

of travel was the highest in Sweden and Denmark, where no passenger was killed in railway accidents; and then come in succession Great Britain, Germany, Switzerland, Norway, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, France, Italy, Russia, Spain and the United States. It is remarkably instructive to notice how those countries which have fostered private monopolies and tried to control them, like France and Italy, and those which have fostered them, and left them alone, like Spain and the United States, come at the very last in the above list. In these countries life is cheapest and can be most readily sacrificed to the god of gold. The position of Russia in this comparison is without significance from the point of view of government or private ownership, as in that country conditions in general are so abnormal as to permit of no comparison that would be conclusive, with other countries.

While in the particular year on which the above comparison is based, Great Britain takes precedence over Germany in regards to safety of travel, this is by no means always the rule. During a number of years during the last decade the fatalities on the German roads were proportionately smaller than on the British. Thus in 1899 the number of passengers killed on German railways for each million passengers carried was only 0.08, while this figure was 0.14 for Great Britain. The number of those injured was 0.39 for Germany and 1.94 for Great Britain.

In face of the figures quoted, and the conditions referred to, which everyone who takes the least interest in our railway problem may easily verify for himself, how can anyone conversant with the facts have the audacity to claim that public railway systems have been failures? Are our public men, members of our administration, who make such utterances, ignorant of the results attained by the State railway systems in Northern Europe? Have they accepted the statements of our interest-subservient press without further investigation? And if they have, how is it that we call such men statesmen?

ERIK OBERG.

BOOKS

A FUNDAMENTAL ELECTORAL REFORM.

Proportional Representation. Second Edition. By John R. Commons. Published by the Macmillan Co., New York, 1907. Price \$1.25 net.

The recent triumph of proportional representation in Oregon makes doubly welcome this second edition of a book which ever since its publication in 1896 has been the American authority on its subject.

The first edition contained a convincing arraignment

of the present voting system, followed by an exhaustive exposition of proportional representation and a sketch of the history and progress of this reform, with its possibilities for good in city, State and nation. There are now added several most valuable appendices dealing chiefly with the initiative and referendum, recognizing their importance, and yet maintaining that proportional representation is the most fundamental and positive of electoral reforms. "The referendum and the initiative," says Professor Commons, "like civil service reform, are negative. . . . They deal with the effects of boss politics and not its causes. They are necessary as a beginning. Like all improvements, whether in mechanics or politics, the first inventions are directed to check evils, not to readjust causes. The last reform espoused is that which goes to the roots. This is the place of proportional representation." "Proportional representation, from the fact that it makes the elective officers responsible directly to the people who elect them, restores the essential principle of representative government. Only in this way is irresponsible bossism cut down at the roots."

And what is this way? Perhaps the clearest and briefest statement is found in the Principles of the Proportional Representation League, of which Professor Commons is a vice president. Proportional representation is defined there as "The Reform of Legislative Assemblies, by abandoning the present system of electing single representatives on a majority or plurality vote in limited territorial districts, and by substituting the following provisions: (1) That all representatives be elected 'at large,' on a general ticket, either without district divisions or in districts as large as practicable. (2) That the election be in such form that the several parties or political groups shall secure representation in proportion to the respective number of votes cast by each."

The technique of the system in its various adaptations is hard to understand. The reform, then, is slower to gain converts. But it is on that account, no less basic and no less practical; for the balloting itself is simple and the principles are just.

ANGELINE LOESCH.

PERIODICALS

A parallel column comparison of the Democratic and Republican platforms is a picturesque feature of Mr. Bryan's Commoner of July 9. The Commoner, like The Public, will be sent from now to election day for twenty-five cents. (Lincoln, Neb.)

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More and more the questions which relate to the perpetuation of the race receive earnest, reverent and frank discussion. An example of this is found