

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"In all parts of the civilized world," said Phil, "great efforts will be made to reduce the hours of labor to eight per day. This movement for shorter hours has assumed such proportions, more particularly in European countries, that the governing class has become seriously alarmed. They know full well that the long and excessive hours of the laborer is the smallest of his grievances. Capital, relying upon the ignorance of the masses, has robbed labor in such an audacious manner that it now stands alarmed at its own action. Labor is well organized and led by men of intelligence and courage who will not shrink from doing their full duty to their class, even if such action would clash with the interests of capital, or interfere with so-called rights. Considering that labor has produced everything and possesses very little or nothing these proposed May-day demonstrations may well alarm the robbers."

"The laborer who has heretofore confined himself to constitutional agitation," said Brown, "might suddenly conceive the idea of obtaining by force what he has so far failed in securing in a peaceable way, and in that case the capitalistic class might well tremble. So long as the laborer is content to confine himself to constitutional means the money power feels comparatively secure. No one knows better than capitalists how easy it is to buy legislatures and congresses, and estimating the patriotism and integrity of labor representatives by the standard of professional politicians the election of a few of the 'lower orders' to our legislative halls does not alarm them much. For their opinions it simply means the expenditure of a few thousand dollars a year more to accomplish their purpose. The labor party is of such recent date and its representatives are so few that it has not yet become necessary to try to corrupt them; otherwise capital would have found out its mistake long ago. As it is, they do not fear constitutional (?) methods, but they have a wholesome dread of these proposed large public demonstrations of their victims, for a hungry man won't listen to argument. There is no use of telling him anything about the benefits and privileges of constitutional government and democratic institutions; there is no time to rant about the sacred rights of property; he won't listen to it. All that he desires is to secure a larger share of the wealth that he produces, and finding himself strong in numbers he may be tempted to take what he wants without stopping to enquire whether the means employed are constitutional or not. And who would blame him? Is it fair, is it just, is it reasonable to suppose that he shall incessantly delve and toil in poverty and patiently wait for the evolution of a better order of things while the drones of society roll in luxury and wealth? Has not every constitutional effort which he has made been thwarted or most strenuously opposed by capitalists of every political stripe, and can they reasonably expect that in the face of these facts he will continue to confine himself to peaceful methods in matters which affect his very existence. Does capital hope to retard the onward march of labor by denying it the right of free speech and public assembly, as has been done in most of the larger cities of Europe; surely it must be struck with blindness—such action adds but fuel to our hate. If this foolish policy is persisted in rioting and bloodshed will surely follow; should the laborer in any part of the civilized world be compelled on the first of May next to raise his arm in defence of his right of public meeting, may God Almighty strengthen his elbow."

"Public meeting, or no public meeting," said Phil, "this movement cannot

be stopped; and the agitation for shorter hours will continue until no man will work longer than eight hours per day. There is one thing, however, which none of us ought to forget, and that is that our employers will never petition us to adopt it. They are opposed to it, and they will fight for all they are worth. We must get ready for the struggle by organizing the workers and by creating a fund to sustain our members in the fight. We must rely upon ourselves and upon ourselves alone. The eight-hour day will benefit labor, and I have repeatedly shown how it will benefit capital also, but I would not waste one minute in trying to convert a capitalist to my views, because it is a hopeless task; neither would I consider his interests, because, in the first place, I am not organized for that purpose, and in the second place, he is quite competent to look after himself. They have always been in favor of a system under which the devil takes the hindmost; let us hustle round a little, so as not to form the tail end of the procession."

BILL BLADES.

THE LABOR SITUATION.

Indications are not wanting in the industrial field that the month of May this year will see a vast army of workmen out of employment because of disputes with employers over the terms of work. Five years ago there was a similar general upheaval, and had it not been for the tragedy of the Anarchists riots in Chicago it is very probable that most important victories would have been won by the organized labor of the country. The revulsion of public feeling aroused by that fearful crime proved a crushing blow to the eight-hour agitation, and the entire labor movement felt its injurious effects long after the revolutionary and un-American element had been repudiated and cut off from recognition.

