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INDUSTRIAL EUROPE SEEN THROUGH AMERICAN EYES

The Throbbings of the Very Heart of Industrial England.

By Judson Grenell.

(Copyrighted, 1904, by Judson Grenell.)

Manchester, Eng., June 20.—We have all heard "the hum of industry," but one needs to visit the very heart of industrial England to realize the full significance of the term. Manchester, in Lancashire, is thought and spoken of as a city of 500,000 inhabitants or thereabouts. It is much more than this. Within a space not much, if any, larger than the area of Chicago are a dozen good sized cities, the total population running well towards the 2,000,000 mark; while Sheffield and Leeds and Bradford and other municipalities are hardly an hour away, in Yorkshire. Here are concentrated the cotton, woollen and iron industries of a great empire; here flourish trade unions as nowhere else in the United Kingdom; and here are to be found, side by side, great wealth and great poverty—a few families living in idle luxury, a goodly number of energetic and enterprising manufacturers, with their fingers on the commercial pulse of the world, supplying necessities and luxuries to all nations, and a great multitude of skilled and unskilled men and women living from hand to mouth, and yet satisfied if allowed to work for what is an American seem totally inadequate wages.

Manchester is still the cotton cloth manufacturing emporium it once was. Its mills have been turned over to other industries, and now in Oldham and Stockport and Hyde and a score of other cities, most of them electrically connected by street cars with what has become the great warehouse (or raw material), is carried on the particular industry that has made Manchester famous. One must go to these other cities to hear the hum of the spindles and to see great mill's employing thousands of men and women. Still, just now, to view the operatives at work, one must luckily pitch on the right day, for since the enormous rise in the price of cotton the mills have shut down part of the time, paralyzing the subordinate industries as well and bring want and hunger to thousands of homes. Yet the mills and the machinery are there, and the willing workers are there also; and when, under the spur of big profits the cotton growers again raise crops that will glut the market, depressing prices, then these mills, with the world's stock of cotton cloth much reduced, will sing a merry tune day and night for an indefinite period in the effort to catch up.

British Trade Improving.

Ninety unions report monthly the state of trade to G. D. Kelley, for 23 years the secretary of the Manhattan Trades Council, and one of the next parliamentary candidates of the liberals and trade unionists.

"There are 56,000 organized wage workers in Manchester and Salford proper," Mr. Kelley said, "and all the other cities hereabouts also have their central labor organization." Salford is contiguous to Manchester, being separated only by the Manchester ship canal.

Mr. Kelley rapidly ran over for me some of the more recent reports received, and the result showed a gradual improvement in business, as compared with last year. This is an important centre for the trades needing machinists, and several thousands are steadily employed. In fact, I find that where factories abound, the trades of machinists and boilermakers flourish.

Hebrew Labor Steadily Employed.

In reading over these reports, only one trade recorded all members employed. This was a union of Hebrew clothing workers. The Britishers may be idle, but the Hebrews had no lost time on their hands. Mr. Kelley smiled significantly when noting this fact, but declined to give his opinion of the reason for such prosperity. Most British workmen believe it is because the Hebrews are willing to work at such a low wage.

"In Manchester," said Mr. Kelley, "the unions believe in and practice the 'closed shop.' Strong unions insist on this, and I think they sometimes blunder in insisting. But whether the rule is a good or bad one, it is closely followed, and that without any formal agreement with employers. The trade union movement is now a part of the civic life of this community. To be outside the pale of its protection is generally believed to be suicidal. It is a bulwark in hard times, with its out-of-work benefits, and a protection in industrially stormy times, with its strike relief funds.

"Our municipal legislators know this, and trim their political sails accordingly. Some time ago the Westinghouse people, who, as you know, have great works here, bid on a municipal contract. The figures were satisfactory, but this firm has imposed restrictions on its employees as to houses, etc., that the average British workman does not consider is right; so the tender was accepted by the municipality with the proviso that the workers' conditions must be changed to conform to British usage. The company hesitated, and finally accepted, and this is the beginning of a quiet contest that is destined to make the Westinghouse at first an 'open' shop, and eventually a unionized and 'closed' one."

Mr. Kelley has been to the United States and knows about industrial conditions there as well as at home. I shall have occasion to hereafter refer to his opinion concerning wages, home comforts, hours of labor, machinery, etc. Suffice it to say that he makes a strong argument for his own country, while agreeing that in some directions the American worker has the advantage.

Saturday Afternoon in Manchester.

In Manchester, as in other industrial centres in England, the factories, and indeed pretty much all the other activities, close at noon. Shortly after 1 the down-town portions of the city begin to fill up, and by 3 the streets are congested. The suburban electric cars pour their thousands into the heart of the town, and weavers, and machinists, and boilermakers, and factory workers—men and women—walk the streets and crowd the saloons, restaurants and grill rooms, with care thrown to the winds.

