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LABOR AND WAGES.

An Article on an Important Social Question.

The following article is from the Week, and was written by Senator C. A. Boulton, of the Northwest:

The writer was accidentally present when a deputation of workmen from the City of Toronto, en route from their conference at Quebec, and accompanied by several members of Parliament, waited on the Minister of Public Works, the Hon. Frank Smith, a month ago and asked him if he would in future insert a clause in contracts for public works providing that where labor unions had fixed the scale of wages for the current year contractors should be compelled to adhere to that scale in putting in their tenders and in paying their men. Their contention was that in the City of Toronto the Trades and Labor Council fixed the scale of wages at which employers and employees should contract with one another. Their arrangements, however, were interfered with by the poorer contractors who had to bring in cheap labor from abroad to work at a lower scale, which would in all probability displace them in the city in which they had made their homes, without any ultimate advantage to the country at large.

This application on the part of workmen affords a good opportunity to inquire into the justice of the position they have taken and how far it is likely to affect the public weal should it be accorded to them. Education which is the parent of intelligence has worked great changes in the methods of the toilers of the country, and the aims that now animate their leaders are conducive to the best results of good and perfect government, which it is the interest of the public to co-operate with. The first efforts of labor to assert itself were stigmatized as socialistic, and there is no doubt that socialism was the only goal many of the agitators had in view as the result of their agitation; but the struggle of the past quarter of a century has modified their views and their intelligence, has directed their minds into business channels in guarding the interests of labor, which by collective efforts can protect the weak from the strong and raise the standard of workmen throughout the country and throughout the world.

A number of workmen are attracted to the City of Toronto, which is becoming a great labor center in consequence of the development of industries incident to the progress of the country. They wish to make it their home, where by industry and sobriety they can maintain their families in comfort and build themselves independent homes. The labor in the city is organized, and the workmen meet and discuss questions which affect their welfare. They determine the scale of wages for the various trades and callings to which all those who receive the benefit of their protection are obliged to adhere. A contractor who may employ, say two hundred men, who is either anxious to take too large a share of the profit, or has taken his contract too low, may send abroad and bring in a gang of foreign laborers, who will work for ten, fifteen or fifty cents a day, as the case may be, below the scale. They displace the home workmen, and as soon as they become permanently fixed, perhaps only after a fight for their position on the part of the home workmen, they will, in time, strike for a higher wage, trade become disorganized, the country agitated and waste of capital and labor is the cost to the country. That is the result of refusing to concede the right to workmen to fix the price they are willing to sell their labor at collectively. In the request they now prefer, they only ask that the laborers who come in to work beside them shall be paid by the contractor on the same scale as is fixed by the workmen of the locality where the work is done, and that the Government shall recognize to that extent the co-operation of labor—a recognition that would soon extend to all branches of industry. A case, to illustrate more forcibly the position of the workmen, came under the notice of the writer lately. The Public Works Department determined to build a breakwater at Digby, Nova Scotia. Plans and estimates of the work were submitted by the engineers to cost \$79,000, the sum appropriated by Parliament. Tenders were called for, and the contract was let to the lowest tenderer, at \$43,000 (little more than half the estimate) on the 18th of 1st November, the work to be finished in eighteen months. The consequence is that the work has not been commenced, and the contractor has been hunting about for cheap material to enable him to have the work done within his contract price. To complete his

contract he will either have to scamp his work or not pay his workmen. Either the Government or the workmen who perform the labor will be injured by the eagerness of the contractor to get the job. The contractor having got it at a figure which renders proper performance impossible, and finding himself in this dilemma is nonplussed, and suggestions are perhaps thrown out that the work is located in the wrong place for the most effective service, which, if listened to, would give an opportunity to make up by the way of extras, and on an average of contracts dealt with in that way the public treasury is sure to suffer in the long run and workmen be defrauded. How can the prayer of the petition from the Labor Council be accorded to with justice to contractors and to the public?

