

MEN WHO "FEED" THE RAILROADS

They employ one million, six hundred thousand men, and their annual payrolls aggregate a billion dollars--Practically every one of them has come up right from the bottom, one having been a tin-smith, another a blacksmith's helper

BY E. J. EDWARDS.

THIS is a story of the men who feed the railroads. Never heard of them? Why, bless you, they are the men who employ even more workers than the railroads themselves. One million six hundred thousand--that is the number, and just four hundred thousand more than those who earn their daily bread and butter working for the railroads on the rail or in offices. And the annual payroll of these men who feed the railroads is a cool one billion dollars, and they have two hundred and fifty odd businesses whose capital is a cool half billion dollars, and they are self-made, almost every one of them--a group of actual capitalists of industry whose careers, taken collectively and individually, could well serve as daily inspiration to those American boys and young men of today whose future lies wholly within themselves.

But feed the railroads--you didn't know that railroads ate?

Why, bless you, again, these men set before (and also on) the railroads everything that these self-same corporations of speedy transportation need to sustain their vigor and perform their physical functions--locomotives, shoes, brakes, signals, switches, wheels, cars of all sorts, electrical apparatus--everything that is meat and drink to a railroad. For, except in one or two rare instances, our railroads do not attempt to make any of their own equipment, but, instead, look to others to supply them with the necessities of railroad life. That's why the names of the men who are engaged in the task of satisfying the equipment appetite of nearly three hundred thousand miles of American railroads are almost as familiar as household names to the leaders of railway operation.

Because these men's business is strictly with the railroad leaders they do not come in touch with the great traveling public--they are comparatively unknown to it. And yet, were it not for these feeders of power and equipment whose portions vary all the way in size from a many-ton locomotive to a railroad spike, the great traveling public would not travel--by rail, at least. Were they to shut up shop tomorrow, speedily the railroads of the country would be in an emaciated condition, for want of fresh sustenance, and in a little while after that not a locomotive whistle's toot, not a spark of fire from a grinding freight car brake, not a railroad wheel turning in its broad homelike of ours.

One million six hundred thousand employees--eight million people sustained directly by the industry of feeding the railroads their meals of steel and iron and what not, served up in a multitude of tasteful shapes. That is, one-tenth of the population of this country today. Perhaps therein lies the reason why an insatiable Providence has willed it that this great country-enveloping industry should be headed by men who are of the masses themselves--who, through their own ambition, energy and ambition, have risen to industrial prominence of the captain of industry brand.

But, however that may be, the careers of these feeders of national traffic, the majority of whom are still young men, as youth is reckoned today, prove afresh most strikingly that it is hard to keep a right American and down that it is, in fact, about the hardest thing in the world to do. And probably the most striking example among these feeders of the railroads is Col. H. G. Prout, whose specialty is railroad diet in switches and signals, the sort that has made possible sixty and ninety and a hundred mile an hour flight--eighteen-hour trains between the country's two biggest cities. Certain it is that none of his business colleagues or rivals have had a more exciting or adventurous career.

Yankee Lad in Darkest Africa.
Deserting a barren New England hill farm for a private's place in the Army of the Potomac, through the Wilderness, before Petersburg and in pursuit of Lee's army, the boy Prout secured some of the money with which he studied civil engineering at the University of Michigan when peace came. The rest of the needed funds he secured by railroad surveying, and this sort of work he followed until the season of adventure singing in his ears, he went to Egypt as a Major in the Khedive's service. That was in the early seventies, when Africa was then largely Darkest Africa. And it wasn't long after the young American's arrival in the land of the Pharaohs before he was in truth in the very heart of Darkest Africa.

One thousand miles south of Khartoum, at Lado, on the Nile, Major Prout was made by General Gordon himself an absolute ruler, to all intents and purposes, of the so-called Equatorial Provinces, that great section of Africa lying along the Upper Nile clear to its source, and between and around the great Victoria and Albert lakes--the region through which Colonel Roosevelt will soon pass on his way north and home. The only white man with Major Prout was the Austrian adventurer, Emin Pasha, who later became famous through his rescue by Stanley. No other white man was there, save that when the town, 1600 miles to the north, and that man was Gordon himself, who, in his order making Major Prout the Governor of the Equatorial Provinces, declared him to be "supreme over finance, civil and military affairs" in the great section of Africa embraced in the provinces.

