



Devoted to the Interests of Skagit, San Juan, and Whatcom Counties and the Whole Northwest.

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### THE STANDARD DEVIL FISH, THROUGH WHOSE SUCKERS RUNS NATURE'S GIFT OF OIL.

THE STANDARD OIL CO. WHICH IS NOW A GIANT AS WELL AS A FINANCIAL FRAUD

The devil fish of American business has been only thirteen years in growing and getting the petroleum trade of the world, completely in its control. Its iron tentacles—railroad iron and iron-pipe lines—hold that industry tight while it sucks blood at leisure. In the final settlement which the American people surely have to make with corporate power, the longest and darkest account will be for the part the "common carriers" played in breathing the breath of life into the Standard Oil Monopoly.

There was at first a double drawback contract with all the railroads leading out of the oil regions, whereby the Standard Oil Company was (1) to enjoy an exclusive low rate of freight on all oil it shipped, and was (2) to receive a "divvy" from the excessive freight which competing shippers must pay. The railroads favored the Standard and picked the pockets of its business rivals, handing the swag over to the Standard Sunday-school superintendents and others. Part of the time the Standard fixed not only the rate of its own freight, but directed how much per barrel the railroads should steal from competitors' shipments for its benefit. It was as if the railroad employees had secretly run a given number of barrels of oil out of every tank car of independent shippers into the cars of the Standard. Of course this double steal soon made the Standard the only shippers of crude petroleum.

Then they went for the refiners. A doubly heavy drawback was put on refined oil shipments, in addition to the discrimination on crude rates to independent refiners. And it was not long before the Standard owned all the refineries in the country, or had crushed the owners and reduced the works to junk heaps. The property it thus destroyed or confiscated amounted to millions, and there was no remedy found in a land where property rights are held so sacred, if a laboring man proposes a fairer shake up. If here and there an independent shipper or refiner held out, thinking he could pay the excessive freight and live out of the enormous margins the Standard was making between the price of crude and refined, the railroads refused point blank to haul out for him at any price—even if he furnished his own tank cars. And the courts, in the celebrated case of Oilien decided that the railroads could not be prevented from thus garroting trade.

The Octopus had now a pretty good grasp on the refining business. By the grace of Satan in the railroads it had constituted itself the only purchaser of crude and the only seller of refined.

But the producer was restive under this state of things which put him so much at the mercy of the devil fish. Other tentacles were then thrown around the producers in the form of pipe-lines, thousands of miles long, with a sucker reaching to every well in the oil region. With this new system of claws the producer of oil not only must sell to the Standard Oil Company, but he could not move a drop of his own property to market, except at the will of the monopoly and to deliver it to whom it might direct. The producer of this property then was not as much its owner as the Standard was.

Only one thing prevented the monopoly fixing the price on all crude as low as it pleased—as it could that of refined as high as it pleased—and that was speculative buyers. Outside capital thought petroleum a good "spec" at fifty and seventy-five cents a barrel, and began to build tanks and run oil into them to hold for a rise. The devil fish never would tolerate rivalry. It began to head off this interference by refusing to run any oil through its pipes from the wells unless the

oil were sold to itself. Hundreds of men whose receiving tanks at their wells were full, besieged the pipe-line offices for relief, and were told they must sell their oil to the monopoly before the blockade would be removed. The producers were helpless. There was no other way to get their oil out, and their tanks were running over.

The next turn of the screw, this one being found to stick, was for the Standard, professing to "yield to popular clamor against enforced sales," to refuse to buy or to run. A complete blockade was established. Then appeared a few outside buyers who "had a little empty tankage in the pipe-lines," who, as a matter of favor, could take the oil at from twenty-five to fifty per cent discount from the very low quoted rate of the monopoly. By some mysterious power these buyers could always open the stop cocks, and relieve the tanks of oil of which they had stolen one-fourth or one-half the value.

Under this highway robbery, things began to get hot in the oil country. There are daredevils there, and there is nitro-glycerine there, and thousands of stovecocks to the Standard's big tanks away in lonely woods and on mountain sides. "Yielding again to public opinion," the monopoly consented to allow private storage tanks to be connected with the pipe lines and suffered men to put their own oil in their own tanks. But this remarkable loosening of the chains upon industry was accompanied with terms as humiliating as a successful corporation ever imposed on returning strikers, and at the cost of charges and fees which gave the monopoly all the profit there was in the producing or holding the oil.

It was at one time charged that the Standard Oil Company intends to buy and monopolize all the oil-producing territory. It did not need to. It could have all the oil produced at its own price, and could prevent well owners from either making any money or using a cent's worth of their own property and take no risk in drilling wells or casing for them. It had practically 50,000 men at work for it for no gain, boarding themselves and furnishing their own capital to operate with. The Czar of Russia is not more potent over his subjects, an Irish landlord has not his tenants more at his mercy than this monopoly had the oil producer of Pennsylvania and New York.

Some of its devices for oppression were mean and heartless enough for a Simon Legree. I knew a young fellow who rigged up an abandoned well and managed to pump a barrel and a half of oil per day out of it. To increase his income so that he could get enough to eat, he dipped waste oil from a stream—the water was constantly colored from overflowing tanks—and carried it to his little tank. The gauger of the pipe line perceiving that the output was increasing alarmingly at a little well, inquired into it, and to punish him for dipping oil cut off his tank from the pipe line, and his whole business was gone up. It claims that all oil found loose belonging to the Standard—like the bank president who kicked a boy out when he picked up a pin that belonged to the bank.

"General average" is another swindle. If a Standard tank springs a leak, or if Jupiter Olympus volunteers an expression of opinion on such fantastic wretches by striking a big tank with lightning, the loss is assessed by the Standard on all the oil to the credit of private parties in its lines. That is, it helps itself to enough private property to make good its own loss. And then, if any of the escaped oil can be damed up and gathered, the Standard covers that into its treasury—a clean steal.

The story might be "continued in our next" for weeks. The profits of this monopoly are—no one knows how much. Perhaps one million, perhaps two million a month. It has

out-grown its creators, the railroads, and is now independent of rebates and tank cars, having its pipe lines from wells to all its refineries.

The history is instructive as showing what is possible in any line of business—wheat, pork, cotton, etc.—if the railroad-join with men with large enough brain and small enough hearts to build a brainless, heartless monopoly.

The strangest of all remains to be told. This organization, it is said, has no legal existence, no head, no body, no bowels, nothing but tentacles and suckers. It cannot be sued, cannot be found, cannot be investigated. And yet it today is the strongest, most exacting monopoly in the world, and holds the business and living of tens of thousands of laboring men and small capitalists absolutely at its mercy. Stranger still, those tens of thousands are submissive, meek, and seem to hug their chains. How will it end?

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