

Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

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LABOR PORTRAITS.

"Men who, in advance of law and in opposition to prevailing opinion, have forced into national recognition the hitherto disregarded rights of labor."

MR. R. APPELGARTH.

On the 1st of June, 1836, his then Majesty's ship *Terror* sailed from Chatham on a remarkable Arctic Expedition, the history of which has often been appealed to as one of the most interesting records of peril and adventure connected with researches in the Polar regions. On board the *Terror* and accompanying that memorable expedition throughout, was a naval adventurer of Hull, named Applegarth, who filled the post of quartermaster. Like many other bold and adventurous spirits, he did not suffer the ties of family and kindred to deter him from entering new fields of danger and excitement; consequently he left behind him at Hull, a wife and family, with but very slender means of subsistence.

The eldest son of that family, Robert Applegarth, is the subject of our present portrait and sketch. He was born at Hull, on the 23rd of January, 1833. The rest of the family consisted of five sisters, and one brother who is now a thriving settler in the United States, having distinguished himself by serving in the army of the North throughout the civil war, as one of the Pennsylvania Volunteer Cavalry.

The father of the family returned safely from the expedition of the *Terror*, but soon hurried away into more distant regions, and his wife and children had to struggle hard against the consequences of his cruelly prolonged absence. In the face of such adverse fortune Robert Applegarth, whilst yet a boy, after a brief and scanty education, sought to contribute towards his own maintenance. Before he was eleven years old he succeeded in obtaining a situation at half-a-crown a week. In a short time he got advanced in a merchant's office at five shillings a week. Here he had access to a variety of information and a small selection of books, which stimulated his thirst for knowledge. Being imbued with a tendency for handicraft rather than dealing, he became dissatisfied with his prospect of becoming a merchant's clerk, and relinquished that prospect in favor of an opportunity which offered for becoming a cabinet-maker and joiner. Having an inveterate hatred to being bound apprentice, he took an engagement where apprenticeship was not insisted upon, and remained in the same shop four years, being advanced from five to ten shillings per week.

At the age of nineteen he removed to Sheffield, where he obtained work under Mr. George Harop, at a pound a week. In a year he saved enough to take a house, and established a little home, in which he proudly installed his mother, but she died only a month afterwards. Three years later his father returned, only to die, for he soon sank under the lingering weakness arising from the hardships which he had suffered in distant lands.

Robert Applegarth arose from his combined afflictions, and stuck steadily to his work. This flush of prosperity led to his marriage, but the reflections upon the prospect of a family, made him dissatisfied with current wages, and he determined to emigrate.

When he landed at New York, on the 30th of December, 1855, having placed unbounded reliance on his own ability to "get on," he had but half-a-crown reserved for future contingencies. An unforeseen difficulty presented itself, for a tremendous fall of snow, lasting a fortnight, put a stop to the progress of his trade, and his position seemed hopeless. Nothing daunted, and prepared to do anything to get an honest living, he found a "Sheffielder," who was a manufacturer of powder-flasks, and undertook to fit on the leather-work by a process resembling shoemaking. By this means he eventually earned sufficient to enable him to proceed inland to Pennsylvania.

The weather was still very severe, and as there was no chance of getting carpen-

ter's work till the spring, he sought for other employment, and found a chairman, who said "Wall, can ye turn?" "Yes," he replied, "Guess I can turn my hand to anything." The chairmaker had a saw-mill, in which was a big lathe, and a steam engine to drive it. The man who used to attend the steam engine was gone further west, and the chairmaker was rather "scared" at the idea of getting up steam himself. Applegarth had never touched a lathe in his life, and knew little of steam-engines, but he had acquired not only the Yankee accent, but the Yankee dash, so he kindled a roaring fire under the boiler at the imminent risk of a "bust up," cleaned and overhauled the engine, and, as soon as the steam was on, "started" the engine at "full blast," and determined with all his might to "go ahead" and "darn the difference." By dint of hard work and close application, he soon added the art of turning to his other accomplishments. He remained here until spring, but being ambitious to penetrate further into the "Far West," he set out for Chicago, about a hundred miles beyond which city he found a rising railway depot at Galesburgh, Knox Co., Illinois. When he arrived there he invested all his cash in a "smoothing plane," but the railway buildings were in urgent progress, and he worked upon them very long hours at 2½ dollars a day, until he was well in funds.

Whilst at Galesburgh, he availed himself of an opportunity he had of devoting his evenings to study with several collegians of Galesburgh, where he formed the close friendship of many young and rising Americans, he was still deeper imbued with that spirit of "go ahead" which has characterized his after life.

Elated with his prosperity, and full of hope, he joyfully despatched a draft and free passage ticket to his wife wherewith to make her way out. But a new difficulty stood in his way. The wife was suffering from impaired health, and she was unable to undertake the voyage. A second time he sent a draft with the same object, but again his wife was too weak and ailing to endure the passage. So his career in the New World was brought to a premature termination. He bade his mates a sorrowful farewell, and turned his back upon a land which he had learned to love, and which he would fain have made his adopted country.

