CORPORATIONS' POWER

Main Issue in the Struggle for True Government is the Regulation of These Usurpers.

ABDALLAH AND THE FLY

The Innocent Little Pet That Grew to a Murderous Giant at Its Host's Expense.

Grave Dangers Closing Upon Us.

[B. O. Flower in February Arena.]

It is of vital importance that the friends of popular government should grasp in a broad way the great basic issues involved in the titanic struggle of the present—a struggle upon which depends an issue no less momentous than the very existence of popular government. The conflict which is pending is between corporate power in the hands of a few on the one side and public interests and the people's rights on the other. Any narrowing of this issue or any attempt to elevate one of the many evil consequences flowing from it so as to make a paramount issue of that which is partial or only a single stem from the giant stalk is a serious blunder which can serve only to divide the forces of progress. Even if the single reform, however beneficent, triumphed it could in the nature of the case be at best but a partial success. Thus monopoly in money, monopoly in transportation, monopoly in all public utilities, whether national, state or municipal, and monopoly in commodities essential for man's life, comfort or well being, are the offspring of corporate control, of society's needs and civilization's demands, in which the great profits of the few are acquired at the expense of the many. Against this evil, as the concrete representation of despotism in its latest role, all reformers, all friends of liberty, freedom and justice, should unite.

The forces of freedom and the forces of oppression are being rapidly marshaled, the lines of battle are being drawn. The tendencies of the opposing theories are no longer vague or doubtful. If the corporations are to continue, a popular government cannot live any more than liberty can exist under the rule of absolutism. Here is a fact for thoughtful people to consider. The corporations, as we shall presently see, are the sworn enemies of public rights, individual independence, common justice and that wholesome liberty which marks a free government.

Nothing is gained by pursuing the ostrich policy. It is neither manly nor safe to disguise the naked facts, which are no longer disputed questions among honest and informed citizens. The situation in the United States today reminds one of a certain eastern legend. Abdallah, an oriental prince, was one day reclining on his couch, sipping his wine, listening to the music of birds and enjoying the rich fragrance wafted from his garden of roses, when a beautiful fly entered his apartment and poised on the edge of his wine cup. He watched the little insect with interest until it flew away. The next day it returned to his cup, and so on, each successive day finding the little visitor at the prince's lonely board. In a short time Abdallah became strongly attached to the fly. He encouraged, humored and petted it, never noticing how rapidly it was growing nor the strange transformation that was gradually taking place by which the once small and inoffensive insect was assuming the form of a man, and later that of a giant. With the growth of the intruder the vigor, health and greatness of the prince diminished. Abdallah became so fascinated with his visitor that he gave him the right of his house, and when his self invited guest after appropriating some of the prince's most prized treasures gave them back to Abdallah the poor potentate went into an ecstasy over the generosity of his guest, wholly oblivious of the fact that the little returned was but a moiety of his own wealth which the interloper had appropriated. With the ascendency of the giant that had once been a fly came the complete transformation of the prince. He lost all capacity for reason and self government and reflected only that which the giant desired him to manifest. Hence he became a cringing lackey at the feet of a soulless tyrant. Under this fatal spell Abdallah dismissed, degraded or destroyed all his true friends and faithful servants and followers, putting in their place the wily tools of the giant. Then another change came over the unhappy prince—the fascination of love changed to the fascination of fear. The warnings of his old friends had been mocked, their fidelity had been rewarded with disgrace, and now the prince felt himself a powerless victim of one who was a stranger to every high or holy sentiment. One morning the prince rose not. His servants entered his apartment to find him dead. It was whispered that the print of the giant's thumb was on his throat.

This legend is suggestive. The corporations have ensnared our nation as did the apparently harmless and beautiful fly. They have been tolerated until they have gained power and a firm foothold in the government throughout all its ramifications. Moreover, and worse, the great opinion forming agencies of the age have come under their power, silently, secretly, but with the one central thought of mastery through consolidation and triumph through organization, a few men have banded themselves together and have seized upon various sources of wealth—sometimes the wealth which nature through countless ages has prepared for all the children of earth. In other instances those things which, arising from and being dependent upon society, clearly belong to the people collectively, have been seized upon and utilized for the benefit of the few, while a third method of accumulating wealth has been through indirect oppression by securing a monopoly of the products which enter largely into modern life, a monopoly rendered possible through the protection afforded by government and the aid of those who had already grown powerful through the control of nature's treasuries and society's opportunities. These class favors and special privileges have been frequently supplemented by acts which, to say the least, have been glaringly immoral, such as the watering of stock and gambling with loaded dice. In this manner have the corporations advanced step by step till the warnings of statesmen and scholars, which a few years ago were denounced as absurd and demagogical, are no longer questioned.

