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**JUST AND REASONABLE**

The railroad rate bill that recently passed the house of representatives provides that a "just, reasonable and fairly remunerative rate, be fixed as a maximum charge," meaning, of course, that the charge should be just and reasonable as regards the railroad and the shipper.

Suppose the house bill passes the senate unamended in any essential particular, and the force of law is given to the purposes of those who framed the measure, then, in that case is there a shadow of a chance of obtaining under it a rate that will be fair to the shipper. Not at all. Why? Because public opinion is not sufficiently enlightened on the subject.

In the first place the people, whose necessities called railroads into existence and from whose use they derive all the value they possess, have a right to the use of them at a charge just sufficient to meet all expenses, including betterments and repairs, and pay a liberal rate of interest on the investment.

It is to be feared that public opinion is not sufficiently enlightened upon the railroad question to demand that rates be fixed upon the basis of actual investment. The danger is that the \$7,000,000,000 of water injected into railroad securities, that do not represent a single dollar invested in railroad property may be counted in determining upon a rate.

In case the bill now before the senate becomes a law, and the interstate commerce commission fix a maximum rate under it to which the railways demur and appeal to the courts, will the courts consider the actual investment in railway property the basis of a rate that will be just and reasonable, or will they consider outstanding bonds and stocks representing 50 per cent water, as property that the court must protect by fixing a rate that will pay interest and dividends upon the present inflated capitalization.

The question of railroad discrimination is a question between localities and individuals. It has been the practice of the railroads to build up favor-

ite cities and towns along their lines through rebates, and to destroy other cities and towns and injure large sections of the country by discriminating against them in freight rates. It has also been their practice to build up favorite corporations and other business enterprises at the expense of their competitors. But regardless of what locality is favored or discriminated against, or which individuals are favored or persecuted by the railroads through the foul system of rebates and discriminations, the burden of paying interest and dividends on the stocks and bonds, 50 per cent of which are water, falls upon the entire community. The railroads of the United States collect unjustly in this way between two and three hundred millions annually. The people who bear this burden fear that public opinion is not sufficiently enlightened and ripe upon this vital question to insure a decision of the courts that will do them justice, in the matter of determining what is a just and reasonable rate.

Public opinion makes new laws and interprets old ones. Courts are mere organs of the public and their decisions from time to time, mark stations in the progress of the public mind. An enlightened public opinion is always just and reasonable, but we must not expect a decision from any tribunal representing the public very much in advance of the enlightenment of the public, on the question at issue. The demand of the hour is for the dissemination of light upon the railway question.

**WON AND LOST**

"What does it profit a man, if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul?" Does the solemn warning of holy scripture burn with consuming force the consciousness of John D. Rockefeller as he cowardly slinks away from the light of day, and the faces of men into his subterranean hiding place to elude the process server of the law? Is his soul crushed with remorse over his merciless plunder of God's children? Is his spirit withering within him in convulsive despair over the consciousness of the methods he employed to get money? Is the blight he put upon the lives of thousands of his fellow beings being reflected back upon him from infinity and haunting him to madness? If true, he is, indeed, an object of pity.

But, on the other hand, if he is merely playing at his old game, and evading a court of justice while his minions carry out some deep and damnable plan to thwart justice, and save to him further opportunities to outrage the laws of God and override the laws of man in the work of plunder, it makes him an object of loathing, as sickening as it is monumental.

Why should the richest man in the world, in this era of money worship, be in hiding? None is seeking to arrest him and deprive him of his liberty, or even of any part of his billion or more of wealth. What, then, drives him, whose wealth would make a thousand millionaires, from the enjoyment of all that civilization can offer, and the applause of the hosts of Mammon, into a hole in the ground for safety after the fashion of a gopher, or a prairie dog?

If the answer must be, more money,

and the protection and perpetuation of his methods of money getting, then money to him is a curse. It brings to him, perverted being that he is, only wretchedness.

Contemplation of the vastness of his possessions, beggars the dreams of avarice. With an income greater than could be consumed by a score of families in luxurious and even riotous living, yet the maker and possessor of this colossal wealth is reported to be skulking back and forth through a subterranean passage that connects his own residence with that of a near relative, to escape being summoned to the witness stand where his testimony, at most, would only contribute to prevent him from continuing unlawful methods of plundering his fellows. And in this instance his testimony would interfere with only one of his many money making machines, and with this one in a single state, that of Missouri.

In his hiding, he is more conspicuous than he would be on the witness stand. His conduct is a confirmation of the charges against Standard Oil. His going into hiding, to avoid a legal process which seeks only to make him a witness in a case where Standard Oil methods are called in question, is accepted by the world as a confession of guilt, and attracts to him in his present hiding place universal attention. If he were a willing witness he would attract only passing attention, and altogether escape the notice of millions of our people.

Is it a part of the divine plan to mass the capabilities and rascalities of a thousand average men in one, that the success of the one may be so striking as to compel universal recognition of the evils in our systems or methods, as the primary and necessary condition of their overthrow? Rockefeller has only done in a large way, what thousands have done in a small way, and thousands more were trying to do. But what Rockefeller has been able to do, and has done, makes it easy for the millions to see not only the immorality of the methods employed, but to realize that they are a menace to civil society and popular government.

The example of Rockefeller, the most successful money maker of all time, in hiding and skulking through his underground tunnel, teaches a lesson much needed in this age of money madness. It teaches that he is most successful, after all, who possesses only a just equivalent of the services he has rendered to his fellow men, and who commands the respect, love and sympathy of his fellows so far as his name and fame extends.

**A PROPHECY**

Make a note of the prophecy here recorded. It may be convenient to refer to, a few years hence.

An irrepressible conflict between the people and the railways for supremacy is now on. The mutterings of the past have been but the casual skirmishes between the pickets of the opposing armies. The railways, the aggressors, have been thus far in possession of the field. They have omitted no preparation, and have covered every point of vantage even to capturing political organizations and dic-

tating nominations. They have no political bias but self-interest, which dictates different policies in different localities on grounds of economy.

The greatest graft of the ages has been perpetrated by the builders and manipulators of our railways. This graft has yielded fortunes in a single life time that dwarfed in comparison the greatest fortunes in the old world, built up through generations of oppression under the patronage of despotic governments. The opportunities this graft offered were irresistible, and attracted the most daring spirits of the age.

The work of plunder was interwoven with that of territorial development, so that in the benefits of development the graft was partly concealed and partly condoned. To check abuses or correct wrongs was impossible during certain stages of development. The day of reckoning could not come until certain stages of development were passed, which have at last been attained.

The great and powerful minds that planned and executed the work of building and manipulating railroads and making such tremendous fortunes

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