

ALMOST A BIRD

Bozeman Bulger made a trip back to childhood's happy home in Dadeville, Alabama, and when he returned to New York he brought this one with him:

A negro was on the stand in an Alabama courthouse testifying to the details of a shooting scrape. The witness told how the prisoner at the bar drew a revolver and began firing at one Jim Henry, and how Jim Henry ran to save himself.

"You say Henry ran?" interjected the lawyer for the defense.

"Dat's what I said."

"You are sure he ran?"

"Sho' is!"

"Well, did he run fast?"

"Did he run fa— Say, boss, ef dat nigger had 'a' had one feather in his hand he'd 'a' flew."—Saturday Evening Post.

ATMOSPHERE

(Continued from last issue.)

"How gray you've got! There's a little bit of Christmas on either side of your ears. It wasn't there when I left, but it's rather becoming. If you stayed here long enough, I'm sure it would melt."

"We're going to be here for a couple of days at least—repairs or something. Do you want me to meet him?"

He opened his cigarette case and struck a match that blazed steadily in the downpour of heat.

"You don't? Very well. I haven't the slightest desire to break up the Garden of Eden atmosphere of yours and the sartorial simplicity of your get-up but—"

He touched the edge of her skirt with a careless hand.

"One doesn't need clothes—one doesn't meet anybody."

His eyebrows lifted and he smiled.

"What a wonderful reformation! Before, it was always you hadn't anything to wear and you met too many people. I remember a yellow gown you had embroidered in copper wheat. Do you?"

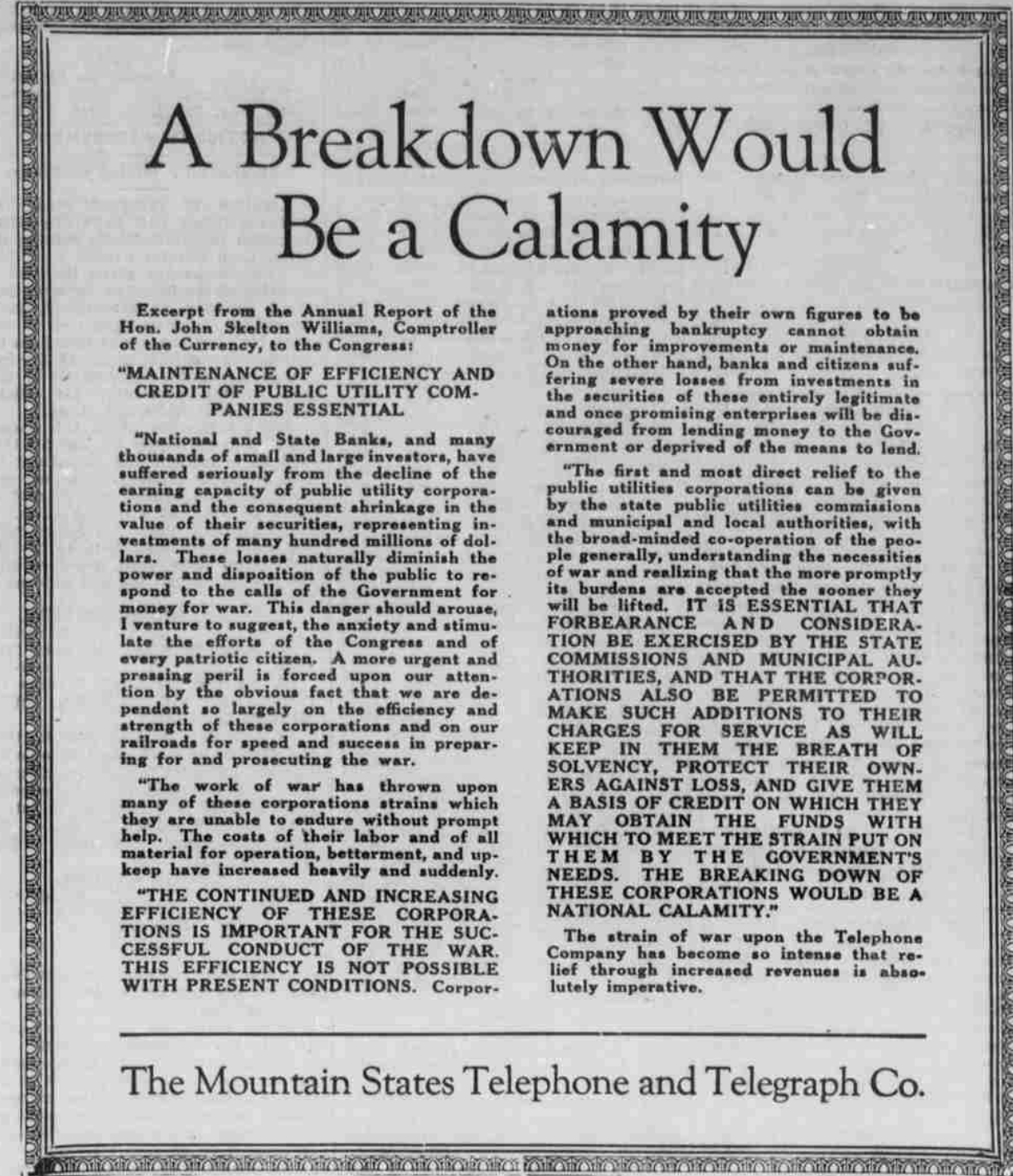
"Paquin," she said dully.

