

OWNERSHIP BY CITIES

Favored, Regarding Street Railways, at a Brooklyn Meeting.

NOT SOCIALISTIC, SAYS DR. ABBOTT

The Companies, Ernest W. Crosby Declared, Treat the Public with Contempt — Thomas G. Shearman's View.

The people of Brooklyn were last night afforded an opportunity to influence public sentiment in favor of the municipal ownership of street railways, and to indorse the bill presented in the Legislature by Mr. Conkling submitting the proposition to a vote in the Cities of Brooklyn, New-York, and Buffalo.

The meeting originated with the Social Reform Club of New-York City, and was held in the Criterion Theatre. The people of Brooklyn did not by their attendance manifest any extraordinary interest in the subject under discussion, for the theatre was not more than half filled.

Ernest W. Crosby presided, and among those on the platform were the Rev. Dr. W. S. Rainsford, pastor of St. George's Church, this city; Thomas G. Shearman, Joseph R. Buchanan of Newark, N. J.; the Rev. Father Thomas J. Ducey of this city, Register of Arrears Fred W. Hinrichs, Edward King, and Alderman Adam Leich.

Mr. Crosby, in opening the meeting, said it had been called by the Social Reform Club because it believed there was a healthy public sentiment in favor of the municipal ownership of street railways.

"The railroad companies," said Mr. Crosby, "have reached the point that when any trouble arises they thrust their hands in their pockets and say, 'It is none of your business.' Now, there are some people who think the time has come when they will make it their business. [Applause.]

"The arrogance of these companies is beyond belief. They receive all their privileges, all their profits, from the public, and yet they treat the public with contempt. I do not know but that it was a wise thing for the City Hall to burn itself out the other day, for if it is true that the trolley companies own the city, the sooner the city transfers its officers to the offices of the trolley companies the more economical will it be for the city."

Mr. Crosby sketched the history of the Brooklyn Heights Railroad Company and the marvelous manner in which it absorbed the Brooklyn City Railroad, and, referring to the term "watered" stock, said:

"The only kind of water in the stock of the railway company is the sweat of the honest man's brow. It is a misnomer to call it water; it is blood.

"Perhaps some day we may look upon Mr. Lewis and Mr. Norton [hisses] as public benefactors, as being those who forced us to drive the first nail in the coffin of the Government of municipalities by corporations." [Applause.]

The Rev. Dr. W. S. Rainsford was the next speaker, and after explaining the reasons that induced him as a minister of the Gospel to appear on the platform in support of this question, he discussed the moral side of the subject, and in connection therewith praised Judge Gaynor for his words when he said, in a decision concerning the strike: "It may be legal to do this sort of thing, but all the same, it is a crime against the community."

"What we have got to do," said Dr. Rainsford, "is not simply to sit down and say this is law, this is law, but, as earnest citizens, say we will work until the law comes up to the conscience of the community."

Dr. Rainsford called upon his hearers to take an active interest in politics, and, through their representatives in the Legislature, bring about necessary and desired reforms.

Joseph R. Buchanan, a labor leader, of Newark, N. J., made a plea for municipal ownership of street railroads. Restrictive legislation would be of no avail. There was but one remedy—municipal ownership.

"It would be better," he said, "for the public good, and the employes would receive better treatment. The people would run the railroads for the benefit of themselves. There would be no necessity for the accumulation of profits and the payment of dividends. If there were no dividends to pay the service could be improved, and the employes paid salaries big enough to allow them to live properly."

The following letter from the Rev. Dr. Lyman Abbott was read by Ernest W. Crosby:

My Dear Mr. Crosby:
A public engagement, made several months ago, prevents me from attending the meeting of Feb. 28 in support of the proposed bill permitting municipal ownership of street railways. With the details of that bill I am not familiar, but I heartily approve the fundamental principle involved in the municipal ownership of street railways, namely: The public highways should be under the control of the public.

Formerly, in the country districts, the highways were subject to private control; the traveler paid toll at various points along the road; and the lessees of the franchise took the toll, and were supposed to keep the turnpike in order.

This relic of a past age, abandoned in the country, survives in the city, where we give over a considerable portion of our highways to private corporations, giving them the profit of the toll, and trusting them to provide the public with the necessary conveniences of transportation.

In this respect the rural communities are in advance of the municipalities, and the sooner the cities follow the example of the country, and take their highways under their own control, the better.

This, it is true, might be done by other methods than by municipal ownership. But to put the street railroads under the control of public officials, while the roads are still owned by private corporations and operated for private profit, would certainly involve serious complications, and would probably involve corruption even greater than that under the present system. The more radical method—municipal ownership—is simpler and more self-consistent.