The system of tendering in some countries is as follows, and in fact in past days was the system in Canada: The Chief Engineer makes his estimate of the work to be done, basing his calculations upon the cost of material, scale of wages, etc., and tenders are called for, the successful tenderer being the one who approaches nearest to the engineer's estimate, upon the principle that it is not in the interest of the public to let a contract below its value, as either the work will be scamped or the laborers swindled. Before making his estimate, the Engineer can ascertain the scale of wages for which the labor unions will undertake to protect the contractor from strikes during the progress of the work, and he can place that rate in the contract, the contractor will then be bound to pay this rate to whatever hands he may employ. The details of the system of preparing the estimates and figuring on the tenders could be arranged so as to guard the public interests. The advantage of the Government availing itself of a system that will avoid strikes is manifest. Strikes hinder work, impoverish the men, disturb trade, and threaten the public peace. Strikes are bound to occur as the industry of the country increases, because the workmen are intent upon raising their standard of employment both in its dignity and emolument. They are accomplishing their object gradually but firmly, with due respect to themselves, and to the interests of the public. Their leaders are intelligent and capable of directing; they are working as well for their weaker brethren as themselves; they know the hardships of the sweating system; they know the garrets that contain the toilers that eke out a scanty subsistence in the large cities, under the system of farming out work through a middleman, but they must first secure an acknowledgement that they are working on legitimate lines before they can cast their mantle of protection over all their fellow-workmen. When it becomes an acknowledged principle that workmen are entitled to sell their work collectively and to be protected in their right to do so, before an employee of labor enters on his work he can go to the Trades Council and ascertain what scale of wages the labor union will protect him in; he will then know exactly what he has to contend with, strikes will not disarrange his calculations or increase his tender to allow for the loss occasioned by them. Workmen are aiming to become the partners of capital instead of its servants, not on the principle that "Jack is as good as his master," but that they may enjoy a greater share of the blessings of this life than has hitherto fallen to their lot. In an enlightened country like Canada, while we are laying a foundation for the employment of industrial labor, we should wish the laborers God-speed, their own intelligence, their own necessities will teach them moderation, and that economy of living is quite as essential to ultimate success and happiness as drawing high wages. Contented well-paid labor is a blessing to any country; it increases the prosperity of the community, it gives a vested interest in the State to the masses, it increases the purchasing power of the people, and diffuses more equally the accumulation of capital. The subject is an exhaustive one, and will bear criticism from all standpoints, but onward and upward should be the motto of the people of our common country.

The present spell of dry weather is one of the longest ever experienced in Alabama. Streams and springs in all sections of the country are drying up, and the railroads are finding it very difficult to secure the water necessary to run their trains.

Counterfeit fifty cent pieces are in circulation in the city and a number of storekeepers have already been taken in by them. The counterfeit is said to be a very good one, bearing the date of 1876, and it gives a good ring.

A VISIT TO A MOHAMMEDAN MOSQUE.

How a Daring Woman Succeeded in Entering, Though She Had No Slippers.

A commission has been appointed by the present government whose duty is the preservation of the monuments of Arabian art; occasionally, therefore, in a mosque one finds scaffolding in place and a general dismantlement. One can only hope for the best—in much the same spirit in which one hopes when one sees the beautiful old front of St Mark's, Venice, gradually encroached upon by the new raw timbers. But in Cairo, at least, the work of repairing goes on very slowly: 800 mosques, probably, out of the 400 still remain untouched, and many of these are adorned with a delicate beauty which is unrivaled.

I know no quest so enchanting as a search through the winding lanes of the old quarters for these gems of Saracenic taste, which no guide book has as yet chronicled, no dragoman discovered. The street is so narrow that your donkey fills almost all the space. Passers by are obliged to flatten themselves against the walls in response to the oriental adjurations of your donkey boy behind; "Take heed, O maid!" "Your foot, O chief!" Presently you see a minaret somewhere, but it is not always easy to find the mosque to which it belongs, hidden, per aps, as it is, behind other buildings in the crowded labyrinth.

At length you observe a door with a dab or two of the well known Saracenic honeycomb work above it: instantly you dismount, climb the steps, and look in. You are almost sure to find treasures, either fragments of the pearly Cairo mosaic, or a wonderful ceiling, or gilded Kufic (old Arabian text) inscriptions and arabesques, or remains of the ancient colored glass which changes its tint hour by hour. Best of all, sometimes you find a space open to the sky, with a fountain in the center, the whole surrounded by arcades of marble columns adorned with hanging lamps (or rather with the bronze chains which once carried the lamps), and with suspended ostrich eggs—the emblems of good luck.

One day, when my donkey was making his way through a dilapidated region, I came upon a mosque so small that it seemed hardly more than a base for its exquisite minaret, which towered to an unusual height above it. Of course I dismounted. The little mosque was open, but as it was never visited by strangers it possessed no slippers, and without coverings of some kind it was impossible that unsanctified shoes, such as mine, should touch its matted floor; the bent, ancient guardian glared at me fiercely for the mere suggestion. One sees sometimes in the eyes of old men sitting in the mosques the original spirit of Islam shining still. Once their religion commanded the sword; they would like to grasp it again if they could.

