

quarrel over that slice of Asia, there would be little difficulty in Russia swooping down upon the prize. It would be a great chance in furtherance of a great scheme, and the Colossus of the North would be recreant to his historic policy if he were not present in force, both at the commencement of the intrigue and the culmination of its work.

### ITS CAUSE AND NATURE

No more widespread and annoying strike in railroad circles has ever been precipitated in America than the one now on by order of the American Railway Union, of which Mr. Eugene V. Debs is the head and moving spirit. It was not at first supposed that the organization was strong enough in either the far West or on the Atlantic seaboard to affect at all seriously the regular transaction of railroad business in those sections; its membership has been computed at about 130,000 men, who were to be found principally in that part of the country known by eastern people as the West and Northwest, that is, the states west of the Alleghanies, east of the Missouri and north of the Ohio. But within the last few days the Knights of Labor and the various railroad brotherhoods have actively joined forces with the A. R. U., the result being a general tie-up of nearly all the principal roads of the entire western country.

It should be understood in the outset that this grievous situation is caused by what is called a "sympathetic" strike. The employees of the railways whose business is thus brought to a standstill have no personal grievance against their employers—at least no such thing is claimed as the cause of the present conflict. Neither in the wages received nor in the hours of labor, have they brought forward anything to complain of. The usual bitterness existing between the corporations and the men when these conflicts occur is accordingly wanting thus far in the present crisis. If violence shall come, as it almost inevitably will if the lock-up continues for any length of time, it will grow out of future efforts by one side or the other to force its policy to success. If the railroads decide to abandon their train service entirely, both passenger and freight, the strikers would hardly be foolhardy enough to try to force them to operate and to provide employment. On the other hand, if the roads try to continue their service with new and non-union men, it is more than likely the latter would be subject to insult and injury, and the companies' property to danger if not destruction.

Now, what is the grievance that has brought about a situation so strained? Simply this: The Pullman car company some time ago reduced the wages of its employees at its great works near Chicago. The men claimed that the scale was already so low that any further reduction meant slavery, if not starvation. The company, on its part, declared that it was operating at an actual loss, and that there must be a reduction of wages to meet this deficiency, or the works must close altogether; and it offered its books for the inspection of a committee of the men

in proof of its claim of poor business. The employees declined this offer; but they laid stress on the seemingly contradictory fact that the company had recently declared a dividend, and upon the other stubborn fact that while Pullman sleepers were still in as great use and as well patronized as ever, and while there had been no reduction in the charges to passengers on such cars, the workmen had been out down in wages year after year, and the prices of material—every element, in fact, that enters into the construction of the cars—had been growing constantly cheaper. As to the argument concerning the dividend, the News has already pointed out that that did not necessarily represent the current year's or quarter's earnings—it may have been taken from the surplus fund of any particularly prosperous year in the past; we all know of institutions, even here at home, which haven't made a cent in twelve months, and yet manage to declare the usual or a slightly reduced dividend. Just how the Pullman company have met the other argument—that their cars are well-patronized and charge a high tariff notwithstanding the great reduction in other lines all round—we have not yet learned; it was probably in the form of a general denial. In this connection it will be said that the workmen made a mistake when they declined the offer to examine the company's books. On the other hand, it must be truthfully admitted that the Pullman management cut itself off from much sympathy it would otherwise have received, when it peremptorily and insultingly refused to arbitrate the differences: a course which the workmen implored and its own warm supporters strongly urged.

Reconciliation being thus made impossible, a strike was ordered. But the sufferers could be none others than the workmen, for the company already had its cars on every railroad; it could close its works without injury to itself at all, the only necessary part of its business being to keep its cars repaired, which could easily be arranged for with its patrons. Then the American Railway Union came to the rescue. The Pullman strikers were members of the organization, and it resolved to sustain them in their fight. After giving due time for the company to accede to the terms proposed, or at least to consent to arbitrate, a strike of all members of the union was ordered against every road using Pullman cars. The novel and daring plan of campaign was inaugurated last week; and the contest, originally against the sleeping car company alone, has resolved itself into a quarrel with every road over which those cars run. Nor has it been possible to adhere to the first intention, which was to refuse to handle only Pullman sleepers or trains containing such cars. The railway managers, resenting this assumption of authority on the part of their employees to say which cars might or might not be run on their roads, forced the issue by promptly discharging the men who refused to handle and take out such trains as were customary. Then the remaining men refused to work until their discharged associates were taken back. And so on, from step to step, it has gone with great rapidity, until the

question now is, not alone whether the roads will yield so far as to run trains without Pullmans, but also whether they will take back their discharged men. Virtually at first a question of wages between one corporation and a few workmen, it has become a great issue between all railway corporations and their employees. And unfortunately, the parties who are suffering the least are the Pullman people themselves; for all the blows, though aimed at them, are really passing over their heads and inflicting injury upon railroad employees, railroad corporations, commerce, the mails, and general business everywhere. This much of an understanding of the case is necessary to correct judgment as to the amount of blame and where it belongs.

### FOR THE COURTS.

Today the courts in the West have grave and delicate duties to perform—duties in which it is essential for the country's welfare that the judges take special care to lay aside bias of any nature and to proceed as patriotic representatives of the national Constitution and the laws enacted thereunder. These duties are pressed upon them by the great railway strike now in progress; and in the adjudication of affairs connected therewith, a vacillating policy or an exhibition of partisanship or prejudice against one or other of the parties immediately concerned, cannot but result in serious mischief to the commonwealth.

The two views of the legal situation may be briefly stated as (1) that set forth by Judge Riner in his order to the receivers of the Union Pacific, and in (2) the stand taken in Judge Hallett's court in Denver today, in proceedings by the strikers against the receivers of the Santa Fe road. Judge Riner's order regards as discharged from the Union Pacific's service all of the men in his judicial circuit who, at 7 o'clock this morning, remained with the strikers. In the Santa Fe proceedings it is claimed by the receivers that those employees who by striking caused the stoppage of traffic are interfering with United States mails, and that the arm of the government, in the use of the troops if necessary, should be directed against them. On the other hand, the attorneys of the strikers, who are conducting the prosecution against the Santa Fe receivers, insist that the latter are guilty of interfering with the mails because they refuse to send out trains with the latter unless they have Pullman cars attached, while the employees have made a formal offer to run all trains except the objectionable cars.

Just what position the courts will take on these issues remains to be seen. If the discharged employees and strikers are held to be the responsible parties for interfering with the mails, the government will have to proceed against them. If the receivers who do not let the mail trains go without Pullmans are legally wrong so far as their road's contract with the government is concerned, then they must obey the orders of the courts, and the strikers would win. Thus far the contest has resolved itself into a matter of legal adjudica-