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JENNIE BAXTER: JOURNALIST

BY ROBERT BARR.

V.—The Prime Minister's Indiscretion.

[Copyright, 1900, by Robert Barr.]

"Then don't you think we might enact a romance in high life in this very room? It is high enough from the street to entitle it to be called a romance in high life." And the editor grinned uneasily, like an unready man who hopes to relieve a dilemma by a poor joke.

Jennie, however, did not laugh and did not look up at him, but continued to scribble shorthand notes on the paper before her.

"Ah, Mr. Hardwick!" she said, with a sigh. "I see you have discovered my secret, although I hoped to conceal it even from your alert eyes. I am, indeed, in the situation of Ralph Rackstraw in 'Pinafore'—'I love, and love, alas, above my station'—and now that you know half you may as well know all. It arose out of that unfortunate ball given by the Duchess of Chiselhurst, which will haunt me all the rest of my life, I fear," said Jennie, still without looking up.

"Don't you think we might enact a romance in high life in this very room?"

Mr. Hardwick smothered an ejaculation and was glad that the girl's eyes were not upon him. There was a pause of a few moments' duration between them. He took the path that was left open to him, fondly flattering himself that while he had stumbled inadvertently upon her romance he had kept his own secret safe.

"I—I have no right to intrude on your confidences, Miss Baxter," he said finally with an effort, "and I hope you will excuse me for--for"--

"Oh, I have been sure for some days that you knew it!" interrupted the girl, looking up, but not at him. "I have been neglecting my work, I fear, and so you were quite right in speaking."

"No; your work is all right. It wasn't that exactly—but never mind. We won't speak of this any more, for I see it embarrasses you."

"Thank you, Mr. Hardwick," said Jennie, again bending her eyes on the desk before her.

The man saw the color come and go in her cheeks and thought he had never beheld any one so entrancing. He rose quickly without making further attempt at explanation and left the room. One or two teardrops stained the paper on which the girl was scribbling. She didn't like giving pain to any one, but could not hold herself to blame for what had happened. She made up her mind to leave The Daily Bugle and seek employment elsewhere; but next day Mr. Hardwick showed no trace of disappointment and spoke to her with that curt imperiousness which had heretofore been his custom.

"Miss Baxter," he said, "have you been reading the newspapers with any degree of attention lately?"

"Yes, Mr. Hardwick."

"Have you been watching the drift of foreign politics?"

"Do you refer to that speech by the prime minister of Austria a week or two ago?"

"Yes; that is what I have in my mind. As you know, then, it amounted almost to a declaration of war against England—almost, but not quite. It was a case of saying too much or of not saying enough. However, it was not followed up, and the premier has been as dumb as a graven image ever since. England has many enemies in different parts of the world, but I must confess that this speech by the Austrian premier came as a surprise. There must have been something hidden which is not visible from the outside. The premier is too astute a man not to know exactly what his words meant, and he was under no delusion as to how England would take them. It is a case, then, of 'when I was so quickly done for I wonder what I was begun for.' That is what all Europe is asking."

"Is it not generally supposed, Mr. Hardwick, that his object was to consolidate Austria and Hungary? I understood that local politics was at the bottom of his fiery speech."

"Quite so, but the rousing of the war spirit in Austria and Hungary was useless unless that spirit is given something to do. It needs a war, not a threat of war, to consolidate Austria and Hungary. If the speech had been followed by hostile action or by another outburst that would make war inevitable, I could understand it. The tone of the speech indicates that the prime minister meant business at the time he gave utterance to it. Something has occurred meanwhile to change the situation, and what that something is all the newspapers in Europe have been trying to find out. We have had our regular Vienna representative at work ever since the words were uttered, and for the past two weeks he has been assisted by one of the cleverest men I could send him from London; but, up to date, both have failed. Now, I propose that you go quietly to Vienna. I shall not let either of the men know you are at work on the affair at which they have labored with such little success, for both are good men, and I do not want to discourage either of them. Still, above all things, I wish to have the solution of this mystery. So it occurred to me last night that you might succeed where others had failed. What do you think of it?"

"I am willing to try," said Miss Baxter, as there flashed across her mind an idea that here was a case in which Princess von Steinheimer could be of the greatest assistance to her.