"You know," he went on in his peculiar dragging voice, "I can easily forgive you all the man side of the business—going away with him, living here and all that. But what I can't forgive is the fact that you have been untrue to yourself."

"Untrue to myself?" she repeated. "I don't understand."

"You would have understood a year ago, but you've got blurred. Those sensitive edges that are such an important part of a woman have become dulled. You're being untrue to yourself at this very moment because you know perfectly well that this changeless blood-sucking heat isn't for you. You know it—I can see it in your eyes."

"I know," she said, "but I didn't till I was coming down to meet the boat—honestly. It jumped at me out of the garden. Perhaps it's been hiding there for a long time."



A Breakdown Would Be a Calamity

Excerpt from the Annual Report of the Hon. John Skelton Williams, Comptroller of the Currency, to the Congress:

"MAINTENANCE OF EFFICIENCY AND CREDIT OF PUBLIC UTILITY COMPANIES ESSENTIAL

"National and State Banks, and many thousands of small and large investors, have suffered seriously from the decline of the earning capacity of public utility corporations and the consequent shrinkage in the value of their securities, representing investments of many hundred millions of dollars. These losses naturally diminish the power and disposition of the public to respond to the calls of the Government for money for war. This danger should arouse, I venture to suggest, the anxiety and stimulate the efforts of the Congress and of every patriotic citizen. A more urgent and pressing peril is forced upon our attention by the obvious fact that we are dependent so largely on the efficiency and strength of these corporations and on our railroads for speed and success in preparing for and prosecuting the war.

"The work of war has thrown upon many of these corporations strains which they are unable to endure without prompt help. The costs of their labor and of all material for operation, betterment, and upkeep have increased heavily and suddenly.

"THE CONTINUED AND INCREASING EFFICIENCY OF THESE CORPORATIONS IS IMPORTANT FOR THE SUCCESSFUL CONDUCT OF THE WAR. THIS EFFICIENCY IS NOT POSSIBLE WITH PRESENT CONDITIONS. Corpor-

ations proved by their own figures to be approaching bankruptcy cannot obtain money for improvements or maintenance. On the other hand, banks and citizens suffering severe losses from investments in the securities of these entirely legitimate and once promising enterprises will be discouraged from lending money to the Government or deprived of the means to lend.

"The first and most direct relief to the public utilities corporations can be given by the state public utilities commissions and municipal and local authorities, with the broad-minded co-operation of the people generally, understanding the necessities of war and realizing that the more promptly its burdens are accepted the sooner they will be lifted. IT IS ESSENTIAL THAT FORBEARANCE AND CONSIDERATION BE EXERCISED BY THE STATE COMMISSIONS AND MUNICIPAL AUTHORITIES, AND THAT THE CORPORATIONS ALSO BE PERMITTED TO MAKE SUCH ADDITIONS TO THEIR CHARGES FOR SERVICE AS WILL KEEP IN THEM THE BREATH OF SOLVENCY, PROTECT THEIR OWNERS AGAINST LOSS, AND GIVE THEM A BASIS OF CREDIT ON WHICH THEY MAY OBTAIN THE FUNDS WITH WHICH TO MEET THE STRAIN PUT ON THEM BY THE GOVERNMENT'S NEEDS. THE BREAKING DOWN OF THESE CORPORATIONS WOULD BE A NATIONAL CALAMITY."

The strain of war upon the Telephone Company has become so intense that relief through increased revenues is absolutely imperative.

The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Co.

"What are you going to do?"

"I've made my life," she said, "I'm going to live it. It's very wonderful in some ways. He cares for me—cares for me terribly."

"A wonderful woman's going to die on this island."

"You mean me?"

"Of course I mean you."

"That means you're willing to take me back—now—as I am."

"Exactly."

The ship was strangely still, as ships always are when slaved with ropes and cables. As they leant across the white rail his arm went around her.

"Let me talk for a moment. Rather a long talk. Your atmosphere's all wavering. It was good for a while—splendid. Something you'd read about and were living out yourself. But I think you see the end of it all. Now, even a fashionable funeral—"

"You mean you want me back—even as I am—after everything's happened?"

He nodded and caught at her wrist.

"I've got to go," she said. "You know—up there to him."

"We can catch the boat—it's here for three days. Aren't you glad?"

"I don't see why we have to catch the boat. I know it's here, I've—"

"They want me back in New York—the head office. Won't you love to get back. They ought to put up the scent of the Avenue in bottles and send it out to people like us so many times a year to make us feel at home."

She was sitting in a wicker chair with her long fingers pointed together—a mist of green behind her head and a faded flower that had once been crimson at her waist.

"I don't think I'll go," she said quietly.

"No," she repeated without waiting for him to answer, "I just don't think I'll go. You've just got me tuned to this atmosphere; the other back there would tear me all to shreds. Go

and see Jack on the ship. You'll like each other despite the woman who came between."

She wrote to them

"I am sending this by one of the stewards because I know he'll find you somewhere on deck with two long, cool, lemony-looking glasses. What I'm doing isn't being done for effect. Always remember that. It was just atmosphere. But when I saw you, Jack, and smelt New York in the seams of your flannels, and when I went back to Ko and found him toasting in native underwear—oh, I don't know—I've taken the motor boat and when the gasoline runs out, I'll drift till I die. Please, please don't think I'm being theatrical—I'm not—it's the real, real thing."

"Shall we look for her?" asked her husband.

"What's the use?" said the man who loved her. "She means it."—Town Topics.