

BERLIN'S PUBLIC UTILITIES

PUBLIC AND PRIVATE OWNERSHIP COMPARED.

Disparities With the Two Chief Branches of Public Service—Telephone System Especially Bad—Efficient Bureaucratic Management—Competition.

BERLIN, May 14.—In no country in Europe can one examine the relative efficiency and economy of State managed and privately managed public services to greater advantage than in Germany. The bureaucracy there is more numerous and its attitude toward the general public is more autocratic than elsewhere among civilized people except in Russia.

It does not follow, however, that the average German is content with all the forms of State control under which he lives. Here in Berlin, for instance, great dissatisfaction is felt with two chief branches of public service, the Metropolitan railroad, or Stadtbahn, and the telephone system. The two illustrate a condition of things which can be paralleled in almost any part of the empire, just as what is true of the private enterprise is applicable in the same way.

The Metropolitan is an object of derision to all travelers, not least to the traveler from America. It carries one, indeed, between five stations for 15 pfennigs (four pfennigs equal one cent), but it takes about four times as long as a similar trip in New York does.

No doubt the traveler is amused at seeing his train dispatched to the stentorian command "Off" by a stiff backed personage in captain's uniform, and there is a great deal of concern, not to say curiosity, displayed about his ticket and behavior generally. At the moment he enters the station which is enclosed in a carriage which is usually warm when it should be cool and cold when it should be warm. But he has disagreeable sensations also.

Once he enters a railroad station, one might say any public place in Germany, he becomes "das Publikum," in other words, the servant and chattel of the authorities. There is a story, probably an old one, of the present Duke of Norfolk, when Postmaster-General, going into a London railway station to buy a penny stamp. The clerk was taking things so easily that the Duke called him to order, and when the clerk in a very impertinent tone asked the Duke why he was received the somewhat astonishing reply, "I am the Public," and with it the Duke's visiting card.

Such a story could not have originated in Germany. In Germany the official is everything and the public nothing. Nor is the public always badly treated, indeed, if it is a good child, if it behaves itself exactly in accordance with the numerous notices displayed in every public place, the authorities in many things remind one of the little girl who, when she was good, was very very good, but when she was bad was horrid.

Were the Metropolitan in the hands of a private company the service would be more rapid, the public better treated and the line more frequently used, not as now avoided when possible. When the line was built by Driksen a quarter of a century ago it was regarded as a masterpiece of technical achievement. So, perhaps it was, but from the beginning of its career it was bound, as municipal services commonly are, to deteriorate.

Influential incompetence was put at its head, it was overloaded with personnel, an army of bookkeepers with stacks of forms was brought into action, the bureaucratic spirit of contempt for or indifference to the rights of the public began to pervade the entire institution, and inefficiency began almost with the undertaking's birth. In such cases managers are chosen for their personal relations in high, that is to say official, quarters, rather than for their skill and experience. The staff is recruited not because of intelligence, alertness and technical fitness, but because of the information the candidates possess in history, Latin, literature and other academic subjects.

Under such a system Edison himself would have a poor chance of employment or promotion. The consequence has been that after twenty-five years working in Berlin the number of passengers, instead of rising yearly to correspond with the increase in population, has remained stationary or decreased. The public prefers the private company's street cars (Strassenbahn) or the carriages of the privately owned elevated underground (U-Bahn) or the omnibuses, or the quick transport at a moderate fare, at the same time avoiding overfilled carriages, unexpected delays and downing superiors.

For the Hochbahn franchise the Siemens & Halske Company pays a rent of about 2 1/2 per cent, on a yearly income exceeding \$4,000 annually. It is a small but quick and comfortable railway, taking one a distance, at present, of four miles for three cents. Since its establishment four or five years ago not a single accident on it of any gravity has been recorded.

The Berlin telephone system has never been so successful as to-day. The staff is said to be one of the worst in the world. An organic change in the manner of putting the call in connection with the caller was made last year, but the result was an improvement one might say, but for several months it has been in operation and the service instead of growing better is daily growing worse. Such a change would have been avoided if a private company, which would have made sure that it would satisfy its clients before venturing to disorganize commercial and public life, had been entrusted with the community. The authorities do not appear to have consulted the public in any fashion. They simply said, let it be done, and the consumer was left to his fate, and the public is helpless and in more than one sense voiceless.

