

OUR BOARDING HOUSE

Reflections on Current Events by the Boarders.

"There is one thing that I can't understand," said Sinnett, addressing Phil, "and that is this: You say that the eight hour day, land and money reform, factory and lien acts, master and servants' acts, free education and the abolition of child labor and a lot of other reforms for which labor agitates are mere side issues. You don't believe that either one or the other, or yet all of them together, will solve the labor question; then why should we waste our energy and time upon them? You have repeatedly said that free trade is as nothing compared to the advantages of free and compulsory education or the benefits of the eight hour day, yet I question if there is a more enthusiastic free trader in the room than yourself; you will argue all night with a man to bring him around to your way of thinking, and then when you succeed you coolly tell him that after all the question is but a side issue. I don't think it's right; if it's a side issue why create friction or ill-will by discussing it? Why don't you plainly state what you believe to be the true solution of the labor question and stick to that? If, as you say, nothing less than the abolition of the wage system will ever satisfy you, why divide the people on minor matters?"

"Because it is upon minor matters that the people are asked to decide whenever the Government comes to the country," said Phil. "Another thing which you will have to consider in the introduction of reforms is whether the people are alive to the necessity of measures such as you wish to introduce. The great increase in the productive power of the world and the ever increasing number of idle laborers have secured a favorable hearing to the agitators for an eight hour day and the time for its adoption is near at hand. The rapid accumulation of wealth in the hands of land and money sharks, the startling increase in the number of mortgaged farms and exorbitant rate of interest, coupled with consequent high rents, secure the land and currency reformers a respectful hearing. Our factory acts are proof that the nation is willing to abolish child labor, and this clears the ground for free and compulsory education; the people are prepared to discuss all of these reforms without prejudice. They see and can understand that they have become necessary, but neither the people as a whole, or yet a large portion of them, have devoted any of their time to seek the true cause of the evils which they would legislate upon, and having failed in this respect the only remedy—to remove the cause—seems to them impracticable and utopian, and the men who advocate it, visionaries. In time, when experience will have taught them or their children that the measures which they now deem all important are mere palliatives in securing to labor all its rights, the nationalist or state socialist will also secure a hearing. The reason which prompts me to advocate these side issues is because public opinion is ripe for them and because they will strengthen labor in its struggle for supremacy with capital; this, however, does not imply that I or others like me lose sight of the great object for which we contend: the abolition of wage slavery. We simply take advantage of anything which, in any shape or form, will advance the well-being of the class to which we belong."

"Radical reforms, such as we demand, can only be obtained gradually," said Brown. "Society must be given time to adjust itself to new conditions if your reforms are to be permanent. History teaches us that the new social system which we wish to establish must be based upon the intelligence of the masses. If to-morrow the govern-

ing owners were to give us full control of the machinery of state, there would be a revolution inside of six months, simply because the people are not educated to appreciate the benefits of integral co-operation, or yet to correctly understand the evils of the system under which they live at present. Neither can this be altered by theorizing; it requires practical application of the remedies which society contends to be sufficient to settle the labor question to demonstrate their insufficiency. Show the free trader that free trade won't do it; the land reformer that the single tax don't go far enough; let the currency crank be disappointed along with him who can't see further than the regulating of the apprentice system or the adoption of the eight hour day. Pass factory acts, lien and liability acts, etc., all this will tend to enlighten the people and ameliorate their condition, but they will also understand by practical experience that neither one or the other, or yet all of them together, are a satisfactory settlement of the labor question. They are, however, steps in the right direction because they bring the question of labor's rights and labor's wrongs prominently before the public. They create discussions on subjects of greatest interest and importance to us, and go far toward the destruction of the hedge placed by capital around what are commonly called 'vested rights,' but in reality are entrenched wrongs, and which will have to be demolished before the people will secure their own."

"These are also my opinions," said Phil, and they will explain why I support each and everyone of the measures advanced, although I know them to be side issues."

BILL BLADES.

BRUTAL FORCE

AGAINST PLACID SUBMISSIVENESS.

(Written for the Echo by Cyrille Horsicot.)

The idea of violence, or the use of force shocks people only when coming from an unusual or obscure source. We become accustomed to the standing threat of a well-trained force of men taught brutality as a trade, and strangely enough our free spirits feel no insult, no sense of injustice. We know there are Gatling guns in the armory that will be turned upon us too if we do not act as please the powers that be; yet we are not horrified or shocked, that is, the most of us think nothing of it. Why? Because if we, the few, protest, we will be branded with the epithet of revolutionist by those who breed revolution among the masses by their unfair treatment in dealing with them. Yes, we producers should be all revolutionists, but not bloodthirsty revolutionists, as we see them too often everywhere in their sanguinary wars where they slaughter us poor wretches in order to get their nefarious end, just as they do now in Chili and other places in South America. Are not those unfortunate countries in a perpetual state of anarchy under the leadership of jaguars always eager to shed the blood of their fellow-creatures in order to get the power in their clutches, the treasure at their disposition, and a notoriety picked up and reddened in the blood of thousands of useful citizens? Now-a-days all the world over, there is a constant menace to the lives and liberties of workingmen, in every police station, in every camp where millions of men are sent to play at soldiering; in the armories filled to the door with guns. It broods like a heavy cloud over the fate of workingmen who dare dream of bettering their social condition. Yet who is shocked at the awful threats of capitalistic power? Who grows horrified at the menacing attitude of the "law" and its tools? Very few. We go on hugging our phantom of liberty with placid minds undismayed by all this array of systematized violence. The power and influence of wealth make their materialized threats respectable, most of the