"It has been thought," went on the editor, "that the emperor is extremely averse to having trouble with England or any other country. Still, if that were the case, a new cabinet would undoubtedly have been formed after this intemperate address of the premier; but this man still holds his office, and there has been neither explanation nor apology from court or cabinet. I am convinced that there is something behind all this, a wheel within a wheel of some sort, because the day after the speech there came a rumor from Vienna that an attempt had been made on the life of the emperor or of the premier. It was exceedingly vague, but it was alleged that a dynamite explosion had taken place in the palace. This was promptly contradicted, but we all know what official contradictions amount to. There is internal trouble of some kind in the court at Vienna, and if we could publish the full details such an article would give us a European reputation. When could you be ready to begin your journey, Miss Baxter?"

"I am ready now."

"Well, in an affair like this it is best to lose no time. You can leave tomorrow morning, then?"

"Oh, certainly; but I must leave the office at once, and you must get some one to finish the work I am on."

"I will attend to that," said the editor.

Thus relieved, Jennie betook herself to a telegraph office. She knew that if she wrote a letter to the princess, who was now in Vienna, she would probably herself reach that city as soon as her note, so she telegraphed that something important was on hand which would take her to Vienna by next day's Orient express and intimated that it was a matter in which she might need the assistance of the princess. Then she hastened to her rooms to pack up. That evening there came an answering telegram from Vienna. The princess asked her to bring her ball dress and all the rest of her finery. The lady added that she herself would be at the railway station and asked Jennie to telegraph to her en route. It was evident that her highness was quite prepared to engage in whatever scheme there was on hand, and this fact encouraged Jennie to hope that success perhaps awaited her.

True to her promise, the Princess von Steinheimer was waiting at the immense railway station of Vienna, and she received her friend with gushing effusion. Jennie left the train as neat as when she had entered it, for many women have the faculty of taking long journeys without showing the disheveled effect which protracted railway traveling seems to have upon the masculine, and probably more careless, portion of humanity.

"Oh, you dear girl!" cried the princess. "You cannot tell how glad I am to see you. I was just yearning for some one to talk English to. I am so tired of French and German, although they flatter me by saying that I speak those two languages well; yet English is my own tongue, and it is so delightful to talk with one who can understand every blessed word you say, which you can easily see those who pretend to speak English in Vienna do not. What long chats we shall have! And now come this way to the carriage. There is a man here to look after your luggage. You are coming right home with me and are going to stay with me as long as you are in Vienna. Don't say 'no,' nor make any excuse, nor talk of going to a hotel, for a suit of rooms is all ready for you, and your luggage will be there before we are. Now let us enter the carriage, for I am just pining to hear what it is you have on hand; some delicious scandal, I hope."

"No!" answered Jennie; "it pertains to government matters."

"Oh, dear!" cried the princess. "How tiresome! Politics is so dull."

"I don't think this case is dull," said Jennie, "because it has brought Austria and England to the verge of war."

"What a dreadful idea! I hadn't heard anything of it. When did this happen?"

"Less than a month ago." And Jennie related the whole circumstance giving a synopsis of the premier's speech.

"But I see nothing in that speech to cause war," protested the princess. "It is as mild as new milk."

"I don't pretend to understand diplomacy," continued Jennie, blushing slightly as she remembered Lord Donal, and it seemed that the same thought struck the princess at the same moment, for she looked quizzically at Jennie and burst out into a laugh.

"You may laugh, but I tell you that this is a serious business. They say it only needed a second 'new milk' speech from the premier to have England answer most politely in words of honey, and next instant the two countries would have been at each other's throat."

"Suppose we write to Lord Donal in St. Petersburg," suggested the princess, still laughing, "and ask him to come to Vienna and help us? He understands all about diplomacy. By the way, Jennie, did Lord Donal ever find out whom he met at the ball that night?"

"No, he didn't," answered Jennie shortly.

"Don't you ever intend to let him know? Are you going to leave the romance unfinished, like one of Henry James' novels?"

"It isn't a romance. It is simply a very distressing incident which I have been trying to forget ever since. It is all very well for you to laugh, but if you ever mention the subject again I'll leave you and go to a hotel."