Probably waterworks ought everywhere to be municipal, but however that may be, the municipal water supply of Berlin is excellent and unquestionably well managed, though the price, 15 pfennigs (about four cents) a cubic metre, is comparatively high. The water is not taken to the same extent as formerly from the rivers Spree and Havel, but comes from a new plant in the suburbs, and runs under the heart of the city and being of sandy structure practically filters the water before it reaches the surface.

Mr. Egger, one of the directors of the works, is not in favor of water supply by the agency of private enterprise. He thinks private companies work at the cost of good quality, are willing to spend money on technical processes that are essential to the production of an absolutely pure supply and do not control waste as a municipality does, since it is not to the interest of the consumer when he is guilty in this respect. The water of the Berlin wells has the unusual advantage of being of a temperature 10 degrees below the surface, but the water is not so much for State and municipally owned franchises. We now come to the three private concerns.

The Berlin in the best lighted city in the world, second to private enterprise. Since 1847, there has been a municipal gas plant in existence supplying half the city's wants, but its forerunner and model, the Imperial Continental Gas Company, is entitled to the credit of having shown the way and of extending the system to the rest of the world.

The history of the Continental is an interesting one. The company, originally English, is nearly a hundred years old, and during that time has given light to most of the chief towns on the continent of Europe. It still has plants in Austria, Spain, France, Belgium and Italy. Its operations in Germany began with the public lighting of Hanover in 1825, up to which date the streets of the town were lighted with oil. From 1825 to 1848 the Continental had a monopoly, but elsewhere, but the high prices charged induced the Berlin city fathers to start a gas plant of their own. Competition went on, both companies were threatened with destruction by the perfecting of the electric light. Then came the incandescent burner, the stocking, as it is called in Germany. The Continental now lights the streets of Berlin, charging for its supply 12.35 pfennigs a cubic metre, as against 0.9 pfennigs, the cost of lighting by electricity. So perfect have the company's incandescent lamps become that one of the large open places of the city is being lighted with them instead of electricity.

POEMS WORTH READING.

The Willow Whistle. Along the grassy shore he stands His voice is heard in the distance The rhythmic sough softly blends His melody low.

He carries it afar and wide. His melody is heard in the distance Control with hissing pomp and pride His pipe's shrill quips.

He fashioned it with artful skill From ronder trees— An unforgetful art that will All things that he has done remain Remains the source of many a joy I knew, when I Wandered as he, a vagrom boy, In days gone by.

HORACE SETHONER KELLER. Sweet Revenge. In this dim, secluded place, With a glass before your face, You may smile and nod and shake Your head, but you are not free You, the maid who scorned in glee Both my love and me, In your queenly spite.

Pictured maid and mighty men, Though quite meek and mild I've been, While you held me in your power, Soon will come my hour of joy, Remorse without alloy, For your cruel play.

You who held me on a string Dangling like some puppet thing, See, I pay you back! From your place you'll fall, I fear, For I'm hanging you, my dear, On a single tack. L. S. WATERBOOKE.

Military. She may sit in halls of Congress She may be the fairest of the fair, She may even find a place in the Presidential chair.

She may travel with a lute when abroad by night she goes, She may have a pocket of jewels, In the mantle of gold.

She may ride a horse a straddle, When upon the road she lies, She may learn to shoot a bullet, Without closing first her eyes.

But she will not be just equal Till, with interest intense, She can watch a thrilling ball game Through the knot hole in the fence. MCLANDBROOK FALLON.

The Golden Age. (Boethius, Book II, Metre V.) In dear, dim olden, ere that Helicon Flowed with the fountain by the Muses' bies, Ere greater Babel and Babylon Drove Terah to low Canaan there to rest.

When yet the world was new, And skies were first made blue, No man loved God and man to God his due, A friendship leal and true.

Then man lived in a golden, happy age, And all was peace and joy and hope and health, No punishments were writ on graven page, For still unknown were sinful wrong and stealth.

And each one fed his kindred, And where waters murmuring stirred, In glad possession of a simple wealth Accounted in a word.

