

Two classes of dealers welcomed these new producers, those who saw greater profit in selling inferior goods at old prices, and another class who was able to foresee that cheapness would become the gospel of trade. Both classes found the venture a paying one. In one place the careless or confiding customer accepted the poorer goods at the same prices he had been paying for better wares. The other stores were plastered over with notices of "bargains," and people hastened there to do their buying. The advent of the Cheap John manufacturer, and the eagerness of people for bargains, compelled other producers to reduce their prices in order to hold their trade. As the campaign proceeded they cheapened the material, they slighted the workmanship and they reduced wages. Trade in every line became a keen hunt for something lower priced, in order that to-morrow's announcement might be lower than to-day's. This spirit has permeated every branch of commerce, and bargains are the lodestone that attracts all sorts and conditions of men and women.

Wherever the bargain counter has a home, it has monopolized the talent and brains of all concerned in its management. But where can one go and not meet it? It has its special organs in the daily papers, and its glaring invitations to those who worship cheapness are the controlling influence in the next day's shopping.

Who shall be so foolish as to rail against economy? Is it not the crowning Christian virtue? Why shall not the workingman's wife make her few dollars go to the farthest possible length in her purchases? The answer is ready: Because her keen scent after bargains is the controlling influence in reducing the wages of her husband and sons and daughters. If she must have cheaper goods, these others must do their share towards it by working for less wages, so that the wares may be offered at less price than before.

Of what value is it that the wage earners form unions to keep wages at a higher level, when their own households are searching the columns of the daily papers for lower priced goods. When one reads the piteous stories of starving sewing women, do not the loud announcements of the dealers, Finished Garments at Less than the Cost of the Cloth, at once appear before his eyes? Is not one the complement of the other? There is nothing on earth so cheap as flesh and blood, for it now touches a limit of cost of production; everything else does.

How can there be perennial bargains if wages and material are not perpetually scrimped? And as a bargain ceases to be a bargain to-morrow if not at less price than to-day so must wages drop lower and lower to meet the demand for cheaper wares. In the political economy of the next generation there will be one axiom made more prominent than all others: Cheap Goods Make Cheap Men. Satan must surely rejoice when he sees the whole world uniting in the one cry of Cheap! Cheap! Cheap! When a dealer advertises a garment a few cents under the price of his neighbor is there a single woman who stops for a moment to consider her sister in the garret who has to work for less that this may be done? Is the saving made by the buyer a matter of actual concern to her? It very rarely is. But to produce the article so that it could

be sold at this lower price women went hungry to their wretched beds.

If one did not know that every bargain offered meant sorrow to wage workers somewhere in this wide, wide world, if not at his very doors, he might rejoice that so much could be bought for so little money. But any article is sold too low when the man or woman who made it was not paid living wages. And when the wage earner's purchasing power is reduced every other interest must necessarily suffer.

The gauge of the times is the condition of the wage earner. Give him fair wages, increase his power to supply himself with the comforts and even the luxuries of life and his demands for these will accelerate the wheels of business in every line and bring prosperous times for all interests. But the bargain counter must have cheaper goods. It encourages bankruptcy. It offers a premium for inferiority. Nothing is out of its line from summer silks to mess pork, from pianos to liver pills.

Is it nothing that these toilers are without joy and without hope? Only despair is theirs. Only a dark to-day followed by a doubtful to-morrow. They are the slaves of the modern Moloch, the bargain counter, that monster who knows no mercy and serves no god but cheap John.

THE COST OF GOVERNMENT.

There is not a free trade journal in the country that does not produce statistics to show that the expense of conducting the Dominion Government is constantly increasing, and this because the policy of the Government is in the direction of protection rather than free trade. Of course they ignore the fact that the advances of civilization require the expenditures of money to maintain and improve means of communication between different sections of the country, and to meet its rapidly growing demands; and to these critics we commend that portion of the budget speech of Hon. Mr. Harcourt in the Ontario Legislature, bearing upon the subject where he says:—

Recognizing that we had a large, new and promising territory in Northern and Western Ontario to open up and develop, we have asked the Legislature from time to time to further this work with liberal grants of money, and by doing so to bring home to the new settlers some, at least, of the many advantages which the older parts of the province so richly enjoy. Large subventions to railways, generous grants to schools, liberal votes in aid of agriculture and mining, new asylums and other public buildings, which are justly the pride of the province, costing in the aggregate millions of dollars, while supplying urgent, immediate needs, have, of course, greatly added to our gross expenditures. Session after session the Legislature has, without a dissenting voice, without word of protest or complaint, agreed in all these particulars to add largely to our yearly burdens. No interest, educational, agricultural, mercantile or otherwise, has in any way been neglected. These increasing expenditures are unavoidable. Growth, expansion, development call for and require an ever-increasing measure of aid from the public chest. As population increases, as our new and rich norland is developed, as settlers from year to year enter upon and occupy portions of the province hitherto unsettled, demands for new and increased grants must be expected. These demands are inexorable, and a progressive government and legislature dare not refuse them. As to these matters, we are by no means alone in our experience. It is the common