

THE EXAMINER.

THE Literature of Railways does not seem a very promising subject of popular examination; but there can be very little doubt at all that to the mind of any business man there is a good deal of interest in it. No great public question is more sure to make demands on public men, and on those who handle public affairs in the press, than the railway question. It is not a new question at all, for ever since the first railway ran, and since Hudson was king, there has been a good deal of discussion regarding railways; but it is only within recent years that the management of railways, and the control of the corporations owning and operating them, have become matters of profound public concern. And it is only recently that books have existed dealing with the problems discussed by the advocates of one or another form of control. The decisions of the law courts of the United States have, in general, tended to give the control of any road extending in any way beyond the boundary of a State to the general Government. The establishment of the Railway Commission in England has, under the direction of the Board of Trade, done much to bring about an effective and equitable control over all railways. And the legislation of Canada has specifically provided for a strong control by the central Government in matters affecting the general welfare.

There are several books on the subject of railways, to which the attention of men of affairs may well be directed. The first is "Railroads, their Origin and Problems," by Charles Francis Adams, jr., published some years ago, recently revised and republished, but, in accordance with a newly-adopted and very dishonest device of publishers, not dated. The volume is divided into two parts, i.e., "The Genesis of the Railroad System" and "The Railroad Problem," with appendices dealing with the law relating to the Massachusetts Railroad Commission. Though published by a respectable firm, the book has no index, and the hasty searcher for information must first set himself the task of going all through the book, which in these days is not necessary, as a rule, in books of a reference character. No attempt whatever was made by the author to put forth his very intelligent work in even the most common form of usefulness, with divisions, or indications of the contents. The volume has consequently been looked on with some degree of aversion, even by those who wished to utilize it. The first part of the volume is devoted to a brief history of the railway system of the United States, quite interesting, but not novel.

The second part deals with the Railroad Problem, which may be described best in Mr. Adams's own words. He says:—

As events have developed themselves it has become apparent that the recognized laws of trade operate but imperfectly at best in regulating the use made of these modern thoroughfares by those who thus both own and monopolize them. Consequently the political governments of the various countries have been called upon in some way to make good through legislation the deficiencies thus revealed in the working of the natural laws. This is the Railroad Problem.

Mr. Adams discusses and describes the railway systems and legislation of the United States, Great Britain, Belgium, and France, each differing in detail and direction, but all involving very much the same problems as regards the public and commerce and the State. His views lean towards a rigid surveillance of the railway corporations. "They need constantly to feel," he says, "that a policeman's eye is on them." He does not place any faith in competition. He says: "Carrying, now, the argument directly into the case of railroads, and having recourse again to experience, we find that railroad competition has been tried all over the world, and that everywhere, consciously or unconsciously, but with one consent, it is slowly but surely being abandoned. In its place the principle of responsible and regulated monopoly is asserting itself. The same process, varied only by the differing economical, social, and political habits and modes of thought of the people, is going on in France, in Belgium, in Germany, and in Great Britain." His main idea is that concentration of railway interests and supervision by the State, by means of a commission, is the plan which will afford the best guarantee to the public against the abuse of the great powers necessarily entrusted to railway corporations. In addition to Mr. Adams's book on the "Railway Problem," the reader is directed to his volume on "Railway Accidents," in which there is a history of railway accidents since the death of Huskisson, and a great fund of suggestive criticism for the improvement of life-saving and accident-averting appliances.

One of the newest English publications is a little volume of essays or letters by "Hercules," published in 1885 in London; in which there is a good deal of discussion on the Railway Commission, excessive charges, passenger traffic, classification of rates, control of the railways by Government, and the legislation required for an improvement of existing arrangements. Chapter nine of this little book contains an intelligent account of the Railway

Acts and Commissions since 1840, and is an excellent guide to the official literature of the subject. It brings down the history to the Cheap Trains Act of 1883, and discusses measures as late as Mr. Chamberlain's "Bill to amend the regulation of Railways Acts" of 1884. The necessity for the strongest Governmental control is insisted on in this volume. As a guide to all railway legislation, this little volume is very useful indeed, and will prove valuable to all business and professional men.

