

A SENSIBLE LETTER.

The following letter, addressed to the editor of the N. Y. Star, will, we are sure, be perused with interest by our readers:

CAMBRIDGE, MASS., May 20.

The workmen of this vicinity are observing the Eight hour movement in New York with almost breathless interest, for you are fighting our battle as well as your own, and this fact must excuse the liberty taken in writing this note.

I wish to "reinforce" the wise words just telegraphed from the New York Star in relation to "over-work," for they go to the very heart of the greatest danger that impends the trades, which have already secured the eight hour system.

The words I copy from the Star are as follows:—

"The shortening of the hours of labor was desired chiefly that the workmen might have leisure to improve their minds, see more of their families, and indulge in pleasant recreation. We don't propose to read the workmen a lecture, but we hope the 'mental gain' will not be lost sight of through greed for greenbacks; or, in other words, that those who have clamored for eight hours will not work ten for the sake of making money. Such action would not be consistent. We are led to these remarks by the report that many of the men who struck for the eight hour system are working the other two hours 'over-time,' and thus keeping men who are seeking employment out of work."

The best service our friends in New York can ever do for the cause, is to secure a frequent reading of your editorial on this danger in all the Trade Unions of your vicinity!

DANGER FROM OVER-WORK.

It is true that where nearly all are working on eight hours for a day's labor, that a very few may obtain extra compensation by working two hours more than the usual time. But reflection ought to teach "over-workers" that their extra pay will be sure to cease, whenever a sufficient number of laborers follow their example, to make over-work the regular work.

When extra labor becomes regular labor, extra compensation stops, and extra labor will soon become regular if a considerable number continue to work ten hours under a system calling itself "extra hours."

Very much of the value of the eight hour system will be in its regularity. Its moral and its pecuniary benefits will depend upon its permanence. If too much of the laborer's time is occupied in the struggle for its preservation, not much will be left to establish homes further out of town or for social and moral improvements. The over-work of a few means the insecurity of the many.

"Well," says the man of all work and no play, "must I be tied down to just the hours and earnings that satisfy nineteen out of twenty common workmen? Haven't I a right to sell my time exactly as I please?"

Certainly my friend, we are only discussing the effect upon yourself and your comrades, and upon prices, in case you exercise this right, just at this juncture. Your idea in working two hours a day extra is not to break down the eight hour system, but to obtain still more money; and this is exactly what most men want. Yet if all who desire higher wages should take this course to obtain them, we should soon have the old ten hour a day rule back again, under a new name.

In the long run—a period of three years, say—the working classes are going to have more money for working eight hours a day than they ever received in the ten hour standard. But before men can be convinced of this, they must first be satisfied that they can obtain as much for eight as for ten hours' labor.

The most formidable obstacle we have ever encountered in the contest for more leisure, was the fear of laboring men themselves that if they worked two hours less time, there must necessarily be a reduction of wages corresponding to the actual loss in production, as if they were always paid for all they produced in their ten hours' labor, after allowing a proper margin for every legitimate expense.

THE PROFITS ON LABOR.

Probably the working classes are not paid for more than seven hours' labor a day; and what remains is called profits upon labor, which go into the hands of a few, who thus become wealthy. In some cases men earn all they are paid in two or three hours' labor a day, and the remaining seven or eight hours go to swell the fortunes of those who have somehow obtained the monopoly that makes such a proceeding as this possible. And yet thoughtless lookers-on say to us, "do you think a man ought to have as much pay for eight as for ten hours' labor?"

This question assumes that we are paid all we earn in our day's work. Why, if we were, the enormous profits made upon labor,

or its results, would never be possible. Millions of dollars in the hands of any one man mean extravagant and unjustifiable profits somewhere. We are sometimes asked whether, if eight hours are more profitable than ten to the worker, why six will not prove still more profitable than eight, and four, more than six, and nothing more than either?

To this we reply by asking the opposite question: If, according to the old theory, ten hours will bring more wages than eight, won't twelve bring more than ten, and fifteen more than twelve, and eighteen more than fifteen, and so on up to twenty-four hours' labor a day?

WHERE IS THE LIMIT.

There is a limit somewhere. To say that the Government would realize a higher revenue for the Post office by reducing postage from twenty-four cents a letter, as it was once, to ten, and from ten to five, and thence to three, or two even, perhaps is not hard to believe now; but it would be absurd to claim that, on this theory, we have only proved that more money would be made by charging nothing for carrying each letter. There is, of course, a limit somewhere. "And all the questions wrangled o'er so long, 'tis only this"—where is it?

