

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"In reviewing the events of the last few years you will find," said Brown, "that fully eighty per cent. of the total number of strikes were inaugurated against a reduction in pay. Under the competitive system wages have, and will continue to have, a downward tendency while the system lasts; it can't be otherwise. I think I have shown clearly how, apart from avarice and greed, competition in the sale of the products of labor oftentimes forces employers to reduce wages whenever this course is open to them. This, though a potent cause of the downward tendency of wages, is, however, not near so powerful an agent as the competition in the sale of labor itself. We are told that it is a commodity: at all events it is bought and sold much the same as other commodities. There is, however, this difference between the laborer and the products of labor: that while one is a living, breathing, feeling being, the other is not. The laborer cannot afford to be idle: he must work in order to live, and it is this necessity of his which provides the opportunity of the employer and is taken full advantage of every time. This is why, in an over-crowded labor market, you find men under-bidding each other in selling their labor until, in some occupations, the wages of the father have become too small to provide the necessaries of life for his family, and the children, who ought to be at school, are forced into factories and compelled to contribute their share to the common funds. It is not the greed of the laborer which prompts him to place his children in competition with himself—it is dire necessity. Here, then, you have two forces which from opposite sides bear heavily against labor; first, the ruinous competition in the sale of the products of labor; and, secondly, the competition among laborers themselves."

"And yet," said Phil, "it was not always so, although the competitive system was in existence. My grandfather told me more than once that as a journeyman it was rarely that he started to work before Wednesday, and never worked later than 4 o'clock on Saturday. This constituted his week's work, and no consideration would induce him to work more. He was a weaver, and no worse or better than any journeyman of his trade and time. He not only made a good living by four days' work a week, but he actually acquired considerable property."

"I have no doubt about that," replied Brown, "but you must remember that this was done before the advent of the power loom. Arkwright's spinning jenny had not yet been introduced, and your grandfather's trade was thoroughly organized. The Guild regulated the number of apprentices, stipulated their term of service, issued cards to journeymen which they had to produce before they could obtain work as such, and in some countries it even had the power to grant or refuse permission to journeymen to establish themselves in business as masters of their trade. All this tended to prevent the supply of weavers exceeding the demand, and hence their prosperity. With the introduction of machinery, however, things changed, and it was at this crisis that the Guilds and Trades Unions of our grandfathers made their greatest mistake. The introduction of machinery was violently opposed by them; in many places they invaded the factories, smashed the machines and destroyed property generally, and from this time dates the decline of the old Trade Guilds. The men of those days could not adapt themselves to the great change that was coming over them. They forgot that the introduction of machinery necessitated the subdivision of labor, and that this very fact enabled employers to fill their places with unskilled labor which they

had hitherto regarded with contempt. If, instead of opposing the introduction of machinery, they had insisted on their right to share in its benefits by reducing the hours of labor in just proportion to the increased productive power of labor, or else demanded that the State obtain sole control of all such machines and work them for the benefit of the whole people, then there would be no such thing as a labor question at the present day. But they didn't, and the result is that capital now controls all tools of production. You and I and every mother's son who works for wages must have the direct or indirect use of these tools, which we can only obtain by the consent and upon the terms of those who possess them."

"So that your whole argument boiled down means this," said Phil. "First that the possession of the tools of production enables those who own them to force their own terms upon those who must use them in order to live at all. Second, that competition in labor and in the sale of the products of labor reduces both profit and wages. This is the position of things to-day; now, how are we going to alter it?"

"By adopting the same policy and tactics which capital has adopted," replied Brown. "Individually the capitalist or rather manufacturer, for there is a difference between the two, was practically as helpless as what we are, but he is combining with his fellows to abolish competition in the products of labor. We must combine to abolish competition in labor. As they, by limiting the output regulate the supply of goods, so must we by reducing the working hours regulate and limit the supply of labor. Shorter hours means the employment of more men; this would relieve the labor market and by lessening competition inevitably raise wages. The first thing for labor to do, is to thoroughly organize. An unorganized trade is a standing invitation to the manufacturers of that trade to reduce wages. Capital always attacks the point of least resistance. So long as the Railwaymen of England were in a disorganized state the companies kept up their large dividends by reducing the wages of their men. The English Railway News emphasizes this fact, and reminds shareholders that labor organizations have stopped this source of revenue, and frankly admits that if dividends are to be kept up to the usual figure the source must be found in better equipment and faster service than heretofore and that a reduction in wages with the splendid organization of the men is impossible. Labor, with thorough organization can, in spite of the keenest competition among trades, still compel the payment of wages sufficiently large to make life endurable, but labor unorganized will find itself between the upper and nether millstone slowly ground to dust."

