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**A YEAR AGO.**

A year ago proceedings were begun in the Kansas Supreme Court to test the powers of the State Court of Visitation.

A year ago the United States court at Richmond, Va., denied the petition of Thomas F. Ryan for an injunction restraining the consolidation of the Seaboard & Roanoke with the other lines in the Seaboard Air Line system.

A year ago a bill was introduced in the Texas Legislature to prohibit the running of double-header freight trains.

A year ago Andrew Reasoner, for many years general superintendent of the Morris & Essex division of the Delaware Lackawanna & Western, died at East Orange, N. J.

A year ago J. C. Stuart resigned as general superintendent of the Chicago St. Paul Minneapolis & Omaha to become general superintendent of the western lines of the Baltimore & Ohio and was succeeded in the first named position by A. W. Trenholm.

One of the numerous railway regulating bills now before western legislatures provides, according to the telegraphed report, that after January 1, 1904, railway companies in Wisconsin "shall equip their trains with devices that will keep them on the track after derailment." The object which it is thus sought to attain is most commendable, and it is to be regretted that the bill fails to specify what the devices are that will accomplish it. Possibly the reporter has not stated the case with accuracy, for it would seem to be beyond the power of an inventor or even of a legislature to keep a train on the track at the same time that it was off the track. Many years ago The Railway Age described a new invention which was intended to keep a car from leaving the track in case of the breakage of a wheel or axle, and this bill may be the fore-runner of some such a device. But it seems only proper that the legislators should know what the unnamed invention is before they order its adoption; although knowledge, it is true, is not always a prerequisite to railway legislation.

A decision given this week in the United States Circuit Court at Chicago seems to indicate that express companies doing business on railway trains are far from being monopolies, as they are popularly considered. The case was that of an individual who was doing a purchasing and "pony express" business between Chicago and Elgin, buying goods for customers and carrying them as personal baggage. The plaintiff, being arrested for abuse of privileges as a passenger and trespassing on the rights of the United States Express Company, brought suit for \$25,000 damages and secured a verdict of \$2,000. The finding of the jury, awarding a much greater amount than was actually involved, appears to some to indicate "that the courts will not tolerate interference on the part of the big express companies with the private business of individuals who carry packages for a small commission." If this is so, the

business of the express companies is open to competition by passengers, whose merchandise the railways are carrying free of charge, as baggage. There would seem to be a question of equity here which the jury has ignored. The railway and express companies think so and have asked for a new trial.

After the wreck at Greenville, Pa., the other day, the passenger department of the Erie took pains to give to the press on two successive days exact and detailed accounts of the damage done and of the cause of the disaster, or, rather, of the fact that the cause was inexplicable. This somewhat unusual official frankness attracted no little attention in New York, where much uncalled-for comment had been based on inadequate knowledge. Generally speaking, the policy, which, of course, is not unnatural, of keeping back information about casualties, does more harm in the public mind than any probable suppression of the truth can do good.

A shipment having origin and destination in the same State, but, in the course of transmission, on a continuous railway haul, passing outside the State, is interstate in character and hence is not under the jurisdiction of a State railway commission. This is the substance of a decision of Judge Trieber, of the United States court at Little Rock, Ark., in the suit of the Kansas City Southern Railway for an injunction restraining the Arkansas Railroad Commission from enforcing a reduction of rates on a shipment from Fort Smith to a point in southeastern Arkansas, passing en route into the Indian Territory. The commission in August last ruled that the rates charged were too high, and ordered a reduction, subsequently overruling the application of the railroad for a rehearing. In October the company obtained a temporary injunction against the commission, which, after full hearing, was, on February 5, made perpetual. In a similar case the Texas Railroad Commission ruled that it had no jurisdiction, but the question has not before had a judicial decision. The principle involved is an important one, although it is not likely to have frequent application.

**A NOTEWORTHY SUBURBAN PASSENGER SERVICE.**

The extended article in this issue on the suburban train service of one of the great Chicago roads has grown out of the thought that the public generally, and even railway men not directly interested, fail to appreciate the extent and importance of such service to the terminal city and its immediate surroundings. Railway men are apt to look upon the suburban passenger business as a mere sideshow, easy to get and easy to run, requiring little skill to manage or operate, and having little connection with the real purpose of the railway; while the commuters are much less inclined to waste their breath in commendation of the road for the excellence of its service than to save it for condemnation when a train gets a minute or two off its time.

