

RAILROADS IN FRANCE.

NOT OWNED BY THE GOVERNMENT
BUT CONTROLLED BY IT.

Deficiencies in Revenue Made Good by the Government—Wages Lower Than in America—Courtesy of French Railway Officials—Pensions for the Men.

The railways of France are not owned and operated by the Government, as they are in Germany, or by stockholders, as they are in England, but by both, says a recent writer. When you buy a railway ticket in France twelve per cent, of what you pay for that ticket goes directly to the Government. For this the State guarantees a reasonable interest on the money actually invested in building and equipping the road. At the end of the year if the road has run behind and failed to earn expenses (and it invariably does fail with the exceptions noted) the stockholders do not apply for a receiver; the Government simply steps in, makes good the shortage, and the same officials continue to do business at the old stand.

One would naturally suppose that, being thus secure in their places, the officials would become arrogant, icy, and unapproachable, but they are the most obliging, genial railway officials on earth. The secretary of two of the biggest and best roads in France, whose office corresponds with our general managers, stood up and bowed to me when I entered, and then sat down and chatted as pleasantly as though I had been an Ambassador. They are deeply interested in all that is going on in the American railway world, and men are kept to translate whatever is written by Americans of the railways over here.

If, by any streak of good luck such as has come to the line to Lourdes, a railway begins to earn more than operating expenses and interest on the money invested, the surplus goes to the state to make good what has been advanced to the railway company.

In return for all it guarantees to the railways the Government reserves the right, in case of war, to take possession of all the railways, rolling stock, and officials, at a moment's notice. With a touch of the key the President of France can make a colonel of the superintendent, a captain of the station agent, and soldiers of the section men.

As the officials are interested in the management of American railways, so are the employees interested in the struggles and tribulations of the railway employees in the United States. They read closely and discuss hotly all that goes on over here, and during the Pullman strike at Chicago that was one of the matters regularly discussed at the meetings of La Fraternelle. This organization is the oldest and strongest in the republic, having a fund of 15,000,000 francs. A rival organization has been formed lately, but it is more of a political order and does not amount to much. La Fraternelle is an organization somewhat similar to the American Railway Union, admitting to membership all classes of railway employees and including among its numbers many prominent officials. They have very few strikes among the employees in France. The men appear to be very well satisfied, and to feel secure in their places. This is due mainly to the kindness of the officials. Engine men are especially optimistic at all times, since it is the rule in France to choose all officials of the locomotive department from among the men, so there is the eternal spring of hope to encourage them.

The system employed by the French in making up the pay roll is hard to understand. First there is a fixed salary for train and engine men, and what one receives above that amount depends upon the mileage made and the time it has taken to make that mileage. In addition to all this there is a small premium in economy in oil and fuel and upon the care of the locomotive, rolling stock, or other property in the employees' care. The pay of an engine driver runs from \$65 to \$85 a month. Firemen earn from \$45 to \$50 a month. Conductors get from \$30 to \$50 a month.

It would be hard for railway employees here to understand how a man can be perfectly contented to fire a locomotive four or five years for forty and fifty dollars, or how an engine driver can be perfectly happy at \$85 a month, standing on a seatless, cabless engine through the long bitter cold winter nights—and northern France is as cold as northern New York. French employees do not require so much in the way of comforts of life as Americans do. Your Frenchman with four sous' worth of bread and cheese and five sous' worth of sour wine will make a meal. His three meals a day will not cost him more than 30 cents, while an American in a similar capacity pays 35 cents a meal. Being accustomed to the cold, the Frenchman sleeps in a fireless room and looks for nothing better. In short with half the wages and none of the comforts, he is about twice as happy as the average railway employees in America.

Except in cases of gross carelessness or drunkenness on duty, an employee is seldom discharged unless the charges made against him are well sustained, after thorough investigation, during which he has ample opportunity to defend his cause. The management, as a rule, does not consider the organization of employees as detrimental to the service. On the contrary, such organization is rather encouraged

than otherwise so long as the object is mutual aid; but they fight hard against the formation of anything of a political nature.

