

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"If workingmen would only study the system under which they live, or learn to see things as they really are," said Brown, "the conditions and surroundings of all those who work for wages would soon be changed for the better. To judge from the ill-feeling which undeniably exists between employer and employed, and the strong denunciation indiscriminately hurled by honest and sincere workingmen against all who in any shape or form employ labor, one would imagine that the sole cause of the misery, the poverty and degradation of the working classes was the greed and avarice of the employers; now, this is wrong, I am not a champion of capital; I owe it nothing for past services and expect no favors from it in the future, but I believe that before men undertake to remove a social evil they must first make themselves acquainted with its cause. That among employers you will find some who are greedy I don't deny, but that they, as a class, are more so than workingmen themselves, that is not true."

"How, then," said Gaskill, "do you explain their eagerness to reduce wages upon each and every pretext; if they are not greedy why do they object to shortening the hours of labor; why do they object to even a small outlay to make their workshops and factories more comfortable for their men; why are they so devilish anxious to employ child labor?"

"Because," said Brown, "they are as much victims of this unnatural competitive system as what you are. Let me try and make this plain to you. We will suppose two manufacturers in the same line of business and selling in the same market; the quality of their goods being equal, evidently he who can sell them cheapest will secure the most trade. As the price of goods are governed by the cost of production both of these manufacturers will strive to produce as cheap as possible. If one introduces machinery with greater productive capacity, and consequently less cost of production, the other must follow suit or else reduce wages to maintain his hold upon the market. It may be argued that instead of reducing the wages of his men he should accept a smaller percentage of profit himself, and this he would probably do, did not the present stage of the competitive system find the majority of our manufacturers with a margin of profits so small that any further reduction in this direction would compel them to withdraw their capital from manufactures and invest it in Government securities where, without incurring risk of any kind, it would yield fully as great a return, if not more. And this is something that must not be lost sight of. Unless capital invested in productive enterprises and their attendant risks yields a larger percentage of profit than the current rate of interest paid by banks or governments it will be withdrawn from manufactures and invested in State or Municipal securities. Whether this would prove a benefit to labor we will discuss some other time; just now we are dealing with our two manufacturers. What applies to the introduction of machinery applies with equal force to the employment of cheap female and child labor; if one does it the other must follow suit."

"But I can see no reason," said Gaskill, "why they should undersell each other unless it be from sheer cussedness."

"Not at all," replied Brown; "these two men may be the best of good fellows in private life and may even be personal friends, but their business interests demands this. Next to improved machinery, the quantity to be produced is a greater factor in the cost

of production than even the cheapest of cheap labor, which both of these men clearly understand. The cost of an article produced by the thousand is ever so much less than the cost of the same article when produced by the dozen, and consequently manufacturers will undersell each other in order to secure larger quantities. Though perhaps they may loose at one end of the bargain what they gain at the other the tendencies of trade are in this direction, and the fact cannot be ignored. But by far the most potent cause of the cutting of prices and consequent reduction of profit and wages is the middleman—the commission merchant. Let me illustrate: The jobber of any given trade deals direct with the manufacturer; he buys in quantities to suit his trade, sometimes by the dozen, sometimes more, and at other times less. The manufacturer sells to him at, we will say, thirty per cent. discount on his regular price list which we will assume enables him to pay living wages and make a reasonable profit on his goods as both of these items were fully considered by him before he fixed the price. The consumer pays for the full value of the goods, the manufacturer makes a fair profit, and the laborer a living wage.

