

SIX

SAMUEL GOMPERS WRITES ANOTHER INTERESTING LETTER

Visits His Birthplace—Has a Discussion With Socialists—Teaches Young Man Good Manners—His Impressions of Blackpool—At Liverpool and Manchester

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LONDON, July 4.—In mentally reviewing my travels of the ten days just passed, I have the sensation of one who has been looking at moving pictures. After a Sunday and part of Monday in Liverpool, I crossed the Irish Channel and reached Dublin in the afternoon, resorted to Holy Head and visited Chester on Wednesday, Thursday and Friday at Blackpool, and Saturday in Manchester, going on to London in the evening of that day. I have met old friends and made new ones, heard many speeches and made a few myself, caught suggestive glimpses of the difference between the English and American labor organizations and methods, and have had before me every sort of evidence of a social situation, atmosphere, and conflict that is an ocean apart from what one meets in America. But in what I have to write today I shall not attempt to go profoundly into social questions; my remarks will rather take the form of moving pictures.



SAMUEL GOMPERS.

Let me set it down as a solemn fact that what is regarded as a well-worn bit of humor which related in connection with an enterprising American journalist has become literally true. I met in Liverpool a British "pressman" (reporter). As I descended the gang-plank from the Baltic, and before I could even reach the baggage room for the inspection of the Customs House officials, a very smooth and shy young Englishman had me by the elbow, saying, "Mr. Gompers, I have been directed by my editor to ask you regarding your impressions of England—to know whether the people of the States or of England have made the greater progress." He stuck to me as long as his idea of good breeding permitted, propounding equally original inquiries all the time, and, although he seemed rather unskilled in the art when I asked for time to learn something of the subject upon which he was seeking information. I shall not pretend that I performed any deep social investigation in Liverpool. One might probably take up months in delving into the records and results of the various movements intended to put flesh upon the bones of Liverpool's poor, whose clothes in their shabby, soiled, and stained, and their crumpled, and here in their hearts, it was told that drunkenness had declined, that with improved organization among the workers along the water-front, wages and conditions are not so bad as they were some years ago; that the general scheme of municipal improvement, though costly, has had some good results to the working class in houses, education, and hygiene. It was clear that the streets were well paved and clean; it could be heard on all sides and read in the local press that the deprived classes were voicing their cry against injustice and in favor of the various projects for the social uplift.

Minor incidents at times possess a much suggestion. I was taken with a party by the reception committee to a very modest roadside house about eight miles from the city, where tea was served. When ready, a young man in a bicycle suit opened the door of the sitting room and called to us, "Come, tea is ready," receiving applause for his democratic joke at this dubbing several members of parliament who were with us. The "tea," which was made up of bread baked in the solid English style, excellent butter, biscuits, sandwiches, and narmalade, was in all respects as good as any hotel could serve; but the price was only 15 cents per person. This is our Socialist co-operation, said one of our hosts; and he went on to relate that his comrades and fellow-workers from Liverpool, Chester, and other towns as far away as Manchester, which they justly operate, and tell one another precious things relating to their cause. He pointed to the wall, and notices of meetings and other events on the bulletin board. Continuing, he said, "We have a presence of the future. No capitalist exploiters are growing rich on our part. A man or a woman can come here for a week-end—that is, from here for a week-end—and stay until Saturday evening, getting a bed and four meals for less than a dollar." The earnest members of his club believe they are thus promoting socialism, by realizing that the club scheme is entirely voluntary, while a Socialist state would be absolutely compulsory. As we came away I looked at the red flag floating from a high pole in the grounds, and said, "Your cooperative club-house is a good example of the Socialist I will join you in promoting."