"Oh, no, you won't!" chirruped the princess brightly. "You daren't. You know I am the goddess of the machine. At any time I can send a letter to Lord Donal and set the poor young man's mind at rest. So, you see, Miss Jennie, you will have to talk very sweetly and politely to me and not make any threats, because I am like those dreadful persons in the sensational plays who hold the guilty secrets of other people and blackmail them. But you are a nice girl, and I won't say anything you don't want to hear said. Now, what is it you wish to find out about this political crisis?"

"I want to discover why the premier did not follow up his speech with another. He must have known when he spoke how his words would be taken in England. Therefore it is thought that he had some plans which unforeseen circumstances intervening have nullified. I want to know what those unforeseen circumstances were. For the past fortnight The Daily Bugle has had two men here in Vienna trying to throw some light on the dark recesses of diplomacy. Up to date they have failed, but at any moment they may succeed. It was because they failed that I am sent here. Now, have you anything to suggest, Madame la Princesse?"

"I suggest, Jennie, that we put our heads together and learn all that those clever diplomatists wish to hide. Have you no plans yourself?"

"I have no very definite plan, but I have a general scheme. These men I spoke of are trying to discover what other men are endeavoring to conceal. All the officials are on their guard. They are highly placed and are not likely to be got at by bribery. They are clever, alert men of the world, so hoodwinking them is out of the question; therefore, I think, my two fellow journalists have a difficult task before them."

"But it is the same task that you have before you. Why is it not as difficult for you, Jennie, as for them?"

"Because I propose to work with people who are not on their guard, and there is where you can help me, if you are not shocked at my proposal. Each official has a wife, or at least most of them have. Some of these wives, in all probability, possess the information that we would like to get. Women will talk more freely with women than men will with men. Now, I propose to leave the officials severely alone and to interview the wives."

The princess clapped her hands.

"Excellent!" she cried. "The women of Vienna are the greatest gossips you ever heard chattering together. I have never taken any interest in politics; otherwise I suppose I might have become possessed of some important government secrets. Now, Jennie, I'll tell you what I propose doing. I shall give a formal tea next Thursday afternoon. I shall invite to that tea a dozen or two dozen or three dozen wives of high placed officials about the court. My husband will like that, because he is always complaining that I do not pay enough attention to the ladies of the political circle of Vienna. He takes a great interest in politics, you know. If we discover nothing at the first tea meeting, we will have another and another and another until we do. We are sure to invite the right woman on one occasion or another, and when we find her I'll warrant the secret will soon belong to us. Ah, here we are at home, and we will postpone the discussion of our plans until you have had something to eat and are rested a bit."

The carriage drew up at the magnificent palace, well known in Vienna, which belonged to the Prince von Steinheimer, and shortly afterward Jennie Baxter found herself in possession of the finest suit of rooms she had ever beheld in her life. Jennie laughed as she looked around her rooms and noted their luxurious appointments.

"These are not exactly what we should call 'diggings' in London, are they?" she said to the princess, who stood by her side, delighted at the pleasure of her friend. "We often read of poor penny-a-liners in their garrets, but I don't think any penny-a-liner ever had such a garret as this placed at his disposal."

"I knew you would like the rooms," cried the princess gayly. "I like them myself, and I hope they will help to induce you to stay in Vienna as long as you can. I have given you my own maid, Gretlich, and I assure you it isn't every friend I would lend her to. She is a model servant."

"Oh, but you mustn't do that!" said Jennie. "I cannot rob you of your maid and also be selfish enough to monopolize these rooms."

"You are not robbing me. In fact, I am perhaps a little artful in giving you Gretlich, for she is down in the dumps this last week or two, and I don't know what in the world is the matter with her. I suspect it is some love affair, but she will say nothing, although I have asked her time and again what is the trouble. Now, you are such a cheerful, conscling young woman that I thought if Gretlich were in your service for a time she might brighten up and be her own self again. So, you see, instead of robbing me, I am really taking advantage of your good nature."

To be continued)

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Where watermelons seldom grow
(It's far too cold up there, you know),
There dwelt a bold young Eskimo.

Beneath the self-same iceberg's shade,
In fur of seal and bear arrayed
(Not over cleanly, I'm afraid),
There lived a charming Eskimaid.

Thro'out the six months' night they'd spoon
(Ah, ye of Sage, think what a boon),
To stop at ten is much too soon
Beneath the silvery Eskimoon.

