking point of their endurance came last Tuesday, when, because he had merely done his duty in turning the light on the Courthouse scandal, because he had caught the curriish Willison in a detestable trick and exposed him, and because he was about to testify before the Grand Jury, a reporter was nearly beaten to death by three cowardly thugs of the "Courthouse push."

Public anger over the manner in which the Courthouse job was so manipulated as to saddle the county with a half-million-dollar debt might have kept on smoldering for a long time, but the assault on Reporter Rowe sufficed to stir it into flame. Now the temper of the people of Contra Costa and of Martinez is such as to bode no good to the men responsible for the Courthouse iniquity, to the hoodlum push which takes its orders from the cowardly Willison, or to the constable, Rogers, who stood by while the thugs were doing their bloody work.

### **HOT SHOT FOR THE GANG.**

The Daily Press of Martinez, in its edition of Sunday, published the following editorial:

The respectable citizens of Martinez, who, by the way, are greatly in the majority, were deeply humiliated by the disgraceful and brutal beating of one man by three on one of the principal streets of the town last Tuesday.

The good name of the town has been further besmirched and dragged in the dirt by two publications more disreputable in character than that of any of the parties who participated in the aforesaid street fight.

What those engaged in the fight of Tuesday did was committed in the heat of passion. The excusing and applauding of the disgusting exhibition by the County Paper and the Contra Costa Grafter is the result of cold-blooded, revolting malice and aforethought, and is therefore many times more disgraceful, disgusting and to be deplored than any one of the actors in the scene of Tuesday last.

James Willison, himself, is quoted as having expressed regret and shame because of his part in the affair, and those who aided him are not boasting of the act, but by the Paper and the Grafter there is exhibited not the slightest regret over the disgraceful spectacle. The manifest gloating of this precious pair over an event which is a blot upon the fair name of our town can not but have the effect of causing some few, at least, to believe that Martinez is a town where all respect for law and order is at the lowest ebb.

To this extent they have, with time for due deliberation, made themselves the dirtiest parties connected with a public disgrace. It is only one short step more from their present position to that of openly advocating lynch law. And with such characters it is a pleasing pastime to screen criminalities of any nature whatsoever so long as there is a little smell of coin about it for them.

### **NIGHT HAVE BEEN MURDER.**

The Paper and the Grafter did not express one word of regret that a man was nearly killed by three others on a public street within a stone's throw of their office, and no arrests made. The logical conclusion therefore is that had the man's life been ended there and then these two same vultures would have flapped their ominous wings with keen rejoicings and would have thrust their foul beaks into the murderous wounds.

But these leeches upon the community in which they exist have been working differently from what they had intended. Their approval of a gross violation of the peace, order and good name of the town has opened wide the eyes of many people who had hitherto been loath to believe that those two publications would abet lawlessness if it paid them to do so. That they will is no longer a question of doubt, hence their efforts to screen rascality in other quarters, for what there is in it for them, is made plain to the most superficial observer.

The absolute silence of each of the pair respecting the conduct of Constable Rogers on that conspicuous Tuesday is a well-studied omission and is eminently consistent with the now established and unenviable character of those publications.

### **A SATIRICAL ATTACK.**

The Black Diamond Argus publishes in the form of a Martinez dispatch the

following satire, aimed at the "Courthouse gang," and the two weekly papers which it controls:

A richly deserved chastisement of an inquisitive, meddling reporter was administered Tuesday afternoon to George Rowe, a representative of the "Chronicle," by James Willison, the popular and industrious foreman of the courthouse construction crew. Incidentally the affair was a merited rebuke of the methods of certain San Francisco newspapers which are continually prying into matters that do not concern them.

The encounter took place at Fournler's corner, Willison leading the attack. The reporter was smashed in the face and knocked down. Then Willison, assisted by two of his employes, proceeded to give the newspaper man an unmerciful beating. He was kicked in the face, and several ribs were fractured, and, after becoming unconscious was carried into Dr. Breneman's office for surgical treatment.

The affair was the result of a series of articles written by Rowe for the "Chronicle" in regard to the Courthouse transactions of the Board of Supervisors. In these articles Rowe charged Willison with having attempted to bribe him with \$30, to "make it easy" for the Pacific Construction Company in his write up.

### **THE WORD OF WILLISON.**

That this was a base, malicious falsehood, we all know, here in Martinez, because we have Willison's word for it. The truth of the matter is that the reporter came up here a little short of funds and borrowed that \$30 from Mr. Willison. Newspaper men are proverbially hard up and it is common practice for big city dailies to send out reporters with barely enough money to pay the fare to the destination. There is nothing surprising in his being broke. Neither is it surprising that Willison loaned him \$30. Of course, he never saw the man before, but that didn't make any difference to Jim, who is one of the biggest-hearted men in the State. Many a time he has loaned money to utter strangers. As the County Paper touchingly remarks, "the only way to keep money in Jim Willison's pocket is to build a high board fence around him."

No wonder, then, that Mr. Willison visited his wrath upon the scurrilous wretch who dared to cast aspersions upon his character.

We must not neglect to give our accommodating and unobtrusive constable, Bill Rogers, full credit for standing by and not interfering with Willison while he was administering the punishment.

After the affair was over, Willison was warmly congratulated by the citizens for the manly and courageous manner in which he chastised his detractor. The remainder of the day and night was devoted to celebrating the event in the usual manner.

### **LIONS OF THE TOWN.**

There is absolutely no truth in the "Chronicle's" statement that there is great indignation here against Willison and Rogers. On the contrary, they are the lions of the town. Martinez is wild with enthusiastic admiration for them.

The people of Martinez are satisfied that Willison's action will effectually stop all further journalistic prying into the Courthouse transactions. It is not doing Martinez any good to have the thing continually stirred up, and it will be decidedly unsafe for reporters in future to follow up Rowe's tactics.

### **ASKS FOR THE FACTS.**

In the Oakland Tribune last evening appeared this editorial, headed "Give Us the Facts":

The Contra Costa Gazette publishes an account of the assault on George A. Rowe, reporter for the "San Francisco Chronicle," that is in effect a justification for Willison and his associates. It represents Rowe as blustering around with a pistol in his pocket looking for a fight, and by inference charges him with borrowing money from Willison in order to obtain a pretext for accusing the contractor of attempted bribery. The public is entitled to know the facts, but as the Gazette is obviously a partisan of Willison, whom it calls "a big-hearted fellow," and insists that there is nothing wrong in the Courthouse matter, a statement of facts would go further than its opinion.

There is a curious lack of detail in the Gazette's account of the affair. It leads one to believe that Willison alone assaulted Rowe, but it really does not state who committed the assault. Rowe names two other men as having assisted in the assault. The Gazette does not state who was present. It is charged that a peace officer of Martinez witnessed the whole affair, and made no attempt to arrest the assailants or to protect the reporter. We are not informed as to who struck the first blow nor apprised of the purport of the conversation immediately preceding it.

These reservations are significant, especially as Willison is such a "big-hearted fellow" and so "free with his money." We would not insinuate that his liberality in this respect colored any views in Martinez, but a narrative of the actual occurrences would be of much greater value to the outsider desirous of getting at the truth. The Gazette says Rowe had a pistol in his pocket, as if that justified the assault. How did it learn that fact? Rowe did not exhibit a pistol at the time he was assaulted, and he claims to have been struck from behind. Did Willison strike him from behind because he knew Rowe had a pistol and was afraid he would use it? Don't jingle Willison's "thirty pieces of silver" at us, but answer a plain question.