One is surprised at the army of idle porters, who do the work of office boys, but they are all big grown-up men, and it takes at least a half dozen of them to do the work usually done by a bright boy in this country. Even at the entrance to the shops or yards you will find a close gate, a little office or bureau, as they call it, and a half dozen men, half porters and half porters, in charge of this gate. Just outside the office of the director of one of the large railways I saw eight big, round-faced, clip-headed porters seated at a long table waiting to take in the card of any visitor who might call. One of them took my card and passed it up to the man who appeared to be the chief. That individual shot a few sharp glances at me and directed one of the men to "throw me in" on a siding while he submitted my card to a number of under clerks. Presently a young man came out and said in an embarrassed way that he was afraid "but so secret" could not see me.

"Give this to him," said I, "and let him decide the matter," and I handed the clerk a letter from the United States Embassy. In less than two minutes I was in the presence of a director who stood up to receive me. It's the same everywhere. My embarrassment always ends when I get past the typewriter and the office boy.

One of the most interesting features in the management of the railways in France is the system of retiring pensions in vogue on some of the large railways. All "commissioned employees," as they are called, which includes all staff officers, men employed in the transportation and locomotive departments and on permanent way, are entitled to a retiring pension when they reach the age of fifty-five years, or have served the company a quarter of a century. The amount of the pension depends upon the average pay drawn by the employee, but is never less than 600 nor more than 900 francs a year. If an employee is compelled by any misfortune to leave the service or is forced to retire after having served fifteen or twenty years, he receives a retiring pension; but in that case it is never more than 450 or less than 300 francs.

A widow is entitled to one-half the pension of her husband provided the marriage took place two years previous to the husband's death. This seems a hard rule, but it is necessary, I am told, to guard against enterprising young widows who are wont to spring up unexpectedly and come weeping around the grave of a dead pensioner. Sometimes the woman came alone, sometimes leading a little child whom the relatives of the dead man had never seen. You can kick a brush heap and get a widow anywhere in France.

To provide for this retiring pension fund three per cent, of the wages of each employee is retained, to which the company adds an amount equal to 12 per cent, of the wages. In other words, four-fifths of the fund is contributed by the company. A very important rule to the employees is one providing that in case a servant severs his connection with the road, even if he is dismissed by the company before he has served long enough to be entitled to a pension, all the money he has contributed to the pension fund is returned with interest.

Day laborers who do not contribute to the pension fund have no share, of course, in the benefits of that fund, but they are not forgotten by the company. If they have served fifteen years, they receive a retiring pension equal to one-half the amount received by commissioned employees. This fund is provided almost entirely by the railroad company.

Those who have served but a short time, but are troubled by any serious trouble, are usually cared for in the same way by the management, and all this tends to make the employees appreciate what they have and strive to hold their places or gain better places with better wages. Very friendly are the relations of the railways to the press and the press to the railways. Passes are given more freely if anything, to reputable journalists than they are in America. A great many political men, including ex-members of Parliament, are considered to be entitled to permanent passes. Two varieties of the French politician invariably refuse free transportation, the man who is extremely conscientious and afraid of his job, and the fellow who is only acting to fool the people. These good souls either pay fare or walk.

Adventure of a Horse at Niagara.

While one of Street Superintendent Sheedey's horses at Niagara Falls was backing a garbage cart at the public dumping place on the river bank on Saturday, he backed too far, and both cart and horse plunged over the cliff, 100 feet to the slops below. Strange to say the horse was uninjured, and he was cared for in a temporary structure until a means for his rescue was devised.

