

LABOR'S HARD LOT.

"MAN'S INHUMANITY TO MAN MAKES
COUNTLESS MILLIONS MOURN."

**Tattered Leaves From the Lives of Those
Who, Unrequited, Toil and Without
Hope—Arrogant Wealth Is Beginning to
Throw Off Its Mask.**

[Special Correspondence.]

One can learn more economics listening to the practical talk of intelligent workmen for one hour than in reading all the magazine articles written by learned professors of political economy in a year. I have had a lesson and a treat in hearing an intelligent railroad man and a bright young miner discussing labor conditions and their experiences generally. If I had one lurking idea that labor is recognized as dignified and righteous by the employing classes generally, I am abused of it now. The whole scheme and purpose is to get all the results of labor possible for as little return as can be contrived, without one consideration of the laborer as a human being possessing feelings, faculties and needs.

We boast as a nation of our great achievements. But, oh, when we think what they have cost, what injustice and robbery have entered into these great works, we have more reason to be ashamed and sorrowful than proud! Our railroads—wonderful accomplishments of human energy and intelligence—are built—at what price of suffering and wrong? First, the surveying, done through great hardships, but by workmen who can as yet make nearly their own terms. Then comes the hard toil—the digging, grading, hauling of dirt, etc. Workers are obtained from the cities, where advertisement for laborers is kept standing. Every man engaged has to pay \$2 for his job. This money is divided between the agent and contractor and is a profitable source of income. Once on the ground, usually a lonely, dreary place, where the rudest accommodations are furnished, the men are set to work with shovels, picks and wheelbarrows, driven, sworn at, harassed, as brutal men drive oxen. Many of the men employed are students, bookkeepers, clerks, who have been forced to grasp this opportunity to earn a living. A week is the longest most of them can endure the strain. They are sent adrift, moneyless and friendless, in a strange land. They tramp or commit suicide, and in either case they are spoiled as decent, self respecting men.

Some remain in spite of conditions. Hard toil, work in cold, rain or intense heat, poor shelter and worse food kill them in time. They fall sick by scores and receive no care. New men are constantly coming to fill the vacant places, for the oftener changes are made the greater the reward of contractors and agents.

The coal, iron, marble, gold and silver, which go to make the greatest works of civilization, are wrested from the depths of the earth at such expense of

hard toil, endurance and risk as few understand who have not gone through it all. Men who do this mighty work should be rewarded by the best the world has to offer. Yet, but for their desperate struggles in the past and their strong organization, their condition would be most deplorable. Owners, contractors and bosses have shown every disposition to encroach to the last endurable limit.

The colored workers, wherever they are numerous, are used as badly as human powers can endure. Whatever the nature of their labor, they are employed in gangs by contractors, paid at truck stores and driven worse than men drive beasts of burden. It is seldom that any of them ever receive a cent of money. Their account at the truck store, with fines, charges, etc., is kept balanced with their meager wages. An abominable system of fines and imprisonments is in vogue. If a worker bids fair to have a considerable balance in money coming to him he is arrested on some trivial charge and thrown into jail. Sometimes he is given the farce of a trial, sometimes not. When the boss is ready, he gets him out and charges it up to his miserable victim, so that no money is overdue him. The young miner told of seeing a white man on horseback driving a negro on foot by a rope securely tied about his arms into town to have him arrested and thrown into jail. He had trotted his horse six miles, forcing the poor wretch to keep up with him. He was panting, sweating at every pore and seemed in great distress. The white man, ripping out an oath at every other word, informed the bystanders that the darky had been swearing in the presence of women.

The method of hiring workers on indefinite terms and then treating them so abominably that they are forced to leave without receiving any pay is not new or uncommon. Many "respectable" people in the cities contrive to get their work done in this way. Domestic are engaged and compelled to work so hard under such degrading conditions that they cannot endure it, leave without giving the usual warning, and so receive not a cent for what they have done. Fashionable dressmakers as well as "sweaters" advertise for girls and women, keep them at work as long as possible without stating terms and finally offer so little that it cannot possibly be accepted, when they are sent off with nothing.

Unorganized workers simply have no chance for justice whatever. The strength there is in united numbers can force the employing classes to recognize in some degree labor's rights, but alone and at their mercy the conditions accorded them are simply inhuman.

Yet, through the changes and chances of a hot political campaign, we have learned that the money kings are to give the working people plainly to understand they must not expect to be as well off as in the past, and that they must resign themselves contentedly to a more subservient position. Here are some of the things they have said:

"If they cannot get a dollar a day,

they refuse to work, while they ought to take 75 or even 50 cents a day in order that we may keep them at work. You ought to teach them that \$1 a day on a gold basis is enormous pay in this country."

"They live extravagantly; they buy meat four or five times a week; they even indulge in pie, which is no kind of food for working people and does them no good. They eat wheat bread when rye is more suitable. * * * Tariff and financial questions should be taken out of their hands, * * * not bothering those engaged in agriculture or manufacturing or exciting them by frequent elections, as is now the case. * * * He thinks the lower classes have too many holidays and excursions, where they meet and exchange exciting converse on subjects referred to and which they are not capable of understanding. Besides this, they should be at work."

"There is danger to trusts and corporations if the people gain more power. We are sworn to protect them."

"* * * A bill will at once be introduced into congress to increase the standing army to at least 250,000 men, and the laboring classes, with their unions and strikes, will no longer play any part in American politics."

"I solemnly assure you that when Mr. Hanna gets control strikes will soon be disposed of."

The quotations are from letters written by Francis J. Forsythe and Samuel C. Pressly.

Here it is, stated plainly: The working classes are to be degraded to a state of absolute serfdom. They are no longer to be allowed even a semblance of power to help themselves. The moneyed men have now stated their intentions and the view they take of workmen with brutal frankness, and the workers must act accordingly.

In reality there is no change of opinion on the part of this class. They have long believed that workers ought to occupy precisely the position they outline, but it has heretofore been policy to hide their views, especially before elections, and allow the masses to hug their delusions of equality and independence. For this reason the line between the moneyed and working classes has never been distinctly drawn in this country. The rich dared not make it as vivid as they believed it should be; the workers would not admit it existed, or, if it did, that it could not keep them from crossing over to the other side if they tried hard enough. Thus reforms which can only be forwarded by the united action of working people against the exclusive interests of the ruling classes have been remarkably slow in comparison with the advancements made in the old monarchical countries.

Perhaps this will be a useful lesson. The working people will know better what they have to contend against and will learn how and where to work. An open foe on an open field is better than an enemy in ambush or an enemy masking as a friend.

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