



Unmaking a Panic

At present the railroads are hard pressed as to where to put their money so that it "won't show" to the income tax collector. Once it gets on the tax report the people will know just exactly how much money the roads have, that is: if the people make certain allowances for human nature—for the roads are every bit as human as was Mr. Jesse James in his prime.

Here was a dilemma. Money coming in so fast they had no place to put it—a regular "congestion" resulted. Many roads went temporarily insane—yes indeed; some of them were so rattled they raised the wages of the men—no kidding. Others averse to handing the men anything hit upon a scheme to doubletrack their lines and doubled the number of "ties" left out to rot. But lo, some of the money had to be given to the gandy-dancer. Hard to beat the working class. They will not long be denied.

The idea was to keep the worker one jump ahead of starvation—but it wouldn't work. You can deny some of the men all the time, all of the men some of the time, but you can't deny all the men all of the time. Because when men work, or machines work, wealth piles up so fast that it cannot be hidden. The railroads have not yet found this out, but I will let 'em know about it.

Some of the railroads caught in this sudden congestion of money hit upon a scheme to lower their roadbed into the clay. This gave them an outlet for some of the change and made their three-ply freight rates look less raw; their three and six-tenths passenger rates less brutal.

Some roads suddenly called the gangs out, put jacks under the rails and raised the steel 40 feet up in the air to relieve the tension on their money tanks. Trying to keep it away from the tax collector they had to give some of it to the people, to the gandy dancer, to the million overalled Uncle Sams who tamp up the bankers' railroads with their \$20,000 tamping feet. I'm telling you—you cannot keep it away from the people. Your sins will find you out. You're damned right!

And here I've been thinking all along that now that we have the roads in good shape, now that all the branch lines are all in place and now that the ties are all sound, we can have a vacation on pay for a change. That's what I thought—I knew the money was there. I thought that all we would have to do is go out once or twice in five years and change the steel. Yes, sir, that's what I thought when suddenly, like a bolt of lightning from a clear sky, in rushes a stream of wealth into the paymaster's office. He turned deathly pale—a spur had to be built so they could back up an automobile car against the cashier's window and haul it away. The chief engineer of the Sancta Flea sent his historic wire, "Call out every dam gang—we've got to spend \$16,000,000 quick—double track—do something—do anything—or we are lost."

And do you know, some of the \$16,000,000 went to the workers.

It was a case of do anything to keep it out of the hands of the railroad men. I wonder what grudge they have against this generation that they are so dam anxious to sink all the wealth in "improvements." Roads that were "good for the next hundred years" are suddenly torn up. Roads that could have been left as they were either raised or lowered. New yards were built destroying thousands of acres of good pasture—a mowing machine cannot be used in a railroad yard. I'm telling you it's a fright. All these roads were good for a hundred years but, and I'll bet, they will be changed three or four times before the century is up.

I wonder what grudge have they against this generation of working men?

And, will the next generation fare any better?—(T-bone Slim).