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Evidently Mr. Hoar sees the hostile relation between his amendment and one which would enable congress to meet immediately after the election of its members. Would it be unfair, then, to infer that he has introduced one in order to head off the other? He flatly expresses his preferences for the present system, so that the country "may have a little time to change its mind," so that the excitements of a sharply contested election shall have "time to pass away before the permanent and deliberate will of the people is enacted seriously into statutes." Pray how is the "permanent" and "deliberate" will of the people on burning questions to be determined, if not in exciting elections? Can there be any motive for allowing time for the excitement to pass away, except that the legislators chosen at such elections may substitute their will for the will of the people who commissioned them? To enable them to do so may be wisdom, but if it be, it is the wisdom of plutocracy. In a democratic government the place for what Mr. Hoar aptly calls "this great political being" to change its mind, the place for it to manifest the subsidence of its excitement over burning questions of public policy, is not in the halls of legislation, but at the ballot box. We should make it clearly understood that legislators are public servants, and neither public masters nor public mentors.

The proposer of the Hoar amendment, Mr. Hoar himself, has thus given sufficient reason for the democratic sentiment of the country in all parties to oppose and defeat it. If there were no other objection to it, its adoption would be a stumbling-block in the way of the kind of amendment that ought to be adopted.

#### "IF CHRIST WERE HERE?"

This was the subject of a sermon delivered recently by Lyman Abbott in Plymouth church, and subsequently published in *The Outlook*. If Christ were here in this nineteenth century, as he was in Palestine in the first, what sort of man would he be, and what kind of life would he lead?

That was the question which Dr. Abbott put, and to which his answer must in the main be most satisfactory, except to those who in the hardening processes of conventional piety have lost all sense of the mission and character of the Nazarene carpenter. In one respect, however, this answer seems to us faulty—radically so. We refer to Dr. Abbott's saying that if Christ were here now, he might be a man of wealth. That is unthinkable.

No man of wealth is known to our civilization, who earns all his wealth. Many of them earn nothing. But even men who do useful work—and they are doubtless the men of wealth whom Dr. Abbott has in mind—though they work with extraordinary industry and skill and productiveness, they do not, if they are rich enough to be accounted men of wealth, earn more than a small proportion of the wealth they command and call their own. Upon examination, their fortunes will be found to depend, directly or indirectly, not upon the usefulness of their labor, but upon unjust privileges created by law. What goes, therefore, to make them wealthy, is unjustly diverted from their brethren. They may not be conscious of the injustice, but it is upon injustice that the superstructure of their wealth is built, nevertheless. No man in our civilization is esteemed wealthy who does not get from others more service in the aggregate than in the aggregate he need return to others. Dr. Abbott cannot name an exception. How, then, could we expect Christ, if he were here, to be a man of wealth?

He could not be an Astor, for instance, living in luxury upon the increment of city land, to which all contribute; nor a Rockefeller, drawing fabulous sums from the monopoly of mineral resources and rights of way for pipe lines. And in saying this we impute no personal wrongfulness to either Astor or Rockefeller. We simply intend to imply, what all intelligent persons know to be true, that the wealth of the Astors and the Rockefellers is largely unearned by them. It is unthinkable that Christ, if he were here, would, like them, be a wealthy man.

Dr. Abbott endeavors to make a

distinction between men of wealth who do, and those who do not, serve their fellows. He explains that if Christ were a man of wealth, "his problem would not be how to make one dollar get two more dollars, but how to make one dollar render the largest service that one dollar can." But that explanation will not do. It is unthinkable also that Christ, if he were here, would appropriate unearned dollars even to do good with them.

Mere men may be and remain the beneficiaries of unearned wealth without guilt. On one hand they may not know that their wealth is unearned. In the complexity of our industrial conditions, under which the function of serving the community by work and the privilege of plundering it by monopoly are blended in what is known as "business," it is not remarkable that men who have never earned a dollar, and have never rendered a service except with dollars that somebody else had earned, should be unconscious of the illegitimate character of their wealth. Much less remarkable is it that in these circumstances men who earn some of their wealth and do not earn the rest, should suppose that they earn it all. On the other hand, wealthy men, though aware of the unearned character of much of their wealth, may believe, what is perfectly true, that as the conditions which give them this wealth are not personal but social, they can be reformed only by social action. There is no obligation upon such men to give away their wealth, nor to ignore the opportunity for making it which society insists upon thrusting before them. If they use their influence to enlighten society, and to cause it to alter those conditions so that no one can have the advantages of monopoly, they do not only all they are in conscience required to do, but all that it is possible for mere men in their individual capacity to do.

