

Rapid Growth of the Railroad.

In 1840 it has been estimated that our yearly average of railroad construction was about 500 miles. In 1850 this average had increased to 1500. In 1860 it was nearly 10,000, and in 1871 it was stated that enterprises requiring an expenditure of \$800,000,000, and involving the construction of 20,000 miles of railroad, were in actual process of accomplishment. In 1872 the aggregate capital of the railroads of the United States, which were estimated to embrace one-half of the railroads of the civilized world, was stated to amount to the sum of \$3,159,423,057, their gross revenue being \$473,211,055.

Thus within forty years, within a little more than a generation, this enormous amount of wealth had, as it were, been created from nothing. Here is probably twenty times more wealth than was obtained by the "conquistadores" of the sixteenth century at the time of the discovery of America, when all Europe was made wild by the stories of untold gold in the new found world. The difference in the method of its acquisition may roughly indicate the progress made in two centuries toward the organization of labor. The Spanish conquerors decimated the flourishing countries they obtained possession of by the sword, and making slaves of the natives, actually exterminated them in many of the West India Islands by their enforced labor in the mines. The advent of the railroad has made the settlement of the whole West possible, and raised the production of cereals in the United States for the year 1872, according to the Agricultural Department, to the enormous total of 1,656,198,100 bushels.

With such a rapid growth of the railroad era, it was naturally to be expected that every thing connected with it has not been conducted in the most orderly manner possible. People learning by experience are apt to make mistakes, and when an entire nation is simultaneously passing through the same educational process of culture, it can not be expected to reach perfection at the first attempt. There was no precedent by which the railroad should be governed, nor which the people could consult for guidance in dealing with it. The turpitude and canal were as incompetent precedents as the games of children would be for the serious business of their after life. And as the railroad has had to create its own engineers, competent to deal with the new problems of construction it has introduced, so has it had to originate its own financial measures; and it was inevitable that the criticism of a larger experience might justly find fault with the mistakes of both. Were the problem to-day presented to the country, with the knowledge that we have upon railroad matters, to furnish anew a system of railroad transportation as competent for our industrial needs as that we now have, there is no doubt an arrangement would be made very different from any now existing. The existing system was not constructed to meet the needs of the present course of trade, but for totally different necessities. At the same time, but for the advent of the railroad, the trade which now finds itself hampered for want of facilities would never have existed. None of the trunk lines, which are the only reliance for bringing to the Atlantic coast the grain crop of the West, were designed for this work. At the period of their construction there was no settled West, and no grain crop to transport. They were built to connect other points, and to supply other needs. The facts in the construction of the New York Central will show readily. This line, between Albany and Buffalo, consisted originally of various smaller roads, built for local needs, and consolidated in 1853. The consolidation agreement was entered in to by the following roads: The Albany and Schenectady; the

Schenectady and Troy; the Utica and Schenectady; the Syracuse and Utica; the Rochester and Syracuse; the Buffalo and Lockport; the Mohawk Valley; the Syracuse and Utica direct; the Buffalo and Rochester; the Rochester, Lockport, and Niagara Falls. The simple statement of the names of these roads show how local and fragmentary was the early growth of the railway. There was no conception then of trunk-lines. The very knowledge of the topography of the West, as the term is understood to-day, was as vague, almost, as at the time of the settlement of America, when the charters of the colonies were described as extending from the Atlantic to the South Sea, or, as with Connecticut, to the Pacific Ocean.—EDWARD HOWLAND, in Harper's Magazine for September.

"What is Life."

The following well prepared article on the subject of Life, we clip from the Sacramento Agriculturist, and commend it to the perusal of old and young:

