

Vicarious Benevolence

Suppose an Oregon farmer had a pear orchard and the fruit was ripe. Suppose also that there was too much of the fruit to sell at home and he wished to ship the surplus to Chicago. Suppose finally that the railroad charges were so high that he could not ship to Chicago without losing money. What would that farmer naturally do? He would go to congress, would he not, and ask for a subsidy. He would ask our benevolent car-makers to give him a bonus on each box of fruit large enough to enable him to pay the freight and sell it at a profit in the Chicago market. Such is the habit of farmers, is it not? And when they ask for such a subsidy they always get it. Or are we dreaming? Is it the farmers who ask for subsidies to help pay the shipping expenses of their crops, or is it the millionaire trust magnates. And is it the farmers who get the subsidies and tariff bounties, or is it the great monopolist masters of congress?

It is a dream indeed. One farmer, or one thousand farmers, may see their crops rot on the ground because of high freight charges and the serenity of congress and Mr. Root and Mr. Shaw is not disturbed in the least; but when certain merchants have goods which they wish to ship to South America and which they can not ship with a profit because the freight is too high, then there is a hustling and bustling. Then the tongues of statesmen begin to wag. Then political philosophy bubbles forth in bounteous abundance and we hear of building up a magnificent international trade. There is nothing quite so lovely in the world as a merchant marine when a trust of shipbuilders wants to make a grab from the national treasury. Nothing in the heavens above or the waters beneath is so altogether beautiful as foreign commerce when the plutocratic exporters wish the American taxpayer to pay their freight bills for them. But when the talk swings round to the tariff, then Mr. Shaw turns pale and rends his garments at the very thought of foreign trade. Nothing is so bad for the country as international commerce when it threatens the divine tariff; nothing so good as foreign trade when it opens the way to a grab for the millionaire shipowners.

The domestic trade of this country has made it great and prosperous. It is worth in dollars many times over what our foreign trade comes to or ever can. Our marine upon the great lakes has flourished and developed to imperial magnitude without subsidies, and so would our ocean marine were the barbarous laws which check and blight it repealed. In regard to our ocean marine we are like the half-witted farmer who set the brake on his wagon and then wondered why the horses could not pull the load. He whipped and swore and the team tugged; but the wagon never budged. His wife came out to look on. "Wife," said he, "I shall have to buy another horse. This load is too heavy for one pair to haul." "Before you buy another horse, my dear, why don't you try the effect of taking the brake off?" The man stared in amazement at her lack of statesmanship. "That is just like the folly of a woman," he replied, contemptuously.

Despite the overwhelming importance of our domestic trade, laws to

facilitate it are wrenched from a reluctant government only after infinite strivings. Such laws are unconstitutional; they are direful paternalism; they are hostile to capital; they are socialistic. Congress shies at them; the courts annul them when they can. But nothing can exceed the philosophical excellence and the entire propriety of laws making donations to foreign trade. We are like the man who had a gold mine that would have made him rich, but he spent all it produced trying to raise coconuts in Labrador. The gold mine is our domestic trade. The coconuts are the unproductive trade with foreign countries which so excites the imagination of Mr. Root and Mr. Shaw.

Foreign trade is a good thing in its natural sphere, just as coconuts are, but it may cost too much. Before subsidizing the shipbuilders to build up an ocean marine, why not try removing the absurd navigation laws which have destroyed it? Why not cut down the tariff schedules? Foreigners buy of us more goods than they sell to us by many hundreds of millions of dollars. Since they can take these goods home cheaper in their own ships than they could in ours, they naturally do so, and they would continue to do so though the whole ocean swarmed with our merchant navy. The effect of a subsidy would be to pay a bonus to these foreigners for carrying home their own goods. This bonus the American taxpayers would advance and the trusts could then cut prices to the foreigner by the same amount. The ultimate consequence would be a further cheapening of American goods in foreign markets. Would it also cheapen them in the domestic market? How long will the patient American consumer continue to tax himself to make goods cheap for the English and German purchaser?

Mr. Root's especial fad now is to beguile us into making a present of free freight to the South American buyer. This would be a charming benevolence, but would it be sensible? It would enable the trusts to sell goods to the Argentines cheaper than they sell them at home, but where does the taxpayer come in? Benevolence is an attractive thing when you can practice it with somebody else's money.—The Portland Oregonian.