Not so with Christ. As we can conceive of slaveholders as being personally innocent of the crime of slavery, but not of Christ as a slaveholder, so, though we recognize the innocence of wealthy men, we cannot think of Christ as wealthy. If he were here now, he might, as Dr. Ab-

bott suggests, be found making furniture in Grand Rapids, digging coal in Pennsylvania, or hammering on some anvil, or following a plow. Indeed, it is at some such work that we should expect to find him, for it was in a kindred vocation that he labored for a living when he was here. But we should not expect to find him a man of wealth. Though mere men may be rich without therefore being personally evil, it is as inconceivable, while the wealth of the wealthy is made up of the losses of their brethren, that truth and justice incarnate should be a man of wealth, as that truth and justice incarnate should own slaves.

#### BASIS OF RAILROAD RATES.

The fact that the University of Pennsylvania supports a professor of transportation, will come to the attention of most people as a novelty; but to anyone who understands the University of Pennsylvania it will be no novelty to learn that, inasmuch as the university has such a professor, he is a special pleader for railroad monopoly. That he should be anything else and continue to hold his place, would be inconceivable. Special pleas, however, are always interesting, be they never so irritating to a well-ordered mind, and this professor's argument in support of the doctrine of rates known as "all the traffic will bear," and its corollary which Vanderbilt frankly phrased as "the public be damned," is no exception.

The Pennsylvania professor admits that upon the face of things it would seem that railroads should fix charges in accordance with cost of service. But this he says would be impracticable because "it is impossible to determine accurately the elements which enter into the cost of performing the particular transportation service"—the cost, that is to say, of carrying each particular parcel or passenger. Value of service, therefore, he regards as the more desirable basis of rates; meaning by value of service what the service is worth to shippers and passengers,—“all the traffic will bear.”

Any thoughtful man would be apt to inquire why it is that dry goods stores are able to fix their charges

in accordance with cost of service if railroads are not. How is it any more feasible for storekeepers than for railroad companies "to determine accurately the elements which enter into the cost" of handling each particular yard of goods? And the inquiry would be pertinent.

The truth is that in fixing prices or rates both the dry goods store and the railroad are governed both by the value of the service to those to whom it is rendered and by the cost of rendering it. No one will pay more for a service, either by a dry goods store or by a railroad, than it is worth to him; and nobody, be he storekeeper or railroad company, can permanently render service for less than cost. Between cost of service, therefore, and its value to the persons served, the rates of service, whether for the service of dry goods stores or of railroads, must be fixed. But at what point prices or rates will rest between these two extremes, depends upon competition. If competition be normal, prices and rates will tend from the value of the service to the persons who receive it downward to its cost to the persons rendering it. And if normal competition continue, prices and rates will ultimately rest at the cost of rendering the service for which they are charged. This is what is meant when it is said that prices are governed by cost of production.

Let the principle here briefly stated be once grasped, and it is easy to understand why dry goods stores are able to fix their charges in accordance with cost of service. If they could, they would fix them at the value of the service to the persons served, in accordance with the doctrine of "all the traffic will bear," but competition forbids that. And steadiness of competition forces their charges down permanently to the point of cost of service, below which they cannot go. It must not be understood, however, that the storekeeper fixes his prices by entering into elaborate calculations, assigning to the price of each piece of goods he sells so much for rent, so much for taxes, so much for freight, so much for superintendence, so much for interest on purchase price of the goods, so much for the wages of the clerk in selling the particular piece, and so

on. His calculations in these respects are based upon the cost in general of conducting his business, and they are stimulated by the forces of competition which press against him on all sides. No committee, with all dry goods stores under its control, could fairly regulate his prices for him, either upon the basis of cost or upon any other basis. The work of such a committee would of necessity be arbitrary. But storekeepers, left free to fix prices in accordance with their business instinct but subject to the pressure of competition, do serve the public at prices which roughly but fairly correspond to cost of service.

If now, it be asked why railroads do not render their service upon the same principle, instead of charging all the traffic will bear, the answer is obvious. While they, like the storekeeper, naturally seek to charge for their service all that the service is worth to the persons served, they are not held in check, as is the storekeeper,—their prices are not forced down to the point of cost, as are his,—simply because they do not operate under the same pressure of competition. Railroads are monopolies. They control highways, and people desiring their kind of service must employ particular railroads. Even where there is competition it is so weak that pooling becomes possible, and the shipper if not subject to one railroad is made subject to a railroad pool. Consequently, railroad rates, left unrestricted by law, do not tend naturally as do store prices, to fall from the highest extreme of "all the traffic will bear," to the lowest extreme of cost of service.

And when legal regulation is introduced, the regulators find themselves in the position they would be in if empowered to regulate store prices without the aid of free competition. They are confronted with the necessity of making calculations which it is beyond the power of any man or set of men to make. It is true, as the professor of transportation of the Pennsylvania university says, that railroad companies cannot possibly determine with accuracy the elements which enter into the cost of service, and so regulate their charges in accordance with cost; but the reason for this the professor carefully conceals,