Yesterday it was decided to draw him up through a chute 250 feet long, erected originally to lower a steamboat. In the afternoon he was tied and strapped to a stoneboat the width of the chute. A steel cable was passed from a capstan on top of the bank down to the chute, and fastened to the stoneboat. It was after 5 o'clock when the signal to start was given. There were several delays, but soon the boat, horse, and two men were coming at good speed. The men cried out that the horse was dying, and this was the signal for greater speed. More men manned the windlass, and upward came the horse. It was an exciting moment for the large crowd, and when the top of the chute was reached and a request for help made, hundreds of hands grabbed hold of the cable, and, with a mighty effort, made a hard and strong pull, and landed the horse out of the chute and well on top of the bank. He was saved. Sharp knives cut the straps and ropes that held him prisoner. Strong men helped him to his feet. It was a great relief to the crowd, and some enthusiastic person suggested three cheers for "Sam Patch." They were given, and the horse will probably be known by that name till his dying day.—Rochester Democrat and Chronicle.

SOCIETY IS INSINCERE.

COUNTERFEIT HOSPITALITY IS FREQUENTLY FOUND.

Yet Some Think There Are Features in the Modern Style of Entertaining Which Shows More Sincerity Than Was Shown in the Old Fashioned Days.

"The insincerity of our age" is a phrase of such surpassing popularity, so doted upon by so many of our writers and so frequently used by them, that one is tempted to act in its presence as he would before a time-honored proverb, to stand with no question raised and with judgment respectfully bowed. Certain signs lead one, although he be in closest sympathy with these writers, to doubt the durability of this much honored phrase. Will it wear much longer? Even now is there not danger that people are growing sincere?

Formerly when Miss Mehitable Winton asked Miss Mary Ann Evans to take tea with her at five she "besought the honor" of the presence of "Miss Evans," and when Miss Evans arrived she was greeted cordially, requested to lay off her bonnet, and to be seated, after which laying off and being seated she was expected to drink much tea and to stay a long time. There was apparent about the whole afternoon a spirit of friendliness. Miss Mary Ann was asked about her conversation with the minister at sewing circle, and was allowed to describe her favorite kind of cross-stitch. In return for these confidences she learned Miss Mehitable's opinion of cross-stitch and of the minister, and through these and kindred topics a close bond of union was made between Miss Mehitable and her friends, so that at the close of the afternoon Miss Mary Ann and the rest were not to be much blamed if they carried with them from the Winton homestead the impression that their company had been really enjoyed by Miss Mehitable.

As time went on and "the rush of our modern civilization," together with "the complexity of our modern life" and other influences of "environment" and "heredity," such as account for all our present actions, even to the purchase of our shoe buttons—as some one or all of these forces acted upon the Miss Mehitables of our day they were led at last to desire less ardently, perhaps, the company of the Miss Mary Anns, or Marriannes as we spell them nowadays. How easy to have retained the old form, to have still "requested" her to come and to have feigned the visit still held as "honor," but no, the conscience, awakened probably by the papers upon the "Decline of Sincerity" which Miss Mehitable has read, now controls her action. She will ask Marianne because it is her duty, but she will on no account permit her to think for one instant that her presence is anything but a matter of indifference to her hostess. So in place of the old-time invitation the nowadays notice is served.

Miss Winton.
At Home: January thirty-one
From four until seven.

bearing with it a "come if you like and stay away if you don't" suggestion of which Miss Marianne is most fully aware. If Miss Marianne goes she finds at Miss Winton's home the same absence of any personal interest in herself that was indicated in the notice. She has but a moment with her hostess, who seems rather in doubt as to her name. After that moment she is completely dropped from her hostess's memory for the afternoon and is left to the mercies of herself and of the hundred or more other guests. If she is a stranger, there is no one to introduce her, and she wanders forlornly past sleeve after sleeve. If she finds friends in the white-gloved, shrieking throng, she fares better; for the frequent opportunity to state her opinion of the play, or to explain why she was not at Mrs. So-or-So's dinner, not only ministers to her sense of being somebody, it also gives her a chance to shriek in her turn, an eardrum protective measure essential to her comfort at the tea.