Public courting is no uncommon sight. George and Gertie, William and Wanta, John and Julia saunter along the thoroughfare hand in hand, or take excursions on the top of the cars, arm around waist, oblivious to surroundings and content to be in each other's society. I have tried to account for this public display of mutual admiration and affection, and wonder if it is not because the homes of these people are too uncomfortable, too miserable, in fact, to make courting satisfactory amid such surroundings. When an entire family is living in two rooms—parents and three to five children—one is certainly more "alone" in a crowd with one's best girl than at home.

At supper time these best girls are taken to the restaurants—some to the public bars—and treated to a "square meal," or to ale and meat pies, to be seen on almost every saloon counter. Whether or not this is the custom in all the manufacturing centres in Lancashire and Yorkshire, I am unable to state definitely. Manchester, by reason of its up-to-date system of municipal street cars, is particularly well favored for becoming a show town for the surrounding country. The question of the success or non-success of municipally owned street cars and tracks is a subject sufficiently large to be treated by itself, but I might say, in passing, that the contrasts between privately owned and municipally owned street cars are so favorable to the latter that I doubt if the British public will ever again consent to the chartering of companies to conduct this branch of public utilities.

England No Soft Soap for American Manufacturers.

To sum up my Manchester experiences, I should say that while the trade unions have increased wages, making the average pay better than in unorganized localities, they have also produced a higher standard of workmanship, which at least offsets any advantages non-union workshops elsewhere may seemingly possess in the way of low wages. I am also satisfied that the commercial supremacy of England is still a long way from being lost, and that her manufacturers and workmen will be able to meet the competition for the world's markets, and with a margin to spare, as soon as they awake to the necessity of taxing out of private pockets and into the public treasury, in lieu of all other taxes, unearned increments in the shape of ground rents and royalties on iron, coal and tin mines so rich that their only difficulty is in disposing of their incomes, and I have found others just as honest and sober, and more industrious, who are so poor that a penny is a prize and a few shillings a mine of wealth. To be sure, this simple fiscal reform, which can easily be applied here, will not clear up all the knotty points connected with the labor question, but it will certainly go a great ways in disposing of obstructions that now prevent a clear view of the greatest problem of the universe.

Bradford, the centre of the woollen cloth trade; Leeds, an industrial hive for all kinds of clothing, and Sheffield, famous as the producer of the finest of steel utensils and iron manufactures, beckon me, and I will next write of some of the interesting things I saw in these flourishing cities.

Contributed

JAPANESE GIRLS.

"First Impressions of Japan," by George Kennan, in The Outlook, contains a wonderful story of how hard some of the Japanese girls have to work for a mere pittance, and work that in Canada women never dream of doing—putting coal on a steamer—but in Japan it is the girls who do this work. They are dressed in dark blue gowns and white headkerchiefs, and stand in couples so as to make two continuous lines up each frame from the pile of coal on the barge to one of the big port holes of the steamer. The men on the barge fill the straw baskets which are used for this work, and each couple take the basket and pass it on, and so keep the coal going on the steamer at the rate of 43 basketfuls per minute. Each basketful contained about 14 lbs., therefore each double line of girls put on board 602 lbs. of coal per a minute, or a little more than 18 tons per hour. There were nine double lines of girls on the two sides of the ship, so the steamer was receiving coal at an average rate of 2¾ tons per minute, or 162 tons every hour; and of course by increasing the number of frames and passers it would be quite easy to handle 250 tons an hour. Indeed, on one occasion the coolie girls of Nagasaki put 1,360 tons of coal on one of the Empress steamers in four hours, or at the rate of nearly six tons per minute. The writer says it is doubtful if any hoisting or conveying machinery that has ever been devised could put coal on a steamer in mid-stream at an average speed rate of 540 tons per hour, and do it as economically as is done by the girls. The compensation received by the latter is dependent upon the number of coal baskets that they handle, but it seldom exceeds three or four cents per hour. Think of it! If these girls worked ten hours a day at this hard work, they could not make fifty cents, and yet $1.50 is considered a very small wage for men who handle coal in this city, and so it is—but why should the Japanese girls have to work so hard for so little just to make money for some one else? Of course, at this wage it must be the most economical way of coaling up a steamer if Japanese girls' lives are not worth anything; but if they are! Is this a specimen of the great enlightened new civilization that is springing up in the East, and is some day going to teach the West how to treat people? If so, may God have mercy on the women!

A Woman.

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(By a Workingman)

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✦ ✦

One Topic.

There is only one subject apparently to-day that is engaging public attention, and that is the present industrial unrest, but no matter how excited men may become while they are discussing or arguing this question, the fact still remains that we have divisions among individuals; but so far as genuine public is concerned, it has not yet divided, and although it is more talked about to-day than any other subject, it has not yet reached the point either in Canada or the republic when it will become a national issue.

✦ ✦

Men are Writing.

Men in nearly every class and station of life are writing upon the all-important industrial question from every conceivable viewpoint save one, and that is the right and the wrong side of the question. Wealth may be mighty, but might is not right any more to-day than it was in the days of the much-admired and greatly beloved man, Abraham Lincoln.

