

INTERVIEWING

John B. Felton, Mayor of Oakland,
on the Stand.

HE DISCOURSES ON POLITICS
AND GREEK.

REVULGES HIS IDEAS IN REGARD
TO MERRITT, CARPENTIER
AND COHEN.

The demand of the public for "interviews" being imperative and unappeasable, and most of the leading notables of San Francisco having been exhausted, we yesterday dispatched our Chief Interviewer to Oakland, to "interview" Mayor Felton. Our Interviewer being duly furnished with credentials, in the shape of a letter of introduction from Colonel John Scott of the Oakland Transcript, presented himself at the palatial residence of Oakland's Chief Magistrate, on Adelino street, where he met with a cordial reception. The diplomatic preliminaries having been achieved, the following dialogue ensued:

Mayor Felton—You are, I perceive, attached to the reportorial corps of the CHRONICLE?

Interviewer—I am. Colonel Scott thought that you would have no objection to being "interviewed," and I have been accordingly detailed to obtain your views on "the situation" and on matters and things in general.

Mayor Felton—Well, "interviewing" seems to be the mode just now. I acknowledge I don't admire the mode. But then the system is not without its advantages. It brings the mind and thought of leading men into direct contact with thousands who would never meet them personally. Now, here you are, to "interview" me. You ask questions. I answer them. Your queries and my replies appear in your Sunday issue, and will be read by thousands and tens of thousands who have never seen me and never will see me in the flesh. Hence, if my ideas are good and sound, I gain by your "interviewing" the power of benefiting multitudes whom I could never reach in any other way. If Plato were alive he would be glad to be interviewed. If Pericles, or Alcibiades, or Cicero, or Caesar, were alive, each of them would jump at the chance of being interviewed by the CHRONICLE. What is the use of having ideas and convictions, unless you can impress them upon the popular mind?

Interviewer—Can you tell me how the "Berkeley Tract" Association is getting on?

Mayor Felton—Pretty well, considering that times are so dull; but I should not mourn if I had never been in it. I also made a mistake when I consented to run for the position of Mayor of Oakland. The fact is, I was cajoled into it by Shattuck and Gagan, who wanted to use me for their own purposes. What the deuce was I doing, running for the position of Mayor of Oakland? Men of Craze's or Merritt's caliber would do for that. It would be a credit to them, but none to me. I should have looked higher.

Interviewer—Yes; your talents, your acquisitions and your reputation fairly entitle you to "look higher." And, if I recollect aright, you did, a few years since, aspire to the position of United States Senator from California.

Mayor Felton—It is true; but I was unfortunate in my managers and agents. I was confiding and, to be plain, green. They were shrewd and unscrupulous. The fact is, I was sold. I spent money unprofitably, and paid good wages to men who couldn't do any useful work. The next time I run for United States Senator, I shall improve on that old programme. The difference between a wise man and a fool is not generally understood. But the fool and the wise man occasionally make mistakes; but the wise man never makes the same mistake twice, while the fool just goes blundering on in the same routine over and over again, like a mill horse treading his dreary round in the bark-grinding mill of a tannery. Young man, I believe you are poetically inclined. Do you remember Coleridge's lines—I think it is Coleridge:

"The strongest plume in Wisdom's wing
Is memory of past folly."

Interviewer—I remember the lines, and they express a profound truth. It is by stumbling that we learn to walk steadily, and through experience of folly that we learn wisdom. But do you mean that you were badly sold by your agents and instruments in your Senatorial fight?

Mayor F.—Bygones are bygones. Let the dead bury its dead. I bear no malice; but I have learned a few wrinkles or two. My "workers" just played me. Fred. Low had his aspirations, too, and Billy Carr, Bob Cushing and Tom Rogers were retained as his wire-pullers. I had Mike Kenney, Jim Reynolds, Bill Fairman, Captain Ike Lees of the police, and a lot of others "working" for me. We wanted to postpone the meeting of the County Committee for two weeks, so as to have all things in proper trim, but by some bungling or other my confederates let Carr, Cushing & Co. out-general them. It didn't do Low any good, however, for I spoiled his "little game," as his tools spoiled mine.

Interviewer—I heard it said that that arrangement cost you a good deal of money at the time.

Mayor Felton—Never mind that. It is weak to show old sores; and I hold regret and repentance to be alike unphilosophical. What is past is past. I have paid out my money and gathered in my experience. What I have learned is worth what I have lost: I am not going to whine about it. You remember that noble chorus in "Eschylus"?

Interviewer—Well, to be frank, I don't; and the fact that I don't remember it is easily accounted for by the other fact that I never heard of it. My education, so far as Greek is concerned, was sadly neglected.

Mayor Felton—Well, well. It is no disgrace not to be classical. My allusion to Eschylus was simply unfortunate.

Interviewer—May I ask what are your relations with Horace Carpentier and ex-Mayor Merritt?

Mayor Felton—Certainly. Our relations are perfectly harmonious. I did rather stand in the way of a tripartite division of Alameda county between Merritt, Carpentier and Cohen. But then, I think, they bear me no malice. They know very well that if I had felt malicious I could have been much more damaging to them.

Interviewer—How about your "opposition" Oakland paper, the Transcript?

Mayor F.—It amounts to nothing. Scott is a well-meaning, fussy fellow. Its recent editor, Billy George, is a mere popinjay and "trimmer." When shipped from Dr. Gunn's Times, he changed his coat and turned Democrat. In short, he is a very small specimen of the Dugeld Dalgetty type, and is bound to fight on the winning side—provided he can only find out which side is going to win.

Interviewer—Let us drop these insignificant subjects. What do you think of Goat Island as a "Terminus"?

Mayor F. (looking at his watch)—Ah! I must beg you to excuse me. I find I am fifteen minutes behind time for a very important engagement. On another occasion I shall be most happy to continue our conversation. [Exeunt

both.]