

THE OMAHA BEE

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RAILROAD WARS.

It is commonly believed that the "Iowa pool," composed of the four railroads between Chicago and Omaha, has been finally broken, and that the business in that important route will shortly become the subject of a "war of rates." A few weeks ago the Kansas City pool was on the eve of disruption, and now the great trunk line pool is threatened with disturbance growing out of alleged cutting of passenger rates by the "Nickel Plate" road. The present difficulties may be smoothed over, but their existence points to the most serious danger that hangs over railway property in this country—a danger far more to be apprehended than any which congress or state legislatures have ever threatened.

This danger consists in "overproduction" of the same type as that which now afflicts the iron and woolen and paper mills of the country. It is a part of the competition of capital, which is everywhere going on and which cannot be kept out of railroad building any more than out of cotton spinning. The very misery cannot suppress or retard it, even within their own circles. An officer of an important railway in the west, whose original line was confined to the state of Illinois, but now extends to Colorado, with a fan-tail of branches in every direction, said recently that every mile of road beyond the original plan had been undertaken with extreme reluctance and only when forced upon them by the plainest necessity. It was not to get new business, but to save and retain the old, that they had built here and there, and were building still. All the lines and properties of this company have been and are still working upon the same theory. Each is pushed on by the other in the line of over-production until the business becomes unsatisfactory, and the "pools" break up and there is a war of rates and a tumble in stocks, and the public derive the advantage, for a longer or shorter time, of very low rates of transportation.

If existing railways cannot avoid over-production and cutting of each other's throats (as they clearly cannot), still less can they prevent the building of other and entirely new lines to compete with their own, such as the Nickel Plate and West Shore roads, which form a parallel to the New York Central and Lake Shore system for a distance of nearly a thousand miles. Nor can anything prevent it except the hand of government. This is a remedy which is not to be looked for in the present stage of the railroad problem, but the time is coming, in our judgment, when the ablest railroad managers will be glad to surrender their now exclusive control over rates of transportation to the government in return for protection against the encroachments of each upon the other. At all events it is worth the consideration of the anti-monopolists, whether the advantages which they think are to be brought about by state interference are not working themselves out with sufficient rapidity under the law of competition.—New York Evening Post.

The anti-monopolists do not propose to submit to the arbitrary exactions of the railroad barons until relief comes through the law of competition. There can be no permanent competition between railroads because in the very nature of things railroads are monopolies. Every railroad in this country has a monopoly of its local traffic at every point that is not touched by another railroad, and when competition does come by the construction of rival lines, combination always follows as a matter of necessity. Whether the combination is made by uniform rates, which are invariably higher than the rival lines could afford to make them, or whether their earnings are pooled, the monopoly always remains. Pooling within itself always means the repeal of the laws of competition, and the out-throat wars between pool lines are generally paid for by the patrons of the railroads when the war is over. The corporation press, with which the New York Evening Post is now identified, readily admits that the government must sooner or later step in and prevent the construction of railroads where existing roads afford ample facility for all the traffic of the section through which the new road proposes to pass. In other words the government must stop the building of two railroads where only one is needed in order to prevent an over-production of railroads, which would force their owners either to exact exorbitant tolls or to resort to a ruinous competition for business. The Evening Post even admits that the time is coming when the ablest railroad managers will be glad to surrender their exclusive control over transportation rates to the government in return for its protection against the encroachments of each upon the other.

In the name of common sense, why not begin now? Why do they want to put off to some future day what they admit must be done as a matter of self-preservation? Why should any more trunk lines be paralleled by "nickel-plate" syndicates, whose sole object is to quass millions through Credit Mobilier construction rings, and then after the road is mortgaged for all it is worth to glut the market with an unlimited issue of stock upon which the patrons of the new road are expected to pay a dividend, whether the road is operated in competition or pools its earnings with the old line.

Why should not the present congress enact an inter-state commerce law that will prevent the systematic highway robberies to which the people of this country have been subjected for years? Why not establish a maximum rate, above which no railroad shall charge, and a minimum rate below which none of them shall cut? Why should not the legislatures of the states interfere on behalf of the people and the railroads, too. Is not this continuous plea of Jeff Davis, "All we want is to be let alone," on the part of the railroad managers and corporation press, getting about as monotonous as it is impudent.

GERARD MASSEY lectured in this country some years ago on the subject, "Why Doesn't God Kill the Devil?" Now Mr. Massey answers his conundrum by suing the New York Times for \$5,000 for alleged damage to his character. The Times charged, among other things, that Massey had advanced the theory that man had seven souls, and that he could obtain proof of the existence of his seventh or only really valuable soul by getting drunk.