Higher wages are paid for ten than ever were obtained for twelve or fifteen hours a day, and the purchasing power of those wages holds as good as of old, for a day's labor thirty years ago never brought as much as one does now. A grander political economy will be evolved from the eight hour movement than its professors have yet begun to teach. Only ten years of the eight hour system will be necessary to blast the reputation of every writer on political economy that has yet appeared, and cords and tons of their writings will pass to deserved oblivion, thus adding another instance to history where the instincts of the masses were wiser than the wisdom of the educated classes.

Alas, that a voice cannot reach every Trade Union in the metropolis, to tell them how grand their present triumph, and how much of hope for our Republic is involved in their fidelity to the spirit of the movement, for in the coming years less hours will be found to mean less poverty, and less poverty means the solution of every problem that has ever disturbed mankind.

ADHERE TO EIGHT HOURS.

These considerations will have more time to suggest themselves in the eight hour system; and gradually they will satisfy all that the way to earn or rather obtain the most money, is to adhere closely to the regular eight hours a day rule, and to denounce all who work over time as the most practical enemies of the new movement for more time or leisure, and a grander civilization for the masses. And the fact that employers are so anxious to have their work done now, has no more force than the fact that workmen sometimes want work to do, when it cannot be had; and whoever urges the hardship of allowing capital invested in tools, machinery, stock, buildings, &c., to lie idle sixteen hours out of the twenty-four, should be invited down to Wall street, or in those localities where merchants, bankers, railroad presidents, and other capitalists do business, to persuade them to work extra hours because the enormous capital invested in their magnificently furnished counting houses is allowed to lie idle seventeen or twenty hours out of the twenty-four. All hail to the Eight Hour Unionists of New York.

LEX STEWARD.

A PHANTOM RAILWAY TRAIN.

A writer in the Albany Evening Times relates a conversation with a superstitious night watchman on the Central Railroad. Said the watchman:

"I believe in spirits and ghosts. I know such things exist. If you will come up in April, I will convince you." He then told of the phantom train that every year comes up the road with the body of Abraham Lincoln. Regularly in the month of April, about midnight, the air on the track becomes very keen and cutting. On either side it is warm and still. Every watchman, when he feels this air, steps off the track and sits down to watch. Soon after, the pilot engine, with long black streamers, and a band with black instruments, playing dirges, and grinning skeletons sitting all about, will pass up noiselessly, and the very air grows black. If it is moonlight, clouds always come over the moon, and the music seems to linger, as if frozen with horror. A few moments after, and the phantom train glides by. Flags and streamers hang about the track ahead, seems covered with a black carpet, and the wheels are draped with the same. The coffin of the murdered Lincoln is seen lying on the centre of a car, and all about it, in the air, and on the train behind, are vast numbers of blue-coated men, some with coffins on their backs, others leaning upon them. It seems then that all the vast armies of men who died during the war are escorting the phantom train of the President. The wind, if blowing,

dies away at once, and over all there is a solemn hush, almost stifling, prevails. If a train were passing in the woods, would be drowned in the silence, and the phantom train would rise over it. Clocks and watches always stop, and when looked at, are found to be from five to eight minutes behind. Everywhere on the road, about midnight, on the night of the 20th of April, a cold wind blows, and a train is found suddenly behind. This is the phantom train, and it is the same as the one seen by the watchman.

THINK BEFORE YOU SPEND.

Do you really need this article? It is probably a pretty dress or some piece of furniture, but what solid benefit will it be to you? Or it is some luxury for the table that you can do as well without. Think, therefore, before you spend the money. Or you need a new carpet, new couch, new chairs or new dress; you are tempted to buy something a little handsomer than you had at first intended; and while you hesitate, the dealer says: "This is only a trifle more, and see how much prettier it is!" But, before you purchase, stop to think. Will you be the better a year hence, especially in old age, for having squandered your money? Is it not wiser to lay by something for a rainy day? All these luxuries will only gratify you for the moment. You soon tire of them, and their only permanent effect is to consume your means. It is by such little extravagances—not much separately, but ruinous in the aggregate—that the great majority of families are kept comparatively poor. The first lesson to learn is to deny yourself useless expenses, and the first step toward learning this lesson is to think before you spend.

INFLUENCE.

Some persons fall discouraged on the highway of life, because they cannot be this or that great or eminent person. Why not be willing to be themselves? No person who ever lived, or ever will live, is without influence. Why not make the most of that? Since you cannot grasp that which you wish, why let that which you have slip through your fingers? No person in the world is exactly like you. You have your own faults, but you have also your own excellencies individual to yourself. Give them air. Because you are not a poet, should you not be a good merchant? Because you cannot go to college, should you therefore forswear the alphabet? Because you cannot build a palace, should you not rejoice in your own humble roof, and that because it is your own? Will not the sun also shine into your window if you do not persist in shutting it out? If you cannot have a whole hot-house full of flowers, may you not have one sweet rose?

