

STREET RAILWAYS.

Mr. A. W. Campbell Writes of Rapid Transit in St. Louis.

ELECTRICITY AND ITS FUTURE.

Wheeling Colonists and Their Connection With the Transportation and Power Companies—The Street Car Service of the Missouri Metropolis—Cable and Trolley Compared. The Irish as Traders and Promoters. A Large-Sized Turtle.

Special Correspondence of the Intelligencer.

WESTERN GROVES, NEAR ST. LOUIS, MO., Feb. 6.—When I look at a map of the city of St. Louis and survey its contour front and rear, water and land, and try to imagine a similitude of some familiar kind to which it may be likened, the mention of which will, as it were, photograph its appearance to the mind's eye of your readership, I am reminded of the celebrated conversation that took place between Hamlet and Polonius as to what "yonder cloud," rising on their slight above the Danish horizon, most resembled. Hamlet, you remember, first thought it looked like a camel; then he fancied it resembled a weasel; and finally, he concluded that it was quite like a whale; and when Polonius remarked that it was, indeed, "Very like a whale," they concluded to let it go at that and call it a whale of a cloud.

Just so in regard to the various resemblances on the map of the great metropolis of the southwest, and in regard to a comparison of views on the subject that took place between our friend Jimmy Campbell and myself a day or two ago, as we stood inspecting a street railroad map that hangs on the wall above his desk in the Rialto building. Our dialogue was very much on the Hamlet-Polonius order, as to whether there was any camel or weasel or whale similitude in this great lay-out of streets and parks and buildings, spread out before our eyes over such a grand area in every direction, or whether, ignoring these Shakespearean comparisons, we must find something of "closer kin to our memories and imaginations." Well, after much learned speculation in regard to things aqueous and terrene, things herbivorous, carnivorous and omnivorous, we finally concluded that the thing that St. Louis, as laid out on the maps, most resembled was an Ohio river turtle of the oblong or oval species; that is, a turtle that is somewhat longer than it is broad; and so, like Hamlet and Polonius, we let it go at that and agreed that it should be written up as a turtle-shaped city; the more so because, in addition to the oval shape, there is a faint suggestion of a turtle's head protruding at the south extremity, and a web foot projecting at the north end.

THE NEW ST. LOUIS.

Of course some jealous and envious Chicago person reading this letter will speak of this turtle business as a happy thought, and as strikingly descriptive of St. Louis, because, as all the Chicagoans affect to believe, she is not only turtle shaped but a turtle in her slow gait and in the torpidity of her general movements. Now, far be it from me to lead any aid or comfort to such an idea as this, for whatever was true in that respect of the old St. Louis there is very little of it visible in the St. Louis of today. As I have already said in my correspondence, she leans the van of the new south and southwest, and is in all essential respects a rejuvenated city as well as a cosmopolitan community.

As you have already perceived in this desecration upon the topography of St. Louis the immediate cause of it all was the street railroad map referred to at the outset. I was endeavoring to get a correct comprehension of the lay of the land as respects the various systems that make up the street railroad mileage of St. Louis. It had struck me more than once that something upon this subject would be of interest to your constituency, especially the Wheeling portion of it, and so I was studying the delineations of the map to that end. Naturally, being in pursuit of information on such a topic, I drifted into the office of our old time East Wheeling friend, for if there is one man, more than another, who knows all about the street railways of St. Louis it is Jimmy Campbell, the stock and bond magnate of the Rialto building. As Corwin once said of Fillmore's administration (in which he was secretary of the treasury), "I know all about it; for, in regard to it, I can say with the Latin poet, magna pars fui, which, being translated, means, a great part of whom I was which."

A NATION OF CONSTRUCTORS.

This is what our friend can say with much more truth in regard to the present street railways of the great Laclede settlement known as St. Louis, for no man, I presume, has had more to do with their exploitation, financing and construction than Jimmy, unless perchance it be that other man of Irish name famous here as John Scullen. And speaking of Irish names, I have long noticed that Irishmen, by birth or lineage, are somehow apt to become connected with the street railways of the country. They are public works builders in their own country and have also been largely so in this country. They have been the contractors who have built the railroads of the United States, and have turned their money thus made into the exploitation of municipal development of every kind, especially in the matter of street paving and street railway construction. The two men I have named are men who began life as railroad men, carriers of surveyors' chains, then subordinate surveyors, then contractors, and then capitalists. And in this evolutionary profession they are only types of their nationality as it can be observed all over the United States. The Irish are naturally a people who run whatever they take hold of. As some one has said, they run everything but their own country. The Saxon has held them at bay there a good many centuries, but, all the same, like Barnaby Rudge's famous raven, they "never say die."

THE IRISH ARE BIRDWIT TRADESMEN.