But another minor incident in which I had a part occurred in Dublin, and elicited a different phase of Socialist methods. A reception was given to me in the Trades Union Hall, in Capel street, by the parliamentary committee of the Irish Trades Union Congress, and the leading members of the Dublin Trades Council. The spirit of cordiality was all that could be desired; by the speeches, apart from the personal aspect, were on the whole sounded in a minor or pessimistic note. One speaker mentioned the deplorable declination of the Irish population; another referred to the accepted fact that Irishmen when gathering together "do not always see eye to eye with each other"; and a third deplored the slow progress of the labor movement in Ireland as compared with other countries. Much of the distress obtaining in Ireland, I am told, is caused by farmers and landowners deserting from agriculture to cattle-raising, numbers of workmen being

rendered superfluous by the transition. Fully 40,000 of Ireland's people leave her shores annually; and the census, as well as the apparent workless worker, tell the same tale. Having been treated most cordially—a compliment in which nearly all the company participated by making brief speeches—I was called upon to respond. After my address a general discussion ensued, when a young man, the youngest in the company, with impassioned gestures and noisy words "rebuked" all his hearers. He declared that he was a Socialist, and added, "Only Socialists understand the root evil of the labor problem, or possess an effective remedy." The occasion caused me to be less agreeable in my reply to him than I had been. He declared that he had been with our road-house Socialist friend in Liverpool, and that he took to seriously strive to teach him something of sound thought and good manners, much to the delight of nine-tenths of the assembled guests.

At Blackpool I attended the tenth annual congress of the General Federation of Trade Unions. The duties performed by the American Federation of Labor, as representative of our affiliated trade unions, require in Great Britain three national bodies, made up of association unions—viz., the British Trade Union Congress, with its permanent parliamentary committee, the parliamentary Labor party, and the Central Federation of Trade Unions. The history of these bodies, and the development at the different periods of their respective stated performance, might make plain their separate existence and administration; but I am not prepared to enter upon the subject too deeply here. The main object of the federation is to give systematic financial backing to its constituent unions during trade disputes. An annual per capita tax is paid into the treasury of each union affiliated; and in case of unemployment due to a controversy with employers, a weekly benefit in addition to that of the particular union involved is paid. The Federation was formed in 1888, with 43 societies or unions having 245,000 members, and it has now 131 societies, with a membership of 835,998. The treasury was increased every year until the last, on an average by \$500,000 a year. The reserve fund at the beginning of 1908 was over \$800,000. The stoppage in the cotton trade last year brought unemployed to 45,000 members; and this with many lesser disputes caused an outlay from the treasury of some thing over \$600,000. In all, from March 1, 1908, to March 1, 1909, the Federation dealt with 638 disputes, involving \$4,362,000. The treasury now contains \$70,000.

Among the men prominent in the federation and well known in the United States are Peter Curran (the Irishman), Allen Gee, Thomas H. Wilkins, James O'Grady, Alexander Wilkie, T. Mulligan, T. P. Richards, Ben. T. J. Ward, William Muir, Ben. Cox, James Wignall, James Sexton, "Will" Thomas, Arthur Henderson, "Pat" Jack, William Mosses, W. Arrandale, Tom Ashton, David J. Shackleton, and W. A. Appleton. Eight of these men are members of parliament. The "agenda" or programme of the meeting comprised little more than matters of routine importance. Except for the democratic idea of having every affiliated union satisfying its members by being represented, an auditor and executive committee might perhaps have attended to all the essential business that was done. Some significance, however, lay in the speeches. The chairman spoke of there having been not one suspension of work (strike) in the previous year that was caused by the demand of a union. All the disputes originated in offensive tactics and orders by employers

with them sitting after dark on the esplanade benches, not to view the ocean, but, in the words of one of the amused observers, "to cuddle and kiss." It would be interesting to get medical testimony in respect to this habit as well as round dancing; for the round dancers turn all one way, very few reversing.

