

# THE TOILER

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## INDUSTRIAL EUROPE SEEN THROUGH AMERICAN EYES

### Battersea, an English Municipality, Conducted by Trades Union Members.

(Copyrighted, 1904, by Jackson Greenleaf.)  
Battersea, England, June 1.—It has often been asked: What will working men do if they ever obtain full political power? Battersea, a city of 171,000 inhabitants, a borough of London, and the home of John Burns, from which he is regularly returned to Parliament, answers this question. Here the organized labor element "runs things," electing two-thirds of the administrative and legislative officials, and using their power to the fullest extent possible for those objects for which trades unions and governments are supposed to exist.

To be sure, a London borough's activities are limited by the London county council, which in turn has only those powers delegated to it by Parliament, but as the whole the borough is as free as a Michigan city operating under a charter given by the state. Its officials can be periodically active in rushing reforms, or they can stupidly insist on letting things go on in the old-fashioned way. Battersea is up and doing, and though with every move the "votes" have increased, the electors, who must be rent payers or lodgers, are more than satisfied if their votes mean anything. Still, the rates are no higher than in other municipalities, and I find that in all of them "Pro Home Rule," "Pro Indignant Batepayer," "Citizen," and others with the true British instinct send communications to their favorite newspapers berating the municipal authorities for not practicing economy and reducing instead of raising the rates.

### SOME OF BATTERSEA'S ENTERPRISES.

With ex-Councillor Kane, a printer by trade and secretary of the Women's National Housing Council, of which I shall write later, I visited the scene of Battersea's municipal activities and was struck with the thoroughness with which everything is being done. This compact borough covers 2,440 acres, with 80 persons to the acre or 51,200 to the square mile. The census of 1901 gives 25,462 inhabited houses, with the births nearly double the deaths. It is engaged in furnishing:

Public baths.  
Public wash houses.  
Workmen's homes.  
Sterilized milk for infants.  
A public gymnasium and billiard room.  
Electrical lighting for public and private use.  
Workshops for making building and road material.  
Public laboratories.  
Public libraries.  
Workshop inspection.  
Waterworks to supply the public baths.  
A labor bureau.  
Battersea officials are also attempting to prevent the increase of public houses, or saloons, and endeavoring to reduce the number in certain areas; controlling street trading by children; employing British workmen only, and paying the union rates of wages to all skilled and unskilled employes. Surely here is a list of public activities that might, for a starter, suit the most ardent advocate of the co-operative commonwealth.

### SAVING THE BABIES.

Let us get in closer view of some of these municipal enterprises. Probably the most important though less conspicuous one is the sterilized milk department. The report of the medical officer of health, some years ago, showed a startling infant mortality. Investigation traced this in part to impure milk. The result was a milk house was started, with depots in various parts of the city, and this supplied over 400 families were being supplied with what is called "human milk." The children are now being scientifically fed, and the death rate has fallen. The milk is supplied in glass bottles, each bottle containing sufficient food for one meal and no more. This each infant is furnished from six to nine bottles of milk a day, the greater number to the youngest, the bottles for those two weeks old containing 1 1/2 ounces, or 1 3/4 ounces a day, and for the oldest 7 ounces, or 42 ounces a day; the price range from 30 cents to 50 cents for a week's supply. I have particularized quite fully as to this municipal activity, to show that a workmen's government can be scientific when necessary.

### SWIMMING BATHS AND WASH HOUSES.

The most popular activity is the swimming baths. There are two buildings, located some distance apart, with separate

bathe for men and women, and also a "slipper" bath, with hot and cold water. A "slipper" bath, I found, is just an ordinary bath room, for which the fee varies from 6 to 12 cents, according to the accommodations. The baths proper are large, and with varying depths of water. A swimming master is engaged, and all children are allowed the use of the baths free of all charges. The last report shows some 300,000 bathers during the year.

