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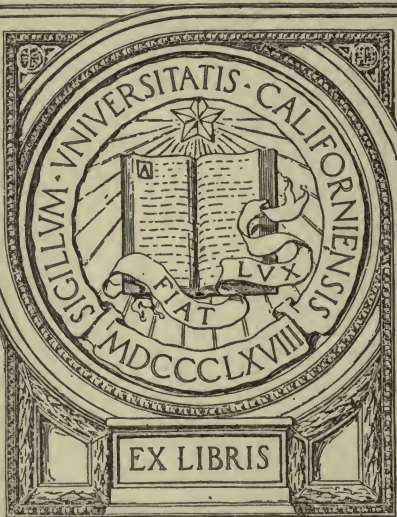
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**Factors Underlying the
Leadership of the
Railways of America**

BY JOHN R. MOTT

THE
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THE
NATIONAL
RAILROAD
CONFERENCE

Factors Underlying the Leadership of the Railways of America

By John R. Mott

An Address given at the
HOTEL, COMMODORE, NEW YORK
JUNE 16, 1922

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MR. CHAIRMAN, Gentlemen: I value highly the privilege of meeting in an intimate way with this company of men of wide outlook, of large achievement and of proved responsiveness to the highest ideals and purposes. As the Chairman has indicated, it has been my lot to devote much of my life abroad as well as here in America to traveling work. I find myself, therefore, always at home in the midst of railway men, having spent now nearly thirty-five years in almost incessant travel among the nations. I am prepared to appreciate sympathetically as well as with

my whole mind's assent the finer aspects of this work in honor of which we meet today, and also lying back of that, the work of the railways themselves. Every time I come back from a foreign journey, whether from the Orient, or from the western nations, or from those that lie south of us, I have a deepened sense of appreciation of the unique and stupendous service rendered by the railways of America to the upbuilding of the life of our nation.

It is due to the railways that we have had the almost unbelievable development of the vast material resources of the American continent. It is due to the railway service, and this is often overlooked, that there has been facilitated so largely the nation-wide dissemination of intelligence as well as the physical and social well-being of the American people. Likewise, the railways have done more than any other one factor to promote the unity of the nation. Just as the Civil War fused together forever the American

States politically, so the ceaseless shuttling of the railways has made possible and done much to realize the social unification and the real spiritual solidarity of our strongly sectional and markedly cosmopolitan population. How much that means only those of us fully appreciate who travel widely over the land. Moreover, the American people do not realize the great contribution of our railways in preventing some of the great ills and perils that have well nigh undone other nations and have actually brought on some of the greatest calamities of mankind.

When on my recent visit to China I heard of the terrible havoc and suffering caused by the famine, I said, "How much of this might have been prevented by an adequate railway service." When in India I have found, even under the matchless administration of Britain, how great famines at times still obtain among the three hundred millions of Hindustan, and have said, "What would not be the situ-

ation were it not for the railways they have, and what is not a widely extending country saved by having an adequate railway system?" When I was in Russia in the summer of 1917 with my good friend General Scott, sent by the President as members of the Root Mission, and we saw the crumbling of the Russian Army and the rise of Bolshevism, we recognized that the principal thing which made this great catastrophe possible was the breakdown of the means of communication. The reason why we have had to pour tens of millions of dollars worth of provisions into Russia this year to save them from starvation, and the reason why the great political distemper of Bolshevism, like a malignant disease, still eats its way into the heart of Russia, is because of insufficient transportation.

Think also of the great contribution of American railways in opening in the railway service boundless opportunity to successive millions of men for useful work and for advancement. Our railways con-

stitute one of the greatest, if not the greatest, school of democracy we have.

Why is it that the American railways hold the primacy among the railroad systems of the nations? It is a fact familiar to those present that America has practically one-half of the railway mileage of the entire world. That, however, is not what impresses us so much as the causes which have given the railways of America their unique distinction and great achieving power.