The next candidate for acceptance is the very latest. It is called "Railroad Transportation, its History and Laws," by Arthur T. Hadley, who is one of the Commissioners of Labour Statistics of the State of Connecticut and an instructor in political science in Yale College. Mr. Hadley's object is to "present clearly the more important facts of American railroad business and explain the principles involved; and, second, to compare the railway legislation of different countries and the results achieved." He discusses the modern transportation system, the growth of the United States internal commerce, railway ownership and railroad speculation, competition and combination in theory and practice, railroad charges and discriminations, the legislation and systems of England, France, Germany, Italy, etc.; and the results of State railroad management. Mr. Hadley says:—

There is a strong popular feeling, to a large extent unsuspected by those in authority, in favour of Government ownership of railroads as a system. No one can have much to do with the more thoughtful working-men without finding out how strong that feeling is, and what hopes are based upon it. The fact that the question is not now under discussion must not blind us to the fact that forces are at work which may prove all but revolutionary when the question actually does come under discussion. If it be true that Government railroad ownership would be a most serious political misfortune for the United States, we must be prepared to meet the danger with our eyes open. Unless we are able to face it intelligently, and to show reasons for our action, the widespread feeling in its favour will prove too strong for us. It may not come for many years; but the lessons of the Granger movement show plainly enough what forces will lie behind it when it does come.

This book no doubt contains the latest and completest account of the subject; and it is by all odds the completest book of reference to foreign reports, blue books, and laws. The author gives at the head of each chapter all the authorities he can find on the subject he is dealing with, English, American, and foreign. Thus a whole library of railway works is referred to here. The latest statistics are also given of the railway interests of the various nations of the world.

All these books are very interesting, though, except for a special purpose, they are not very lively reading. Business men and railway men and politicians and journalists will, however, find their account in procuring and studying them; and it is for that reason special attention is directed to them.

M. J. G.

LORD BEACONSFIELD'S LETTERS TO HIS SISTER.

THE collection of Lord Beaconsfield's Home Letters which Mr. Ralph Disraeli published last year has been followed by a much larger and far more valuable series. These later volumes form excellent biographical material: there is hardly a dull or uninteresting page in the collection. They are full of wit and epigram, with touches that illustrate the character of the writer and the historical events of his time. From them we make the following excerpts:—

Bulwer was his first social godfather, and here is Disraeli's description of a party at Bulwer's in February, 1832:—

We had a very brilliant reunion at Bulwer's last night. Among the notables were Lords Strangford and Mulgrave, with the latter of whom I had a great deal of conversation, and Count d'Orsay, the famous Parisian dandy; there was a large sprinkling of blues—Lady Morgan, Mrs. Norton, L. E. L., etc. Bulwer came up to me, said, "There is one blue who insists upon an introduction." "Oh, my dear fellow, I cannot really, the power of repartee has deserted me." "I have pledged myself—you must come;" so he led me to a very sumptuous personage, looking like a full-blown rose, Mrs. Gore. Albany Fonblanque, my critic, was in the room; but I did not see him. . . . The Mr. Hawkins, who made a wonderful speech, and who, although he squinted horribly, was the next day voted a Cupidon, and has since lost his beauty by a failure, and many others, whom in this hurry I cannot recall—Charles Villiers, Henry Ellis, etc. I avoided L. E. L., who looked the very personification of Brompton—pink satin dress and white satin shoes, red cheeks, snub nose, and her hair à la Sappho.

At the next party at Bulwer's, Disraeli was to meet a person who afterwards played a very important part in his life; and to those who knew Lady Beaconsfield in later years the passage will be not less curious than interesting:—

I was introduced "by particular desire" to Mrs. Wyndham Lewis, a pretty little woman, a flirt, and a rattle; indeed, gifted with a volubility