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LOUIS F. POST, Editor.

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It is difficult to decide whether the Lindly-Morris bill, purporting to authorize municipal ownership and operation of street car systems in Illinois cities, is a lobby play on the part of the street car corporations or a "strike" on the part of the Lorimer political ring. The character of the bill indicates that it might be either; the circumstances suggest that it is not improbably the latter.

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This bill was reported from the House committee of which Lindly is chairman, in lieu of the Senate (Mueller) bill. The latter having passed the Senate had come into the House and had been referred to Lindly's committee. On its face the House substitute appears to be the superior bill, because of its almost extreme simplicity. It is more like a broad constitutional provision than a statutory regulation, and seems at first glance to leave to the cities of the State ample powers over the subject to which it relates. But examination discloses one "joker" after another, which, notwithstanding the broad general terms of the bill, has been concealed within it.

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The most obvious of these "jokers" is a specific provision affecting the security that could be offered to investors in municipally owned street car lines. It authorizes cities to borrow money for buying or constructing street car plants, either upon their own credit or upon the security of the plants. This seems reasonable enough until two facts appear. In the case of Chicago no money could be borrowed upon the credit of the city, because the statutory debt limit of Chicago has been reached already. This is fact number one. The second fact is that money could not be borrowed on the security of the plants to be purchased or constructed, because the substitute provides that in case of foreclosure the purchasers shall not be permitted to operate for more than three years. Financial experts are positive that sufficient money for purchase or construction could not be borrowed on such limited security. With no means, therefore, of procuring the necessary capital for public ownership of street car lines, except upon the city's credit which is even now exhausted, or a mortgage upon the plant so restricted with reference to foreclosure that no one would invest, the city of Chicago would find this substitute bill what some one has called it, not an enabling act but a disabling act. It would probably make public ownership in Chicago impossible while it remained in force unaltered.

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Other "jokers" in this bill are numerous, brief as the bill is. For one thing, there are provisions for a popular referendum at every step but none for a popular initiative. The people could not force a referendum. Only the council could do that, and if the council were inactive nothing could be done. This defect is not peculiar to this bill, but it is a bad feature none the less. As to the referendums, a negative vote of a fraction over 40 per cent. would, with one exception, always veto an affirmative vote of nearly 60 per cent. Another important "joker" is an innocent looking clause which would practically prevent all negotiations on the part of the city for leasing to existing street car corporations. If a lease were deemed desirable, it could not be made to any corporation which did not happen to have been organized under the incorporation act of 1872. Consequently, if Chicago were able to bargain for the purchase of existing lines upon an agreement to lease them for 20 years or less to the present operating companies—a plan which might lead more smoothly than any other to public ownership and operation—the bargain would be impossible. Still another "joker" is the omission of any clause regarding the consents of landlords to the construction of municipal ownership lines. Under the Mueller bill, these consents would not be necessary, and corporations could not bribe landlords to obstruct municipal construction; but under the House substitute precisely such obstruction would be possible.

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That the substitute bill is defective is evident from these considerations; that its origin is bad is apparent upon the face of the facts. "Boss" Lorimer is behind it. No one doubts that. One of his political creatures, a colored member from Chicago, is its sponsor. His man from the country, Lindly, has chaperoned it through committee. His newspaper organ in Chicago, the Inter Ocean, is supporting it with misleading editorials and interviews that are manifestly distorted so as to misrepresent the sentiments of the persons interviewed. His speaker of the lower House has impudently violated the constitution of the State in order to railroad the substitute measure through without amendment. As we stated at the beginning, it is impossible at present to determine whether all this is done in connivance with the street car pool, or independently by a political ring as a "strike" to be abandoned if the pool fails to respond.

The speaker's conduct in connection with this bill furnishes an extraordinary instance of official usurpation. To effect his purpose he has refused to listen to demands of many members, both from the floor and in writing; yet the constitution of the State in terms requires him to call the roll upon every vote when five members demand it. The speaker's action in this respect has been criminal in a high degree,—if not legally so, at any rate morally; and the wonder is that a respectable community will tolerate such flagrant and brazen disregard of its fundamental law by one of its principal officers. The members to whom the speaker thus refuses to accord their constitutional rights are fully justified in their policy of blocking the passage of the appropriation bills.

