

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"The Contractors' Association don't believe in labor having a first lien on work done by it," said Brown. "I see they are bringing their influence to bear on the Government and members of the Legislature to give Brunet's bill the six months' hold." This is, to say the least, a narrow-minded move and one that I wouldn't expect from an association which numbers among its members men like Allard, Cochrane, Savignac and others whom I have always regarded as broad-minded men."

"Of course," said Phil, "every man looks after his own interests. I don't believe that the contractors would object to labor having a direct lien upon what it produces providing the contractor and material man were placed upon the same footing."

"But why should they," said Gaskill, "when their relative claims upon work done are of an altogether different character to that held by labor. Let me illustrate what I mean. Suppose one of us was a contractor, another a material man, and still another a laborer. I want to build a house, and agree with the contractor upon a price and tell him to go ahead. He engages laborers, and orders bricks, sand, lime, etc., from the material man. He is the middle-man in this case. He stands between me and the laborer, and between me and the material man, he does my work; and having laborers at his command, besides being a better judge of material and where to get it, he does it better than me. He devotes his time to building houses and therefore has proper appliances to save labor and time in the building of them, and he therefore does my work cheaper and quicker than I could do it; but his labor does not increase the value of the bricks, sand, lime, etc., left by the material man upon my building site. The economic power of this material has not been changed. It represents the inherent value of bricks, sand, lime, etc., as such, but in no greater or lesser degree than when this material had been in the hands of the material man himself. The ordering or buying of the material by the contractor has not increased its value to anyone except myself, and to me only to the amount of the cost of the removal from the material man's warehouse to my building site. If a thousand bricks at the kiln sell for \$7 and I pay 50c for carting them to my place, the bricks will be worth \$7.50 to me, but to anybody else they will not be worth more than \$7, because for that price they can be bought at the kiln. The bricks, sand, lime, etc., after passing through the hands of the material man and contractor have value inherent in them as material only, and the power to be exchanged for something else of a like value, but other powers they have as yet none. Now, let labor act and with this material create a dwelling, and straightway the economic powers of this material is changed. The bricks and material composing the house not only have the value and the power of exchange which they had after the material man and contractor got done with them before the house was built, but labor has given them the additional power to CREATE VALUE. I can grow rich by renting houses, but nobody will be found growing rich by renting bricks, mortar, nails and other material composing a house. And it is because of this fact that labor endows material with greater powers than either contractor or material man does, that labor demands a first lien upon what it produces. We don't want a lien upon the land which the house stands on, but we do want a lien upon the house itself—and a first lien at that."

"Well, how would your argument apply to agricultural laborers," said Sinnett. "If I hired a man to lay a drain on my land would he have a lien on the drain or on the land, and if on the drain how would he realize on it?"

"The thing is simple," said Gaskill. "You don't lay that drain for an ornament or for the sake of the drain. Your drain is for the purpose of improving your land by drawing off the superfluous water and thus making it more productive, it is an improvement on your land. If you wanted to sell the land the presence of the drain in it would prompt you to charge a higher price than if it was not drained and it would enable you to get more for it than the value of the same kind of land without a drain. It therefore belongs to the land and the laborer who constructed it should have a lien on the land and not on the drain. A man putting a fire-escape on a building practically adds to the building and should have a lien on it, and not on the fire escape."

"The principle is the same," said Phil, "and should be applied throughout. At present labor is away behind in its claim or else has no claim at all. Take the laborers' case on the Pontiac Railway years ago, or the case of the imported laborers on the Hereford line, where, through absence

of a claim of this kind the country was put to a lot of expense in sending the soldiers down to Hereford to preserve the peace. Where Canadian soldiers were forced into the humiliating position of protecting the property of swindling contractors against the fury of outraged and robbed labor. And our Government want to know why Canadian workmen emigrate to the States. Who the devil would stop in this country if he can get out of it; and if there are so many of us still here, it isn't because we like its laws or institutions, but simply because we are too poor to leave it. Give every workingman and habitant in this province one hundred dollars and free transportation to any point in the States east of St. Louis and the population of Quebec will decrease sixty per cent. in one week. Men are sick and tired of this province—tired of the meddling interference and constant wail of 'give, give, give,' of priest and parson—tired of its costly, slow and one-sided administration of justice—tired of its political jugglers and medieval legislators—tired of asking for justice and receiving sneers—tired of seeing their every right abrogated and trampled under foot and their best interests sacrificed to the interests of capital. So, far from loving their country, they are fast learning to hate it. Let the present policy of oppression and injustice continue and the French revolution on the Seine will be but a milk-and-water affair, with all its horrors, compared to the French revolution on the St. Lawrence. That was a struggle for principle, this will be one for existence."

BILL BLADES.

THE GROVEL OF THE DRAPERY TRADE.

Whenever Capital and Labor are at war, and commotion is in the air, and the parochial sycophant is in motion to uphold the cause of "law and order," the Australian draper comes to the front. Why grovel and drapery should invariably go together is a problem which can only be solved by deep scientific research, but experience has proved them to be inseparable elements. The lady-like female with the yardstick represents the one branch of industry that never was known to strike a blow in its own defence. It is underpaid and overworked and trodden upon, and it serves as humble target for bad language of all sorts and descriptions, and yet it is the only worm on record which never turns. It turns flat, and that is all. When employers and employed are at variance, and a great effort is being made to elevate the status of Labor, the gilded duke who flies round in the ribbon department always casts in the weight of his little soul with the cause of property. He has no property himself and no prospect of any, but the very name of Labor suggests perspiration and dust and brawny vulgarity, and all

these influences are antagonistic to the correct hang of his pants and the accurate adjustment of his coat-tail, and the altitude of his collar. Therefore the draper fills the ranks of the special constables, and humps bales and boxes and unclean bags on the wharf at a crisis, and breaks his back generally to prop up the cause of monopoly. He does these things partly because it is respectable to manifest his antagonism to that low and offensive thing, the ordinary every-day toiler, and partly because he would be sacked if he refused to do them. He exhibits no resentment at this state of things for he is a being apart; he belongs to Labor, but he refuses to recognize the fact lest he should burst his tie in doing it, and he affects to be an essential part of Capital and is kicked in consequence. He is neither man nor woman nor any other recognized institution—only a draper. He is the backbone of Australian "loyalty," the prop and stay of the Imperial Federation movement, and the principal support of the Primrose organization and the Social Purity Society; also, he hollers loud and long whenever the name of his beloved Queen comes to the front. He is a social mystery, for nobody knows what becomes of him when gets old, and nobody—so far as we can learn—ever saw a dead draper or attended the funeral of one. Probably he is sacked when he ceases to be young and beautiful, and then he either bursts or evaporates and fades away. No historian has recorded that a draper ever rose to eminence or did anything for the good of his country. One of the great names on the scroll of Fame is that of the negro flunkey who asserted the independence of San Domingo, but the weary little dude in the glove and sock department never did anything but oil his hair and look elegant. And yet the poor, servile, stunted he-milliner is a serious obstruction to human progress. His grovel is so far-reaching and complete, and his subservience so illimitable, that he is a public evil as well as a nuisance. He is incapable of elevating himself on account of his collar, and he is filled with an arrogant longing to suppress everybody else whose collar isn't up to the mark. He shudders when he hears that an individual in a woollen shirt and large boots has ventured to assert himself, and his soul revolts—at 30s a week—when he comes in contact with a low, coarse person who drives a cart and hasn't any eye glass. And, worst of all, he is utterly devoid of sympathy with any democratic sentiment or any progressive idea, because, unhappily, he knows no better, being only a draper.—Melbourne Bulletin.

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