

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"Gladstone, speaking at West Calder the other day, gave some sound advice to workingmen," said Brown, "which applies as much to us as it does to the men of England. He told them plainly that the only way for labor to protect itself against the encroachments of capital was to organize. In all the strikes and lockouts of late years labor had right on its side, and what it had gained was through the judicious use of combination. Workingmen ought not to contract the habit of appealing to Parliament, but should elect parliaments of their own, which would legislate in their interests without placing them in the undignified and ridiculous position of petitioning the men of their own choosing to inaugurate much needed reforms. He believed in manhood suffrage, and affirmed that the judgment of great questions by the masses was more enlightened than that of the educated classes, and Gladstone was right."

"This habit of labor organizations petitioning Parliament is an unmitigated nuisance," said Sharkey, "and in my opinion retards the growth of organized labor more than all else put together. Surely labor knows, or at least by this time ought to know, that it has nothing to hope from parliaments as constituted at present; that those bodies have legislated for centuries, and continue to legislate in the interests of capital, that they are bought, lock, stock and barrel by contractors, usurers, monopolists and other gangrenes of society whose interests are diametrically opposed to the interests of labor, and yet these are the men to whom we annually send miles of foolscap beginning with: 'The prayer of your petitioners humbly sheweth,' and ending with: 'And as in duty bound your petitioners will ever pray.' What a stupendous farce; and it is recognized as such, because these miles and miles of petitions invariably wander into the legislative waste paper basket. Now, if labor is in earnest, why don't it organize politically and elect its own men? This is a constitutionally governed country, one in which the people hold the power, at least on one day in five years, and petitions emanating from labor are not only a waste of ink and paper, but are altogether out of place. Why should you petition a Government when you have the power to elect one? Elect a right kind of a Government, and there'll be no need of petitioning it for anything; you have the power; you are the majority; why don't you do it? Or, if there isn't principle enough in you to be a reformer on election day, at least have the decency to stop your howling about misgovernment and class rule. Whose fault is it if you are misgoverned? Is it the politicians in Ottawa, in Quebec or in your City Council? Why you yourselves have elected each and all of these, and you yourselves are alone to blame. Don't make any mistake about it, if you desire honest Government you must become honest yourselves."

"The arguments that you advance," said Garlic, "are correct if you consider this question in the abstract, but you forget that the habit of years is stronger than the impulse of the moment; you forget that labor as a class has not studied this phase of constitutional government sufficiently to correctly estimate the power and responsibility of the franchise; you forget the pressure that is brought to bear upon the voter at election times in a thousand and one ways by crafty politicians to influence his vote; you forget the gullability of human nature, which, as Barnum says, likes to be humbugged; it is because you forget all this that you speak so bitter. To regenerate the Israelites, to fit them to assume

the responsibilities of a free nation, Moses, the greatest organizer the world has known, took his people into the desert, aye, and kept them there for forty years. If it took this length of time for this extraordinary man to inculcate the principles of Judaism and lay the foundation of a great nation under the most favorable circumstances, surely we need not despair of the slow progress of unionism. The Israelites, freed from the opposing teachings of his enemies, quickly adapted themselves to his system of government, and even forgot the traditions and habits of their race excepting those taught by himself and his followers. We have no such advantages, and our growth, or rather the growth of unionism, must of necessity be slow. Could we take the laborer away from capitalistic pitfalls and the erroneous teachings of our 'saviours of society,' who simply deal with the effects and not the cause of social wrongs, the labor question could and would be settled inside of ten years, but that we can't do. I have no faith in petitions, I don't believe they affect legislation in any way; but they effect a purpose, and that is: They embitter the people against these professional politicians who ignore them; for this reason I am in favor of them, as I am in favor of anything that will cause people to be discontented with governments as constituted at present. As for labor organizations to go into politics, I don't think it's wise at present to do so."

"And why not," said Stephen; "is there a single trades union that does not demand certain reforms from the Government, and is not the getting of these reforms, whether by petition or otherwise, political action? And since you must go into politics why not do it in a systematic and effective manner."

"I'll tell you," said Garlic, "our members wouldn't stick. It's all right to meet and discuss public questions, but it's quite another thing to be dictated to how to vote."

"Oh it is, is it?" said Sharkey. "I didn't think you fellows looked at it in that way, seeing that you religiously vote at the dictates of a party boss or ward heeler; but perhaps you'd sooner be dictated to by such cattle than by your union. For my own part, I believe it's time that labor organizations separated the chaff from the wheat, and the best way to do this is to give their members a chance to vote on

principle; let it be understood distinctly that those who ain't with us are against us; don't let any barnacles grow on the ship of labor reform, it will sail all the better without them. All honest men as yet don't belong to labor organizations, though they would gladly vote for men placed in the field by a bona fide party of honest men, but they don't like hole and corner work and they won't vote for hole and corner nominees. Come out of your shells and show the world that you have the courage of your convictions! Organize a party which will make honesty fashionable among men and place politics on a higher plane, above the reach of the ward heeler or professional politician, and honest men will rally around your standard and swell your ranks. Let those who will fall out; this fight between capital and labor is to the knife and the knife to the hilt, and none should be allowed to remain passive. We do not fear our enemies, but we must know our friends."

BILL BLADES.

STRANGE WEDDING RINGS.

Stories about wedding-rings are more than numerous. One of the best is that about the Duke of Hamilton, who fell so passionately in love with the younger of the celebrated Misses Gunning, at one of Lord Chesterfield's garden parties, that two days afterward he sent for a parson to perform the marriage ceremony.

The Duke, however, had forgotten two indispensable articles, being provided with neither a license nor ring.

At last, however, the difficulty was surmounted, and the loving pair were united with the ring of a curtain at half an hour after midnight in Mayfair Chapel.

One of the most pathetic stories of the results which accrued from the forgetfulness of a bridegroom in this respect, however, is narrated in the "Lives of the Lindseys." The bridegroom expectant was Colin Lindsey, the young Earl of Balcarres, who, when he should have been at church to meet his sweetheart, was quietly discussing his breakfast in his night-gown and slippers.

Glancing up at the time, he was horrified to see it so late, and at once hurried to church, forgetting, as was but natural in the excitement of the moment, that he ought to have taken the ring with him.

A friend who was present, however, seeing the predicament of Balcarres, when the marriage ceremony came to a dead stop, handed him the necessary golden circlet, which was placed upon the bride's finger.

Passing into the vestry to sign the register after the ceremony was concluded, the countess glanced at her ring, and beheld a grinning death's head.

Suddenly she fainted away, and unhappily the omen made such an impression upon her that, upon coming to her senses, she declared that she was destined to die within twelve months.

As is but too often the case in such sentiments, the fear produced its own effect, for before a year closed the young earl was a widower.

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