

the service is all that could be expected, and there have always been surplus earnings every year for the last 45 years.

The money for the construction of public telegraph lines is advanced by the general state treasury, a certain time limit being prescribed, when the amount has to be all paid back with usual interest. Surplus earnings are either used in the construction of new lines or are turned over to the state treasury.

The main telegraph system of Sweden belonging to the government under the supervision of the telegraph department, is supplemented by a number of lines operated by the railways along the roads. Of course some of these lines are in fact also public property, in as much as all main railroads are public property. But as these lines are considered as an integral part of the railroad system, they are administered in connection with the railroad department. Private railroads also operate telegraph lines along their roads, all of which, however, are cooperating with the main system, owned by the state, and open to the public on the same conditions and at the same rates as the government's lines.

The length of the state owned cables (those only belonging to the telegraph department are here referred to) was at the beginning of the year 1900 not less than 5,500 miles; and the length of the wires was 16,500 miles. The length of all cables in the country was at the same time 9,000 miles; and of the wires, 28,500 miles.

The government constructed its first telegraph line in 1853, and in 1856 the administrative bureau, which takes care of and operates the public lines, was established. This bureau also regulates and has supervision over the lines which work in cooperation with the government's lines.

No complaints of any serious kind have ever been known to have been made against the public telegraph system, as owned and operated by the government; and the corruption that is often claimed would be the result of a system of government ownership is practically unknown to Sweden. But it must be remembered that the details have been worked out during a long period of years, and that publicity of results and accounts, contracts and agreements, to a great extent prevent and eliminate possibilities for corruption.

As to the rates charged, it must be remarked in the first place that rates are uniform all over the country, independent of distance, in the same manner as are postal rates in this country. The longest lines are about 1,000 miles, and the rate is \$0.0135 a word; however, a minimum rate is fixed at \$0.135 cents for all telegrams not exceeding ten words in length.

The financial outcome has, as mentioned before, always proven a success, and in 1899 the incomes exceeded the expenses by \$110,000.

The construction cost of the lines is, if anything, higher than in this country, the wire having to be imported, and the lines being constructed with extreme care. The operating expenses are naturally somewhat lower, the compensation paid to operators being less in proportion than here. This difference, however, by no means accounts for the difference in rates charged by private telegraph companies in the United States, and it could easily be admitted that the usual rates in this country could be cut in half

if the government owned and operated the lines, as it now does the postal service. Lower rates would also increase the amount of business, and thus make the proposition a still more favorable one. What other countries can do with success there ought to be no reason why the United States could not do, thereby decreasing instead of increasing the present corruption, and adding to the comfort and convenience of the citizens.

ERIK OBERG.

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HUMAN KINDNESS IN WRECKED SAN FRANCISCO.

Ashton Stevens in San Francisco Examiner. Reprinted Here From the Coast Seamen's Journal of April 25, 1906.

In the wreck of San Francisco the courage of her people found expression in kindness. The minds of the survivors are yet a little numb. The picture fails to reveal itself as a whole; it comes to us detached, broken; the perspective is all awry. We are so close to it that vision seems to have been reversed and we are miles and miles removed. San Francisco is fighting her way back to her budding in the yet steaming ruins of Lower South-of-Market street; the resonant music of hammer on nails is heard near the Ferry building; already, before the smoke has cleared, the stimulus of reconstruction is in the air.

And fragments of the picture come back to the survivors, the reconstructors. It is only natural that that they should be very personal. Each man has a story in his breast, a raw, incomplete narrative of terror. That is the splash of red on the canvas, and concerns not so much man as the elements. That was revealed in a single shock, and at best imperfectly understood, for the sedentary intellect of the twentieth century is hardly equipped to cope with anything so direct, so uncomplicated, so unsubtle, so brutal. This modern intellect has less difficulty grasping the kindness of man for man.

Human conduct was put to a terrible test, and survived it. Out of my own experience I recall only kindness. None was so hard put as not to help another, even though the help went no farther than a word. Let me be more specific.

When the ceiling came down on the top floor of the Occidental Hotel we fled, with barely enough clothes for panic modesty. Among the absent articles were one pair of shoes. I barefooted it up Bush street towards Grant avenue, for the overhead trolley and telegraph wires in Montgomery and Kearny streets were falling. Near Kearny street an all-night cabman stood at his horse's head. He hailed me. His eyes glazed with terror, he said: "Let me drive your wife and you somewhere. It won't cost you a cent. You know me—honest, too bad, it won't cost you a cent! Let me drive you somewhere. Let me drive you to the cemetery."

That was kindness, and it was kindness as unconscious of ghastliness as of humor.

At Grant avenue we were joined by a stranger, completely clad save for a collar. My bare feet troubled him more than they did me.

"Here!" he said. "Here's a shoe store. Break the window and take a pair. You can pay for them later—if there is any later."

"Not yet," said I.

"I guess you're right. It might start the looting."

