

Mr. Roosevelt's Santa Fe Farce

In forbidding the prosecution of the officials of the Santa Fe railroad for contempt of court in the matter of rebates, and directing that all proceedings shall be had against the corporation alone, President Roosevelt makes a precedent which, if followed, must practically nullify the interstate commerce law.—Boston Post.

The whole matter is rather remarkable. It will cause the country to wonder whether there is any serious intention on the part of the administration to sustain the interstate commerce commission in its effort to enforce the law as it stands.—Indianapolis Sentinel.

The same plea of the innocence of ignorance which was put forward by Alexander and his ilk in the Equitable is adopted by Mr. Morton when he says that he had no knowledge of the two years' violations of law by the railroad company of which he was a leading executive officer.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

It is not often that the man who confesses, under stress of questioning to wrong-doing, when the alternative would be perjury, is hailed as an exemplary reformer.—Boston Herald.

In spite of the authority by which the letter is declared to be genuine, one would prefer to believe that it is not genuine, or that it has been changed in some way. If it is genuine then all this oratory about rate legislation and other talk indicative of a determination to hold railroad corporations and the trusts to the law is merely tall talk with nothing to it.—Galveston News.

The guilt of a corporation carries with it the guilt of the men who are responsible for conducting it, and President Roosevelt is simply wasting his breath when he tries to convince the people of the country at large that the Santa Fe company violated the law but that its officers should not be held to account for its doing so.—Charleston News and Courier.

It must be vastly comforting to Mr. Paul Morton to know how absolutely spotless President Roosevelt holds his conduct as a former Santa Fe official. It is enough to shake Mr. Morton's faith in his own numerous confessions of violating the interstate commerce law.

President Roosevelt insists that it is "deeply discreditable" to repeat Mr. Morton's own admissions of such violation. He would not believe them on Mr. Morton's word. The interstate commerce commission and the president's special attorneys, Messrs. Judson Harmon and Frederick N. Judson, could not gather enough evidence to convince him.

After all these months the Santa Fe investigation ends in a farce. Nobody is to be harmed—Paul Morton least of all, because along with his absolution he gets a certificate of good character from Mr. Roosevelt.

Messrs. Harmon and Judson were foolish enough to think that all Mr. Roosevelt's haranguing and gesticulating were meant in earnest. They only waited the signal to take the Santa Fe officials into court and prosecute them on the evidence they had collected. But Attorney General Moody knew how soft-hearted the president is toward his personal friends. "No; the corporation," remonstrated Mr. Moody, "but not my colleague Paul Morton." And President Roosevelt backs him up. It is the Santa Fe that is to be prosecuted, not the individual violators of the in-

terstate commerce law.

From now on railroad managers who have shivered when the president thundered about keeping open the highways of commerce know what to expect. "Guilt is always personal," reasoned Mr. Harmon in his solemn, old-fashioned way. "So long as officials can hide behind their corporations no remedy can be effective. When the government searches out the guilty men and makes a corporate wrong-doing mean personal punishment and dishonor the laws will be obeyed."

Let them hide, says Mr. Roosevelt in effect. Better that ninety-nine guilty men should escape than that Paul Morton should be punished. Some day when I can no longer restrain my indignation I'll have a corporation fined a few dollars if this iniquitous practice does not cease.—New York World.

No official document ever admitted to the records of the United States government, we believe, has in it a more hopeless jumble of sophistry and inconsistency than can be found in the argument attempting to support the indefensible position of the administration in the Santa Fe rebate cases.

The carefully prepared correspondence, however shrewdly and artfully designed to obscure the great and glaring issues of law and morals involved, would fail to hide those questions. But the work is coarsely done, and the most charitable view of its logic is that it is sadly unconvincing.—New York Press (Rep.)

The more the course of Mr. Roosevelt and Attorney General Moody in the rebate cases is scrutinized the more inglorious appears their utter abandonment of plain duty and the more palpable their nullification of the federal statutes. And it is equally apparent that their sole motive was to shield one of the president's personal friends. The law itself and the machinery of justice recognizes no favorites. The law designates and prohibits what is deemed to be wrong and provides specific punishment for all who violate it. Immunity is granted to none because of his wealth or influence. The president would have been deserving of less censure had he come out plainly and said: "Morton is guilty, but he is my friend and he shall not be prosecuted." It would have at least had the merit of candor. His attempt to justify his plain neglect of duty is so weak as to almost excite a feeling of contempt.—Houston (Texas) Post.

Mr. Roosevelt's Morton letter has been a bitter pill for his admirers to swallow. In no quarter is there a disposition to defend the president's conduct. A few republican newspapers are apologizing for him. Some are trying to explain. Others, like the Tribune, ignore the incident. The majority make little effort to conceal their astonishment and disappointment that Mr. Roosevelt should so misuse his powers.

The Loomis incident also is coming in for its share of plain-spoken criticism. The dismissal of Bowen was generally approved. The "vindication" of Loomis was regarded as somewhat dubious. But the promotion of Loomis on the heels of this scandal is the subject of generous and hearty denunciation, as it should be. To make this man a special ambassador and empower him to make "reforms" in the diplomatic service is carrying a bad joke beyond the average man's sense of humor.

Arbitrary personal government could hardly express more contempt for popular opinion than Mr. Roose-

velt has done in these two cases. To say that he has blundered is to treat him with a consideration to which he is hardly entitled. He has erred deliberately in these cases, setting his personal friendships above law and above "the good of the service."

Better lawyers than Mr. Roosevelt find ample grounds for action against Mr. Morton and other Santa Fe officials. Their motives are known to be disinterested and above suspicion. But Mr. Roosevelt, with executive, not with judiciary powers, declares his friend Mr. Morton innocent and prevents the courts from hearing his case. The coddling of Loomis was an unfortunate mistake, but the protec-

tion of Paul Morton takes on some of the aspects of a national scandal.

In every railroad headquarters in the country there will be rejoicing. To save Paul Morton from the necessity of defending himself Mr. Roosevelt has practically issued a general amnesty to all railroad lawbreakers. Personal guilt is abolished. Only corporations can sin, and for them the penalty is a trifling fine. In order that Paul Morton may go scot-free Mr. Roosevelt makes a dead letter of the statute.

President Roosevelt has deliberately and with set purpose committed one of the gravest blunders of his administration.—New York World.

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