When he first returned from America he took work under Mr. J. Robertson of Sheffield, between whom and himself there still exists a cordial friendship. Notwithstanding, though he was getting the highest wages paid in the locality, he could not fail to feel acutely the painful contrast between such pay and that he had obtained in the States. In the Far West, where labor was in great demand, personal energy was so sure of success. At Sheffield he entered heartily into the working of his local trade society, and soon perceived that holding business meetings at public-houses was detrimental to advancement. Though neither then nor now a teetotaler, he exerted himself to disassociate grave deliberations from thoughtless conviviality, and eventually succeeded in removing the meetings of his society to a reading room. Here, after the ordinary business was got through, discussions were held upon general questions, and especially upon the principles of trades unions. These discussions, in which he took a leading part, laid the foundation of that fame, which has since constituted him a recognized self-made man in the trade union world.

He was several years a member of the Organized Trades of Sheffield, and took an active part in assisting labor movements in various parts of the country.

He was much dissatisfied with the state of local societies in those days, so that, when the great strike and lock-out of the metropolitan building trades took place in 1859, and the Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners was consequently inaugurated in June, 1860, he immediately exerted himself to promote its extension. He procured the adhesion of his own Sheffield

society, and promoted the formation of numerous branches through the country. His untiring energy and ability made him favorably conspicuous amongst his fellows throughout the country, so that in October, 1862, he was elected General Secretary of the Amalgamated Society, and was re-elected every succeeding year until 1871, in which year he gave two months' notice and resigned the office, and was succeeded by Mr. J. D. Prior, an able and efficient officer. Mr. Applegarth still retains his membership in the society, and at the invitation of the executive council, he has since attended each of the Annual Trade Congresses as a representative.

During his term of office he devoted himself to the welfare of the society with ability, zeal, and success. When he was first elected, the society consisted of 32 branches, and 805 members, with a fund of £790; during his uninterrupted tenure of office, the society increased to 240 branches, and 10,500 members, with a fund of more than £18,000; while for donation, sick, funeral, and other benefits, including trade purposes, upwards of £80,000 was expended. This was up to January, 1871, since which time its history has been one of steady progress. Although it has been his lot to occupy a prominent position in many trade disputes, his firmness and moderation has secured for him the confidence of employers and employed. The active general business of the society devolved almost entirely upon the general secretary, and his constant effort has been to prevent strikes by the adoption of arbitration.

His administration of the affairs of the society has ever been characterized by smartness and alacrity, combined with a judicious use of printing, and ample reports and tables of work and wages, which form valuable books of reference worthy to be examined by every political economist, and indispensable to all who really desire a knowledge of the real working and results of a good trade union.

His ability and application are acknowledged not alone by his own society and his own craft, but by many other trade societies who have, from time to time, availed themselves of his advice and conciliatory influence in time of trouble. In like manner, his self-acquired position, as a trades union authority has exerted itself in a wide circle outside the official sphere. He has been appealed to by philanthropists, by men of science, and by distinguished officials upon questions concerning which he has a practical knowledge. Consequently he is proud of being in the confidence of numerous men of eminence who sympathize with Professor Beesley in writing:—"I have known him for several years, known him intimately, I may say; and having found in him an honorable disposition and a generous and enthusiastic temper, I value his friendship."

He was the first witness upon the Trades Union Commission of 1869. His evidence thereon forms a body of suggestive matter calculated to dissipate many of the extreme objections entertained by some employers and their over-zealous friends against the principles of trade unions. Mr. Mault, the avowed representative of the masters, endeavored to throw discredit upon some of Mr. Applegarth's evidence, but Sir William Erle, the chairman, interposed, and said: "I do not suppose that any man who has sat at this table and heard Mr. Applegarth, can doubt for one moment a single word he has stated."

As an acknowledgement of the importance of his evidence, which is separately published, he has been presented with a handsome bookcase and 200 volume of first-class books, subscribed for by the members of his society and many friends outside; and on his resignation, he was presented with a costly gold watch as a parting token of friendship and respect.

Mr. Applegarth, during his residence in America, acquired a firm confidence in the political institutions of the United States. He there attended mass meetings and other gatherings, and observed the manliness and self-reliance encouraged by the detailed

working of popular government. As a natural consequence, he has joined many efforts to obtain an approximation to such a government at home. He was an active member of the Reform League, and of the London General Council of the International Workingmen's Association. He was also a London delegate to the International Congress held at Basle in September, 1869.

In February, 1870, he was urgently solicited to become a candidate for the representation of Maidstone in Parliament. He retired in favor of Sir John Lubbock.

When he was in America he was very favorably impressed with the excellence of the school system there, his conclusion being that good schools, absolutely free to all, so far from degrading a people into pauperism, as some persons assert, are calculated to elevate all alike into a healthy, social equality. In 1869, having obtained introductions from several eminent English professors, he made it his business to visit and enquire into the working of the school system of Switzerland, and the result of his researches appeared in a series of letters published in the *Sheffield Independent*. He was invited to give evidence before the royal commission on scientific instruction and the advancement of science under the presidency of the Duke of Devonshire, which evidence appears in the report of that commission.