What are some of the factors which have made the American railways great and given them leadership among the railway systems of the world? I may be far afield but I think one of the factors has been the spaciousness of the opportunity. They had a vast continent thrust upon them to be opened, settled, subdued and developed. There was something about this which appealed powerfully to the imagination and also to the adventurous and heroic in strong men. It served to call out the best that was in

them. Someone might say, "Is there not a great continent in Africa? What about Siberia which is nearly three times the size of Canada or the United States?" Yes, their day will come, and I predict that the very spaciousness of those vast areas, which grew upon me as I made my long journeys over them, will yet challenge some of the greatest minds and release the latent energies not only of the Russian people but also of other nations whose cooperation they must have.

The admitted leadership of American railways may also be explained by the freedom which they have had to evolve plans and project them through the decades, notwithstanding embarrassing and harassing restrictive legislation—legislation which in its practical effects or outworking has often proved to have been unpatriotic. When we contrast the developments on this side of the Atlantic with those in the European nations and even more with those in Latin America—we recognize that we have had a measure

of liberty that has made possible our showing what railways can do and how they can serve the interests of a great people.

Another factor that explains the greatness of our railways has been the eminent leadership which these enterprises have had. I make bold to say that there is no work in America or in any other country which has called out among men more power of vision, more capacity for initiative, more organizing ability, that is, the ability to wield and combine men, than has the leadership of the railway systems of this country.

Undoubtedly another cause has been not only the power of mentality and personality to which I have called attention, but likewise the money power. What undertaking in America or in any other nation has had so largely poured out upon it the great energies of capital, not only of the rich but also of what we might call associated poverty. What project have we today that is more truly American?

Then I like to add another factor that has made us forge to the front. That has been our power to cooperate. I remember the discerning remark of Senator Root, "You may judge the degree of advancement of a nation's civilization by its ability to cooperate with other nations." This is just as true of companies as it is of nations. Judging by this test, the railway companies of this country have evolved into a high stage of advancement and present an example of which we may be proud. We all remember the days of keen and remorseless competition, even unto warfare. It sometimes had its advantages in calling out the latent capacities of men and companies; but we have evolved, I repeat, into that state where railways, notwithstanding centrifugal energies, have shown their ability to cooperate with one another, and, what I sometimes think is even more striking, have developed unusual capacities of cooperation internally. When we think of troubles between

companies and men we may at times feel depressed, and wonder whether or not this point is true, but if we contrast what we have here with what they have in certain other nations, we shall find abundant ground for encouragement and hope.

Were I to mention another factor, it would be to emphasize the general character and spirit of the men in the service from top to bottom. I do not wonder that you are proud of this service. Nor do I wonder that the thing that causes us most solicitude is the fact that at times we are conscious that there is not the desired solidarity, or the sense of the solidarity that does exist. This leads us right into the heart of what has brought us here today.

Among the influences that have made possible the remarkable personnel of the American railway systems is the work of the Railroad Young Men's Christian Association. It deserves to be ranked very high indeed if we may judge by the testimony of the railway officials. What

agency has begun to do as much to promote right character, right relationships, and right spirit among the men in the varied services as has the Young Men's Christian Association?

The word that I suppose we heard most frequently in the war was the word "morale." You will remember the dictum of Napoleon that morale is to other factors in war as three to one. The World War was a war of morales. You will recall that Hindenburg in the early days of the war said that the victory would ultimately be achieved by the nation that had the strongest nerves. I do not like that word as well as I like the word "morale" which represents, as I see it, the spirit of the men.