The Chicago & Northwestern, operating three lines into desirable residence regions, has developed the largest suburban traffic of any western road, with perhaps one exception, and has followed a liberal policy in anticipating the needs of this business, without regard to its immediate profitableness. A new consideration has compelled the attention of this and other roads of late years—the competition of electric roads, with cheap fares. It would doubtless be very gratifying to railway managers to find that the communities which their none too remunerative train service has called into being and developed to importance were sufficiently grateful to withstand the temptation of a cut of one or more cents in the rate by an electric line. But, unfortunately, gratitude with railway patrons, at least, is an anticipatory rather than a retrospective emotion, and never swells the receipts of the ticket offices. So the competition of the lightning must be met either by reducing the rates and overturning the whole basis of rate-making for an extended area, or by offering a service which will compel patronage by its great superiority to that which the trolley lines can possibly give. The latter is the course determined upon by the Chicago & Northwestern management, and it is now giving to the residents along its lines

a suburban train service which, for comfort, speed, safety, frequency, regularity and reasonableness of rates, is altogether commendable.

From an operative standpoint the Northwestern's train service at Chicago is specially notable by reason of the topographical difficulties under which it is conducted. All the great traffic of its Wells street terminus is bottled up by a 2-track turn-bridge over the Chicago River, and the successful handling of the hundreds of train and engine movements under these conditions should count largely to the credit of the superintendence, in comparing the service of this road with others. The maps and diagrams in the article to which reference is invited will make clear the peculiarities of the situation with which this road contends so successfully.

#### A GOOD WEEK FOR CONSOLIDATIONS.

Wall street has been kept unusually busy during the last week or two in learning, imagining, making and operating upon reports of railway consolidations and combinations. The public was ready to believe anything in that direction, and prices of stocks have been sent skyward and earthward by the varying stories, to the large profit of operators. The great fact of the acquisition of the Southern Pacific by Union Pacific interests incited the street to other possibilities and inspired inquiry which resulted in a surprising flight of stories, some of them true, some probable and others foolish on their face. Here is a synopsis of the chief rumors:

Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe to consolidate with Southern Pacific. "Rot."

Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe said to be negotiating for St. Louis & San Francisco, also for the Colorado roads.

Union Pacific said to have acquired the Colorado roads—Rio Grande, Midland and Southern.

Denver & Rio Grande about to absorb Rio Grande Western. Not improbable.

Denver & Rio Grande, Rio Grande Western and Colorado Southern stated to have been secured by Gould interests. President Jeffery states that George J. Gould has purchased an interest in Denver & Rio Grande, but that its independence has not been impaired.

Missouri Pacific, the Colorado roads, St. Louis & San Francisco and Missouri Kansas & Texas said to be united by "community of interests" between Gould, Rockefeller et al.

Pennsylvania said to have made "a compact with the Union Pacific, which recently acquired the Southern Pacific, the deal to include both the Atchison and Southern Railway systems." Possibly the rumor-maker has here confused the Southern Pacific and Southern companies, but the truth of the story is not affected.

Delaware Lackawanna & Western said to be acquiring Lehigh Valley and Wabash. Denied by President Truesdale.

Pennsylvania "to be united with" Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe—"probably only on a favorable traffic agreement."

Pennsylvania, Milwaukee & St. Paul and Northern Pacific "to be merged into one system." Mr. Hill, who had been given a few days' rest, was to be left out in the cold under this scheme.

Philadelphia & Reading has absorbed Central of New Jersey. This is a fact.

Lehigh Valley to be absorbed by Philadelphia & Reading. Denied.

Chicago & Northwestern likely to lease or purchase Union Pacific. Said to be Harriman's plan.

Chicago & Northwestern said not to be included in Harriman combinations, and therefore to be planning various independent extensions. This hurts the popular story of a Vanderbilt line from ocean to ocean, with Northwestern and Union Pacific as constituents.

Chesapeake & Ohio and Norfolk & Western to be consolidated. Denied.

Mobile & Ohio purchased by Southern Railway. A fact.