The hated rival now we see!
(You spy the coming tragedy,
But I can't help it; don't blame me.)
An Eskimucher vile was he.

He found the lovers there alone.
He killed them with his axe of bone.
(You see how fierce the tale has grown),
The fond pair died with an Eskimoan.

Two graves were dug, deep in the ice,
Were lined with furs, moth balls and spice;
The two were buried in a trice,
Quite safe from all the Eskimice.

Now Fido comes, alas, too late!
I hope it's not indelicate
These little incidents to relate)—
The Eskimurderer he ate.

L'ENVOI.

Upon an Eskimo to sup
Was too much for an Eskipup—
He died. His Eskimemory
Is thus kept green in verse by me.

—The Cornell Widow.

IGNORED DISTINCTIONS IN ECONOMICS

If one wishes to read a story of appalling ghastliness, let him turn to the sixth chapter of II. Kings. Benhadad beseiged Samaria; he cut off the imports; he girdled the city with a protective tariff; and starvation came with all its brood of horrors. A woman appealed to the king for justice. "What aileth thee?" inquired the king. "This woman," she answered, "said unto me, 'give thy son, that we may eat him to-day; and we will eat my son to-morrow.' So we boiled my son, and did eat him, and she hath hid her son."

"So we boiled my son!" Could anyone, by any possible delusion, imagine that the awful dearness of food in this famine was an indication of increased wealth? Food became so dear, the value "boomed" to such an extent, that the head of an ass sold for fourscore pieces of silver, and women bargained to boil their offspring.

WHEN INCREASED VALUE MEANS INCREASED POVERTY.

Let anything be essential to existence; let that thing become scarce, its value is bound to advance, to "boom," if you please, but that enhancement in value is not the sign of increased wealth. It is the sign of increased impoverishment in that particular thing.

There was a time when a man could purchase an acre of land in New York City for a week's work. To-day, the ordinary mechanic could not earn the price of that acre in forty thousand years.

Every year sees land become dearer in our growing cities. Is this increased dearness a sign of increased wealth in land, or is it a sign of increased poverty? There is no more area on this continent than when Columbus landed, while there is a vastly increased population. The average area for each is less; therefore, in this thing we are poorer. The supply is the same, the demand is greater; the ratio between supply and demand is diminishing. Just as increased price of food in a famine is a sign of increased poverty in food, so is increased price of land a sign of increased poverty in land. The one thing in which increasing population must exercise greater economy, is land.

TWO INCREMENTS OF VALUE.

As population increases in any locality labor builds more houses, fabricates more clothing, makes more machinery, and produces things as they are required. Labor ever tries to increase the supply, to maintain the abundance, so that the ratio between supply and demand may never diminish.

The assessment of any town, after an increase of population shows, therefore, an increase of value in two particulars: 1st, in the increased value of the land; 2nd, in the increased value of the products of labor on the land.

Here we have two increments of values placed in the same category as though they were of exactly the same kind. Let us see if this assumption is warranted.

INTENSION VS. EXTENSION.

1. So far as the land is concerned, each foot is dearer. The increased value is one of intension, an increase of value in each part, but no increase of the parts.

But as to buildings and goods the case is diametrically different. No particular part is dearer—a pound of sugar, a yard of cloth, a sewing machine, or a building is just as cheap as ever; probably cheaper. The increased assessment of goods arises from increased abundance. It indicates a greater aggregation of values. The increased value is one of extension, no increase of value in any one part, but an increase in the number of parts.

The increased assessments of the land arises from increased scarcity, it indicates greater poverty in land. The increased assessment of goods arises from increased abundance. It indicates a greater plenty of goods.

INDIVIDUAL VS. COMMUNAL.

2. There can be no controversy as to the source of the value of buildings and other labor products. The time sheets of the workmen show just who toiled to produce these valuable commodities. But when we come to the land value, did anyone ever see the time books of the speculators to ascertain how much value they produced? The facts are too obvious to demand discussion. The one value is due to labor—crops, goods and houses come only from toil; land value increases from the presence of increasing population. The first value is due to the individuals, the second to the collective presence of the whole community.

TRANSIENT VS. PERMANENT.