We were walking Grant avenue, making for Portland square. "Here," he cried suddenly, "there's a Jap store and the fellow's just opening it. Get a pair of slippers."

I started for the shop; my hand went mechanically for my pocket—it was empty. The stranger read my face.

"You forgot your money. Help yourself to mine."

Three gold twenties and a five-dollar gold piece were on his palm.

His thumb projected one of the twenties. He was "forcing" it as sleight-of-hand men "force" a card.

I took the \$5 piece, gave it to the Jap and put on a pair of upperless bath slippers. The Jap gave me change—\$4.65. He could not have been cooler had the earthquake been merely a Russian army. I turned to give the change to the stranger.

"Put it in your pocket," he said, "and I wish you'd take some more. It may come in handy this day."

"You don't know me," I said.

"You don't know me," he answered, "and there's no time for exchanging cards."

After five minutes of argument on my part the stranger gave me his name and address.

In that fragment of the picture his kindness is very vivid.

My next helpful brother is a Chinaman. We met him in Portsmouth square, where hundreds on hundreds of his countrymen were gathered. Of all of them, he alone wore the product of the American clothing store. I fancied that a cigarette might go with the tweeds. I was itching for a smoke, and asked him for one, and got it, and more than it.

"A pair of socks will warm your feet, and I've got another pair for the lady," said my Chinese stranger. "Come with me. It's only over the way to Sacramento street. I own the drug store next door to the Chinese doctor."

Yes, he was kind.

So was the gentle old lady that found a seat with us on a bench in the square and opened her telescope basket and gave to the lady of my itinerant household a pair of leather slippers. Those slippers are still in commission. They shall be precious souvenirs when the city is rich again, but just now they are as blessedly useful as my own shoes, which they were the means of restoring to their original owner.

We slept in another square, the Alamo, high over Hayes valley; and there, too, all was kindness.

"To-morrow will be a hard day for the poor," said a man that had banked \$15,000 the day before.

"For the poor!" laughed a big-hearted Irish cook that had escaped with a pillow-slip full of tinned beef. "For the poor!" she laughed, giving him a can of beef. "I'd like to know what the rich have got to be rich with."

Tom Ferguson dug me up next morning. "I don't know you," he said, without reproach, "but I kept the saloon at 719 Market, and I'm a friend of some friends of yours. How much money have you got?"

"A couple of dollars."

"Not enough. You'll be wanting to get your family over to Oakland, and you'll have to bribe a wagon or an automobile. Take this twenty. Oh, hell, don't worry about me. I stuck a thousand dol-

lars in my pocket when the place went. That was for my friends and their friends. That's all money's for just now."

Mr. Ferguson's profession is not listed very highly by the ladies of certain worthy societies, and it might bar him from membership in clubs where his presence is not as welcome as his wares; but to me (and I confess myself prejudiced), Tom Ferguson is better than the best he ever sold. He sold whisky, but he gave of the milk of human kindness.

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RAILROAD DISCRIMINATIONS.

THE REMEDY.

For The Public.

What shall we say of the remedy for railroad discriminations? The thing which is absolutely essential to business and commercial freedom, is a neutral or impartial carrier. The old turnpike served rich and poor alike; it paid no rebates; it had no favorites among individuals. It was not interested in building up one town at the expense of another. It carried the small dealer's cart as safely as it did the wagon of the merchant prince. We must have the railways on the same basis, so that there will be no more unfairness or favoritism than there is to-day in the postoffice; where all must buy stamps alike, for the weight of the matter which they send.

It seems very doubtful that a really neutral carrier can be obtained short of government ownership and possibly government operation. The reasons for this conclusion are many. The owners of railways are not in business solely to sell transportation to the people. They own mills, foundries and mines; they have manufacturing establishments, farms and vineyards. They own real estate in cities and towns; they are interested in trusts and combinations. When I speak of the owners of railroads, I mean those who direct their policies. If the owner of a railroad also owns a mill or factory or real estate along the line of his road, his financial interest leads him to discriminate in favor of the mill or factory or in favor of the town where his real estate is located. He makes and remakes the tariffs of the road with a view, not only to make dividends for the road, but also to make profits for him and his friends in their business ventures. Human nature, when left to itself, can bring no other result. Again, the owner of the railway is after dividends; there may still be competition between his line and others. He is approached by a large shipper, who asks him for a special low rate and promises him in return a certain number of carloads per week to be shipped over his line, a "bonanza" for his road. He gives a special rate and his road makes dividends. The large shipper, with this special favor, drives all his competitors out of business or persuades them by inexorable logic that it is best for them to sell out; and the large shipper becomes a trust. In some cases the railway owner finds that the tables are turned, the trust is now bigger than the railroad. It dictates to the railroad, and perhaps swallows up this and other roads and runs them to suit itself. How true this is, is seen in the extensive control to-day of railroads by the Standard Oil interests. Whether the big business enterprise absorbs the