To keep even a semblance of order and authority in the country of stark naked and turbulent savages, Major Prout had at his beck and call a military force of 3000 men. And what an army! Black infantry from the Sudan, artillerymen from Lower Egypt, Bashu Baskun and Irregular soldiers from the Middle Nile Valley--as varied and picturesque an assortment of fighting men as one could possibly hope to see on a comic opera stage even.

Quite naturally, with a large slice of Africa to father, Colonel Prout's life was by no means filled with that nothing to do and nothing new feeling. When he wasn't quieting the restive blacks in some quarter of his domain, he was busy attempting to impress upon the face of the country some of the evidences of pioneer civilization. To that end he performed one bit of work that has him wondering to this day

how he managed to accomplish it successfully.

Taking Steamer Through Jungle.

You may remember, if you have ever read Stanley's account of his rescue of Emin Pasha, who succeeded Colonel Prout as Governor at Lado, that the rescued went to meet the rescuer in a steamer that troubled the waters of Albert Nyanka. It was Colonel Prout who put the steamer in the lake, and to get it there he had it carried, piece by piece, through 60 miles of the worst sort of African jungle to a point on the Nile whence it could float into the lake with safety. All of the parts of this 80-foot screw boat were carried by the hands of naked savages through the roadless, pathless forest--all except the boiler, and that was dragged on runners over the whole 60 miles. And, says Colonel Prout, whenever he tells the story, "I am still wondering how it happened that some essential part of the steamer was not lost or destroyed while in transit. But when we came to erect the boat for its trip into the lake, we found not even a screw was missing, not a part of it injured in any way during its piece-meal journey through a darkest Africa jungle."

For four and one-half years Colonel Prout remained in the Khedive's service. Then he resigned his Governorship and reported to General Gordon, his immediate superior, at Khartoum. Gordon had conceived a great admiration for the young American, both on account of his personality and his ability to handle men and country, and he tried his best to persuade Colonel Prout to remain in the Egyptian service. He even went so far as to offer him the Governorship of the Sudanese province of Darfour, the acceptance of which would have made Colonel Prout a pasha.

But the experiences of four and a half years in the Sudan and the Equatorial provinces, along the Upper Nile, clear to its source, has caused the young Yankee to look back on life. So he said to General Gordon:

"No, I think I am too young to take the post, General. (He was still under 30.) 'Also, I don't believe that I ought to waste any more time out of my own country. My life is still all before me; my stay here has been only an episode. I have made up my mind to go home."

"And it is well that I did so," said Colonel Prout to me, "for if I hadn't, and I had accepted General Gordon's offer, my career would have ended right there in Darfour. The post that Gordon wanted me to take was given to Slatin, an Austrian. He was Darfour's Governor when the trouble that resulted in the death of Gordon broke out, and he was captured by the Mahdi and kept for 12 years a prisoner in Omdurman, opposite Khartoum, where, as you know, Gordon met his tragic end. That imprisonment would have killed me, with my slight physique. But Slatin managed somehow to live through it, and eventually escaped, riding 400 miles across the desert to the British lines."