The objection that municipal ownership is Socialistic is not well founded. The proposal of Socialism to put all industries under public control is best met, not by denying all possibility of co-operation in public enterprises, but by carefully discriminating between private and public functions; and surely the control of the public highways is a public function.

The objection that the municipal ownership of street railways will lead to corruption is answered by a consideration of the fact that corruption is greatest where a public function is relegated to a private corporation. For in such cases the corporation is under constant temptation to obtain by corrupt methods special favors from the Government, and corrupt men in the Government are tempted to extort money from the corporation as a condition of treating them with simple justice.

The objection that municipal ownership of street railways is an impossible dream of impracticable visionaries is answered by the experience of Great Britain, especially in Birmingham, Manchester, and Glasgow, in which cities, as a result of municipal ownership, the service has been improved, the hours of the employees reduced, and the profits to the municipality have not only paid the interest on the cost of the purchase, but, in at least one case, have repaid the purchase money in less than a quarter of a century.

Finally, if it be asked, "How can Brooklyn, after having given away its streets to private corporations, resume control of them again?" the answer is that it is not necessary at this point in the discussion to formulate any method.

Let the public once determine that it ought to control its highways, and we may be very sure that wise and honorable busi-

ness men will find a way by which that control can be resumed, without disregarding the rights of private property on the one hand or sacrificing the public welfare on the other. Yours very respectfully,
LYMAN ABBOTT.

The Rev. Father Ducey said: "I have no fear of capital. I am here in the interests of humanity and of justice."

The reverend gentleman read his speech on the ground that he did not want to be misquoted by the capitalistic press. He reviewed the labor troubles of the last few months and the lessons to be learned therefrom. The sooner the municipalities gained control of the street railroads the better it would be for the people, he said.

Thomas G. Shearman said that while he dissented with some of the things that were stated, he assented with the spirit of the meeting.

"All of the corporations are not bad or corrupt," he said. "The corporations with which you can reasonably find fault are those to which you have given franchises for nothing and exempted them from taxation. I have to walk on eggs when I talk on this subject, because I am counsel for some of these railroads in Brooklyn.

"Speaking on behalf of the railway companies, we have got from you the most valuable ground rents for nothing, free from taxation, and God bless you for it. Let me say, however, I am not counsel for the Brooklyn City Railroad. What has that company got from you? It has got a franchise from you for nothing, and for which you could get to-morrow \$800,000 a year. And it pays you nothing. On the contrary, you are giving the Brooklyn City Railroad \$925,000 a year, which is the biggest steal in the world.

"I do not believe, at present, that it would be safe for the State to assume the ownership of railroads. It must be a matter of evolution. But in Brooklyn you have reached a point where you could make a start. You have already worked out the problem to a certain extent on the Brooklyn Bridge.

"I will tell you what the City of Brooklyn could do. You could go to the Legislature and have a bill passed enabling you to operate your cars over the existing lines upon payment of a small sum. For \$6,000,000 Brooklyn could equip itself with a magnificent trolley system and merely operate it over the existing line. The other fellows could run their cars, but the people would all crowd into the city's cars."

These resolutions were adopted:
Whereas, The recent great strike in this city, involving as it did the lives of innocent onlookers, as well as the happiness and welfare of large numbers of our working people, and the comfort and safety of the public at large, has drawn renewed attention to the existence of grave evils in the present system of street railway management; and

Whereas, These evils result from the fact that the corporations are more interested in paying their shareholders large dividends upon watered stock than in affording the public (to whom they owe their existence) a safe, comfortable, and convenient service; be it

Resolved, That, in the opinion of this meeting, the remedy lies in the resumption by the municipality of the valuable franchises conferred upon these corporations; and

Resolved, That, to give our opinion practical expression, we pledge our enthusiastic support to the bill introduced in the Assembly by Mr. Conkling and in the Senate by Senator Bradley, submitting to the people of New-York, Brooklyn, and Buffalo the question of city ownership of the local railways occupying their streets.

Resolved, That we urge upon the Legislature its immediate enactment into law, and call upon all citizens interested in securing to the city the benefit of the large revenues resulting from the possession of these franchises to co-operate in an endeavor to place the issue squarely before the people at the next election.

Speeches were also made by Register of Arrears Hinrichs and Ernest King.

THE SOCIAL WORLD.