THE CITY'S NEW DEPARTURE. The city of Denver is about to inaugurate a new departure in the matter of raising revenue. An ordinance has been unanimously recommended for passage in city council to impose license fees upon nearly every class of mercantile business. It may be of interest to Omaha business men to know how little they are taxed comparatively. The schedule of license fees in Denver is very lengthy. It includes among others the following: Auctioneers, \$200 a year; brewers, \$300; retail liquor dealers, \$1,000; wholesale liquor dealers, \$300; book agents, \$40; commission merchants, \$200; intelligence offices or employment bureaus, \$200; ice wagons, \$25 each; money changers and dealers in stocks, \$100; patent medicine peddlers, \$400; pawn-brokers, \$500; pedlars of patent inventions, \$100; lightning rod peddlers, \$100; tree peddlers, \$100; roller skating rinks, \$100; other skating rinks, \$200; second hand dealers in furniture, \$300; railroad ticket broker, \$100; solicitor for real estate, insurance agent, or railroad ticket broker, \$100; advertising agents and bill posters, \$40; insurance agent, \$500; loaner of money on personal property, \$200; sewing machine agent, \$100; agent for foreign breweries, \$300; agent for powder company or gunpowder, \$100; menagerie and circus, for first exhibition, \$250; each subsequent exhibition, \$100; each sideshow where admission is charged, \$25; peanut stands and sidewalk merchants, \$120; telegraph companies, \$500; telephone companies, \$1.00 per year for each instrument; junk dealers, \$50. Liquor licenses are payable for six months in advance, other licenses must be paid one year in advance, except transients, such as pedlars, agents, etc.

With such a revenue as that Denver can have a large police force to apprehend thieves and ruffians, and the criminal class generally, and should have enough to maintain a splendid fire department. In Omaha there is nothing like this license system, and it might not be good policy to establish such rates but there ought to be a better system than we have for licensing certain classes of business which pay no other taxes for keeping up the city. To be sure the license money in Omaha would all go to the school fund, but this would relieve us from all school tax and enable us to pay off the school debt.

CUT OFF THE "CONTINGENT." At nearly every session of the Nebraska legislature for the last ten years bills have been log-rolled through to pay claim agents for collecting money due to this state from the national government. We have had bills for the relief of Tom Kennard and Pat O. Hawes and other professional lobbyists, and in nearly every instance those lobbyists have succeeded by pooling with the Lincoln rings, and every bogus claimant who happens to want relief at the expense of the taxpayers. On page 352 of the statutes of 1883 we find the following item among other miscellaneous appropriations: "To pay Patrick O. Hawes in full for collecting the claim of the state of Nebraska from the United States for suppressing Indian hostilities in 1864, \$1,038.25." When this allowance was made to Mr. Hawes it was done with the understanding that this closed the ledger account between him and the State of Nebraska. But Pat O. Hawes is again at Washington pretending to be the accredited agent of this state for the collection of claims. It may be of interest to the taxpayers of Nebraska to know why anybody should be employed to act as state claim agent. By whom has Pat. Hawes been appointed and by what authority? Nebraska has two senators and three members of congress at Washington under pay, and they certainly ought to be competent to adjust any claims which this state may have against the general government. If they are not competent or willing to attend to such matters, they are unfit to represent us. It behooves the governor of Nebraska to recall all claim agents, or pretended agents, to save our legislature from future annoyance, and the state from further expense. Nebraska has had enough of the contingent congressman farce.

DIO LEWIS AND JOHN B. FINCH. Dr. Dio Lewis, who has been a recognized authority on matters of temperance, in eating as well as drinking, has struck a snag in his voyage through Ohio. It appears that ten years ago Dr. Lewis was the apostle of the Ohio crusaders, and indirectly the founder of the Women's Christian Temperance union. The officers of that society had recently made arrangements to celebrate the tenth anniversary, which will occur on the 23d of December. An invitation was issued to Dr. Lewis to address the assembly on that occasion at Hillsboro. It appears, however, that the doctor has undergone a great change of heart during the last ten years. He had reached the conclusion, after traveling from Maine to California, that prohibition does not prohibit, where the community has not reached a high moral standard. With him, therefore, temperance reform had become a battle for higher morals within the family circle instead of a vain attempt to regulate the appetites and habits of people by prohibitory statute. The ladies of Hillsboro, having heard of the conversion of Dr. Lewis to the high license and local option systems, decided upon a new departure. They invited our own, the

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Prof. Elliott, of the Smithsonian, who has spent much time in Alaska, thinks that owing to the failure of recent gold mines there the population of the territory does not now exceed 400 persons. We presume that he means 400 white persons. If this is the case it will be an expensive luxury to give Alaska a territorial government, with legislative and judicial officers. Possibly the best way out of the dilemma is to annex Alaska to Washington territory for governmental jurisdiction.

Congressman Haskell, of Kansas, is dead. He was one of the ablest representatives that Kansas has ever sent to the national legislature. He represented the Second district of Kansas, which included the counties of Allen, Anderson, Bourbon, Cherokee, Crawford, Douglas, Franklin, Johnson, Labette, Lynn, Miami, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson and Wyandotte. His home is at Lawrence. He was born at Springfield, Vt., March 23, 1824, received a classical education at Easthampton, Mass., and took a special course at Yale college; engaged in mercantile pursuits; removed to Kansas in 1856; was a member of the state house of representatives in 1872, '75 and '76, serving the last term as speaker of the house; was nominated for governor by the temperance party in 1874 and declined; was elected to the Forty-fifth and Forty-sixth congresses, and was re-elected to the Forty-seventh and Forty-eighth congresses as a republican.

While the southern people deprecate the revival of sectional issues they should be made to understand that they cannot at this late date expect the United States to cash their claims for