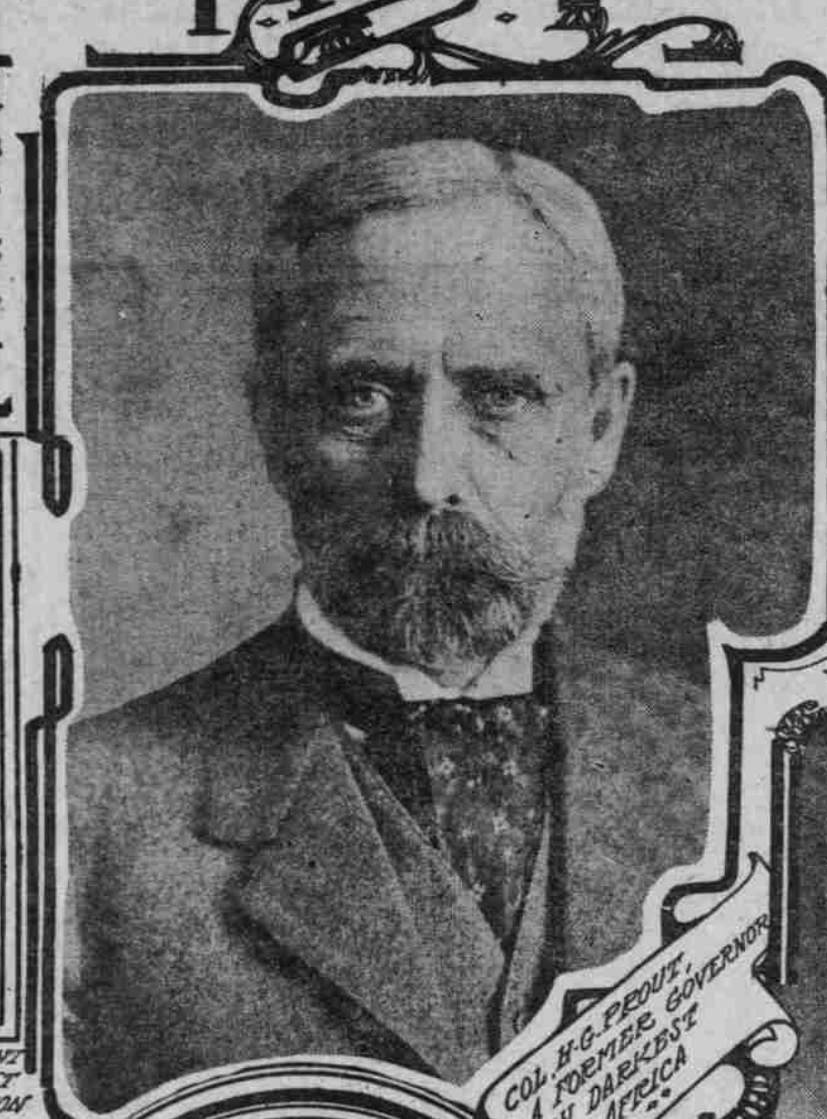
Today, among the railroad men of the country, Colonel Prout is widely known as the man who for years edited the most famous of our railroad periodicals. As he says, his is a slight physique, and he also has the air of a scholar. Yet neither his apparent physical delicacy nor this equally apparent temperamental difficulty kept him from being the University of Michigan's best gymnast what time he was a self-supporting student there.

Adventures of a Boy Congressman.
Another of these feeders of the railroads who has had interesting governmental experience is George A. Post, who once a humble clerk in the Pennsylvania town of Susquehanna, is now one of its proudest traditions, and all because of a political party factional quarrel that landed him, the candidate of the united minority party, in the House of Representatives back in the early '80s when John G. Carlisle was first made Speaker.

But the sightseers at the Capitol did not ask only to have the new Speaker pointed out to them; they also longed to see the "boy Congressman," and when Representative Post, of Pennsylvania, was pointed out to them, some would exclaim, "My, he certainly is just a boy," and others would say--the womenfolk, of course--"Ain't he just the dear?" No sooner had Mr. Post taken his seat than it became noted about that he was just about the youngest ever sent to Washington as a National legislator, and his appearance coinciding with his accredited birth date, he made good copy for the newspaper correspondents and so became a source of wonder to his colleagues, temporarily, and to all Congressional visitors continually.

But despite his tender years, Mr. Post won recognition for his political ability from the Democrats in both wings of the Capitol, and one result was that when President Cleveland named Senator L. Q. C. Lamar, of Mississippi, Secretary of the Interior, that the old Southern gentleman sent for the youthful Pennsylvanian and said to him:

"George, I am going to ask the President to approve of your appointment as



W.H. MARSHALL, PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST LOCOMOTIVE CORPORATION



