DESERET EVENING NEWS.

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A GRAND TRAIT.

The NEWS was much impressed with the following remark of a staunch friend of the people of Utah, a gentleman who knows them well, although he is not one of them: "I have been telling your friends in the East, when the stories of this political party's trickery and the other political party's unfairness would be telegraphed in the unfavorable effect, 'Never mind about such things; don't quibble and become fearful that one side or the other is going to get the advantage by any sharp practice; the people of Utah know how to deal with knaves, whatever the name of politics the latter may have; any crowd or clique that try to put up a job on them will be sure to get the worst of it.'"

This fine tribute to the perception and the sense of justice of the citizens of this Territory will be appreciated, and all ought to see to it that for the future it is still more highly deserved. The NEWS believes it has been and is true of the people inhabiting these mountain valleys. They never were blindly, intensely and bitterly partisan, and we trust they never will be. Our faith in their integrity is that no party affiliation will be strong enough to make them partners in and beneficiaries of political chicanery, selfishness or fraud. We know them well enough to promise that crooked work of any and every kind cannot escape their stern rebuke. They are a patient and a charitable people, but they are honest, and will have fair play in politics as well as in business. This is not saying that they are or will be prone to party treachery. On the contrary, it is saying in the most emphatic kind of a way that, fighting bravely for right and justice within their party lines, they will be rendering the highest service to party fealty and preservation.

IT IS OUR BUSINESS.

It has been insisted in some quarters that the Reilly funding bill, extending for fifty years the time of paying the Pacific railways' indebtedness to the government, is "not our fight" so far as Utah is concerned. An examination into actual conditions, however, makes it clear that this claim is a mistake, since the matters connected with and to be affected by the funding bill are of the gravest importance to the people of Utah, and therefore are emphatically their business. Not only do these conditions make them concerned as spectators in any contest that is being waged affecting the Pacific railways, but self-interest requires some measure of active participation therein. This is the case notwithstanding the fact that the Salt Lake Chamber of Commerce, as a local business organization acting in the interest of merchants here, was justified in pursuing a conservative course in not favoring, at present the antagonism of the railways, and therefore laid aside the anti-funding bill resolutions.

The attitude of the railways toward Utah makes every move affecting them of vital importance to the people generally. Our business and industrial interests have been in great measure in the hands of the railway managers, and this has never been more the case than at present. This is realized when we are reminded that if Utah could reach an outside market with her agricultural and industrial products without having to pay enormous tribute in the way of freights, matters might be very much improved here. In this respect it is common knowledge that the welfare of Utah has not been very dear to the railway heart; but that the policy has been to keep the people here in a state of business serfdom. For instance, our agriculturists are absolutely shut out of the coast markets with their surplus wheat solely on account of the exorbitant rates charged by the Southern Pacific. A host of other instances with agricultural and industrial products would be cited in the same line.

Then there is our coal interest. If in this Territory we could mine three-quarters of a million tons more annually than we do at present, what a vast amount of labor that would represent! If we could have a profitable outside market for this amount, how many millions would it bring to Utah in a decade! Yet this trade of 750,000 tons of coal annually which could be had with California is completely shut off by railway rates and manipulations, and that amount of foreign coal is used instead, to the injury of Utah business. And beyond this there is the local extortion. Everybody knows that we ought to have $3 coal in Salt Lake, Ogden and Provo, and a proportionate price at other towns along the railways. Who prevents it? The railways. If a mine owner not in the railway man's coal combine attempts to reduce the price he is shut out and suppressed by an iniquitous doubling up of freight rates; and this city goes on and pays $2 a ton more than she should on half a million tons of coal annually, while other cities and towns are no better off.

But how is the failure or success of the funding bill going to help or hinder us in these matters? If its success will fasten on us for another fifty years the burden that has been borne for a quarter of a century; or if its failure will relieve us within the next five years and bring equitable freight rates so that the farmer and the coal miner can get their product to an outside market, and so that coal can be shipped to our cities at the price it should be, the answer to the question is given. For the determination of these matters it is to the interest of Utah that due consideration be given to suggestions for a change. So far as the railways are concerned, there is no promise that the success of the funding bill which they support will cause the slightest variance in policy. If there is any relief in sight it must be on the other side.

Without being committed to either view of the case until after thorough investigation, it is only fair to ourselves to hear and weigh the arguments presented on so vital a topic. The opponents of the funding bill, who now have nearly a hundred thousand signatures to their petitions in the West, make this claim: If the bill is not passed then the government will take control of the Pacific roads and cause their operation upon a basis that will not discriminate against any section of country; and as Utah always has been discriminated against in the matter of shipping her products, she has all to gain and nothing to lose. In the coal business all mine owners can enter the market with their output upon an equal basis, and not be shut out by excessive freight tariffs.