✦ ✦

Men are Reading.

Men are not only writing to-day, but there are large numbers of men of all classes who are deeply interested in reading all that is written on both sides of this important question.

✦ ✦

Men are Thinking.

And of course the result of all this writing and reading is to compel men to think; and as soon as you get men to think, they immediately begin to

✦ ✦

Form Opinions.

Every man is entitled to form his own opinion on this great subject, but very little good will come out of it all until men

✦ ✦

Are Convinced

It is the man with a conviction, whether it be right or wrong, that is the man that makes himself felt in the community.

✦ ✦

The Toilers

Will have to read and think out this all-important industrial question for themselves, until they are convinced about what is wrong and what they can do to remedy these wrongs that now exist.

✦ ✦

First.

The toilers must become convinced that it is time that they gave up sending delegations to beg upon our public officials to bring in this law and amend that law in the interest of labor; it is just about time that they selected men from their own ranks, and then as one man cast their votes for their own labor candidate. We need to-day a few toilers that shall come out and stand and vote a straight labor ticket, so that labor's voice can be heard in our legislative halls, as well as the voice of capital.

✦ ✦

Second.

If the toilers wish their children to be taught the things that toilers' children need to know, they must be represented on the Board of Education, and here once more they need straight labor candidates as well as straight labor votes.

✦ ✦

Third.

If the toilers wish to be represented in our legislative halls, they will find it necessary to form labor leagues in each ward, so that by this means they can secure a large number of earnest and enthusiastic workers at election times for the candidates of "the labor party."

✦ ✦

Fourth.

If the toilers wish their voice to be heard in Canada, they must support The Weekly Toiler. The press is the best and readiest means through which the toilers can be educated as to what are the best methods to be adopted, so that labor shall be recognized as well as wealth in this country.

✦ ✦

Fifth.

The toilers are fortunate in having secured a Labor Temple, and this should be made headquarters for the Labor Party, both politically and educationally.

✦ ✦

Sixth.

The toilers also need to make a thorough study of economics, for there is not the slightest doubt in the minds of a great number of toilers that we are now suffering in the birth pangs of an industrial reformation from an economic standpoint, and there is apparently reason to believe that the application of co-operation will bring about as marvellous results economically as the application of steam and electricity has done mechanically.

✦ ✦

Seventh.

The toilers have already secured in germ a Labor Temple, a Labor Party, and a Labor Press, but how feeble are the attempts that have been made to what could be done if the toilers would unite as one man, vote as one man and work as one man to place the needs and interests of the toilers in the areas of public opinion.

✦ ✦

What is Wrong.

The toilers have lost the control of the hand tool and have allowed the tools propelled by steam and electricity to pass into the hands of a few private individuals.

✦ ✦

What is Needed.

The toilers must learn how they once more can become owners of the tools which provide them with their daily needs, not by a bloody revolution, but by a peaceful evolution.

✦ ✦

This Means

That the toilers that are already alive to what is needed must enter upon the gigantic task of educating the toilers of Canada in what should be done and how they can do it.

✦ ✦

Canada.

Every toiler that is living in Canada should read and study about the marvellous possibilities that are before the people of this country until they become permeated with a spirit of enthusiastic love for the welfare of Canada.

✦ ✦

A Noble Band.

We need a few young men that thoroughly believe that an industrial reformation is needed in Canada, who are ready to consecrate their lives to the sacred duty of bringing about a reformation of the principles that govern our industrial affairs, until we have industrial institutions in Canada governed by the principles of Christianity instead of political economy.

✦ ✦

Getting Ready.

Consciously or unconsciously, we as a people in Canada are preparing for a tremendous fight between labor and wealth, and it would be wise for every toiler to find out on which side he is going to fight.

If.

If labor is the cause of all wealth, it is funny that wealth, the effect of labor, should be able to control the cause which produces it.

✦ ✦

Labor Wasted.

If labor is the cause of wealth, what a lot of wealth is wasted by the people that do not labor.

✦ ✦

Money.

At the present time money is the key that unlocks the door that supplies that which keeps us alive and supplies our needs.

✦ ✦

Labor.

Labor is the key which will unlock the door of industrial freedom for all humanity.

✦ ✦

Love.

Love is the key which unlocks the heart of God and all humanity.

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ROBERT J. FLEMING,
Commissioner of Assessment and Property.

City Hall, June 29th, 1904.

Malcolm McBain

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Some Day.

Some day men will stop and wonder
How we ever made the blunder,
Living all the time for plunder,
Just to leave and then go under.

✦ ✦

Toilers.

Don't forget Christ was a toiler; some people do.

The other evening we sat upon the stage of Carnegie Hall and listened to a dear friend advocating home rule for Ireland in a two-hour speech. We went home with him, and after leaving him within the portals of his domicile, said good-night. Hardly had we descended the steps when he came tumbling down and into the street. His wife had thrown him out. He has not mentioned home rule since.—Editor Moffet, Bricklayer and Mason.

✦ ✦

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