It will be interesting to remind ourselves of what it was that at times tended to destroy the morale of men in the armies. War-tiredness in some cases was the cause; again it was idleness; at other times it was uncertainty or doubt; and not infrequently it was what we called

enemy propaganda. These were among the principal influences. On the other hand, what were the causes that contributed most powerfully to the building up and maintaining of high morale? As I answer this question my answer will constitute in some respects the best outline I could give of the work of the Railroad Young Men's Christian Association, because what this organization is striving to do along railway lines of the country is to promote the right morale, that is the right character, attitude and spirit of the men. I would, therefore, ask the question again: What were the factors in the war that did most to maintain and strengthen morale? One of them undoubtedly was the promotion of the physical comfort of the men. I do not need to fill in what you will find in these pages [referring to a pamphlet on the table]. That is one of the great objects of the Railroad Association. When you think what it does with its dormitories, restaurants, rest rooms, athletic features, its

homelike lounges, you understand what we mean by the physical comfort of the men. A second factor that contributed to morale was the mental and heart contentment of the men. Again you will recall vividly the entertainments, the lectures, the reading rooms of the army Y. huts and of the Railroad Y. buildings at terminal and division points, and you recognize the full force of this point.

The right use of the leisure hours had very much to do with preserving and strengthening morale. I trace nineteenth-twentieths of the troubles among young men to unaccounted-for hours—sometimes an evening off, sometimes a day, sometimes a week-end. It is to these vacant hours that I trace the lapses and falls of men. We cannot well overstate the importance of a program such as that of the Association to occupy usefully the vacant spaces in the time of men.

Another thing that contributed much to feeding the morale of men in the war was the opportunity the Association af-

forded them to change their minds. After spending long days and nights in the trenches, or after being on the battlefield where they witnessed scenes and had experiences which they would fain forget, or after the irksome routine of camp life, to be able to go into a bright and cheerful room and mingle with their fellows and converse with the men and women workers in charge and enjoy the diverting games and uplifting ministries to mind and spirit, was the means of transforming their whole mental outlook.

Another influence that made for morale was the consciousness the men had that they were not forgotten, that the people back at home—the citizens of their native land—believed in them, were indeed interested in them, and followed them there, not simply through government taxes but through such welfare organizations as the Young Men's Christian Association. Tens of millions were contributed for Y. huts, equipment and facilities. The same influence is exerted by the Railroad

Y. with its generous backing from the companies and their stockholders and friends.

The secretarial leadership of this work has also had a profound influence. I can speak freely on this point because I am not known technically as a Railroad Secretary. But I know these secretaries and how they have spent themselves and how they count it a high honor to be of service to the railway men. They have helped immeasurably, in my judgment, to keep alive the ideals that have done so much to feed the spirit and maintain the morale of the men.

Let me emphasize as a chief factor the ministry of pure religion, the religion that St. James spoke of, pure and undefiled, which is being exemplified, lived and communicated in the religious program of these Associations. What did this not mean to men going into battles; what has it not meant to men since in the more difficult period following the Armistice; what has it meant to millions

of men in the railroad service, who through these Associations have come under the wonderful, superhuman influence of Jesus Christ.

Well, therefore, may we today, on the turning of the fiftieth milestone of the work of the Railroad Young Men's Christian Association, pay our tribute to this nation-wide, beneficent, efficient and fruitful organization. It has accomplished a great work. With its hundreds of Associations, with its scores of thousands of members, with its large property interests of many millions, with the backing of nearly every railway company of importance in the land, with the wide outreach of its influence to other lands, it is on the threshold of vastly greater achievements.

