

A REASONABLE RETURN

At a mass meeting of railroad employes held at Grand Island to protest against the further reduction of freight rates by the railroad commission some criticism of the farmers was heard for demanding reduced railroad rates at a time when the farmers themselves were prosperous. The farmers, a speaker is reported as saying, are not willing that the railroad employes should share in their prosperity, a prosperity "brought about solely by the railroads."

It will be a pity and a mistake if this movement of railroad employes allows itself to generate sentiments such as this before their relation to the public and the railroads has been fairly and open-mindedly established. The debate leading to the Hepburn rate law of 1906 settled some of these things. It decided that the railroads are quasi-public corporations, receiving certain special privileges which only the state can give and without which they can not exist, in return for which they are to serve the public faithfully at reasonable rates. It was agreed that railroads are not creators of prosperity, but agents of it. They are to have fair returns for their capital whether the farmers are prosperous or not, just as the railroad employes demand fair wages whether the railroads are at the particular time specially prosperous or not. And no matter how prosperous the public is, it has a right to reduce railroad rates to the point which leaves the railroads a reasonable profit and no more.

Now the only real excuse for the farmers and the railroad employes to get at cross purposes lies in the doubt as to what this reasonable return is. The railroads tell their employes that the rate reductions enforced by the state have made wage reductions necessary. But their saying so does not make it so, and when they refuse to show us the proof are we not justified in doubting their word? Thomas F. Ryan, himself a great capitalist and railroad owner, alleged under oath the other day that the stock of the railroads of the country is 95 per cent water. May it not well be true that it is paying dividends on watered stock which causes the wage reductions? In that case the railroad employes should clearly be organizing to squeeze the water out of the stock instead of to force rates high enough to pay just wages and also unjust dividends.

So long as the railroads refuse to reveal the information as to their real value, which the public must have before it can determine what is a just profit, the farmers can do nothing less than assume that rates are too high.

For the employes to assume that they are too low is to take the simple

statement of a self interested party as final proof. If before they make up their minds as to this the employes will join with the farmers in forcing out the truth, such feelings as were expressed at the Grand Island meeting will have no occasion, for rates can then be adjusted in the open with obvious fairness to all interests.—Lincoln (Neb.) Journal.

BOOKS RECEIVED

Have you read Ed Howe's "Daily Notes of a Trip Around the World?" If not you ought to read it. It is published in two volumes by Crane & Co., Topeka, Kan. Editor Howe, commonly known as Ed took a trip around the globe and wrote a story of that trip for his own paper, the Atchison Globe, named presumably in anticipation of his own trip. He left home on the 26th of October, 1905, and returned in March, 1906. He took a daughter with him and reports that their trip cost them about \$3500. His daily diary of his journey is full of interesting incidents told in the humorous vein that has made his writings so widely quoted. His pen pictures of Hawaii, Japan, China, the Philippines, Ceylon, India, Egypt, Palestine and Europe are life like and full of information. The Commoner is glad to commend them to the reading public.

Mr. P. M. Hanney has published through the Hazel Pure Food Company, Chicago, a book entitled "How to Gain Health and Long Life." The table of contents which sufficiently describes the scope of the work includes "How Animal and Vegetable Bodies are Related," "The Digestibility and Nutritive Values of Foods," "The Proper Arrangement of Meals," "How to Detect Adulteration in Foods," "Necessity for Physical Exercise," "Pure Air, and how to Secure it," "Pure Water, and how to Obtain it," "Sleep, and how to Obtain it," and a few hints relative to the training of the child.

JOHN W. TOMLINSON

If Mr. Bryan has as faithful a friend and worker in every state as Hon. John W. Tomlinson is proving himself to be in Alabama there will be things doing in the Bryan camp in November. Mr. Bryan's idea of conducting a campaign with men and not with money—a thorough organization of all the active supporters of the cause of democracy in every beat and township throughout the land—is being faithfully executed and put into practice throughout Alabama by Mr. Tomlinson. In every county, and every town of importance as well as all parts of the state, Mr. Tomlinson is assisting in the crystallization of Bryan sentiment and in perfecting a thorough working organization of all the supporters of the Nebraskan's candidacy. If the Bryan men in the state are exercising the same painstaking care in the creation of an army of active political soldiers to serve in the cause of the people under the leadership and guidance of the great commoner, there can be but one result in the coming national election—an overwhelming Bryan victory. Organization is the secret of success in any enterprise wherein the efforts of many are to be enlisted in a common cause, and all know the difference between the quality of service rendered by him who is a paid Hessian and him who serves because of his belief in the teachings of true democracy and popular government and his loyalty to a cause and its leader. Again we say, if other states are being as closely organized as Alabama democracy will certainly triumph and Bryan will be elected to the presidency by his followers in November.—Gadsden (Ala.) Evening Journal.

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