Again, say the anti-funding bill men: We want a direct road to the coast, and have talked of the Deep Creek line, which never has amounted to anything else but talk. With the Central Pacific track under government control all connections must be treated alike. A road from this city around the south end of Great Salt Lake, and within reach of branch lines to Deep Creek, would join the Central Pacific in less than 140 miles. That would give the through route desired. To build an independent road to California would cost $20,000,000. The "link" could be constructed for less than one-twentieth of that amount, and be just as satisfactory. With the funding bill passed this could not be accomplished in the next half century.

Thus it will be seen that in the items of the local coal supply and the direct route to the coast, aside from other considerations, there is sufficient connection between the funding bill and the vital interests of Utah to call for a careful examination of the matter. It would not be wise to pander to an anti-railway sentiment and go headlessly into a movement antagonistic to the Pacific roads; nor is it a fair thing to the people to permit the railway men to smother full and free discussion of the topic. We want to see Utah relieved from the unjust and oppressive railway discrimination that is holding her back in industrial development; and we want to find the quickest and easiest way to accomplish that result. For this reason we believe that every legitimate scheme which affords a prospect of success should be given thorough public investigation. In this respect the government dealing with the Pacific railways is our business.

RUSSIAN CONDITIONS.

The slow progress of the Russian people in civilization is a fact difficult to account for. It is true that since the time of Peter the Great, whose victorious armies and mighty genius lifted the empire up to the position of one of the great powers of the world, there has been steady advancement in every direction; but it is equally true that this advancement can bear no comparison with that of the rest of Europe, not to mention the phenomenal growth of our own country. And it is equally true that what progress has been made in Russia is confined almost entirely to the upper classes, the favored few, who mostly have had the benefit of foreign influences, while the masses of the people remain practically in a condition not much above semi-barbarism. It is strange that in a country with such vast agricultural and mining resources, the bulk of the nation should be plunged in a bottomless pit of debt, almost starving to death; that the clouds of ignorance and superstition should darken the face of the land while neighboring countries are basking in the light of knowledge and freedom of thought. To say that all this is due to the established form of government is not to account for the fact; it is but to state another fact equally strange, and both no doubt being but different effects of the same cause. History teaches plainly that when a people really advance in civilization, in a desire for liberty and enlightenment, no despotic government can keep them back forever. As they grow and expand they will burst their fetters and crush despotism with irresistible force, or perish in the attempt.

Recently some interesting figures illustrative of conditions in Russia have been published, which throw a ray of light on this subject. It is shown that the death rate in that country is enormous. According to the reports of the medical department, the rate of mortality for the whole empire ranges from 31 to 37 per 1,000, and in the thirteen central provinces of European Russia it reaches 62 per 1,000. Last year in 118 districts the deaths exceeded the births, indicating, it would seem, that the population is actually dying out. The death rate throughout is about twice that of Great Britain and exceeds largely that of every other European country. In 1880 it was calculated that the average duration of life in Russia is 29 years, while in Germany it is 37 years, and the fact is that the mortality is greater among the country population than in the cities, proving that it is not due entirely to bad sanitary regulations.

There must be a cause for this, and it is thought to be found in the fact that a vast majority of the people are actually starving. The food of the Russian laborer consists chiefly of bread. Statistics show that the gross product of the country when the exports and that which is reserved for seed are deducted leave just about 700 pounds a year per capita, or less than half what is allowed a convict in English prisons. With all his toil and economy, the average Russian peasant cannot earn enough to pay his taxes and secure the food necessary to maintain his vitality. The government now has an account of $51,428,621 taxes in arrears, and $200,000,000 for food furnished from public storehouses, all charged to the peasants.

These figures show, even if they are but approximately correct, the true cause of the enormous mortality in the country and also the condition of stagnation in which the Russian people exist. Neither intellectual nor physical progress is possible when impeded by hunger. A people daily staring starvation in the face and grappling with the problem of mere living as with an impossible puzzle are not likely to take much interest in the higher questions of life, such as education and individual human rights; nor are they in a position to give time and thought to such things, even if they should momentarily feel an interest in them. Disheartened, despairing, the peasants plunged in debt and slowly dying of want cannot have ambition enough, as a rule, to rise and demand reforms; they try to forget their misery in intoxicating drinks, resigned to their fate and accepting it as unavoidable.

It is of but little avail that the higher classes of the people live in luxury and get the benefit of civilization abroad. They are not and cannot be in touch with the suffering masses, the main body of the nation. These remain sick and unable to profit by the advance of civilization around them.

The great lesson to be drawn from Russian conditions is that any nation that will advance and maintain its position in the front ranks of civilization must see to it that all its resources are so utilized as to give the laboring classes the means of living in accordance with the requirements of nature. If the laborers and their interests are so neglected that starvation is the result, the nation as a whole will suffer; and the outcome must be either dissolution or a relapse to despotism in one form or another.

Home and Abroad.

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