A Saxon bearing the very Saxonish name of Drinkwater asked me in London if I had noticed when traveling in Ireland the singular absence of Hebrew merchants or traders of any kind in that country, and upon my telling him that my attention had not been called to that fact, if such it was, he went on to reiterate that it was a fact, as I would discern if over I went back there. There are neither Saxon or Semitic traders there, said he; the Celt is too much for them; he can give them points in the business by buying and selling and boat them both. Now this fact is contrary to the idea put forth by Mark Twain in one of his humorous speeches, to the effect that Irishmen were mainly divisible into orators, poets, politicians, policemen, Tammany men, walking dila-

gates and grievance committeemen. In addition to all these accomplishments, as my London friend assured me, they are also great merchants and shrewd traders. The Scotch themselves, as he intimated, were not cannier in a deal, for are they not both Celtic in their origin?

I was all the more inclined to take stock in this statement of my Saxon friend, after hearing Morris Horkheimer say last summer that if a man was going to deal to any advantage to himself with Col. Thomas O'Brien he had need to get up very early in the morning. He intimated that the truth of his remark. Now I venture to say that there are shrewd traders here, like our friend Morris, who will go him one better as respects this necessity for early rising, and will tell him that those who have any aspirations in the direction of distinguishing either Jimmy Campbell or John Scullen in a deal must needs not only get up very early in the morning, but, for that matter, remain up all the night before.

THE PATH OF PROMOTERS.

I observed recently a pungent paragraph in Joe McCullagh's paper (he, too, is an Irishman) advising the city council to place all the streets, alleys and sidewalks of the town at the disposal of Scullen, for street railroad purposes, and allow him to gridiron them all with his track as might suit his ideas and interests. Thinks I to myself, on reading this paragraph, Joseph is hitting at both of his friends in this paragraph, albeit he only names one of them. In other words, I felt quite sure that our ex-townman might expect to be included in the next blast from his warning trumpet. This, you know, is the fate of promoters and other people who do things the world over. At a triumphal banquet given to Boss Shaphord, on his return from Mexico to the national capital a few years ago, one of the speakers made a remark to the effect that if a man was not willing to be misunderstood by his fellow citizens, and even to be called hard names, he had no mission as a municipal promoter; that is, as a projector, exploiter and builder of magnificent streets, parks, circles, boulevards, electric light plants and street car lines.

ST. LOUIS GROWING.

This reference brings me naturally to the promotion and construction of some of these same kind of improvements in St. Louis, particularly the various street railway systems and their 264 miles of track. The contrast which the city presents in the matter of rapid transit to the sort of transit that I have always associated with my previous visit here in 1883 is very striking indeed. Those were the days of the slow going horse car lines, and I remember them as both slow and shabby; almost such as you still see here on one or two insignificant lines. These were the turtle days of St. Louis, sure enough, and it is no wonder that she had such a dwarfed and repressed growth for so long a time. She was then in her 12th year, and during those four generations of existence she had not, with all her natural advantages, such as I pointed out in my first letter, accumulated as many people nor made anything like the progress that Chicago had made in less than two generations. She was still a horse car town. In that year, however, or the one following, the cable lines were introduced, and the people had for the first time something in the nature of rapid transit. The effect was very decided in the growth of population and the rise of far-out values. She gained 120,000 people from 1880 to 1890, whereas in the previous decade she had only gained about 40,000. I presume she owes something of this growth to the two promoters I have named and their municipal following.

WHEELING'S RAPID TRANSIT ARCHITECT.

Wheeling owes a good deal to John Sweeney as a promoter, although a good many people do not think so. He is the architect of rapid transit there on both sides of the river. Of course he went in, as the prime consideration, to help himself, just as all promoters do; but, all the same, he did a great deal for the town. Well, it was a dictum of John's that rapid transit begets its own reward in the way of patronage, the truth of which observation, so far as Wheeling is concerned, would have no doubt demonstrated itself ere this but for the break-down in her industries just about that time. Its truth has been fully demonstrated in St. Louis, as the figures abundantly show. For instance, on a street railway system of 181 miles, in 1884, and a population of about 400,000, the lines carried 43,000,000 passengers that year, whereas ten years later, in 1894, with a population of 510,000, they carried 95,000,000. In other words, while the population increased about one-third, and the street railways in about the same proportion, the patronage increased over one hundred per cent. Thus you see how well rapid transit has paid the promoters of it here, and I notice by their resumption of dividends at Wheeling that it has begun to pay there, also.

TROLLEY VS. CABLE.

St. Louis is well situated for a rapid transit town. It has some long stretches, of easy grade, in both north and south directions. The area of the city is about 40,000 acres, or about half the area of Ohio county. Its river line is equal to the distance between Short creek and Grave creek, and it has an average width of about six miles. This is the area traversed by its 264 miles of street railway. This mileage is divided between six or seven systems, the principal of which are the Union Depot system, the Lindell, the Missouri and the Suburban. Three-fourths of the trackage is under the electric trolley system, and the balance divided between cables and horse cars. Like the English sparrow, electricity drives out competition. There is an adaptiveness and elasticity possessed by it that belongs to no other form of motorship. It can wind round and round, and "wire in and wire out," until, like "Muttie Van," it "leaves the people all in doubt whether the fox that made the track is going forward or coming back;" whereas the cables, like stomachs, have to run in carefully prepared and expensive channels. The latter cost (rails and all) about \$35,000 per mile to construct, as against say \$12,000 for the trolleys. The capitalization of all the systems (the 264 miles) represents, nominally, eighteen millions of dollars, and bonds to the extent of sixteen millions more. The average franchise of the lines runs thirty years. There is an annual average franchise tax of \$5,000 in addition to their other taxes. In lieu of these taxes some of them pay 2 per cent of their gross receipts.