Now, however, comes the middleman; he says, 'look here, I'll order my goods by the thousand, but you must give me at least an extra ten per cent. discount; if you don't the other fellow will; in fact he has offered it to me, but you shall have the first refusal.' Sooner than loose so good a customer the manufacturer agrees and then the fun commences. The same jobber who formerly bought from him at thirty per cent. off or seventy cents on the dollar now buys his goods from the middleman at thirty-five off or sixty-five cents on the dollar, and more he won't pay. Then our man, to regain his customers from the middleman, makes an all round cut of thirty-five and ten off his list or fifty-eight and one-half cents on the dollar. The other fellow, through this fight between the middleman and our friend, has lost considerable of his trade and is determined to regain it. With him it's a case of 'die dog or eat the hatchet.' He has put in new machinery and cut his men's wages, and now offers the middleman in consideration of a large order forty-five per cent. off, or a dollar's worth of goods for fifty-five cents. The middleman accepts and promptly goes our friend one better by reducing prices to jobbers to forty and five off the list or fifty seven cents on the dollar; and so the war goes on, until the consumer buys the goods at almost cost price, the middleman makes a small profit and the laborer and manufacturer 'get left.' These are the causes, and not greed and selfishness, which compel productive capital—often much against its will—to make war on labor. How it was that capital, which is a child of labor, could obtain supremacy over its parent and compel it to assume second place, and how labor may attain the position to which it aspires and which rightfully belongs to it, we will discuss to-morrow night. I would like, though, that you people compare notes and investigate for yourselves whether or not the statements which I have made are correct. This labor question is one which you, and nobody else, will eventually have to solve; and it won't be solved by hurling invectives against your opponents."

BILL BLADES.

Thomas McGreevy and Nicholas Connolly received at Quebec on Thursday their summons to appear in Ottawa to answer to the charge of conspiring to defraud the Government. Both gentlemen are perfectly confident as to the result of the trial and express a determination to see the thing through. They will leave for Ottawa on Monday or Tuesday.

Robert Bonner offers to give the owner of the first horse which trots a mile on a regulation track in 2.05 a purse of \$5,000. He says he never expects to see a mile trotted in two minutes, despite statements from experts that they think such a thing possible within a few years.

DOUBT.

We weary sometimes of this ceaseless war,
And wonder if the victory, when it comes,
With blare of trumpet, and the beat of drums—
Will be as glorious as our fancies are.

Why should we struggle? Life's a little span;
With tooth and claw let's make a pathway through.

To die, or live—what matters it to man?
Sooner or later, there's end of me and you.

And yet, and yet! while musing in this way,
Something will whisper, and the heart take hope.

Who fights Truth's battles lives a life each day,
And then the darkness clears through which we grope.

What matters it, oh, watcher of the night,
Whether the Captain sees or hears?

Or thy heart's pierced by shaft that's aimed aright,
And thou cry out—and God shall stop His ears.

Stand to the ramparts! in the walls are men
Sickened to death. Children and women pine.

And thou art strong and merciful. Again
Face the proud foe, and make the warrior's sigh.

Lift high the flag! hope on, hope on, and trust;
Cease questioning, and close the tremulous lips.

Fight on, fight on! simply because we must,
Until the time bring dawning or eclipse!

—Joseph Dana Miller.

So with Mr. Tom Mann's proposal that state or municipal workshops shall be furnished for the unemployed, and that persons engaged in trades which give employment

stead of migrating to the large towns and helping to swell the ranks of the unemployed. This is one of the questions of the hour. With respect to those social problems, as they are called, which are coming to the front, and which some propose that we should send to parliament for solution, what shall be said? In the first place the mere fact that they were sure to come up, and the consideration of them could not possibly be avoided, should teach us patience and toleration. In the next place, past experience gives us abundant reasons for relying upon the common sense of our countrymen, upon their appreciation of what is practicable, and above all, upon their inborn love of what is fair and just. The question which excites most apprehension is the demand for an eight hour working day for all trades, to be imposed by the authority of Parliament. The expectations of the advocates of this measure may be chimerical, and many will think they are so; but let the whole question be argued and threshed out until the elementary facts are made plain.

So with Mr. Tom Mann's proposal that state or municipal workshops shall be furnished for the unemployed, and that persons engaged in trades which give employment

only for six or eight months in the year shall be maintained for the rest of the year at the cost of the public. Let it be discussed, and let us see what fate it will meet with at the hands of workingmen generally. It will probably turn out to be one of those "radiant bubbles" to which Mr. John Morley referred so pleasantly and indulgently in his speech at Cambridge. As for the socialist schemes, out and out, with which we are confronted, we are bound to give them a fair hearing and trust to sober argument for their discomfiture; socialism may have something to teach us, though there is but little probability that its principles will meet with any wide acceptance. Socialism is not nearly so great a power with us as it was fifty years ago when the benevolent Robert Owen shone as chief crusader."

