



## Wonder

*By CHARLES HANSON TOWNE*

Three things there be that seem to me  
The loveliest, as life runs by:  
The endless legend of the grass,  
The sunlight on the green morass,  
And the great silence of the sky.



# “What ’s the Matter with the Railroads?”

## *II—The Man Factor of the Problem*

By EDWARD HUNGERFORD



FOR more than two decades imagination, virility, foresight, have been upon the wane in our American railroads, until to-day these qualities are quite gone from many of them; the debacle of the national machine is all but complete. The man with an idea may be needed upon our carriers, but he is not wanted. They are ruled by conservatism, carried to the last degree. Yesterday the man with an idea was at a premium in railroading; the roads themselves were known for their daring, their strength, their progress. To-day the men who operate them are the abject slaves of a system; the only ideas that they may safely advance are those leading to immediate economies. Immediate expenses, even with great and far-reaching economies as their ultimate result, are quite taboo. The railroader may no longer think; he may, apparently, only execute.

What is the reason for this? A hundred answers will be made to this question. The one most often advanced is the excessive degree of regulation which to-day hampers the railroads of the United States. “These government sharks have killed railroad initiative,” is said time and time again. There is some truth in that answer; yet I myself think that there is greater truth in the fact that absentee ownership of the carriers—long-dis-

tance banker control, if I may be permitted to speak frankly—has done far more than either state or federal regulation to kill initiative and progress in our transport machine.

Folk in Wall Street, and a good many others outside of that famous thoroughfare, think of the difficulties of our railroad problem as things merely of dollars and cents. They feel that the questions of rates and wages, of income and outgo, are the sole factors to decide the future weal or woe of the roads. If the rates are put high enough and the wages and other items of expenditure are kept low enough, they will prosper again. These folk feel that the problem is solely an economic one.

I believe that they are wrong. I feel that the prime point of the entire question is contained in three words, “the human factor.” This factor comes first, not last. Because Wall Street and other cocksure folk have in the past placed it behind the problem of finance, is one of the very great reasons why our American railroads are having extremely hard sledding at the present moment.

The human problem of the railroad may fairly be said to be divided into two classes, the patron and the employee. There is that meaningful phrase, “the fine tradition of our American railroading,” for it stands