In Manchester I visited the vast warehouses of the Wholesale Co-operative Society. I shall not tire the reader's patience with the long statistical statements necessary to impress on him the truth as to the present status of the society, if he would but read them all. In the last fifteen years the increase in the business transacted has been marvelous, the volume in the past year exceeding \$500,000,000. "Hundreds of new societies were formed, embracing hundreds of thousands of new members and tens of thousands of additional employees." So runs the story. It is fourteen years since I last visited Manchester. I was greatly impressed with the great development of this industrial and commercial concern. I again satisfied myself that the trade unionists in several of the largest industrial regions of Great Britain are staunch supporters of the co-operative movement. In the existence of a Joint Council of Trade Unionists and Co-operatives, peace between the two great economic working class movements is represented in the co-operative movement as a rare gem; no "captains of industry" and yet it is one of the greatest business institutions in the world.

One of the statements made to me by an active man in the affairs of Manchester, which greatly impressed me, was to the effect that the school trustees, through the teachers, present to any pupil, boy or girl, a free proposition to take care of it, to nurture it, and that this has a good influence upon the minds and conduct of the children.

On the train from Manchester to London I fell into conversation with a young college man from New Zealand, whose father had lived all his life; but after some years' experience as a civil engineer, he was taking a post-graduate course in England. I put him the usual queries as to New Zealand's social experiments. From his brief education in the country he was easily inferred. They were as follows: "All classes are satisfied with the land policy system, comprising only a few acres of the immense estates, through compensation to the owners, the land policy system to the pauper immigrants and alien races is generally satisfactory. The government railway system, comprising only 2,900 miles, is less economically and efficiently managed than it would be in private hands. I know of one case in which a line of 39 miles had been profitable to a company and satisfactory to the public, but which since taken over by the government, has ceased to pay; and the service, at the same time, is less satisfactory than formerly. The bookkeeping in connection with public enterprises is difficult, as outlays are sometimes charged up to the undertaking, but in the public treasury. As to compulsory arbitration, in trade disputes between

employers and employed, it is now unpopular both with the employers and the workers." He cited the now well-known cases of the boot and shoe manufacturers who closed their factories rather than obey the findings against them of the government arbitrators, and the case of the butcher workmen who were fined or went to jail rather than work on terms which they deemed unjust. "Other words, compulsory arbitration in the country without strikes" has ended in showing itself capable of destroying both the business of the employers and the liberty of the wage workers. I necessarily only repeat the summary of the views of this native of New Zealand of English stock for what it may be worth as a sort of sign board to the reservoirs of further information; but it coincides with the results of the recent observations of the thinkers and doers in the industrial field of the United States. On Sunday I went to Hyde Park not to view the famous "church parade," in which the unworthy workmen parade about on their way home from service to look one another's fine prayer books; but to hear something of what the open-air orators were saying in this land of free speech. From the snatches of the "rostrum" of the great English public men that I caught, I gathered that the orators were hardly to be regarded as of much importance. The English spirit must be admired which tolerates a large number of persons who have not ready access to libraries and may set in the "academies" of Park education in the current subjects; and also there are the vivifying open air and one's sense of certainty or suspension confirmed by the manifestations of the crowd. The custom of Sunday and every day street and Park meetings is common in England. I am informed that sometimes most excellent speeches are made. Those that I heard, however, were rather of a drowsy ode. The police on duty always exert their authority to maintain the right of the speaker to be heard without molestation.

The Suffragettes furnished one of the topics for the speeches. I heard one who was usually friendly to them say that the methods they are pursuing are injurious to them. Weakness proceeding to assault strength violently, he said, is a natural craving of heart-pain, or any other kind of unhappiness. Open at the other kind brings smiles, hope, pleasant faces, good hearts, and full life to humanity.