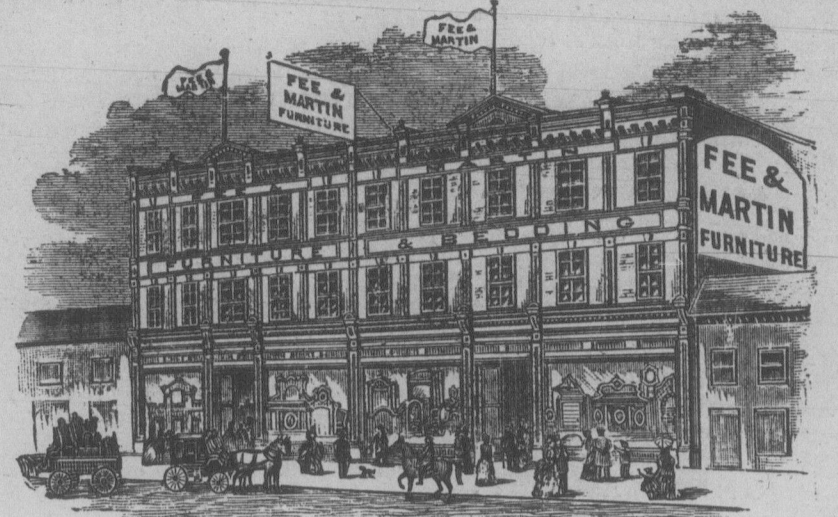
governments, which exist only to protect property rights, don't care a farthing about the thousand victims who are slaughtered, burned, crushed and drowned every year in the act of producing the wealth from which the worshippers of mammon throw them a paltry sum in reward for their invaluable services, just as they will throw a dry bone to their greyhound after catching a fine piece of venison with which they entertain their friends in their feast of Lucullus. The producer has to acquiesce in this monopoly of force as in the monopoly of everything else. The capitalist naturally makes few "incendiary speeches." He does not shock people by saying what he will do, but the guns, bayonets, clubs and trained men are there just the same. Words are superfluous. The property-serving classes not only threaten our lives by these visible means of warfare, but they are constantly, by slower, less conspicuous methods actually taking our lives. The marble palaces of the rich are built on the crushed lives of miserable oilers; the very flesh and bones of defrauded children are worked into the cement and stones; the magnificent decorations scarce hide the tears of unhappy women whose toil-shortened lives made them possible. The hundreds of human beings sweltering in one tenement house that one may live in a mansion fit for the gods, drink in leath and disease with every breath they draw. In the mines, in the factories, mills and workshops human lives are offered a continual sacrifice to the greed of property. Yet the great public sees nothing in all this legalized injustice. But nature knows no man-made laws. Before the bar of common justice this universal robbery and murder of the innocents, respectable and legalized though it be, is as atrocious as hell, and a terrible day of retribution is sure to come sooner or later! But woe to a common person who dares to talk of force! not having the power to make his efforts toward throwing off his chains respectable, he is, of course, a bloodthirsty rafter. Some sycophant newspaper claiming to be "liberal" sorrowfully deprecates the fact that workingmen have ever resorted to violence to insure concessions. That is a shameless lie! "Lawless violence," they say, makes an arbitrary use of legal force, which often appears at the time heartless and cruel, a necessity. What would result if at any time dissatisfied men could at pleasure defy the law, destroy property and dictate terms to established authorities? What indeed? What would happen if men were allowed to think and act for themselves when their labor and lives are concerned? No matter if they are working fifteen hours a day, with scarcely enough time to eat a bit of bread, as is the case with bakers, under horrible conditions; no matter if their pay is barely sufficient to keep off starvation, no matter if their babies are forced into the terrible grind in order to keep body and soul together; no matter if their lives are but continued stories of privation, degradation, toil and poverty, if they will only keep still about it, it's all right. It is the groaning over their hurts that is criminal; if they only keep quiet they are very good sort of people, and everything can go on "smooth and even." Yes, they are allowed to wait till agitation, education and the ballot shall break their chains if they wait quietly. And be corpses or idiots by that time; no doubt they will be allowed to enjoy their freedom. A man hasn't much of an opportunity to use the ballot as it was not long ago, with a policeman's club poised over his head and threatening starvation from the "bosses" staring him in the face. Then is the time to act. Now is the time to prepare for such emergencies. Whoever believes in the workingman's right to defend whatever idea he may conceive of his rights with any equitable force he can command rather than to tamely submit to a degrading slavery believes in the temporal redemption of his fellow-creatures from the bondage of cruel and unholy pharisees. He who does not rank with humanity's bitterest foes.

Workingmen! throw aside your *esprit de parti* for which the cunning leaders make of you their puppet shows; select some practical men to make your laws, spurn the satanic press who poison your mind and encourage the labor papers in order to make them dailies instead of weeklies. If you do that the victory is yours before long; if not, then go down the slope until you reach the bottom of the ravine and become an easy prey to soulless vultures and vampires with human faces.

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