

THE FIVE-CENT-FARE BILL *

MR. SPEAKER: I think we should not hastily pass this bill over the governor's veto. I have to say with shame that when I voted for this bill I did not act as I think I ought to have acted, and as I generally have acted on the floor of this House. For the only time that I ever voted here otherwise than in the way I thought I honestly ought to, I did on that occasion. I have to confess that I weakly yielded, partly in a vindictive spirit toward the infernal thieves and conscienceless swindlers who have had the elevated railroad in charge, and partly to the popular voice of New York.

For the managers of the elevated railroad I have as little feeling as any man here. If it were possible, I would willingly pass a bill of attainder on Jay Gould and all of Jay Gould's associates. I realize that they have done the most incalculable wrong to this community with their hired newspapers, with their corruption of the judiciary, with their corruption of past legislatures. Nevertheless, I think we ought never to have passed this bill in the beginning, and that we ought, on no account, to pass it over the governor's veto, and certainly not until we have had a fair chance to look at it calmly in the light of reason.

I question very seriously if the bill is constitutional, and if the bill is constitutional I think it is at any rate

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breaking the plighted faith of the State. It is not a question of doing right to them. They are merely common thieves. Take the resolution, or rather the petition, handed up by the directors of the railway, signed first by Gould and in the last place by his son. I would pay more attention to a petition signed by Barney Aaron, Owen Geoghegan, and Billy McGlory than I would to that paper, for I regard these men as furnishing part of that most dangerous of all dangerous classes, the wealthy criminal class.

Nevertheless, it is not a question of doing justice to them, it is a question of doing justice to ourselves. It is a question of standing by what we honestly think to be right, even if in so doing we antagonize the feelings of our constituents. We have heard a great deal about the people demanding the passage of this bill. Now, anything the people demand that is right it is most clearly and most emphatically the duty of this legislature to do; but we should never yield to what they demand if it is wrong. In a matter of such importance, in a matter where I know that very many of my associates feel that we weakly yielded to what was the popular clamor, that we did not do what was right, did not vote according to the rights of the question, but, on the contrary, merely according to what we considered our constituents wished us to do regardless of the rights involved, I say that on such a question we ought to defer the argument until some day—Wednesday, if chosen, if not Tuesday. Wednesday will do perfectly well, so we may act coolly in considering this important measure and act on the broad ground of right and justice. And if the people disapprove our conduct, let us make up our minds to retire to private life with the consciousness that we have

acted as our better sense dictated. I would rather go out of politics having the feeling that I had done what was right than stay in with the approval of all men, knowing in my heart that I had acted as I ought not to.