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Beginning a Series:

An American Transportation System

I. Railroads and Terminal Waste

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one, for our own industrial and commercial development, and for the salvation of the carriers. In one direction Congress has seen the planlessness of American railroad building and has taken steps to correct it insofar as it is capable of correction. The 1920 Transportation act authorizes the Interstate Commerce Commission to plan the consolidation of our railroad lines into a number of great systems. Such consolidations, besides assuring the customary advantages that come from doing business in larger units, will put the feeble orphans of the transportation world under the protection of the stronger roads which should have fathered them in the first place. But such consolidation, even when worked out by the Interstate Commerce Commission and even when made obligatory on the carriers, will be incomparably less important for both the carriers and the public than compulsory consolidation of terminals.

In New York this would mean the creation of a new terminal company, owned jointly by the carrying roads. The terminal company would purchase from the carriers all their terminal lines, stations, equipment. The terminal company would take charge of the delivery of all freight in the district. Railroads would deliver inbound cars to the terminal company's belt line, a continuous road intersecting the terminal yards of every carrier in New Jersey and New York. The terminal company would consolidate freight movements, abandon duplicate and unnecessary lines and facilities, develop union freight stations, promote the welfare of the public and of the carriers unhindered by the rivalries and the jealousies of the carriers themselves. Similar companies would do the same in Philadelphia, Baltimore, Chicago and in every first class city of the country. Once the system gets started the roads will demand it in the second class cities as well.

The effect on shippers will be the same as when two or three telephone companies in a town are unified into a single system. The effect on the railroads will be that experienced by a man stopping a very large hole in his money pocket.

We have no American railroad system. The lack of system makes itself most severely felt in the planlessness and inconvenience of competitive railroad facilities in our large cities and in the enormous expenses that these duplicate terminals impose on the rail carrier. The solution of the rail problem lies not in pursuing the chimaeras of higher rates and lower wages, but in cutting out this vast terminal waste.

EDWIN J. CLAPP.

Deported

IN a third-class coach of the London express, an Englishman—son of the imperturbable race—was talking himself into a fine passion. I happened to be among his involuntary listeners. In the course of his harangue he repeatedly pointed his thumb at two young girls, who had stumbled into the coupé under the weight of their wicker trunk, just before the train pulled out of Plymouth. Now they sat staring at the speaker whom they evidently could not understand. Everyone was looking them over with sympathy and curiosity.

"From Serbia," cried the Englishman, "from Serbia all the way to New York and then—deported! Think of it, the effort, the expense, the disappointment of it—deported because the quota was full! And they have been torn away from their mother, young and stupid and scared as they are. Poor things! Now just watch them—" He turned to the older girl, who was barely twenty, a pensive, rather sullen looking person with blunt Slavic features and very beautiful eyes.

"Going to Danzig?" he shouted, as though volume of tone could make her understand the unknown tongue. She shrank a little, looked at him helplessly, and surrendered her ticket.

"You see, she doesn't know. She's being sent to London—I wonder why."

The train rolled through the smiling Devonshire landscape, and the two girls grew momentarily tenser with fear of the Unknown Land. Presently the increased rumbling speed of the train and the pitying scrutiny of their fellow-passengers unnerved them and they began to weep, quietly and desperately. We were at a loss. The curse of Babel put an insurmountable barrier between them and us.

Then by some chance remark passed behind wet handkerchiefs, we discovered that they talked German. I spoke a few words, and their faces brightened wonderfully at the familiar sound.

"Who is taking care of you here in England?" I asked.

"There is a man on the train who buys our tickets, but he cannot speak to us."

"Do you know where you are going?"

"No, not at all."

That was certainly true. They proved to be quite innocent of geographical knowledge, and learned with dismay that England was an island, that it did not border upon Serbia, and that they were going north instead of south.

We talked of many things, and gradually their story became coherent.