At night a couch was found beneath the pine Or sought, perhaps, in some soft fragrant lawn, So close not far of the great woods were seen, Watched for the first faint flush of dawn.

And at the morning glow They called with mellow low, And on the waking shepherd they would fawn, And joy and gladness show.

The fertile fields all went of food supplied, The fields of grape, or running water, drank; There were no travellers venturing far and wide; No prow of stranger touched the ocean's brink; The seas sailed unexplored, and the winds were free, Uncut by barbs full oared;

To seek a foreign strand might no one think, With trading ships rich stored. So simple was the people's art and life, Content they dwelt in brightness of a peace, Unbroken by the sword, and free from strife, Men's thoughts were white as sun washed dew, and free.

Unloathed by Tyrant foes; Pure, beyond thought and high Were their hearts, and love and mirth without surmise, As Heaven might uplift. O golden, happy age, return, return! Private system is in the world to stay, No more the great of gold and silver, Each quarries out a deif.

To mine great stores of self, And run an eager, frantic, breathless race, Whose prize is self, is self. WILLIAM ADAMS SLADE.

Two Sides of a Proverb. In youth my veins with yearning surged Far lands to visit and a distant cross; The rolling stone, 'till I could see no more, My cautious parent, 'will collect no more.

I went, I saw, I conquered; and When I came back with tales of money, 'I always said, 'quoth Dad, no bland, 'Tis roving boys that get the honey.' E. T. NELSON.

The Sea's Call. From the "Mediterranean Sentinel." The leave of a deck and a wide blue track, The sea's call, the sea's call, the sea's call, The beheading of smoke from her funnels black, The sea's call, the sea's call, the sea's call, The edge of the world that looms afar, A half moon, ghostly, white, The sea's call, the sea's call, the sea's call, And the winds of a tropic night.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS.

What were the "days of the company" to which reference is made in the article on the 50th anniversary of the adoption of the Stars and Stripes as the flag of the United States.

Three of the best known New Yorkers with reminiscences of political affairs in the city and the State for the last forty years are Edward G. Gilmore, Senator Tom Creamer and Tommy Lynch, one of Gov. Flower's political wardens. These three men, Gilmore, Creamer and Lynch, and David C. Demarest, could fill eighteen volumes of reminiscences. In the beginning of the careers of these three men New York did not extend much above Fourteenth street and all three boys were reared in the city which was the plot of land now occupied by the Fifth Avenue Hotel. Only politicians familiar with inside doings will properly appreciate the experiences of these three men.

If Gilmore would write what he knows and if he would tell of his vast experiences what entertaining volumes he could turn out! Just so with Creamer and Lynch. The late Henry Lewis and David C. Demarest and others have written successfully on the inside workings of political machines, but around a table at the Fifth Avenue Hotel the other day the suggestion was made that Gilmore, Creamer and Lynch should write their natural cleverness as a literary gift all three could beat any political novelist (that New York State or any other State has yet turned out). Then, too, it was added, if Lewis or Phillips and others of equal ability could be secured, the experiences of Gilmore, Creamer and Lynch, thousands of novels of the ripest interest, which would be of very great benefit to the American people, could be produced. The conversation ended by saying that such a credit as a literary man, combined with his experiences as a political reporter, that led him to produce novels which brought about great reforms in England.

Senator Foraker at 61 enlisted as a private in the Eighty-ninth Regiment, Ohio Volunteer Infantry. Because of his activity and bravery he attracted the attention of General Sherman and was appointed an aide on his staff. At Missionary Ridge Foraker was in the very front rank of the charge that went over Bragg's breastworks. Later on in North Carolina he bore a message from Gen. Sherman to Gen. Sherman and was with him when Sherman's left wing was fighting Gen. Joseph Johnston, who had struck them on the flank, and that reinforcements were badly needed. This ride was a most perilous one, being nine miles long in North Carolina, and was not without incident. Gen. Sherman was greatly pleased over the bravery shown by the dashing young soldier and many years afterward he referred to the incident in a public address delivered at Cincinnati. The occasion was a soldiers' retreat. Foraker was Governor of Ohio at the time. Gen. 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