UNSKILLED WORKMEN.

Adam Clarke says, "The old proverb about having too many irons in the fire is an abominable old lie. Have all in—shovel, tongs, and poker." We would, however, present such advice with caution, lest it should be misunderstood and misapplied. "As we are aware, the proper study for every man—the one which should claim most of his attention, and demands the fullest employment of his physical and mental energies—is the business by which he is to gain his livelihood. Upon this we enforce concentration. But there are also subjects and matters to learn and to study about, which relate more or less to the main business of every man's life. For instance, we will assume the occupation shall be a mechanical one, such as the construction of machinery, carpentry, engineering, or pattern-making. Now is there nothing attached to the business of a machinist or a worker of iron but planing, turning, scraping, and filing of surfaces? To file straight, to turn "true," to "make a neat finish," are indispensable to make a good workman. These are irons that have to be in the fire. But there are others that can be kept heated without injuring, but rather improving, the condition of the others. Expertness in mechanical drawing, a knowledge of geometry, mensuration, decimal arithmetic, and proportion, and of the properties, strengths, and weight of metals and other materials—these are the shovels, tongs, and poker, that are instrumental in keeping a machinist's business in full blast. How many machinists of this day can say that they are experts in their calling, with a thorough knowledge of the first principles of mechanical science? And yet men will say that they received a good school education, learned arithmetic, writing, studied such and such sciences and subjects; but now, when they have entered upon a business which demands the exercise and putting forth of all they study, they cannot tell how to find the circumference or area of a circle, how to calculate the mechanical powers, how to draw a bevel-wheel or calculate a train of gearing. They have forgotten how to work by decimal fractions, and have not practised writing or drawing. Even foremen and overseers, who are generally supposed to know more than those they oversee, are too often ignorant of the most important facts and aids in their business. These remarks apply equally well to engineers. We are all aware that there are a great number of ignorant engineers in this country. Such a state of unskilled workmen, however, has manifested itself to a greater extent in the United States than in Canada. The Westfield boiler explosion, the constant blow-ups on the Mississippi and other rivers, the "smash ups" and "break-downs" of machin-

ery, and property on land and sea, the collisions, explosions, and silly, fruitless discussions, all tell of unskilled, unintelligent, engineers, while the funeral bell of thousands of human victims tolls the solemn dirge of the sacrificed life, to human motives of professional ignorance, and unintelligent carelessness. True, it is then that in this our day, we know not the things which belong to our peace; but they are not hid from our eyes, for we cast our dead into the sea, and fill our hospitals with the tortured bodies of the wounded.

GOLD-MINING BENEATH THE SEA.

The *Alta California* says that a Submarine Exploring Company, from New York is about to employ the kind of diving-bell, successfully used at Hall Gate, for the collection of gold sand off the California coast. It is well-known that at and off Gold Bluff, on the northern shores of California, the sea beach has extensive ranges of golden sands, which have been worked for years and are now producing no small amount of gold, remarkable for its purity. The sand is black, and contains titanic iron and visible particles of gold. There was a rush some years ago to these new diggings, which failed because they fell short of extravagant expectations. The gold was there and provokingly visible. But the tide was great and the period of low water too short for working. Then the wet sand had to be carted over roads of dry sand and up the cliffs, and thence miles to water for washing out the gold in a crude way. This kind of work does not suit the crowd who rush to new places, expecting to toil little and pick up much. As usual the back rush reported unfavorably, and ever since people only remember the abandonment. It was found that the sands grew richer the further the breakers penetrated, and lifeboats that sounded from six to ten fathoms beyond found the sandy bottom still richer in gold of remarkable brightness. It seemed as if the gold washed up on the beach came from these submarine banks, but it was deemed impracticable to realize the riches covered by such a depth of moving waters. Now it is believed that this diving-bell will place the gold within the reach of all the searchers.

THE HABIT OF OBEDIENCE.

That article of army discipline which requires the soldier to first obey, and afterwards to complain if the order is unjust, should be adopted as the chief law of home government. So far from the law of exacting obedience being subject to the condition of showing reasons, we believe a parent with a strong will, although it be a perverse one, will train a child better than a parent of reasonable mind, tainted by infirmity of purpose. The parent's perversity, unless it be unkind or ill-tempered, will not occasion the child half so much uneasiness in the one case, as the child will suffer from those perversities of his own which will spring up in the other. Habits of instant and mechanical obedience gives rest to the child, and spares his health and temper; while a recalcitrant or dawdling obedience will keep him distracted in propensity, and brings a perpetual pressure on his nerves and on his mental and bodily strength.

Sawdust and Chips.

