

walls are constructed that are planned to match our tariff wall, and we find ourselves compelled to seek new outlets for trade or to revise our tariff system.

At the close of the Spanish war we saw the trade of the orient opening up before us, and our manufacturers declined to be alarmed by the growing sentiment against us in Europe. The time has come, however, when our isolated position can no longer be ignored. By means of a tariff system we have built up a narrow home trade. By tearing down the wall to a basis of tariff for revenue we can expand not only our foreign trade but our home trade as well, for we shall cease then to shelter the predatory trusts and will restore a state of competition that will vary and expand our industries. The laboring man, therefore, need not worry about his wages, as competition will furnish a wider field of industry and will therefore maintain wages. Our system of prohibitive tariff will tend constantly to narrow our trade, and our only relief is to be found in such measures as will prevent the other nations of the world from making us a victim of the same discrimination which we have wielded so long against them.

RAILWAY STRATAGEM REVEALED

At last the railways have revealed the plan by which they expect to defeat the Esch-Townsend bill for railway regulation. The bill, while far from perfect, provides that a government commission have the power to fix rates, and this provision has aroused the deadly and determined hostility of the railways. It must be eliminated at all costs.

In pursuance of their plan the railways have a counter proposition. It provides that litigation over disputed railway rates shall be expedited, but it gives the interstate commerce commission no increased power in the regulation of rates. At present the commission has the right to take evidence with reference to disputed rates but not to suggest fair and reasonable rates. It can merely order a rate reduced, but it has no power to enforce the order, this power being reserved to the courts. The railways would have the powers of the commission remain the same, but would make it possible to secure quicker action on the part of the courts in case of appeal.

The Esch-Townsend bill is an effective measure insofar as it gives a government commission the power to fix rates and to stamp out discrimination. Its provision that the rate fixed by the commission shall go into effect immediately is its greatest merit but it is on this provision that the railways will center the fight. They will attempt to prove that such a power is bound to ruin the railway business. The testimony of favored shippers obtained at the sitting of the senate committee on interstate commerce will be carted into the senate and the pyrotechnics will begin. For weeks the senators hostile to the Esch-Townsend bill will devote themselves to the task of convincing the people that they are unjust to the railways. We shall see the railway side of the question supported by an appalling array of facts and figures. There will be oratory in floods and tidal waves. And when the noise has ceased; when the people have been defeated and dumbfounded, the railways will call for a vote. What the result will be is purely a matter of conjecture, but it is pretty well understood throughout the country that the people have lost confidence in the senate as at present constituted.

On the other hand the people have made up their minds to have government control of railways. If they are thwarted by the present senate they will join in a mighty demand for government ownership and the election of senators by direct vote.

POSING IN BORROWED PLUMAGE

Evidence accumulates that the railways are preparing some artful dodge with reference to the anti-pass agitation which is winning its way so well in Nebraska. Of late three or four republican members of the last legislature, who were notorious for their railway affiliations, have announced themselves as hostile to the free pass system and have declared that legislation is needed to suppress the evil.

Is it likely that these gentlemen have seen the light and have turned reformers. If it be wise to abide by that celebrated maxim, "beware the Greeks bearing gifts," it is wise to be watchful of these men lest their purpose be guileful and their practice the most cunning deceit. The Independent does not pretend to say just what the artful dodge is, but it views with no little apprehension the sudden reformation of politicians who were wont to be hand and glove with the lobby. If these men succeed in controlling the republican organization, is it likely that they will use their power to secure any legislative action against the pass evil? This is a question which the

rank and file of the republican party should keep constantly in mind.

Members of all parties should be on their guard against chronic pass-holders who now pretend to a change of heart. Undoubtedly there has been a great alteration in public sentiment with regard to the pass in politics and in business. Undoubtedly there are many men who now believe the pass to be a great evil who thought little about the matter twelve months or even six months ago. Some of them may have ridden on passes whenever they could convince the railways that they were able to pay for such transportation by services of one kind or another, and now they may be honestly convinced that the greatest good of the greatest number requires them to help in suppressing the free pass system. Such men, however, are not signaling their change of mind by rushing into politics. They are not seeking to place themselves at the forefront of a public agitation which they had no part in creating. Such men are repentant and silent. They are not asking the people to elect them to the legislature in order that they may prove how sincere they are for reform and how determined they are to fight the battles of the reform cause even though they make martyrs of themselves. And yet this is the attitude of the three or four professional railway politicians now posing as enemies of the free pass system.

Nebraska voters must be careful not to be deceived by the virtuous bluster of these men. The voters should exact written pledges of all their candidates. A referendum of this kind would be a great protection against railway cunning. Few men will dare to place themselves on record in black and white with the intention of breaking their pledges after election. Even the professional politician will take no such chances. Whatever the scheme maybe—and the people may feel assured that the railways will have some cards to play—vigilance is the weapon with which the railways must be met. If the people permit the work of organization to remain in the hands of the professional politicians they cannot hope to make effective their demands for reform. There must be a new deal and a square deal. That party which turns over its organization to pass-holders who shout for anti-pass legislation cannot expect to retain the confidence of the voters. That party will deserve, and, unless all signs fail, will meet with defeat in the elections which are to decide whether the railways or the people are supreme in Nebraska.

"ALL ARE HONORABLE MEN"

C. H. Gregg, of the state normal board, has adopted the popular doctrine that it is not wrong to do as a member of a corporation what it is wrong to do as an individual. As president of the Kearney Hardware company he has filed with Auditor Searle a claim for \$1,080, but the auditor, who is interested in the legal if not the moral considerations involved, has refused to approve the claim.

Mr. Gregg's company furnished the Kearney normal school with a quantity of hardware. The contract was let to the Lincoln Hardware company on July 15, 1904, was transferred to the Stoddard Hardware company and at length to the Kearney Hardware company, of which Mr. Gregg became a member after the contract had been awarded. As a member of the State Normal board he receipted for the supplies, and as president of the hardware company he filed his bill with the auditor. Treasurer Mortensen entertained some doubts as to the legality of Mr. Gregg's actions and at a meeting of the normal board asked Mr. Gregg if he were not violating the law. Mr. Gregg replied that as an individual it would be illegal for him to hold such a contract, but that it was perfectly legal for him to be a member of the corporation holding the contract.

It does not appear in the minutes of the board that the moral phase of the question was discussed. Public officials rarely question each other about moral phases. The question always is, have you acted within the law? Apparently Mr. Gregg satisfied himself on that point before becoming a member of the corporation holding the contract. While it is not always safe to judge the mental operations of that very common class of men among us who are looking for the "easy dollar," it seems as though Mr. Gregg had decided that if his action was not illegal it was right. Hon. Chauncey M. Depew took practically the same view when as a director of the Equitable Life Assurance society he voted a rich loan to a tottering corporation of which he was a member. Mr. Gregg, therefore, finds himself in respectable company. Indeed, this company has been respectable in all ages. Doubtless the contractors who built the pyramids were members of the Royal Egyptian Cemetery association. Even in the garden of Eden Adam entertained the idea that by distributing the guilt he could lessen his own responsibility, and Adam was the most respectable gentleman of his day. When Brutus and Cas-