A GOOD ELECTRIC SERVICE.

This business of gridironing streets with rails and overhanging them with wires is a pretty serious one from some points of view, and not without its inconveniences and dangers, as was shown here in the recent great sleet and snow storm, when so many "live" wires were prostrated and such a serpentine mesh of called copper obstructed the streets. There was for a day or two a somewhat pronounced underground sentiment in

St. Louis, but the public has a proverbially short memory and already but little is heard of it. The fact is that the electric service in St. Louis is so good, except in the matter of heating the cars, that the people reconcile themselves to the banishment of horses and carriages from the streets and to the dangers from the dropping of wires, especially as there is no practical electrical substitute for the trolley. They tried the storage system here and abandoned it as commercially impracticable, and as for conduits they will never be introduced until, as in the case of the telephone and telegraph wires in Wheeling and other cities, public sentiment, by reason of some startling calamity, becomes inexorable against the overhead system.

ELECTRICITY AND GAS.

It is not only on the street railway lines that electricity has made the great advance here that I am speaking of. It is invading the domain of horses and steam in all directions. There is an infinite amount of machinery run by the subtle fluid in St. Louis. I referred in one of my letters to the railroad supplies factory of M. M. Buck & Co., at 214 North Third street, where our ex-townman, Mr. Han Handlan, presides; a concern of six stories that is wholly operated by electricity brought into the establishment over a wire run from the Laclede Power Company, two miles away. The average cost of such power is forty cents per horse power per hour. (I do not know what is in their factory.) By the use of it a factory escapes the dangers of explosion and fire, and also all the ashes and dirt that attend the use of coal. Therefore, you can see that, even supposing it to cost as much as steam, the tendency must be to its very general use. In the domain of both motorship and light the march of electricity is onward, "conquering and to conquer." All houses of the better class now erected in St. Louis are provided with electrical connections, just the same as for gas. I asked our friend Campbell, who is largely interested in the Laclede Gas Company, if his company did not find its receipts falling off as reason of this spreading use of the new illuminator. "Not at all," he replied, "on the contrary, as you will see by this little slip containing a synopsis of our business, for the year just closed, our receipts are increasing." And, sure enough, this was the showing of the slip. The explanation that he gave was that more gas was used in the kitchens and for other purposes of heat, and also that electricity had educated the people to a more liberal use of gas as an illuminator. The language of the Marselles hymn is, "Oh, liberty! can man resign thee once having felt thy generous flame?" And so, by a gentle transposition, our friend Campbell, and a full chorus of his gas company, can say and sing, "Oh, light! can man resign thee once having seen the electric flame?" His opinion is that the St. Louis man, at least, can not, and therefore that the great Laclede (of which our friend Dully Thompson is treasurer) will, like Tennyson's brook, "flow on forever."

ELECTRICITY'S FUTURE.

In my letter of January 14, I quoted Mr. John J. Mitchell (Captain Richard Crawford's early confederate) as saying that it would be something immense to come around here a few years hence and see the wonders that will be wrought by electricity. I am daily more impressed with the truth of this remark. The leading paper here makes a feature of electrical news in its columns, and it is astonishing to observe what is going on everywhere, all over the country and all over the world. I suppose, of course, that you have seen that an electrical line is to be opened this year, in whole or part, between Washington and Baltimore, and that its cars are to make the run between the two cities in about thirty-five minutes. Also, I suppose that you have noticed that the Baltimore & Ohio is building electric engines to haul heavy trains through the new eight mile tunnel under the city of Baltimore and the river east of it. How long will it be until the Baltimore & Ohio and all steam roads will adopt electricity? Further, also, you have no doubt seen that the Niagara Falls company is about ready to supply the city of Buffalo and all the country within a fifty-mile radius with all the electricity they need for power and light. The light of the future, the power of the future and the heat of the future are all to come from this mysterious agency—this invisible and innumerable agency—about which we know absolutely nothing, and which, as far as we can now see, is as unknown as the power that governs the Universe. Indeed, as respects electricity, it is very much as the Hindoo said of that same mysterious power of the Universe, that "we are puzzled by a power we see not, and struck by a power unknown." This is all we know of electricity, that it is a power evoked from an iron or steel magnet, or otherwise created by chemical corrosion (as in telegraph offices) but nothing is explained as to its origin or nature by anything we can see. Occasionally I have gone out to the power houses here that generate it for motor and light purposes, and have watched the whirling dynamos—some of them evolving 1200 horse power, and others of them supplying as many as 1,500 arc lamps with current; and I have asked the electrical experts in charge to explain the nature of their current—these "lines of force," as they call them, that are generated by these whirling dynamos, and all the reply they make is that which was made to the Hindoo, viz:—"What do the wisest know?"

"What have they wisest from the silence? Hath even a whisper come Of the secret—whence and whither? Alas! for the gods are dumb."

A. W. C.

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