Missouri Kansas & Texas to be added to Harriman syndicate list—perhaps.

Northern Pacific to absorb Chicago Burlington & Quincy; or Burlington to be consolidated with Northern Pacific—which you please.

New York Central to be combined with Union Pacific and Southern Pacific. "Not a word of truth in it," says President Callaway.

Erie to be connected with Chicago Milwaukee & St. Paul and Northern Pacific.

Southern Railway to form an alliance with Southern Pacific.

Seaboard Air Line rumored to want New Orleans & Northeastern—a notion which the Southern Railway, which the latter serves, is not likely to encourage.

Illinois Central said to be planning to absorb the Alabama & Vicksburg, a part of the Southern Railway system.

Wabash said likely to take control of Wheeling & Lake Erie.

Chicago Rock Island & Pacific, Denver & Rio Grande, Rio Grande Western and the proposed Salt Lake & Los Angeles road to be consolidated. Imaginary.

Chicago Rock Island & Pacific to be absorbed by Atchison Topeka & Santa Fe. "Nothing in it."

Chicago Rock Island & Pacific said to have purchased Mexican Central—which is about the same as purchasing the Mexican government, to which the Central road is eventually to revert.

Chicago Indianapolis & Louisville (Monon) absorbed by Southern; also by Louisville & Nashville.

St. Joseph & Grand Island to be absorbed by Burlington.

Iowa Central and Minneapolis & St. Louis to be consolidated. Natural and probable.

Chicago & Eastern Illinois and St. Louis Southwestern reported to be secured by "the Harriman syndicate, including the Goulds and Rockefellers."

Harriman "has his eye on" Chicago Great Western.

Chicago Great Western control said to be secured by J. P. Morgan.

Thirty-three consolidations in a week is a great record, helpful to the stock market and welcome evidence to those who assert that every effort of the owners of railway securities to avert ruin by substituting co-operation for unchecked competition is dangerous to the public. The public, however, is not greatly alarmed, and the more it sees of these efforts as they are worked into practical operation the less will they find occasion for alarm or suspicion.

#### COMPARATIVE CONDITIONS OF EXPRESS AND MAIL SERVICE.

In the course of the investigation of the subject of railway mail pay made last year and the year before by a special commission of Congress, no little attention was given to the comparative conditions of the mail and the express service. A considerable part of the argument submitted by Prof. Henry C. Adams for a reduction in the compensation paid to the carriers was based on statistics of payments by the Government for the handling of the mails, and by the express companies for the conveyance of express matter. Judging from the reports just submitted, this comparison of unlike quantities appears to have had little effect upon the commission. Perhaps the clearest practical brief statement of the relations between the two branches of transportation was given before the commission by Mr. John J. Valentine, the president of Wells, Fargo & Co.

Mr. Valentine pointed out that the service rendered to the Government by the railways is much more expensive and elaborate than the service rendered to the express companies. In the magnitude of the cars supplied, in the furnishings of those cars, in the carriage of the mail clerks, and in other elements of the service, the work done for the Government is more expensive than that done for the express companies. In Mr. Valentine's opinion, which, however, was founded rather upon observation than upon investigation, the mail service of the United States is, in round figures, perhaps, one-half more expensive to the railroad companies than the express service. These conclusions will hardly be gainsaid by experienced railway officials.

Similar views were presented, with great elaboration, in a formal paper upon the same subject prepared by Mr. Samuel Spencer on behalf of the Southern Railway.

"By persistent and strenuous insistence upon certain requirements," says Mr. H. T. Newcomb in his examination of the subject, "the postoffice department has, with the cordial co-operation of the railways, built up a system of railway mail distribution and transportation that is magnificent in its efficiency and marvelous in its perfection of adjustment to the demands of the public." The forcible remark is added that "it should not be forgotten that it is a costly service and involves methods that are radically different from those followed in other forms of transportation." As Mr. Julius Kruttschnitt put the case for the Southern Pacific and for all other roads as well: "We cannot handle the mail as a commodity; the department for the benefit of the public prescribes the most expensive manner of handling it, and the public is given the very best of service. Day after day the public, and the department representing the public, are more and more exacting, and the expense to us of conducting