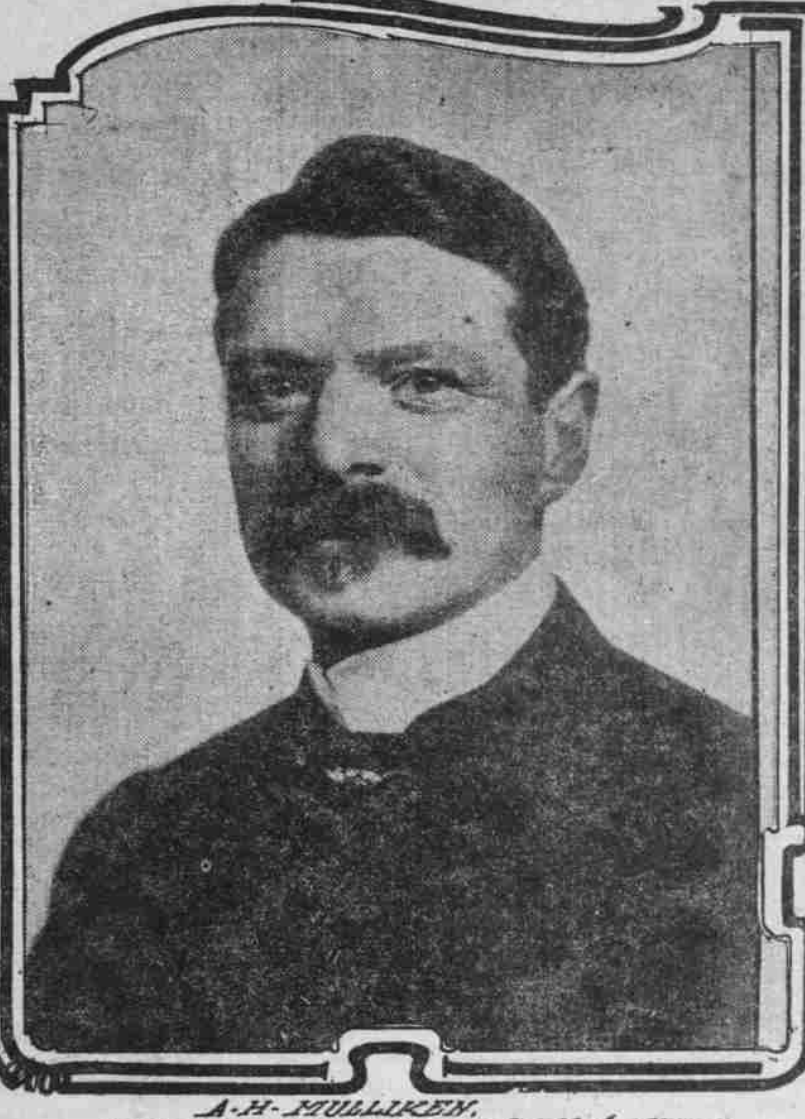
W.D. PEARCE WHO BEGAN LIFE AS A CLERK



Geo. A. POST, ONCE EDITOR OF A 'BOY' CONGRESSMAN



A.H. KITTEREDGE, ONCE A TINSMITH



A.H. MULLIKEN, WHO ONCE WORKED FOR \$5 A WEEK



O.H. CUTLER, ONCE A PRIVATE SECRETARY, NOW PRESIDENT OF A GREAT CORPORATION WITH PLANTS IN TWELVE STATES

Assistant Secretary of the Interior. Will you take it?"

That seemed a political office, worth while to the youngster who had recently served as secretary to the Democratic Congressional campaign committee, and him the Governorship of the Sudanese province of Darfour, the acceptance of which would have made Colonel Prout a pasha.

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place. Mr. Post declined it. Then Attorney-General Garland spoke up.

"George, it's too bad that this embarrassment should have arisen. Now I'll tell you what I'll do. I'll see that you get appointed as a Federal Judge in one of the territories. You can go out there and grow up with the territory, make a career for yourself, and possibly come back as United States Senator. What do you say?"

"Senator," answered Mr. Post, "up in my town in Pennsylvania there is a judge that everybody respects; he is a Justice of our Supreme Court. We think he holds about the most dignified office possible. When any of us pass him on the street we say 'Good morning, Judge,' with a sort of respectful awe, realizing the great office he holds, and when he replies to our greeting, we feel as if we have been greatly honored. He has known me from boyhood, and calls me 'George.' Now, if I were appointed a judge, and were to meet him and say, 'Good morning, Judge,' he would feel obliged to say 'Good morning, Judge,' in reply. But he would feel that I was a misfit, knowing that I have practiced law only a year or two. And I should feel humiliated, knowing that I could not live up to my position. No, I will not accept the offer, although I thank you for making it. I'll quit politics, go home, practice law, possibly, or enter business, and see if I cannot make a career for myself in which I shall not be dependent upon patronage or pull."

For a moment the two Cabinet officers were silent. Then Senator Garland held out his hand.

"My boy," he said, and there was a trace of feeling in his voice, "you have chosen wisely, indeed."

Today the former boy gentleman from Pennsylvania is head of the association of the men who feed the railroads and is reputed to be in the million-dollars-and-over class.

Clerk Who Made Good.
Another former clerk who is now a great provider to the railroads is W. D. Pearce, of Chicago.

As a clerk, Mr. Pearce was told off by his employers to present them in some deal that they were having with the Great Northern Railroad. Suffice it to say that he looked after the interests of his firm so well that the general manager of the railroad firm y said to him:

"Look here, Mr. Pearce, we want a man like you to become our purchasing agent. Will you take the job?"

"Certainly," was the reply, "and glad to do it."

Mr. Pearce's work in this capacity eventually led to his appointment as general manager of the Northern Pacific. He had been occupied with the duties of this office only a few months when a railroad supply manufacturer with whom he had become acquainted in a business way, walked into his office.