3. Suppose men were to cease all toil, to raise no crops, weave no clothing, prepare no food: how long could mankind exist? Not a week. The supply of commodities must be maintained by continuous effort. Nature's decree is short, sharp and decisive: "Toil or die." Nature will not tolerate a race of laggards; she makes no provision for the maintenance of idlers. She will be wooed by the hand of industry and by the hand of industry alone. Idleness she blights with barrenness, weeds and death. Man's productions are marked with the stamp of decay; they are soon consumed or worn out, their value quickly disappears, and labor must continuously renew the supply.

Is labor needed to maintain the value of town lots? Is this value subject to decay as the flower, to disease as the horse, or to corruption as food? Do speculators and landlords toil ten hours daily to maintain these peculiar values, to restore the decayed, the consumed or the worn out, as labor must reproduce potatoes, shoes and coats? Verily, not. Here is a value caused not by labor, but by the presence of an active, organized community—a value that increases more rapidly than population increases, and which remains generation after generation without the slightest necessity for an hour of toil on the part of its claimants. Labor-produced values are transient; land values are permanent.

DECLINING VS. INCREASING VALUES.

The one aim in the introduction of all improvements has been to lighten human burdens, to gain greater abundance with less expenditure of human effort, to increase the result and to diminish the toil—maximum results from minimum efforts. But with every triumph in mechanical or other device, the value of the product is necessarily diminished. The Bessemer and other processes have reduced the price of steel from $50,000 to about $50 per ton. Cotton goods now cost shillings where they formerly cost pounds; and a journey can now be performed for dimes where it formerly cost dollars or eagles. The diminution of values by this method is an indication of increased wealth, an addition to the abundance of human satisfaction, better opportunities for human development, less expenditure of the man and greater rewards for his enjoyment—diminished toil, increased reward.

Mark the contrast in land values. The site of New York City was bought from the Indians for $25; to-day the value is estimated at upwards of $2,000,000,000. Seventy-five years ago the site of Chicago was swamp and prairie; to-day it is worth a mint of money. Faster than population increases does the value of land increase; and no device has ever been discovered, or is likely to be discovered, to diminish its value.

THE OBVIOUS REMEDY.

To assess labor-produced values and land values, is to confound assets with liabilities. The community causes a value; the individual toiler produces a value. The community should religiously confine its taxation to its own value, to that value of the land which it causes. This complies with honesty.

The rights of property must limit the claim of any man to what he produces. No man, by his labor, produces land value, and to allow him to claim this value is to allow him to subject his fellows to tribute.

The only correct formula is—community-created values for community purposes; individually-created values for individual possession.

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NOTES AND NOTELETS.

The candidates for a seat in the City Council could talk of everything except the one thing which stands out supreme above everything else, namely, our unjust taxation. The fact that every city grows exactly the same way, with palaces at one end and slums at the other end, was scarcely so much as noticed.

Ald. Foster, in the Second Ward, actually boasted that he had done all he could to secure the easiest terms for a manufacturing firm to get a site at Ashbridge's Bay. He claimed great honor because he had tried to secure the site for them without paying any ground rent. Did anyone ever hear of a workingman escaping the payment of ground rent? It is one of the marvels of the age how the legislators are always on the lookout to help the rich.

✦ ✦

We may well ask, who governs the country? When Mr. Prefontain was asked what assistance the Government would give to the new Grand Trunk Pacific Railroad, he replied: "Well, I think it ought to receive as much as the other line. Of course, I cannot tell you what will be given, because we must first find out what the organizers desire." Is the Government to take its bidding from the organizers?

✦ ✦

Professor Goldwin Smith, in discussing the minimum wage law of Australia, objects to that measure that it will have the effect of excluding from employment all those whose work is not worth the legal wages. In other words, all but the able-bodied, or otherwise first-rate workers, will be prohibited from earning their bread. While the professor makes this statement he does not utter the first syllable as to the monstrosity of the laws which thus place the whole of the opportunities for employment in the hands of one part of the community, and leaves the toilers at their mercy.