The real object of the collusive law suit in the Federal Courts in Chicago, betwen the New York Guarantee company and certain Chicago traction companies, and in which receivers have been appointed, is not as deep down in the well as Truth is supposed to be. The design is to put the Federal government in possession, through receivers, of a local public service which concerns the people of the city of Chicago. Here is another argument, if one were needed, for public ownership and operation of all municipal functions. The moment they are farmed out to private companies, interests outside the State acquire power to divest the city of self-governing rights by carrying disputes into the Federal courts. A Federal law suit, a Federal receivership, and ipso facto the local government of a city is transferred to Federal officers—often hostile partisans—who are appointed for life by the central power at Washington.

This process of centralization would have been impossible before the Fourteenth amendment. Then no corporation of one State could rule in another State. It had no standing in Federal courts; and its standing even in local courts outside of its own State was by comity and not by right. But now, under a forced construction of the Fourteenth amendment, though the Negro, for whose protection this amendment was designed, gets no protection from it, the corporations, which were not thought of by its framers, get not only protection but dangerous power in overflowing measure.

The "honor of the army" is again in the balance. Gen. Corbin having had his application for membership in a Washington club rejected, one of the governors of the club, a military officer, has resigned. Not because he might in that way resent the exclusion of a personal friend from his club, but because he regarded the exclusion of an army officer as a reflection upon "the honor of the army."

Army honor is a curious thing. Hard and strong as steel when disturbed only by guilt, it is as fragile as glass when the guilty are to be punished. Drunkenness, debauchery, corruption, atrocious cruelty, wanton murder have characterized the advance of the army in its march along the path of Duty toward Destiny, but without in the least affecting its "honor;" yet the bare suggestion of a fair investigation wringe tears of solicitude for "the honor of the army" from every guilty officer who wants to escape. This is one of the reasons why the administration will not allow the people to see Gen. Miles's report of his investigation in the Philippines. Gen. Miles has little regard for "the honor of the army;" he is more solicitous to have the army honorable.

Could there be a more pitiable example of the loathsomeness of militarism, a more grewsome burlesque upon army ideals of "army honor," than the cold-blooded murder this week of a German artilleryman by a German naval cadet, and the pride of this criminal boy over his fatal success?

As witnesses narrate the circumstances, his crime is no worse than the conflicting story of the boastful murderer himself. He says that the artilleryman, an old schoolmate of his, meeting him casually, offered his hand as an equal instead of saluting as an inferior. For this he ordered the artilleryman to a police station, and on the way murdered him with his sword. One of the witnesses says that the artilleryman was about to enter a beer hall in Essen with the witness when the cadet encountered him. The artilleryman was slightly inebriated. Neither he nor the witness saw the cadet until the cadet approached in a hectoring manner and said to the artilleryman: "You failed in your duty by not saluting me; accompany me to the police station." The artilleryman was surprised, but said nothing, and attempted to pass along the street. The cadet pursued with drawn sword, easily overtook him, struck him flat on the head, making him reel, and then drove the blade into his back. The artilleryman fell in a heap, bleeding both from the head and back. It all happened in an instant. There was no provocation whatever. The cadet was perfectly cool and seemed to feel proud when he saw the artilleryman fall. When a noncommissioned officer came, the cadet said vauntingly: "I did this. When I draw my sword blood must flow. This man insulted me by refusing to salute and endeavored to escape arrest. I had to defend an officer's honor at all costs." And the cadet appears to have been surprised that the officials did not applaud the deed. He strutted about the station with a martial air, still flourishing his sword, which was streaked half way up the blade with the artilleryman's blood. How revolting all this is. One is tempted to wonder from what order of low browed beast or decadent savage that young criminal must have sprung, by what processes of natural selection his moral sense was degenerated.

Yet there is evidently no peculiar wickedness in the boy's nature. He writes the mother of his victim a consolatory letter which testifies