"Look here, Pearce," he said, with his customary genial bluntness, "you can't afford to be general manager of this railroad, big as the job is. You can do better. I want you to come with our company; you'll have a great future there."

The general manager of the Northern Pacific thought a moment. "All right, I'll come," he replied. That was all, and today he is vice-president of a railway supply concern whose annual business reaches up into the millions.

Go to Dayton, O., and ask almost any man this side of middle age that you chance to meet on the street if he knows Arthur Kitteredge, and in all likelihood he will reply: "Kitteredge? Sure I know him. Why, he used to go from door to door with his little tin-smith's forge and his soldering iron, prepared to mend a leaky leader or a leaky pall. What's he doing today? Oh, he's the head of a big car

works--one of the biggest in the West, that is."

All of which is true; and it is also true that while young Kitteredge was an itinerant tin-smith his ambition was to have a share of his own some day. But while he was dreaming this dream he unexpectedly received an offer from a man who admired his industry to go upon the road as a salesman of stoves. The sum of money dangled before his eyes was so alluring that Kitteredge straightway forgot his early ambition, and put aside his hand force for a salesman's grip.

Time he developed into the stove company's best road man, then the car company acquired him, and then he acquired the car company, good proof of this accomplishment lying in the fact that he is now its president and a man of large wealth.

Rise of a Blacksmith's Helper.
A blacksmith's apprentice at 20, then a full-fledged smithy, then a locomotive fireman, next an engineer, and at 40 head of one of the largest manufacturing establishments of Western Pennsylvania, one which supplies the railroads with many sorts of food--such, in brief, is the business career of J. S. Coffin, of Franklin, Pa.

Starting with a railway supply firm in Chicago, at \$5 a week, and 12 years later being offered a partnership in the firm, which he refused, in order to establish his own business, in brief, is the career of A. H. Mulliken, of Chicago. As for O. H. Cutter, who is president of a railroad feeding corporation which operates some 12 plants in as many states--an industry which is, in fact, a United States Steel Corporation in miniature, and not much of a miniature, either he served for some time in that capacity to Senator Frye of Maine.

Then, as a final example of the sort of men who are at the head of this gigantic business of feeding the railroads, there is William H. Marshall, president of the corporation that supplies the railroads of this country with almost one-half of the locomotives they use, and, in addition, helps to equip many foreign railways with motive power.

At 26 years of age Mr. Marshall was an unknown draughtsman in a town in Northern New York. Some time later he became editor of an engineering magazine, and still later entered the employ of the Lake Shore Railroad in a subordinate capacity. The manner in which he managed to work up to the general management of the road is illustrated in the anecdote told of him and a balky locomotive.

This engine no one could do anything with, not even the most competent engineer. Finally, along came Mr. Marshall. Soothing, cajoling and practically petting the monster, after the manner of men who really love a locomotive, he took the recalcitrant one in hand. At last he turned to an engineer standing near.

"Now you take that engine and run it," he said, "and you'll find that it will give you no trouble."

It did not, from that time on. Lake Shore, Mr. Marshall came in close contact with the men who directed the fortunes of the locomotive business he now heads. They not only know of him as a competent railroad man, but as one who knew locomotives. So, when the presidency of the corporation had been vacated by death twice within a year, the directors turned to Mr. Marshall and made him president when he was a little past 40 years of age.

Like so many men who have come up from obscurity to high industrial positions, Mr. Marshall is unassuming, extremely democratic in his manner, fond of a good joke, an excellent story teller, and at the same time a man of immense power of concentration and able, apparently, to work easily and without making any fuss about it.

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We'll Keep the Little Farm.

Well, Jane, I guess we'll keep the place. Upon this little farm so long. Let's stay here till we can sell it once. You know, I thought I'd sell it once. To Jones, or Deacon Brown. And take the money we had saved. And buy a house in town. But when the house began to swell, And grass began to grow, Somewhere it does seem to me I ought to let it go. I love the crimson clover, And the fragrant daisy, And the pink and snowy blossoms, Hanging on the apple trees; And the humming of the bees, And the Summer's honey breath, The blushing buds of May; The smiling Autumn, rich With the golden harvest grain, The noisy hubbub of the brook, And the laughter of the mill; The lowing herds upon the heath, And the quack of the waterfowl, And the rustle of the leaves, And the hush of the night, So after all, I guess I've best To keep the little farm.

—J. Elmer French.

The soil of Siberia is in many regions as rich and fertile as that of Canada.

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—J. Elmer French.

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