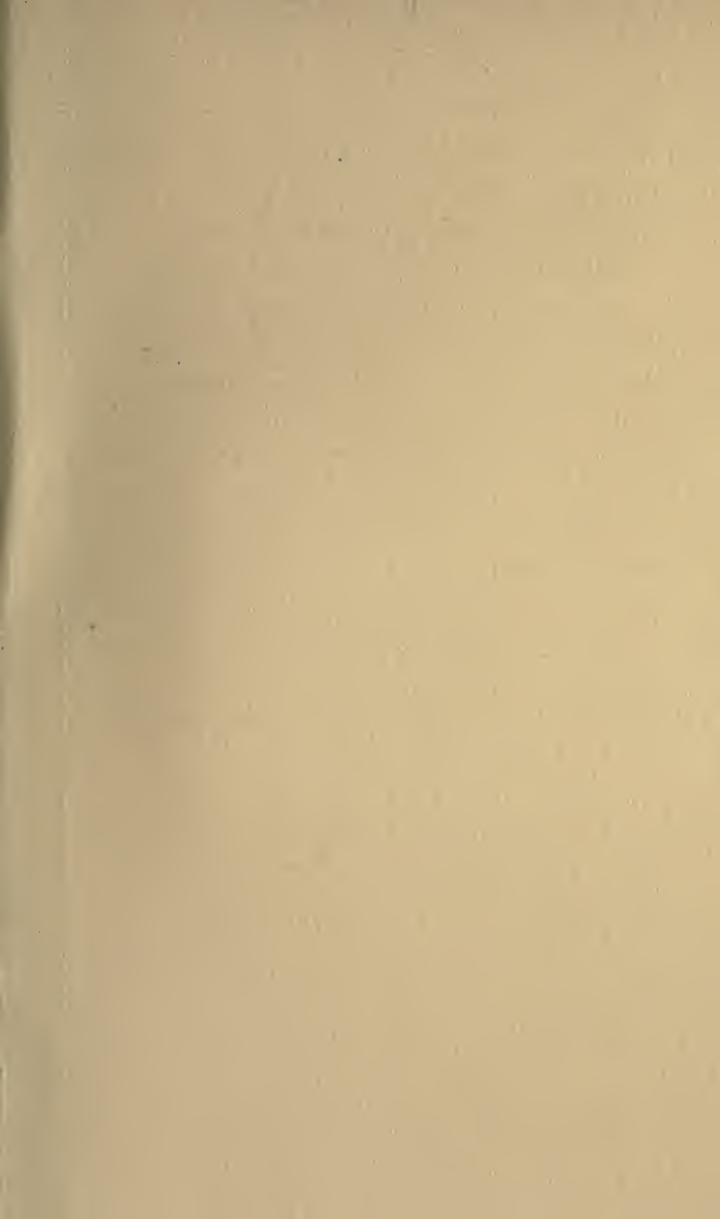
If I were to mention another great result that has been achieved and is being increasingly achieved, next to its influence on the character and spirit of the men, I would speak of the unifying power of the Railroad Young Men's Christian

Association. In these recent fateful and tragic years we have witnessed an alarming development and manifestation of the divisive forces of mankind. I sometimes think the greatest problem before us for the next fifteen years is the racial problem. Not only the divisive tendencies among the races but among the nations. Nor would I overlook another great divisive tendency—that in the social and industrial order. The conflict is on. What does it not mean that we have an organization which for fifty years has shown its ability, as no other society with which I am familiar, to unite in one membership, one program, and one objective, the employers and employes, and this in a voluntary and not an obligatory way, with the largest possible freedom of expression and action, and, therefore, ensuring the finest and most effective cooperation? What has it not meant? I am not surprised that the other great industries of the world have finally been convinced after watching for years this

practice game of the Railroad Y., and now we cannot keep up with their demand for the extension of the Young Men's Christian Association work on the railway Association model to their industries. Nor should we wonder that industrial leaders in Europe and in Asia have requested that we send experts to study their fields at first hand, and to plan agencies and facilities for their service. Discerning observers recognize afresh the stabilizing and steady guiding power of this great work.

In a time of strain like the present, it assumes added meaning and importance. To my mind, we are summoned at a moment like this to expand greatly our plans. There are some things on which we have to call time, but this is not one of them. This is one of the projects from the nature of the case that should be expanded until the helpful network of the organization is spread much more intimately over all classes of men throughout all the railways of America. We want to keep

in mind what the French call "grand strategy." By grand strategy they mean that which takes in the whole map—all the fronts. As I look over our great American republic and notice the spaces that are without these facilities and without the helpful working of these vital and steadying processes, I say let us have grand strategy that takes in every railway system in its entirety. To this end we must expand greatly the resources for this work. So far as I can see there is no more highly multiplying use of money right now than that of relating it to these plans, to influence aright the ideals, the character, the spirit, the efficiency, the relationships, the output of the men to whom we commit such unparalleled interests of property and of human life.



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