Perhaps Miss Marianne is a brave spirit and advances to the dining room, made beautiful with flowers and candles to lure her in. Here she undergoes various trials of skill. She stands with card case and handkerchief grasped firmly in one hand, while with the other she receives and tries to arrange the many offerings that pour in upon her. Will she have "tea, coffee, or chocolate?" "Tea? With rum or lemon?" She has answered, "Chocolate, please," but decides to make no suggestion, and merely answers, "With both." In a few moments she receives clear coffee without sugar. Then comes sandwiches and almonds and chocolate which tempt the unwary, and in a thoughtless moment she begs a glass of water. When it comes she drops four almonds, spills coffee on her light card case, and stains her glove with the chocolate, now melted by the coffee. All these incidents occur because it is a difficult feat to balance a plate with a cup and saucer upon a case held in one hand, and yet Miss Marianne must free the other hand for the water. The waiter vanishes. There is no table near. She stands helpless, tantalized. It is worse than being handcuffed, for her fetters are of the very best china and must not be broken.

Oh, yes, being a nineteenth century young woman, she does at last extricate herself from the difficulty, but in her wisdom she refuses cordial or ice and makes her way to the cloak room. There is no good-bye

to her hostess. They have seen enough of each other. She merely leaves a card to remind Miss Mehitable that she has been present.

Now, what one cannot fail to admire about all this is the frankness, the sincerity of it all. Of course not all hostesses are like Miss Mehitable. Such sincerity is even yet exceptional. A chair offered or an introduction furnished, a sufficient number of waiters in the dining room, a plate large enough to project beyond the saucer—these things are sometimes found and might any one of them be construed into a welcome from the hostess to the guest. There is, however, the wording of the notice, always the same, making no pretence.

With what ease, in a less conscientious age, might a hostess have omitted to ask those whom she did not desire to see. Now she asks them because she knows her duty, and she tells any one for whom she really cares, "Be sure to come early; there is a mob coming after 4," and the mob knows its duty, too, these conscientious folk, and it comes. The precise nature of this duty it is not the present purpose to analyze. It is evidently, however, connected in no way with hospitality. Is hospitality going out of vogue perhaps, as we come more and more under the sway of "oughts?"

Another sign of sincerity is furnished by the present custom of "days." Formerly one was accessible to one's callers on all days; now they are permitted less freedom. One has engraved upon one's cards "Tuesday," or "Second and Last Thursdays," or "All but First Mondays," as one's taste directs. "Come every day except Tuesday," or whatever day has been chosen; "Tuesday is my day," and I want really to see you." The card makes no false assertions. It does not say "at home," for one has no intention of staying at home should anything attract one away.

Afternoon teas and "days" are perhaps our most perfect manifestations of this beautiful spirit of sincere conscientiousness. There is a more dangerous spirit of spontaneity about most of our lunch and dinner giving. The host and hostess have an appearance of cordiality in their behavior which is in itself suspicious. They seem really to like the society of their guests—a state of affairs which, in an age of teas, must surely be mere semblance. Or are we wrong? And is the old time spirit of hospitality still present among us manifesting itself, in new ways perhaps, but as cordial in its friendliness as in the former times? Is it not true that in the ways in which friend meets friend there is the same openness and freedom that we read of?

The demands made upon us are greater than those made upon our forefathers. We are brought into more kinds of relations and into relations with more people. Our hearts have possibly not expanded quite so rapidly as our railroad and telegraph systems—which have as strong an influence upon our social life as they have upon our Stock Exchange—but is there reason to believe that when the heart is touched it is any the less warm? We may not be able yet to meet with real friendliness all of the seven hundred people whom we invite to our daughter's wedding. Demands have increased upon us too rapidly. We cannot meet them all yet, but there can be small question that we are learning to meet them. Compare the way in which men of differing political views meet together now with the receptions that they gave each other in the free handed days gone by and tell which is the more hospitable time.—N. Y. Sun.