Aristotle, on being censured for bestowing alms on a bad man, made the following noble reply: "I did not give it to the man; I gave it to humanity."

Tom Moore compared love to a potato, "because it shoots from the eyes." Or rather, exclaimed Byron, "because it becomes all the less by paring."

A lady asked a clergyman, who was suffering with the influenza, "My dear sir, what do you take for your cold?" "Five pocket handkerchiefs a day," was the answer.

Countryman at his menagerie: "See here, now, them ain't zebras; don't you see they're all marked like 'x'?" They've been fools enough to paint 'em all to one pattern.

A California obituary: "The deceased was a talented man of romantic nature. He placed the butt of his gun in the fire while he looked down the muzzle, and departed hence spontaneously." "Who?"

A writer on physiognomy lately says: "A human face without a nose does not amount to much; whereas Snuggles observes that a human nose without a face doesn't amount to much, either."

A loquacious blockhead, after babbling some time to Lord Erskine, observed he was fearful he was intruding on his lordship's ear. "Oh, not at all," said Erskine; "I have not been listening."

Medical societies are warned not to ask a certain Western minister to preach for them. He has this text ready: "In his disease Asa sought not the Lord, but to the physicians. And Asa slept with his fathers."

"Do be frank," said young Mr. Smith to Miss Francis, who had been quizzing him for an hour. "But, Edward, I have been Frank twenty-five years, and I should like to try some other name, just for a change," was the arch reply.

Professor Goitz, of Konigsberg, in his experiments upon the nervous centre of frogs, finds that if you take out the brain, and then rub a wet finger down the frog's back, the

creature will croak as if pleased. Frogs must be easily pleased.

The first bird I shot in America," said an Irish sportsman, "was a fortune!" I treed him under a haystack, and shot him with a barn shovel. The first shot I missed him, and the second time I hit him in the same place where I missed him the first time."

A painter who was "drying his brush in this vicinity, was asked to estimate on the cost of painting a house. Drawing out paper and pencil he figured up as follows: "A naught is a naught; three into five twice you can't; I'll paint your house for just forty dollars."

"What dogs are these, Jasper?" inquired a gentleman of a lad who was dragging a couple of waspish-looking terriers along Regent street, Edinburgh. "I dinna ken, Sir," replied the urchin. "They came with the Dumfries coach, and they ate the direction, and dinna ken whaur to gang."

NATURAL ADVANTAGES.—Teacher—"What bird did Noah send out of the Ark?" Smallest boy in the class (after a pause)—"A dove, sir." Teacher—"Very well; but I should have thought some of your big boys would have known that!" Tall pupil—"Please, sir, that boy ought to know, sir, 'cause his father's a bird-ketcher, sir!"—Punch.

A Scotch law lord was seated one day on the hillside of Bonally with a Scotch shepherd, and observing the sheep repose in what he thought the coldest situation, he observed to him: "John, if I were a sheep, I would lie on the other side of the hill." The shepherd answered: "Ay, my lord, but if ye had been a sheep ye wad have had mair sense."

MISERIES OF A BACHELOR.—"There's no use talking, I'm going to get married," said a bachelor acquaintance the other day, while busily engaged in sewing. "Here I have worked just twenty minutes by the watch trying to get this needle threaded, and then just as I succeeded, I pulled the thread out. Finally I got it threaded again, and now, after sewing this button on good and strong, I find I've got it on the wrong side, and now I have all my work to do over again."

A traveller relates the following:—From Detroit I go westward ho. In the railway cars was a he-looking female, with a green cotton umbrella in one hand and a handful of reform tracts in the other. She said every woman should have a spear (sphere). Them as did not demand their spears, didn't know what was good for them. "What is my spear?" she asked, addressing the people in the cars. "Is it to stay at home and darn stockings, and be the slave of a domineering man? Or is my spear to vote and speak, and show myself the ekel of man? Is there a sister in these keeps that has her proper spear?" saying which, the eccentric female whirled her umbrella round several times, and finally jabbed me in the waist with it. "I have no objections to your goin' into the spear business," sez I, "but you will please remember I aint a wild bear. Don't spear me again, if you please." She sat down.

A MODERN SHYLOCK.—A Paris correspondent writes that a Jew called Meyer, but nicknamed the "Hunchback," and who was so poor that he lived upon the charity of the richer part of the community to which he belonged, came suddenly, about a month since, into a property valued at 300,000f. According to the testator's will, however, the heir was to be compelled to give 30,000f. of this sum to the poor. Now the idea of this reduction of his newly-acquired wealth so preyed upon Meyer's mind that he fell ill and died of grief before he had touched one penny of his heritage! This sounds like a moral story for a schoolbook, but it is guaranteed to be perfectly genuine.

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