The great power of corporations is fed by sources of wealth which belong to all the people, and the unjust appropriation of which by a few entails that natural suffering upon the social body which an infraction of hygienic law entails upon the physical body. Thus nature has provided land rich in productive power; she has stored light and heat in her secret recesses for the blessing and comfort of all the people, and it is the right, nay, it is the supreme duty, of the government to see that society as a whole enjoys the blessings of these sources of comfort and essentials to life. It is a crime when a few persons are permitted to seize and hold for their own profit these vast privileges while the humblest citizen, because of these unequal advantages, is made to suffer and die for what otherwise would have made life a joy.

Today we find the vast oilfields of America in the hands of a corporation which has behind it a record of lawlessness that may well amaze intelligent foreigners, and this corporation, with its hands on the tap which supplies the people's light, levies a revenue from millions of people which if enjoyed by all instead of by a few score people would render it possible to reduce taxes on the one hand and on the other for the nation to carry on vast measures for internal improvements that would give employment and good wages to the "out of works" on practical and needed enterprises, such as the erection of permanent levees, the reclamation of arid land by irrigation, the building of great highways for the people and similar necessary improvements. The infinitesimal fraction of the vast accumulation farmed from the people by one man in the Standard Oil trust which has been given to a conservative sectarian educational institution gives a very fair hint of the enormous benefits which would accrue to all if this wealth, which nature has stored up for society, were operated for the benefit of society instead of being seized and appropriated by a few in such a manner as to render possible an oligarchy at once lawless, corrupt and cruel.

The great oil monopoly is a fair illustration of one way in which associations or corporations composed of a few men are growing rich almost beyond the imagination of man through the stored up resources of nature, which should be, nay, which are, the common heritage and inalienable property of all the people.

In the great coal corporations, with their frightful system of oppression, so suggestive of galley slave methods on the one hand and on the other hand their control of the output which places the nation at the mercy of a few persons, we have another illustration of the same vitally important fact which confronts the republic today. Nor, when considering the injustice practiced against the wretched miners and the extortionate prices charged for coal, must we lose sight of the very important point that with government ownership and fair profits a vast revenue would accrue to the state from this and other sources of natural wealth which by right belong to all the people, unless it can be clearly established that might and craft make right. These great reservoirs of wealth provided by a beneficent Providence for humanity are being seized and held by an infinitesimal proportion of society, and through this injustice, this wrong, this moral crime, the sufferings of the people are yearly increasing, while the normal unfoldment of civilization is checked, real progress is retarded, and the currents of public life are being polluted by a subtle and deadly poison.

Passing from the treasure house of nature, where is found wealth which if employed by the people for the good of all would soon change the front of civilization, we come to another source of corporate power, which, in the hands of organized society, where it manifestly belongs, and operated, as is the postoffice, for the good of all, would prove a double blessing to the people, because (1) the enormous interest on fictitious valuation, or watered stock, now being wrested from the people—which is essentially dishonest—would under public ownership disappear, and (2) a fair profit or revenue above running expenses on actual investments would, in the hands of the national, state or municipal government, yield an income sufficient to reduce taxes to a minimum. Under existing conditions corporations control franchises of fabulous value to society, and through the possession of these public or quasi public utilities they are levying tributes incomparably greater than all the burden of direct taxation, tributes which go to enrich a few who are already enormously wealthy, to increase the power of corporate greed, to further enslave the millions, debauch and corrupt government and shift the basis of national life from justice, integrity and freedom to might, cunning and oppression.

The history of the great monoplies which so largely control the storehouses of nature's wealth or govern their output and distribution and the story of the rise of the various other natural monopolies, such as railroads, telegraphs, telephones and the public utilities in municipal life, would each require a volume. The story of one, however, is practically the history of all, and I shall therefore merely refer to one or two typical illustrations.

In a masterly review of the railroad question recently made by Justice Walter Clark of the supreme bench of North Carolina the able jurist showed from the returns made by the railroads operated in that commonwealth for 1896 that the net earnings of the three principal roads were $2,975,000, or almost 15 per cent on the full actual valuation of the railroads, a valuation which according to the railroad corporations is in excess of the value of their entire property. Yet though according to their own reports for 1896 their net earnings were almost $3,000,000, the claim of the roads is that in addition to a large interest on the actual cost of the property or its real valuation they must pay interest on $70,000,000 of fictitious capital or water. But I ask, in the name of reason, justice or right, why should every farmer, every traveler and every shipper in North Carolina be thus systematically plundered to pay for capital which never existed except on paper? Why should the wealth creators of North Carolina pay 15 per cent on a liberal valuation of the entire railroad properties after all running expenses, including princely salaries to favored officials, have been paid, when under state ownership 3 per cent would yield a handsome profit for money invested and 12 per cent would remain with the proper owners or real creators of the wealth?