Käthe and Anna Focht, as they called themselves, had been Austrian Jugoslavs until their

native town of Versec, in the great European kaleidoscope, had become a part of Serbia. They had been well-off and happy in Versec; then the great wars and revolutions had brought famine and high taxes, and had cast such a shadow over the old life, such doubt upon the future, that they had dreamt and talked of the Promised Land, where peace and plenty abounded—.

They got their passports, and had them viséd by the American consul. Mother Focht and five children started upon the great adventure, secure in the power of their passports—for what could befall them while those official Papers were correct?

The first thing that befell was a week of detention on Ellis Island. It was somewhat worse than the steerage trip had been—they waited, not knowing for what. Then they heard rumors that another Paper had been signed and sealed with their fate: Mother and the three younger children should enter, but with them the immigration quota was full—Käthe and Anna were to be deported!

"They kept us two more weeks," said Anna with a shudder. "It was awful then, because there was no hope, nothing to make us bear the filthy sickly life in those barracks. There were so many of us that we almost starved. Every day some one died of disease or broken heart, and many of the women went mad. We can never forget it, not if we live a hundred years! It was for that we came across the sea—and now they have signed a Paper, saying we must go back to Versec."

What they should do in Versec, or who should receive and protect them there, the Paper did not say.

"Our home is sold," she continued, "we have sold our house, our furniture, our mattresses and cloaks and all our things. We are told to go home, and there will be no home. We must live upon the kind mercy of neighbors." She glanced at her shabby black skirt and blue jacket. A ragged silk kerchief, originally crimson and gold and deeply fringed, still covered her head, and was the only remnant of some gorgeous Balkan costume, her old mark of rank in Jugoslavia.

"And we have no mother!" she cried suddenly, overcome by this greatest grievance. "We could bear everything, if they only had not taken her away! We shall never see her again. And we have never been away from her before—we are young and helpless and cannot speak to anyone. What will these strange men do to us before we come to Versec? What shall we do among them all without mother? We cannot even write to her, because we will never know where she lives, and she will not write because she does not believe we shall ever see Versec again. O why did they send just us away, who are so unprotected?"

I tried to explain to her naïve intelligence the necessity of our immigration law,and the impossibility of considering individuals among such a multitude of people. She nodded patiently, convinced of her fate.

Käthe, who had been staring silently out of the window, pushed back her kerchief and turned scornful eyes on me.

"The Law is the Law," she said. "We know it. But this I will ask the American consul in a later life: why did he visé our passports at all, when it was forbidden to enter? Did he not know how many passports he had already seen, and how many could enter every month?"

I could not answer her question. I can only repeat it for myself: why are these people ever allowed to come? Why are passports approved that can be of no use? Why are heads counted in New York instead of abroad at the American consulates? Many a human destiny hangs on this little awkwardness of the immigration system.

America, that is the Promised Land at some time to all the oppressed of the world, stands thus in many memories as the Gate of Sorrows. Poor dreamers, can no one warn them of the fate that may await them? There seems to be absolutely no reason why they should be allowed to sell their all, to go upon the venture perfectly secure in the power of their passports, and return again destitute, penniless, some of them mere children taken from the protection of their parents. They go back to live upon charity, who once have worn kerchiefs of crimson and gold!

What shall the American consuls, or we who stand behind their signatures, answer these plaintiffs in a later life? SUSANNE K. LANGER.

Doppelgänger

I'm waiting for myself, sitting up too late
Waiting for myself to come back tonight.
I saw myself go out of a moonlit gate
And turn to the right . . .
I saw myself, a midge on the silver face
Of the moon, trudge up the sky,
And through the molten silver and fine-spun lace
Of clouds, go by.
I saw myself come to that misty house
On the other side of nowhere, where you are.
Discreetly hidden under whispering boughs
It gleams like a star.
The door glowed open. "Oh, it's you!" you said . . .
So I sit here waiting—with Fate—
And I wish Myself would get back
For I ought to go to bed
And he stays so late!

WILLIAM ROSE BENÉT.