Anthony Jordan, a negro employed to hold a balloon for an aeronaut at the Intersouthern Exposition at Raleigh, N. C., was caught in the ropes on Wednesday and carried 60 feet into the air. He fell to the ground, receiving fatal injuries.

A great part of philosophy consists in knowing how to do without things. A horse, for example, enjoys his food best when he hasn't a bit in his mouth.

Women on Strike Against the Men.

An actual "strike of the sex" has lately taken place among the women of the Akona tribe of Western Africa. According to the Women's Herald, they protested against the treatment to which their fathers, brothers and husbands subjected them. Remonstrances being of no avail, they tried a stronger measure. A neighboring tribe with whom the Akonas were not on good terms were appealed to, and it was agreed to take in all the dissatisfied women. A village awoke one morning to find all its women and girls had gone, and work of almost every kind at a standstill. Messengers were sent out after the women, with instructions to grant their demands in full. What fun there would be among the Benedicts of Montreal if the same occurred here.

Effect of a Sermon by Mr. Spurgeon

A manufacturer when a bachelor some years ago was in the habit of putting up at a hotel in the neighborhood of Aldersgate street. Sallying forth one Sunday in a listless mood, he was crossing Finsbury pavement when an omnibus driver cracked his whip and called out "Over the water to Charley." The bachelor took the hint, perhaps regarding it as a providential call, and got into the omnibus, which put him down outside Mr. Spurgeon's tabernacle.

He was not in the habit of attending divine service, and this was the first and last time he ever heard the great Baptist preacher. The effect of the discourse upon his mind, however, must have been considerable, for when he died he left to Mr. Spurgeon's orphanage and other philanthropic institutions associated with the Metropolitan tabernacle no less than half of his large fortune.—London Tit-Bits.

SOCIALISM.

Politicians Throughout Europe Discussing the Question.

The Socialist Congress at Erfurt has had the result of bringing Socialist politics to the front, and politicians not only in England but throughout the continent are eagerly discussing the best means of making people better satisfied with their station in life, and thus lessening the field for the agitation of wilder spirits of Socialism. Sir William Harcourt, one of the leading Liberal members of Parliament, speaking of the subject, says: "It is a matter of observation and the subject of common remark that, apart from special matters, a great change has come over the political horizon within the past few years. The change may not be so great as is imagined, but at any rate it must be admitted that a new class of questions is put to the front, and seem to command a preponderating share of popular sympathy. The hours of work, the adequate remuneration of the workmen, the means of providing work for the unemployed, the claims of those who, after using their utmost efforts, cannot obtain work; these are some of the matters which we are invited to discuss, and some regard them proper subjects for legislation. Then there is the wide subject of sanitation in towns and dwellings and workshops."

"The interests of agriculture in former times were considered mainly with reference to the landlord and the farmer. These have almost disappeared, and the laborer has risen in their stead. How is his condition to be improved? How shall he be enabled and persuaded to remain in his native village, in-

stead of migrating to the large towns and helping to swell the ranks of the unemployed. This is one of the questions of the hour. With respect to those social problems, as they are called, which are coming to the front, and which some propose that we should send to parliament for solution, what shall be said? In the first place the mere fact that they were sure to come up, and the consideration of them could not possibly be avoided, should teach us patience and toleration. In the next place, past experience gives us abundant reasons for relying upon the common sense of our countrymen, upon their appreciation of what is practicable, and above all, upon their inborn love of what is fair and just. The question which excites most apprehension is the demand for an eight hour working day for all trades, to be imposed by the authority of Parliament. The expectations of the advocates of this measure may be chimerical, and many will think they are so; but let the whole question be argued and threshed out until the elementary facts are made plain.

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