A SENSIBLE SERMON!

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A Long Ride.

A French non-commissioned officer of hussars recently undertook on a wager to ride 248 miles in 100 hours on a 12-year old troop horse. He won by an hour and twenty-seven minutes, rider and horse showing little sign of fatigue.



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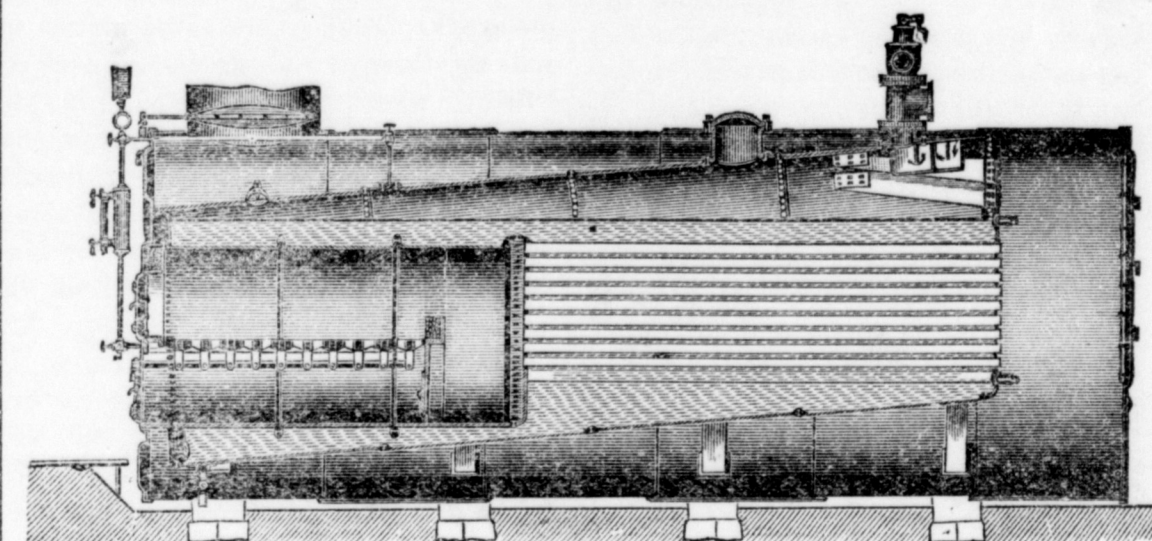
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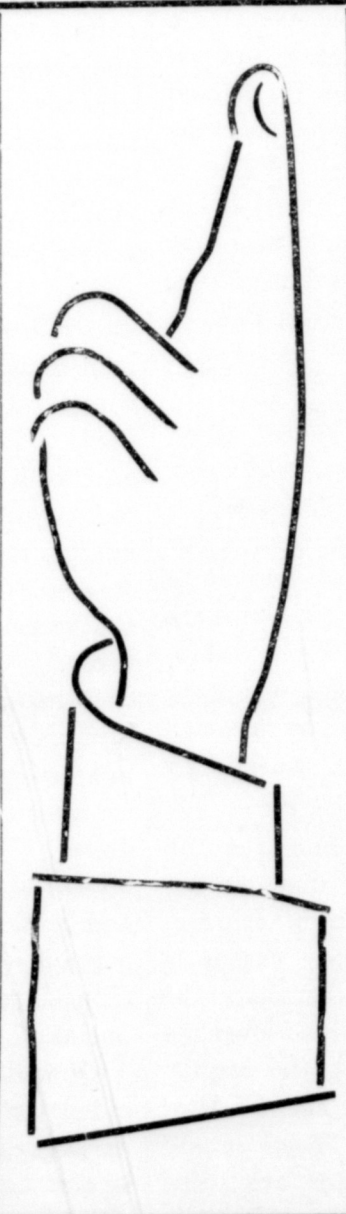
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