BILL BLADES.

THE CHURCH AND THE SOCIAL QUESTION.

The Rev. Dr. Ferguson, president of the annual conference of the Primitive Methodist Church in England, in his inaugural address, came out strong on the social side of the Church's work, and what is of more importance, went straight to the mark, as will appear from the following extract from his address published in the connexional organ, Light and Truth:

"To illustrate it properly, he quoted from a recent return presented to the London School Board, showing that 44,000 little Metropolitan children attended school daily 'in want of food.' In spite of voluntary and other efforts 24,737 children, in a city where every house is within the sound of church bells, 'do not obtain enough food.' Archdeacon Farrar recently said in Convocation that there were 100,000 paupers, 80,000 fallen women, and 60,000 persons living in single rooms in London, and to this mass about 240

souls were being added every hour. (Sensation.) Surely Professor Huxley was about right when he said that the presence of widespread body and soul destroying and ever-increasing poverty in the midst of abounding wealth is the enigma which this civilization must solve, or else be devoured by the monster itself has generated. Turning to the condition of the agricultural laborer, who was driven by necessity from the land, the President said it was the influx from the country parishes that creates the increasing danger to the welfare of the whole community. (Hear, hear.) Personally, the President said, he believed a statement recently made by a true reformer was in the main correct—that the cause of poverty, the cause of starvation, the cause of monstrous want in the very centre of wealth, of ignorance in the midst of enlightenment, of the direst abasement and emprovement in the midst of the highest civilization, comes from the single fundamental fact that the masses of our people have been disinherited. (Loud applause.) So long as the human being is a land animal, so long as man can only live on land and work on land, so long as all wealth is simply the raw material of the land worked up by human labor—then it is inevitable that if the land of any country be treated as the property of one class of the country, no matter how you advance, no matter what inventions may be made, what improvements may be carried out, there must be at the bottom of the social scale brutishness, and vice, and ignorance, and want, and starvation."

A NEW TYPE-SETTER.

A Michigan Inventor is Now in the Field With a Very Rapid Device.

Earle V. Beals, of Muskegon Mich., a practical printer, and employed for the past nine years on the reportorial staff of a local paper, has of late years been working upon a type-setting device which he thinks he has now practically completed.

His invention consists of two separate machines. The first of these corresponds to a typewriter and is operated by a compositor who works from the copy, but this, instead of being printed, as by a typewriter, is transferred to a strip of paper by perforations made by striking the keys on the finger-board, the particular letters or characters being determined by the distance of a perforation from the base line.

This machine may be called the perforator, and when the copy has thus been transferred to the slip of paper this is taken to the second machine which, working automatically by electricity, sets up type, and as each line is composed, impresses it into matriced paper in a new way that makes a perfect moulded matrix of the line. The matriced paper moves along automatically as the lines are composed until a matrix is obtained for a column of matter. This is then ready for the stereotyping process.

The quick fixing of the face of the type in matrix paper Mr. Beals recognized as one of the largest obstacles, and at the same time the most important and desirable feature of the machine, and he claims to have labored much over this point. His success in this particular is accomplished by an entirely new method. As to the application of heat, that fixes the guest lines of type faces as clearly as does the metal matrix. By the action of electricity on a series of magnets the types are brought into their proper places; a series of needles pass over the perforator and the electric current thus closed actuates the magnet corresponding to the particular letter of that perforation. The action of this machine is entirely automatic and perfectly positive. It is also very rapid. The perforator can be separated as rapidly as a typewriter, on which the average speed is about fifty words per minute, but the automatic-aligning and impressing machine will be capable of handling the matter turned off from two or three of the perforators. The capacity is equal to twenty men at a case.

Several months ago he procured patents on the machines, and last August he took his experimental machine to Detroit, where it was subjected to the close investigation of mechanical experts representing a number of heavy capitalists of that city whose interest in the machine had been secured, and who stood ready to give practical aid in case it proved to be equal to its claims. The result seems to have been entirely favorable to Mr. Beals' invention. The experts were greatly interested and reported in its favor. The result was the preliminary formation of a company that has already made arrangements to develop and perfect the machine and put it on the market.

Mr. Beals visited Chicago and carefully examined the machines on exhibition. He saw nothing in any of them that is similar to his machine, either in principle or detail, and the result of his study is a firmer belief in the superiority of his own invention.

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