Next comes the public wash house. Here the good housewife brings her week's washing, and for 3 cents an hour is supplied with hot water, a steam boiler and free facilities for drying and ironing. She can get her wet clothes dried in ten minutes. Her week's washing seldom costs her more than ten or fifteen cents. This public wash house is run in connection with one of the swimming baths.

### MUNICIPAL BUILDING.

Battersea was probably the only borough in England that, throughout the war in South Africa, was continuously in the name of one of the new streets on the Battersea estate, which is given over to municipally-owned homes for workmen. "Joubert" it has been named, and I expect it will remain. Another street is called "Odlger," after a deceased secretary of the London Trades Council. There are also "Fleming" and "Reform" streets. The municipal dwellings are of the two-story type common in English cities, consisting of from two to five rooms each, and renting for \$1.87 to \$2.57 a week. The more ambitious ones have baths in the scullery, which are connected with the kitchen, thus supplying hot water.

These 314 municipal dwellings have involved a cost of over \$600,000, which, it is expected, the rents will wipe out in 50 years. They are substantially built of brick, and are in marked contrast to the privately owned tenements generally inhabited by British workmen in the large cities.

### THE EFFECTS OF EFFICIENT GOVERNMENT.

Two marked things have occurred in Battersea since the advent of the reform spirit. While there has been a decrease in the death rate, there has also been a decrease in the birth rate, though the percentage of marriages has increased. That is to say, with improved social conditions, with a decrease in slum houses, with more sanitary surroundings, the fertility of the race has decreased. Families are smaller. In 1884 the birth rate was 43.4. In 1902 it was 28.2 per thousand population. However, this phenomenon of declining birth rate has been observed in many civilized communities inhabited by the Anglo-Saxon race, and it looks as if the birth rate of England may eventually fall to that of France, where the population is almost stationary.

Improved social conditions seem to provide a natural check to increase of population. It is not necessary to start a war to prevent over-crowding. The other marked result of all these improved social and sanitary conditions is the enormous increase in rents, which one of the city's officials informed me was not less than 50 per cent. Some of this is due to the increase in the rates, now eight shillings in the pound, which are wholly paid by the renter, but in the main the owners of the ground have taken advantage of the greater desirability of Battersea as a residence city to charge more for the use of their land, which pays not one cent taxes for local purposes. Taxes are wholly collected on improvements, in proportion to rentable value.

That this is not as it should be is recognized by the Battersea common council, which as early as 1902 took action favoring local taxation of land values.

Let us turn to the municipal activities of the city of Chicago, which is not far from Battersea. The value of the land in Chicago has increased 50 per cent in the last ten years. That of Chicago, grown at the same rate, the city of New York would be worth \$1,000,000,000. The total assessed value of the Province of Ontario is \$50,000,000, so that the land value of the city is placed at more than five times the total value of all the land and buildings in the province.

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As souls, full-statured, grow far-seeing,  
Thou shalt unfold our better part,  
And in our life-cup yield more honey;  
Light up with joy the poor man's heart,  
And Love's own world with smiles  
more sunny.  
'Tis coming! yes, 'tis coming!

Let me sell you a metal punch,  
It's crumbling, with our hot tears rusted;  
The sword earth's mightiest have leant  
on it,  
In causer's, with our heart's blood  
crushed;  
Room! for the men of Mind make way!  
Ye robber rulers, pause no longer,  
Ye cannot stay the opening day;  
The world rolls on, the light grows  
stronger—  
The People's Advent's coming!

When a girl who was brave  
Said: "Your faith used a shave,  
Otherwise you'd look awfully out!  
Along the way of life I've found  
One sterling motto that endures:  
The force that makes the world go  
round  
Is "Scratch my back and I'll scratch  
yours."

After buying a revolver for the purpose  
of committing suicide an Ohio man  
reconsidered the matter and married an  
aunt's hated woman with seven children.  
Who immediately started to shutte.

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