At the suggestion of Professor Fleeming Jenkin, of the civil engineering department of the London University, he advocated a system of technical education throughout his own society with considerable success. He was one of the founders of the National Education League, and is a member of the central executive of that body, who reprinted one of his letters on compulsory education, and circulated it in thousands throughout their numerous branches. He was a candidate for the representation of Lambeth upon the first London School Board, obtained 7,600 votes, and would undoubtedly have been returned with double that number of votes but for the defective arrangements which prevented crowds of workmen from recording their votes.

He was elected Secretary of the Conference of Amalgamated Trades which was formed in 1867, to secure the legal recognition of the right of trade combinations. This object was accomplished by the passing of the Trades Union Act when the Conference dissolved, but this act of bare justice was accompanied by the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which has justly aroused the indignation of the workpeople throughout the kingdom. As a member of the London Trades Council for several years he took an active part in the work, both social and political, which that body took in hand.

At an early age he joined the Co-operative Movement, and has availed himself of every opportunity to promote co-operative production and distribution. He believes that in properly conducting trades unions the workmen receive an education in the art of organization and administration which it would be impossible for them to receive otherwise, and which qualifies them for that higher form of organization—co-operative production—to which he looks forward with confidence as the solution of the labor problem.

In his writings and speeches, as well as in the reports of his society, will be found evidence of the comprehensive view which he takes of the duty of a working class leader; whatever was in his opinion necessary to be said or written in vindication or support of the claims of his own trade he did of course, with alacrity and ability; but he never tired of pleading the claims of the miners, the sailors, and the agricultural laborers. At an early age he seems to have grasped the great truth conveyed in the words of James Russell Lowell, who, in the New England dialect, tells us that—

Laborin man an' laborin woman
Hev one glory an' one shame.
Ev'ry thin' thet's done in human
Ingors on all on 'em the same.

In August 1870, being anxious to see for himself some of the effects of the war between France and Germany, he visited several of

the battle-fields, including Saarbuck, Forbach, and Remilly. He was within ten miles of Metz when the capitulation of Sedan took place. His observations and reflections were published at the time in a series of letters which appeared in the *Scotsman*, and another series in the *New York World*.

During the Parliamentary recess of 1871 the Home Secretary nominated him to a seat on the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Operation of the Contagious Diseases Acts. This is the first instance of a workman being invited by the Government to occupy a similar position.

He has ever been an ardent advocate of conciliation and arbitration, and though he is now engaged in a business which has not the most remote connection with social or political movements, he frequently, as the representative of the Labor and Capital Committee of the Social Science Association, devotes his time and energies to settle trades disputes, and takes as deep an interest as ever in the welfare of his class.

We cannot enumerate here the countless incidents of a life which has been one of hard work and perseverance; or the numerous gratifying testimonials, handsome presents, letters alike of humble co-workers and eminent men, with which Mr. Applegarth's walls and presses abound, in evidence of the high appreciation in which his efforts are held. As he is little more than forty years of age, it is hoped that he may live for many years in the exercise of that wise discretion and wide experience which has made him the acceptable counsellor of so many practical men in reference to public affairs.—*The Bee-Hive*.

DEPUTATION OF MINERS TO THE HOME SECRETARY.

On Friday a deputation of miners from thirteen counties, representing 91,300 workmen, waited upon Mr. Bruce, to lay before him their views with reference to the payment of wages by weight instead of measurement, and as to whether the masters or the men are responsible for the propping of the pits to secure the safety of the colliers. The speakers were Mr. Halliday, president of the Amalgamated Association of Miners; Mr. Brown, vice-president; and Mr. Pickard, miners' agent, who urged that the Home Secretary should do something in the special rules to be issued on the 1st of August, to compel the coalowners to regulate the payment of wages by weight and not by measurement.—Mr. Bruce, in reply, said the Mines Regulation bill was to provide for the safety of the colliers, and it was with very great reluctance that he interfered with the system of weighing as opposed to measurement, as he considered that the Government was overstepping its proper duties between masters and men. In the clause that did so interfere there was to be a dispensation granted by the Home Secretary if the change from measuring to weighing caused a great deal of expense and inconvenience. Each case was considered on its merits, but if the deputation would give one instance where a workman had been dismissed because he refused to work where measuring was resorted to, he should insist upon the weighing being at once substituted for the measurement. [This the deputation promised to do.] Then as to the "propping," the most prolific cause of loss of life. The Government were anxious to diminish risk by throwing upon the masters more responsibility, though not exempting the workmen from all proper responsibility. Various technical arrangements were suggested to throw the responsibility upon those who had supervision in the pits; and Mr. Bruce promised that the point should not be lost sight of in the new rules.

A HIGH AUTHORITY.—Mr. Curran was once engaged in a legal argument; behind him stood his colleague, a gentleman whose person was remarkably tall and slender, and who had originally intended to take orders. The judge observing that the case under discussion involved a question of ecclesiastical law, "Then," said Curran, "I can refer your lordship to a high authority behind me, who was once intended for the Church, though, in my opinion, he was fitter for a steeple."