It was suggested that the matting might, for a baksheesh, be rolled up and put away, as the place was small. But the stern old keeper remained inflexible. Then the offer was made that so many piasters—ten (that is, fifty cents) would be given to the blind. Now the blind are sacred in Cairo; this offer, therefore, was successful; all the matting was carefully rolled and stacked in a corner, the three or four Moslems present withdrew to the door and the unbeliever was allowed to enter. She found herself in a temple of color which was incredibly rich. The floor was of delicate marble, and every inch of the walls was covered with a mosaic of porphyry and jasper, adorned with gilded inscriptions and bands of Kufic text; the tall pulpit, made of mahogany colored wood, was carved from top to bottom in intricate designs and ornamented with odd little plaques of fretted bronze; the sacred niche was lined with alabaster, turquoise and gleaming mother of pearl; the only light came through the thick glass of the small windows far above, in downward falling rays of crimson, violet and gold. The old mosaic work of the Cairo mosques is composed of small plates of marble and of mother of pearl arranged in geometrical designs; the delicacy of the minute cubes employed, and the intricacy of the patterns are marvelous; the color is faint, unless the turquoise has been added; but the glitter of the mother of pearl gives the whole an appearance like that of jewelry. Upon our departure five blind men were found drawn up in a line at the door. It would not have been difficult to collect fifty.—Constance Fenimore Woolson in Harper's.

A Substitute for Ivory.

Hitherto none of the persistent efforts to produce a good artificial substitute for ivory have been successful. The Engineer, however, now calls attention to a patent process based upon the employment of those materials of which natural ivory is composed, consisting, as it does, of tribasic phosphate of lime, calcium carbonate, magnesia, alumina, gelatine and albumen. By this process quicklime is first treated with sufficient water to convert it into the hydrate, but before it has become completely hydrated or slacked, an aqueous solution of phosphoric acid is poured on it, and while stirring the mixture the calcium carbonate, magnesia and alumina are incorporated in small quantities at a time, and lastly the gelatine and albumen dissolved in water are added. The point to aim at is to obtain a compost sufficiently plastic and as intimately mixed as possible. It is then set aside to allow the phosphoric acid to complete its action upon the chalk. The following day the mixture, while still plastic, is pressed into the desired form in molds and dried in a current of air at a temperature of about 150 degs. C. To complete the preparation of the artificial product by this process it is kept for three or four weeks, during which time it becomes perfectly hard. The following are the proportions for the mixture, which can be colored by the addition of suitable substances: Quicklime, 100 parts; water, 300 parts; phosphoric acid solution, 1.05 sp. gr., 75 parts; calcium carbonate, 16 parts; magnesia, 1 to 2 parts; alumina, precipitated, 5 parts; gelatine, 15 parts.

Where Dogs are Street Cleaners.

Next to St. Sophia we have heard most about the dogs of Constantinople. When we counted 280 dogs in an hour's drive in Damascus we thought we could see nothing that would surprise us in canine numerals. But Damascus does not begin with this city, especially in the old part, as in Stamboul. At times they lined the street, making it yellow and furry for two or three rods. Again, dogs lay stretched, singly, in the middle of the street asleep, and carriages and foot travellers went out of their way to pass them for hours, rather than trouble to move them. Puppies ran about ad libitum and dear little things they were too.

These dogs are not a fine breed. Their hair is coarse and rough, and their bodies thick and heavy. But they have good, mild faces, gentle eyes, and, as for attacking any one, it seems never to enter their minds. Cats, too, are plenty, and often is seen a happy family of dogs, cats and chickens sharing the street with perfect good nature. The dogs are the street cleaners. At night, when refuse is thrown out from the houses, they have high feasting, and by morning nothing but what can be easily carried away in baskets or on donkey back is left. They belong to nobody, and would live a happy and care free life did they not somehow get many injuries. The howl of a dog sounds every few minutes even in Pera, and it is not rare to see torn ears, bleeding eyes and scratched, hairless skin.—Cor. Philadelphia Ledger.

Good Sleepers.

The author of "Bulgaria Before the War" says that the Turks devote to sleep any spare half hour that may be at their disposal. At night, he says, all his companions would be in the land of dreams within ten minutes, while he lay wide awake and envious.

He continues:
"It has often struck me with astonishment to see the little respect any one in Turkey pays to sleep. When I have been staying in the villages I have often heard the members of the family get up, and after searching about among his sleeping companions, arouse them all to ask where his tobacco was, or upon some equally slight excuse.

"A lad of eighteen would thus wake up his father, a man of sixty, perhaps, two or three times in the night, and yet there would never be an angry word or remonstrance; and when I have snapped savagely at some one for walking into my room and over my body in the middle of the night my snappiness has caused the greatest astonishment.

"Many times have I turned in with natives in the same room with me, and though I was generally tired and my companions not, yet I think I may say I was invariably the last to close my eyes."