In the case of the New York Central, as very ably discussed by Governor William Larrabee, a similar revelation is made, while in the cases of the Atchison, the Iron Mountain, the Erie and other great trunk lines even more astounding is the story of the corporate plunder of the public. The methods pursued by the Pennsylvania, as pointed out by Governor Larrabee, while more ingenious are scarcely more creditable than those of other lines. But, as I have already said, the story of one of these great corporations which own and control these vast public utilities is, with slight variations, the story of all.

When we come to quasi public utilities in municipalities, we find the same record of public plunder for private gain. Take, for example, the metropolitan street railway of New York, which furnishes a fair illustration. The New York World of Oct. 11, 1897, published a carefully prepared and somewhat exhaustive history of the rise of this giant monopoly. The story shows that there is today about $20,000,000 of water in the body of this one child of corporate greed, which enjoys an enormously valuable street franchise, and in return compels the traveling public to pay dividends, or interest, on $19,880,000 more than the total cost of the property.

The New York Journal publishes some valuable articles showing the enormous revenues which properly belong to the city of New York, but which through the control of quasi public utilities by private corporations are diverted into the pockets of the few. This paper also published a table giving the annual income in interest, rental and dividends from some of the leading public utilities of New York, of which the following is a summary:

Street and elevated railroads	$9,023,881
Gas companies	4,714,746
Electric light companies	824,750
Brooklyn Street Railway company	2,588,775
Total income in dividends, in interest and rentals	$17,152,182

Under municipal ownership this immense sum would be saved to the people in cheaper service and in lower taxes.

These illustrations are fair samples of the El Dorados of wealth which annually flow into the pockets of the few, who, through the corporate control of public utilities, are levying unjust tribute for private gain from the wealth creators of the nation.

Special privileges or protection granted by legislation are another source of gain, from which, with the aid of those who control nature's stores and the utilities made valuable by society, the few have been enabled to form vast trusts and monopolies. Thus, in the one item of sugar it was made possible for one great trust to take millions of dollars from the people by levying an additional tax on every spoonful of sugar eaten. All the corporations are linked together by the band of community of interest. There are periods when there is local warfare for a short time while the greater corporations are absorbing or crushing their smaller rivals, but these are merely incidents in the march of corporate power, and the fact remains that corporate greed is a unit against public weal. The corporations exist for the purpose of acquiring wealth for the few from the nation or the units that make up the nation, and corporate power, having no ethics, and indeed no conscience or soul, is the most formidable and essentially demoralizing influence in the republic, a power which corrupts and subverts government while it organizes oppression, and in whose atmosphere neither justice nor liberty can long survive. Its influence is as a moral miasma in public life, while it impoverishes, enslaves and debases the people. From the national government, despite the persistent efforts of organized corporate power to prevent exposures, have come such glaring and revolting swindles as the Credit Mobilier, the whisky ring, the secret bond deal and the armor plate and the sugar scandals. These are fair examples of the debauching influence of the corporations in public life. The Tweed ring and the exposures of the Lexow committee were startling illustrations of the corrupt conditions in municipal life which were rendered possible by the influence of corporate power seeking franchises and special privileges.

But the less open and less brazen influence of the corporations is something even more alarming than their bolder and more direct methods. Such are the purchase of large interests in great opinion forming journals and the silencing of voices which would soon awaken the conscience of the nation were they allowed to expose the corrupt and immoral practices of the corporations; the union of great advertising interests in a practical boycott by withdrawing their patronage from papers advocating measures beneficial to the people but offensive to the millionaires, such as the income tax; the pressure brought by bankers and insurance companies upon the advertising patrons of the press, as well as upon the press which advocates measures opposing the money lending interest. These are a few of the influences which have long been actively at work, and which, owing to the rapidly increasing power of the corporations and their Machiavelian methods, are becoming more and more successful.

The real conflict of the present, the struggle upon which the issue of free government is hanging today, is between corporate power and the public weal. It is a life and death conflict between interests organized in bands and conducted for the benefit of the few at the expense of the many on the one hand and the genius of free government and the well being of the millions on the other. It is of first importance to keep ever in the foreground the fundamental fact that the real issue is and must be the commonwealth against the corporations—that is, the freedom, happiness and prosperity of all the people against the aggressions of organized greed. It matters not whether we consider the question from the standpoint of economics, from that of public morality and national integrity or from that of private virtue and self respecting manhood; whether we view it in its relation to the liberty of the people and that sound morality upon which enduring free government alone can rest; whether we view it merely as a question of business relating to the interests of the people, or whether we consider the higher and more important aspects which relate to the fundamentals upon which lasting civilization rests—this issue becomes one of first importance to every right thinking man, whether he be statesman or educator, farmer or artisan.