When the digestion is all right, the action of the bowels regular, there is a natural craving and risht for food. When this is lacking you may know that you need a dose of Chamberlain's Stomach and Liver Tablets. They strengthen the digestive organs, improve the appetite and regulate the bowels. Captain, what time does the boat start? "It starts, madam, when I give the word." "When I've always had the wrong idea, I thought it started when the engineer pulled a lever, or did something. Thank you ever so much." "Milk," said Plodding Pete, "dere's was 'rings dan sold bricks." "What's happened?" "De lady up de road said dat if I'd chop an armful of wood and gimme a cake." "Didn't she keep her word?" "Yes. She handed me a cake of soap."

self. It cannot be gainsaid that the cause of the Women's Suffrage equal with that of man is gaining ground with Great Britain.

On Sunday morning I visited the house in which I was born, No. 2 Port street, Spitalfields, London. I passed through neighborhoods almost every house of which I knew more than half a century ago, when a lad of eight was in my twelfth year when my father took his family to the United States. Chesapeake, Cornhill, Commercial street, Houndsditch, Blagopoga street—these all looked much the same as they did in the long ago.

I made my way to my own old street, and stood before the house in which I was born. I had re-visited the spot fourteen years ago, for the first time since my boyhood; and I was then subject to those peculiar sentiments, both pleasing and depressing with which one is seized when beholding with mature vision what was familiar to the unknowing, eyes of childhood and to the transforming memory of later years. Somehow, the blunt and hard facts, in the light of comparisons, seemed distasteful. The great things to the boy are every day matter to the man. Yet this was the scene of the struggles of my father and the loving care of my mother. Home was once there. We were happy, that big family of ours, in our childhood, hard-working though we were. Kindly people now live in the house. Its "bread-winners" have "gone to Chicago," the rest hoping to follow soon. Perhaps one reason for the absence of the fulness of that tender and somewhat mournful sentiment that comes to me in contemplation of his birth place lay in the fact that with me were my wife and daughter, and also my very excellent cousin, the favorite theatrical comedian, in our own country as well as here, Sam Collins. Sam has the happy habit of seeing all life as a joyous mood. He was born in the same house in Port street; and his sole idea, on now seeing it again, was to bring us others present to laugh and make merry with him. Well, why not? Turn down the leaf in the book that is a natural craving of heart-pain, or any other kind of unhappiness. Open at the other kind brings smiles, hope, pleasant faces, good hearts, and full life to humanity.

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INCREASE TO START OCT. 1. Reasons for 'Phone Co's Boosting Rates LOSING MONEY Rates When Increased Will Be Lower Than Majority

The New Brunswick Telephone Company has recently been considering the advisability of increasing the telephone rates in the city, and it was rumored that increased rates would take effect on August 1. H. P. Robinson, the general manager of the company, stated last evening that it had been finally decided to increase the rates as follows, which increased rates will take effect on Oct. 1st: The business rate, special wire, will be increased from \$40 per year to \$45. The business rate, two party line, will take a jump from \$35 to \$40. The special lines, residence rates, will be raised from \$25.00 to \$30, and the two-party line, residence rates, will be increased from \$20 to \$24. The four-party line will jump from \$18 to \$20. An eight party line for residences will be instituted and the rate will be \$28. This will make the lowest rate the same as ever, giving those desirous of having a telephone at their residence at the minimum expense; an eight party line for the same price, as they are now paying for a four-party line. Asked as to the cause of the increase Mr. Robinson said that there were two chief reasons. The first was because the financial statement had shown that the company was not making money, but losing money, as they were not allowing for depreciation, an amount within \$40,000 of the actual depreciation of the service. The other reason, said Mr. Robinson, was because the rates when increased, would be higher than the majority of rates of other companies in Nova Scotia and the New England States. Mr. Robinson further stated that the company was desirous of continuing to pay a 5 per cent. annual dividend, and to protect their stockholders, making the investment a sure and profitable one, which it is not at the present time.

MAY BE SETTLEMENT LYNN, MASS., July 23.—According to Frank Kidder, business agent of the packing room employes, who are on strike in three large abattoirs, the outlook is promising for a settlement of the differences as far as two of the factories are concerned.

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