—Mrs. Francis's Pink Reception.—The pink reception given yesterday afternoon by Mrs. Clarence W. Francis, at her home, 224 West Seventy-third Street, was largely attended. She was assisted in receiving by Mrs. C. H. Phillips, Mrs. Francis Robbins, Mrs. Charles Holt, Mrs. M. Daly, Miss Adams, and Miss Patterson. There was mandolin, guitar, and violin music. Tea was served during the afternoon. All the table decorations were in pink to match the prevailing color of the room. The hostess, who is a very pretty blonde, wore a pink brocaded satin gown, trimmed with lavender ribbons and violets. The women who assisted her in receiving were also dressed in pink. Among those present were Mrs. Frank H. Platt, Mrs. A. B. Darling, Mrs. E. S. Hoyt, Mrs. Francis De Grow, Mrs. F. S. Bangs, Mrs. Cowles, Mr. and Mrs. Gardiner Weatherby, Mr. and Mrs. Le Marche, Mrs. Robbins, Mrs. Raymond, Mrs. James Pyle, Mrs. William Pyle, Mrs. McAlpin, Mrs. Pinkus, Mrs. Nichols, Miss Nichols, Mrs. Wentz, Messrs. Holt, Morris, and Phillips, Mrs. Adams, Mrs. Vanderhoef, Mrs. John Macy, Miss Whitlock, Miss Beers, Mrs. William Macy, Mrs. Lincoln McCormick, Mrs. Harry Williams, Mrs. Thorne, Mrs. Robinson, and Mrs. and Miss Hungerford. This was the last of the Thursday receptions given by Mrs. Francis.

—Musical by Miss Callender and Miss De Forest.—Miss Callender and Miss De Forest gave their last musicale last night, at their home in the Tiffany house, 7 East Seventy-second Street. The rooms were crowded with society people. The following programme was rendered by the Seidl Orchestra, with Victor Harris as accompanist:
1. Overture, "Lenore," No. 3....Beethoven
2. Aria, "Mon Coeur, s'Ouvre Ta Voix."
(Samson e Dalia).....Saint-Saëns
Mrs. Julie Wyman.
3. Largo from the symphony "From the New World".....Dvorak
4. "Kol Nidre," for cello and orchestra.....Max Bruch
M. Joseph Hollman.
5. Ballet music from "Le Cid"....Massenet
6. Songs, a "Erinnerung".....Spicker
b "A Night Song"....Victor Harris
c "The Pigeon".....W. Neil
Mr. Francis Fischer Powers.
7. "Good Friday Spell," from "Parsifal".....Wagner
8. Scena, "La Mort de Jeanne d'Arc".....Bemberg
Mrs. Wyman.
9. Waltz, "Welner Leben".....Strauss
After the musicale, supper was served.

—Lecture on Vedanta Philosophy.—The second of Mr. and Mrs. A. L. Barber's series of "Afternoon and Evening Talks" was held at their home, 871 Fifth Avenue, yesterday afternoon. The Swami Vivekananda of India was the lecturer, her subject being "The Vedanta Philosophy: Soul." The rooms and hall were filled with a large number of people interested in the lectures, which are under the management of Mrs. Ole Bull. Among those present were Mr. and Mrs. W. H. Lawton, Miss Emma Thersby, J. Baxter Upham, M. Banger, the Rev. Charles H. Eaton, Mrs. George B. Loring, Mrs. Mary Mapes Dodge, Mrs. Adams, Peter Marié, Mrs. Lanier, Dr. and Mrs. Fillmore Moore, Mrs. Charles Lynde, and Miss Corbin. Miss Anthon sang, accompanied by James M. Wilson.

—Mrs. Westervelt's Dinner.—Mrs. John C. Westervelt of 7 West Fifth Street gave a dinner last night at her home. The rooms were decorated with roses and orchids. The guests sat at table in the following order: Dr. Otis, Mrs. Emory, Mr. Bell, Mrs. Bowers, Mr. Dana, Miss Stanton, Mr. Westervelt, Mrs. Henop, Mr. Trotter, Miss Van Wyck, Mr. Emory, Mrs. Otis, Judge Ingram, Mrs. Dana, Mr. Bowers, Mrs. Westervelt, Mr. Henop, Miss Mixton.

—E. R. Gunther's Theatre Party.—Ernest Abbey's Theatre last night. The party afterward had supper at the Waldorf. Among the guests were Mrs. Gen. Pierson, Mrs. H. Victor Newcomb, Miss Laura Jay Edwards, Mrs. Chisholm, Miss Helen Dudley, Miss Florence Clark, J. Arthur Bramwell, Robert A. Rutherford, Howard Constable, George Richards, and Philip Minton.

—Social Incidents Yesterday.—Dinners were given last night by Mr. and Mrs. Watts Sherman of 838 Fifth Avenue and Mr. and Mrs. Henry Mills Day of 6 East Forty-fourth Street. A musicale was given last night by Mrs. Arthur Dyett of 134 West Seventy-first Street.