TELEGRAPHS AND TELEPHONES

For years the census bureau has been gathering statistics relative to telephones and telegraphs in the United States, and the mass of information collected will soon be issued in the form of a comprehensive report. Statistics of the telegraph and telephone were first shown in the census of 1880. At that time the telegraph had been in successful operation for forty years, while the telephone was still in its formative stage. Since then telephony has outstripped telegraphy. Now the various telephone systems operate more than three-fourth of the wire mileage and employ about three-fourths of the wage-earners in the service of both.

In 1904 there were approximately 3,300 commercial systems, 1,000 mutual systems and 5,300 independent rural lines. For the commercial systems the mileage was about 5,000,000, number of telephone, 2,500,000; mutual systems, mileage 90,000, number of telephones, 120,000; independent lines, mileage, 75,000, number of telephones, 80,000.

In 1902 the number of messages and talks reported was 5,070,554,553, of which 4,949,849,709 were local exchange calls and 120,704,844 were long distance and toll calls. The report will show that on the average there was one telephone to every 34 persons; that each person talked 65 times

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a year and that each telephone was used 2,200 times.

During the last ten years there has been a tremendous growth of the telephone service in rural communities, although the greatest increase in the number of telephones has been in the cities. San Francisco was the best served city in the United States, having one telephone for every nine inhabitants.

The average revenue per telephone amounted to \$37.50 and the average per message 1.7 cents. The average operating expense was \$24.56 per telephone and 1.1 cents per message. On January 1, 1905, the total number of telephones in the United States was 3,400,000 against a total of 1,485,784 in all Europe.

The effect of the telephone in reducing or checking the amount of telegraph business is produced in two ways—by substituting the long distance phone call for the telegraph message between two widely separated points and by obviating to a very large extent the necessity for using the telegraph within city limits.

The rates of the two systems for medium distances do not differ greatly and for very long distances they are overwhelmingly in favor of the telegraph if the message be taken as the unit; but if the number of words exchanged be taken into account, as well as the time required for getting into communication, the telegraph is at a disadvantage in case of a large amount of traffic.

Frequently the brief message will answer and the written telegram serve as a record; but when a swift interchange is required the telephone seems to have thoroughly established its superiority for social matters and for business. The public employs the telegraph at the rate of only a little more than once a year per capita, whereas the number of telephone messages is already 65 per capita.

The commercial telegraph systems owned and operated 1,318,350 miles of wire in 1902. In addition there were 16,677 nautical miles of submarine cable. The twenty-five systems have an investment or capitalization of stocks and bonds of \$162,946,525, a total revenue of \$40,930,000, and total assets of \$195,503,775. About 30,000 wage earners are employed.

The railway telegraph systems are represented by 684 companies. They employ 32,000 operators. The number of messages sent during the year for railroad business only was 201,743,756 and the number of commercial messages was 4,474,593.—Special Correspondence Sioux City Journal.

IRRESISTIBLE FUN

We must have fun occasionally. Devoled as we are to solemn work, the complications of reformers at times give us the blessing of a smile. What is known in Illinois as the Deneen organization, which owed its recent

victory to the reform element of the town, before the election entered into an armed truce with one Martin B. Madden, whose proclivities are known to fame. On account of the nature of the Honorable Madden, and his unfitness for the society of the good and true, it was arranged that he should write a letter resigning from the county central committee. Also, in spite of the fact that the Honorable Madden was unfit for association with the truly good, it was conceded that he was good enough to represent his district in congress; so the ways were greased for his nomination, the president gave him strong letters of recommendation, and he was overwhelmingly elected. At a certain meeting of the ward club the letter of the Honorable Madden was taken out of the pocket of the presiding officer and placed upon the table. The Honorable Madden walked to the front of the hall, stood beside the table, and started to make an impassioned address. The chance was too good. He reached out, seized the letter, crumpled it up, stuffed it into the pocket of his "pants," and announced in no uncertain language that the letter was obtained under duress. The members of the reform machine in public and private have not infrequently expressed the opinion that they always did suspect that the Honorable Madden was not quite right. A negro coachman had a valuable coach dog poisoned with strychnine. As the dog was kicking his last an overgrown brother-in-law of the coachman stood in the sad assemblage and repeated over and over: "I told Mr. Brown there was something the matter with that dog."—Collier's Weekly.

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