✦ ✦

The careless manner in which economic questions are discussed is illustrated in an article in the Weekly Sun, which asserts as follows: "We do not doubt the fact that the expenditure of $250,000 on the Meaford harbor and the erection of an elevator there has been of advantage to the people of Meaford and to the Grand Trunk Railroad." If the editor will think for a second he will notice that expenditures of this kind add to the value of the land only. They enable the land-owners to subject the other citizens to a greater tribute. Thus they do not benefit the people of Meaford; they simply split society into two parts, lifting one part to greater fortune and subjecting another to greater tribute.

✦ ✦

The papers have contained long accounts of the gorgeous pageantry and the ostentatious display at the Durbar held at Delhi for the proclamation of King Edward. We would beg to suggest that it would perhaps be well to place this senseless exhibition in its proper setting. After the sights of the Durbar then let us see the host of victims of the famine, with the misery that haunts Whitechapel and the degradation of the Five Points.

✦ ✦

It is impossible to read the daily press without noticing the prominence that is given to the figures that represent the amount of goods transported from one part of the word to another. In the growth of these figures we are asked to glory and to swell with pride. Then there is abundance is truly a cause for thankfulness, but we feel much more anxious about the destination of this abundance. If we felt sure that it would go to replenish the homes of the producers, that it would gladden the heart of the toiler and enable him to live the life that he should enjoy and which his industry merits, then in this abundance we could truly rejoice. But when we hear of men gaining fortunes through some turn of the stock board, by some increase in the value of land or other speculation, then the disregard of justice that this indicates makes us feel that we should bow our heads in shame and cover our faces with confusion.

✦ ✦

We informed our readers some time ago that a vote was to be taken in the State of Colorado on a constitutional amendement to allow local option in taxation. The amendment was defeated, but the evidence now shows that in the counting of the ballots there was the most shameful frauds. In one case the favorable vote was reported at 376 where a recount showed 656, and the vote against was reported at 1,565 where it should have been only 429. By this miscount there was shown to be a majority against of 1,179, where there was an actual majority of 227 in favor of the amendement.

✦ ✦

Forty candidates for the position of aldermen can discuss the amount of the taxes and complain that they are too large for one who can point out that they fall at the wrong place. Forty men can point out how we can economize by cutting down the expenditure for industry for one who will show how to stop the misappropriation of wealth by the idle. A host of councillors are ready to give a free site or a special exemption to some wealthy capitalist, but the men are rare as snow in summer who are prepared to grant a free site or a special exemption for the home of the workman.

✦ ✦

The address of Mr. J. J. Murphy, of New York, last Sunday was a thoughtful and interesting statement of many phases of the labor problem. He pointed out one fact which is well worth noting. The great Steel Trust and other large combines are now advocating the policy of giving a share of the profits to the workingmen, this share to depend on the continuous service, the absence of strikes and the maintenance of the profits secured by the tariff. Thus the profits thus shared are to be used to insure the good behavior of the employees and to secure their support to the delusive indirect taxes.

The speaker also showed how some of the large firms or companies evade their taxes by voting large bonuses in demand notes to the different officers, and thus showing a large indebtedness. In this way they could show to the assessor a large liability against their capital, and thus evade the taxation on personalty. Great is the art of bookkeeping. Shout for the old flag and protest your loyalty, but dodge the taxes. Hurrah for the Queen and shoot the Boers, but be sure to stick the taxes on the other fellow.

J. Kier Hardie, member of the British Parliament from Scotland and editor of the London Labor Leader, was grossly insulted by the police of Brussels during the excitement incident to the attempt on the life of the King by the anarchist, Rubino. The police professed to see no difference between anarchism and socialism, and placed him under arrest as possibly concerned in a conspiracy to murder the Belgian monarch. And this in the face of the fact that Rubino had stated that he hated the socialists, as they were friendly with the police. Hardie was quickly released when it was learned that he was a member of the English Parliament, but does not propose to let the indignity pass, and will require an official investigation through the international office.

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Unless the City Council of Victoria, B.C., frowns down the motion of one of its members, the question of an eight-hour day on corporation works will be submitted to the electors of that city at the municipal election. In such event, the referendum machinery lately incorporated in the city charter, will receive its first use. On the abstract question of an eight-hour day, it is hard to see how the people in corporate capacity have more right than a private employer to exact more than a fair amount of a man's labor for a given wage. It may be remarked that it is to the interest of the transient employer to overwork his men, while the permanent employer will profit by the shorter day on account of his employees being "fitter."—Victoria Colonist