There is happily very little danger of any repetition this year of the violent element being able to create any such disorder as they did five years ago, and public sympathy is strongly in favor of the agitation for reduced hours, so that the prospect of practical advance being made in that direction is quite hopeful. The Irish World has already given a forecast of the situation in the coal mining and building trades, which are taking the lead in the eight-hour agitation. President Gompers of the American Federation of Labor, who has made an extended tour of the labor centres of the country, expresses himself as sanguine of substantial results being effected without any protracted suspension of work.

According to Mr. Gompers' estimates there are in the mining industry from 90,000 to 100,000 men actually organized for the movement; the number who are not organized, but who will without doubt act, will raise the total to 175,000. This includes those now on strike in the coke regions. The strike, he said, is to be directed at the operators in the "competitive district," which covers practically the entire bituminous coal region of Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Ohio, Indiana, and Illinois. While the anthracite coal region may possibly become involved, it is not intended to make any effort to enforce the eight-hour demand in Eastern Pennsylvania. It was volunteered that at the conference recently held between operators and employees the men did not, as has been stated, demand an eight-hour day and decline to consider any question of smaller pay for the time worked. They, it was explained, expressly stated their willingness to discuss and concede some reduction. Mr. Gompers said he had a fairly well authenticated statement to the effect that the operators regarded the eight-hour demand as a "bluff," and expected that the men would abandon their demand when it was so abruptly refused, and they were surprised when the operatives so readily agreed to adjourn the conference.

Organized labor is said to have since received assurance from a number of operators that they will concede its requests for eight hours, and as we go to press the reports are still more favorable that a general compromise may be effected on the nine-hour plan.—Irish World.

OLD MEN.

There ought not to be any old men; and the reason there are is because men do not take good care of themselves. In these days of rapid living many men are worn out at sixty years of age and some of them before that. Yet some of the grandest achievements that men have ever made have been made by men who were over seventy and even over eighty years of age. Kent wrote his commentaries after the law said he was too old to remain on the bench. Gladstone was never more of an intellectual power than he is to-day; and columns might be filled with the names of men who were in their prime when over seventy. But while this is true, we have great armies of old young men; men who are worn out before they should be; men who are dying when they should be most vigorously alive.

If we abuse our natural powers we must expect that they will wear out. If we work too hard or live too fast, we shall get to the end before we need to, just as surely as the machine that is run at a high rate of speed will wear out sooner than if it were run at a lower rate of speed. Human nature will stand just so much and it will not stand any more. If we do two days work in one, or enjoy two days pleasure in one, we shall die when life is half lived, provided we keep it up day after day and year after year.

Then we should always endeavor to cultivate youthfulness of heart, however wrinkled the cheek may be or however gray the hair may grow. The old grandmother, sitting in the old arm chair, her face wreathed in a kindly smile, is a beautiful sight. She may be feeble, she may be racked with pain, but her dear old heart is young, and the children love to come around her and hear her sweet kindly voice. Old men can cultivate this youthful spirit too. It is not wholly reserved to the grandmothers of the world. The winter with its frosts and snows, can smile sweetly and so can age; and in order to make age beautiful youth should cultivate those virtues which unite to make gentle, beautiful character.—Western Rural.

IMPORTANT TO WORKMEN.

An interesting judgment was rendered by the Court of Review on Thursday in the case of Dickinson vs. the Canada Bank Note Company. The plaintiff was a steel engraver in the service of the company, with whom he had a five years' engagement, one of the conditions of the contract being that lost time was not to be charged him and he was not to charge for any extra duty required of him. He was ill during six weeks, and in his present action for balance of salary claimed payment for that time. The Superior Court granted this, but the Court of Review reversed that part of the judgment, on the principle that salary must cease when the services cease, and that a condition such as the one mentioned in the agreement must be interpreted in a reasonable manner and cannot refer to an unlimited loss of time.

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