"What is life? How is it spent? Man is ushered into this world without any accountability on his part for his birth or creation. The majority of men live for themselves alone, in selfish struggle for superiority and wealth, constantly trampling upon the interests and the feelings of others. How different would life be, and how much more pleasure and happiness would there be in this world, if each lived a true and noble life; careful of the interest, and of the feelings of those with whom he came in contact, and lived constantly in the presence? Let us pause and inquire, "How are we passing our lives? Whom are we living for? What good are we doing? When life's flame has expired, and we are numbered with the dead, will the world feel a good effect, and a beneficial influence from our life? These are questions it would be well to ponder. How few of us improve the benefit of the passing hours. Perhaps there is not one of us who can sincerely declare that he is now living in a satisfactory manner, though most of us intend to do so presently. The scholar is waiting until his school days are over; the youth till he is of age; the artist until he becomes more skillful; the clerk till he can claim a larger salary; the physician till he can obtain a practice. Some are looking forward to a change of place or occupation; some to assume new responsibilities; some to enjoy more leisure. Then they will begin to live in earnest, but now life is a kind of makeshift—a time to be passed through as an avenue to the future; to be valued not for its own sake, but only for that to which it leads. Meantime life is fast flitting away, habits are being formed, character for good or evil is being built. Who can tell which part of life is important, which is to be the fullest and richest, which will offer the best opportunities? Or, rather, who can declare any part unimportant, insignificant or meaningless? Each day is a life in itself, full of vital import to him who seeks it. If it is despised, ignored or wasted, so much of life is lost; nothing can make up for it; no future, however brilliant, can ever compensate us. Let us then, while planning for the future, beware how we slight the present. The now is all we can be sure of. We may not live to see the future of which we dream, or the plans we lay, for they may be frustrated, but the good we do to-day can never be obliterated."—Farmer.

A Civil Service Examination.

In these days, when civil service reform is agitating the bosom of the politician, it may not be out of place to present, for the consideration of aspirants for place at Washington, the following dialogue that occurred some years ago between Judge C—made

a candidate for door keeper of the House.

[Enter candidate, who supposes the Judge to be a member.]

CANDIDATE.—"If you please, sir, I wish to be elected door-keeper of the House, and if you will be so good as to vote for me I will try to —"

JUDGE.—"Take a seat, sir, and I will examine you."

CANDIDATE.—"Yes, sir, if you please."

JUDGE (gravely).—"Have you ever been a door-keeper?"

CANDIDATE.—"No, sir; but I trust by your vote and —"

JUDGE.—"Have you ever been instructed in the responsible and arduous duties of door-keeping?"

CANDIDATE.—"No, sir, but I would like to be."

JUDGE.—"Have you ever attended lectures on door-keeping?"

CANDIDATE.—"Why, no, I never heard of any."

JUDGE (sternly).—"Have you ever read a book on the science of door-keeping?"

CANDIDATE.—"I never did, sir; but I would, if —"

JUDGE.—"Have never conversed with one who has read such a book?"

CANDIDATE.—"No, sir; but I certainly will."

JUDGE (solemnly).—"Do you not see, sir, that you have not a single qualification for the office?"

[Exit candidate, resolved to go home and give it up.]—EDITOR'S DRAWER, in Harper's Magazine for September.

The Time to Eat Fruit.

The earlier in the day fruits are eaten the better. They should be ripe, fresh and perfect, and if eaten in their natural state, it is almost impossible to take too much. Their healthful qualities depend on their ripe acidity, but if sweetened with sugar the acidity is not only neutralized, but the stomach is tempted to receive more than it can digest, and if cream is taken with them, the labor of digestion is increased. No liquid of any description should be drunk within an hour after eating fruits, nor should anything else be eaten within two or three hours—thus time being allowed for them to pass out of the stomach, the system derives from them all their enlivening, cooling and aperient influences. The great rule is, eat fruits and berries while fresh, ripe and perfect, in their natural state, without eating or drinking anything for at least two hours afterward. With these restrictions, fruits may be eaten in moderation during the day and without getting tired of them, or ceasing to be benefited by them during the whole season.

Oratorical Blunders.

It was a Frenchman—the famous Carlini—who, contentedly laying his head upon a large stone jar for a pillow, replied to one who inquired if it were not rather hard, "Not at all, for I have stuffed it with hay." It was an American lecturer who solemnly said one evening, "Parents, you may have children; or, if not, your daughters may have." It was a German orator who, warming with his subject, exclaimed, "There is no man, woman or child in the house who has arrived at the age of fifty years, but what has felt the truth thundering through their minds for centuries."

A Refined Man.

A refined man is never "loud" in his dress, for refinement is always allied to simplicity and a judicious and tasteful employment of the means of the good and happiness which it has at command. It seeks to divest itself of superfluities, and aspires continually to the utmost possible purity. Refinement leads to personal cleanliness and elegant neatness good taste and simplicity. Needless display and bashfulness are alike repugnant to its spirit.

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