

## IS IT STAR CHAMBER RULE?

Respectable (?) Gamblers Indicted at Parkersburg Whose Names are not Allowed to be Made Public.

*Special to the Sunday Register.*

PARKERSBURG, West Va., February 21.—On Monday, the 9th day of February, the Circuit Court of Wood county convened at Parkersburg, with His Honor, Judge J. M. Jackson, presiding. When the names of the Grand and Petit jurors drawn for the February term by Sheriff Samuel Stewart were made known, it was remarked that they represented men of more intelligence and ability than generally falls to the lot of the ordinary jurymen. There were no "professional" jurors drawn, and the decrepit and bald headed element were notably absent. Each juror's name was a guarantee in itself that justice would be meted out to all with an impartial hand and entire disregard of persons, and the number of indictments found verified the first formed conclusion. *Junta Jurant.*

The names of the jurors were as follows (Grand)—Ralph Logan, John B. Johnson, S. P. Wells, M. C. Church, W. Vrooman, D. E. Greer, John Fisher, W. P. Anderson, Jacob Deem, Samuel Wilson, John H. Hannaman, Whitten Wells, R. S. Corbin, jr., N. S. Lwing, E. Meldahl and Wm. H. Taylor. There is not a single name on the above list that was indicative of distrust and the people expected wonders, as it had been whispered for some time back that a blow would be struck at the gambling houses. The first day, Monday, was so wet and muddy that few of those living in the country could reach the city. It rained incessantly all day so that there was but little done. On Tuesday morning, however, most all the jurors were present, and before the close of the three days allotted them by law, over two hundred indictments had been found. Of these some eight or ten were for felony, and 192 were for gambling, exhibiting gaming device etc. For some years past Parkersburg has gained a notoriety for saloons houses of prostitution, gambling, &c, that has not been coveted by her verdant sister towns.

A certain system of lawlessness has reigned for some time past over which the authorities seemed to have but little or no control, notwithstanding the boasted detective ability (?) of the city's ex Chief of Police. Now and then a blundering burglar might be caught when too drunk to run, or some hungry thief be surprised while trying to steal something to eat, but beyond this the wonderful police force just retired did nothing to distinguish itself and the greater crimes were winked at.

Until the outbreak of the late war Parkersburg was not much of a place. It is not much of a place yet—only on its darker side. Masquerade balls, theatres, skating rinks, &c, are well patronized, while dust lies thick on the cushions of her church pews.

A newspaper man recently dropped into an all-day prayer meeting to which the Christians of all denominations had been invited and found but five persons present. Then visiting the forty-two saloons, gambling houses etc., he counted over 400 loungers. Comment is unnecessary.

As soon as the recent grand jury had disposed of its regular business, it sat down to discuss the questions of gambling and gamblers, prostitution and its progress, saloons, and the open violation of the Sunday and license laws, etc. Subjects of no trifling moment, we are sure. The great problem seemed to be "Shall we make a clean sweep of gambling resorts and indict all, or shall we select a few to make an example of?"—Better reason reigned over their judgment, and they decided to indict every case that was possibly indictable. Their decisions were wise and impartial. At the close of their business nearly 200 indictments

were handed in to the court. When it was first rumored that the jury had summoned witnesses on certain well-known gambling cases, the effect was wonderful. There was a general stampede, or exodus, from the city. In speaking of the popularity of the name Smith, some person has said that on a certain occasion a man ran into a church and called out that John Smith was wanted at home, when half the males in the church put on their hats and started for home. So it was in Parkersburg when it was said that every man in town who visited gambling houses was either indicted or summoned as a witness against others. Lawyers left their clients in court, editors or reporters had to take a train at once to visit the scene of an imaginary railroad collision out of town. Merchants had to leave at once for the East to look after a delayed invoice for the spring trade. Attorneys had to go to Wheeling to see about the passage of "that bill." Respectable citizens had to visit friends in the country. Physicians lost no time in seeing their out-of-town patients. In fact, it appeared as if everybody was leaving the city at one time. But the mill ground away, and it ground exceedingly fine.

One of the most remarkable features of the matter is this. It was not at first supposed that "prominent citizens" would be indicted; as fast as the foreman of the grand jury sent in the indictments the names of those indicted were read out in court, until it was discovered that the names were running up into the highest circles of Parkersburg society, when the court very decidedly ordered that "no more names be made public." Sublime sympathy! What the people want is news—the unbiased and unvarnished news of the day and no matter how high the offender may stand, let him be treated and dealt with according to his true character. The names must be exposed at trial, and it is hoped that the petit jury will deal as conscientiously in this matter and discharge its duty as faithfully, impartially and fearlessly as the grand jury has done.