And, what is more, in the presence of this mortal struggle between the forces of progress and those of oppression an awful duty devolves upon every man, a responsibility which no one, I care not how insignificant his influence may seem, can evade without committing a moral crime for which, somewhere and in some way, he will suffer as surely as there are moral laws running through the universe, and as certainly as the infraction of law brings evil consequences. This question, therefore, is one that concerns in a vital way every man and woman in the nation. What more glorious work can one engage in than that of rescuing freedom from oppression, reinstating justice on the throne of law and bringing hope, happiness and prosperity once more into the lives of the people?

The Evil of Trusts.

It may be gracious, but it is just, that I, speaking for myself alone, should express a difference from the distinguished leader whose flag I followed to the ditch and who again I am ready to follow to that inevitable victory which fate has decreed him, yet I differ in the view expressed that the reincarnation of silver is the most urgent need of the hour. Great and important as is the question, yet to me there ever arises that other question, What avail is it to the poor man should the government increase their privileges fourfold to take that money from him? So long as the law permits the concentration of wealth in the form of trusts to dictate to the citizen the price of the necessities of existence the citizen's increased dollar will be but the increased sum paid by that citizen for his existence. I say, therefore, that when these monopolies through prodigal bounties obtained by selected legislation can set a value upon the poor's privilege of living there can be no relief in expedients which palliate for an hour the fast increasing wealth.

We have the spectacle confronting us of the combined trust, controlling $7,000,000,000, the consolidated banks $11,000,000,000, the railroads $5,000,000,000, yet this vast wealth, one-third of the nation's possessions, manipulated by less men than would fill the Auditorium of Chicago, not 10,000, yet who, by virtue of this prodigious accumulation and its power for evil, openly defy the laws, corrupt the ballot box and defile the judiciary, and as a result of it all they force 30,000,000 people to yield up their benefits and 20,000,000 people to forfeit their political rights.—Hon. James Hamilton Lewis.

A Kind of Party Loyalty.

It is the misfortune of great parties when long in power that to it flock for mercenary and selfish motives all those who desire to enrich themselves by legislation which the party can give them.

So to the Republican party there have flocked during the past few years many birds of ill omen, undesirable tenants, who are making the house so foul that they are driving out the rightful owners.

Mr Cleveland disrupted his party in doing the bidding of a money syndicate which made enormous profits out of a scandalous bond deal.

Today all the trusts, all the monopolies, every agency which is bleeding the country, has taken refuge under the wing of the Republican party because they fear the Democratic party, which has kicked them out.

King Bomba cries, "I am the party, and there is none besides me!"

It is noticeable that every rascal is always an extreme partisan and "hollers" patriotism and party loyalty so that you cannot hit him without breaking plate glass.—Hazen S. Pingree.

THE NEW MANAGEMENT.

Formally Take Possession of the Great Overland Route.

The Union Pacific receivership became a thing of the past at midnight Jan. 31, 1898. At that time the receivers of the Union Pacific Railway company formally turned over the possession of the great "Overland Route" and all other property in their possession to the Union Pacific railroad company.

With the advent of the new company comes the announcement of the officers who will guide and direct the operation of the great railroad. According to a circular issued by Horace G. Burt, president, the following executive officers have been elected by the board of directors: Alexander Millar, secretary, New York; James G. Harris, treasurer, New York, Erastus Young, auditor, Omaha, Frank D. Brown, local treasurer, Omaha.

The following appointments are made by President Burt, to become effective Feb. 1, '98: Edwin Dickinson, general manager; John A. Munroe, freight traffic manager; Edward L. Lomax, general passenger and ticket agent; John B. Berry, chief engineer; John W. Griffith, purchasing agent, Omaha.

The president's circular further states: "All other persons in the service of the receivers upon said line of railroad on said day, until further notice, are authorized to act in their respective positions and capacities for this company."

The Trust Octopus.

Trust-forming goes steadily on. It stops not for season of plenty or adversity. One combination after another is consummated and the under man squeals every time. The latest is the steel rod, wire and nail trust, and J. Pierpont Morgan, prince of the trust makers, is the head. Morgan will have power far beyond anything the Rothschilds ever thought of if he is spared to live a few years more. And every he makes is to the direct detrime the public. The voters of the co had only begun to appreciate the t danger when six and a half million them last November cast their ba or a man pledged to throttle the o pus. But in the next election this will far transcend anything else in portance. Neither silver or tariff touch it. The very life-blood of people is being drawn by these comb tions. The larger cities are being fe the sacrifice of the smaller. The r roads foster the tendency. It comes be a question whether or not the gov ment some day will not be faced w the problem of absorption of the r road and telegraph systems as wel the great industrial enterprises. T is why the government talks about b ing or building an armor-plate pla It, itself, is coping with a combinatio Knoxville Sentinel.

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