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THE QUESTION OF TO-DAY.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Shall the unions or the people rule?

This is a vital issue not merely in New York city but in the nation. For the first time in our history it is now put squarely before the voters of the country.

It is not a question of being For or Against the institution of organized labor, but it is purely a question of who shall rule this great republic.

Here in New York we have the absurd situation of a handful of citizens representing the proposed wishes of perhaps less than one-half of 1 per cent. of the population undertaking a "sympathetic" strike to bring to a standstill the activities in the daily life of the other 99.9 per cent.—about 5,000,000 people. And these people are to suffer because a traction company stands by its 10,000 or 12,000 employees who are satisfied with their employment and who refuse to break their contracts and to abandon their own union to join the organization ordering the strike.

To win this point, if the strike leaders have their way, the vast population of the city is deprived of its right to work, to have light, heat and food, and to enjoy the guaranteed privileges of citizenship. The suffering and loss of life among the poor and sick and among the victims of riots and violence which these leaders encourage is of no concern to them. No law can reach the authors of such a calamity. In our weakness we have actually made some laws to exempt them from punishment.

This vital issue is national. Shall union leaders control and dominate our government and direct lawful authority? Hughes says "No"; Wilson, by his acts, says "Yes." The voter now has a chance to decide who is right.

There are many important issues, but the average man would like to have these questions rightly and permanently answered:

Shall the power of the President and Congress be used to help strikers to win their contests with their employers, as has recently been done?

Shall our 36,000,000 workers (not including the professions) continue to submit without protest to the injustice so often committed in the name of American labor by the 7.7 per cent. of their number who are unionized?

Shall this vast number of workers remain mute and indifferent in the face of the unprecedented indignity and humiliation which 1.1 per cent. of their number (the railway brotherhoods) have forced upon the President and Congress?

Shall the leaders of the 2,800,000 union workers in our country be permitted to continue to fasten in the minds of public men and lawmakers the absurd fiction that they can control the votes of the 14,255,000 American citizens, the so-called "toiling masses," who are engaged in our mining, manufacturing, mechanical and transportation industries?

Shall the 27,000,000 men of voting age in the United States be controlled and their legislation dictated by the labor leaders representing but 2,000,000, or 7 per cent. of their number?

Is it not time that the ninety-eight submerged millions should be heard on the question of their own punishment in labor disputes?

Is it not time for every American to shake off the absurd fear of being classed as an enemy of labor because he opposes the unjust acts and the violence committed in the name of labor?

Has not Mr. Wilson already answered the question, "Shall the unions or the people rule?"

Was it not the fear of the so-called "labor vote" that frightened Democracy into exempting in the income tax a large part of our people from paying their share of the cost of government and increasing the share of the rest of our people to make good the deficit? Is this "equality before the law"? Is it not creating such a privileged class by statute?

With the "labor vote" terror upon him he and his party have made other similar surrenders to political expediency.

If a business organization continues to perform an act in the restraint of trade it must pay the penalty of the law, but labor unions under the Wilson surrender may commit the same offence and escape the penalty. He has also exempted them so far as he could from punishment for violating court injunctions. This was a special concession to strikers.

How many of the submerged 98,000,000 citizens believe in this class legislation?

And now Mr. Wilson has established the precedent that the power of President and Congress may be used to compel employers to accede to the demands of a mere fraction of the dominant 2 per cent.

The justice of the strikers' demands is one thing; the surrender of the power of the Government to strike leaders is another thing, and vital.

What would Mr. Wilson have done if a foreign force had appeared and threatened to paralyze our commerce and starve our people if they did not pay a cash tribute of $60,000,000 annually? Would he have sounded the usual surrender and retreat? Would he have exclaimed: "America has millions for tribute, but not a cent for defence of her dignity and honor"?

Would he have rushed to Congress and joined his party leaders in a frantic and hysterical effort to pass a law compelling the payment of the "tribute" with the proviso that the justice of the demand could be determined later and the money returned if it were decided that "the enemy" ought not to have it?

He would have done nothing of the sort. He would have used the army and navy, the entire power of the nation to resent the insult and punish the offender, as he did when Huerta's soldiers arrested a few sailors for a few hours at Tampico.

Our recent "enemy" which demanded tribute or the severe punishment of our people was a domestic one and supposed to control several hundred thousand votes. Therefore the case was different.

The President undoubtedly regretted the situation; he did not want to see the people suffer; he did not want to offend the unions, but he naturally cast a longing eye upon the so-called "labor vote." Again the Democratic bugle sounded "Surrender!"

Slowly but firmly the four railway brotherhood chieftains pressed upon the Presidential brow the crown of thorns and delivered into his trembling hands the cross of gold. Sixty millions in tribute is not a small cross to bear.

For his friend "the enemy" he abandoned the principle of arbitration to which he and his party were irrevocably committed and for which the railway officers asked. Apparently it took but little pressure on the crown of thorns to bring the announcement that arbitration did not apply in this case.

There was no demand that the work should be reduced to eight hours a day, but that ten hours pay should be given for eight hours work; in short, a simple demand for an extraordinary increase in wages. Evidently more pressure on the crown of thorns, for the President announced to the public that the *principle* of the eight hour working day was at stake and must be sustained. In making this erroneous statement Mr. Wilson lost the moral and political support of a vast number of friends and far more votes than he had gained.

The entire spectacle was made historical and complete by the obsequious attitude of the Administration toward its new masters, who had condescended to hear the President and permit him to take their demands to Congress.

Regardless of any arrogance or discourtesy in their attitude, the President treated them with the most distinguished consideration. Congress hurriedly provided them with headquarters in the committee room at the national Capitol, whence they could more conveniently wield the bludgeon over the people's representatives. From the corridors of this same temple of liberty respectable citizens, branded as lobbyists for opposing some of the President's measures, had been driven with a great blare of trumpets two or three years before. The regular business of Congress was suspended. The Administration leaders vied with each other in giving homage and service to their distinguished guests with the alleged 400,000 votes in hand.

QUESTION: Would similar honors have been conferred upon the representatives of the thirty-odd million bank depositors, policyholders and other investors who own the railways and their securities? Were the wishes of this vast multitude of owners consulted? Not at all. They were not organized to act at the polls.

"A fitting climax to a perfect day," was the verdict of the President, as reported by the press, when the news came that the bill had passed. But the crowning act of these unprecedented and extraordinary proceedings came when Mr. Wilson celebrated the victory of his friends "the enemy" by honoring them with the four pens with which he had signed the contract for the payment of the "tribute" by the people.

However some good people may deplore it and try to evade it, THE ISSUE is ON.

The press has printed copies of instructions issued by the members of the brotherhoods to "deliver the goods." The "thirty pieces of silver" are to be paid if possible.

Labor has repeatedly refused to vote in a body for any candidate. Experience shows that American workingmen vote as individuals and free citizens, with few exceptions.

No party leader can "deliver" the union vote or the labor vote in America.

Governor Hughes is therefore not swayed by the "union vote terror." He is not afraid to take the side of the submerged 98,000,000 in the matter of the use of unjust and unlawful force. He says: "I am solicitous for the improvement of conditions of work, but I shall stand unalterably against yielding anything to force. The President's surrender in the case of the misnamed eight hour bill was an unpardonable thing—a shameful thing. It is against the spirit of democracy and absolutely opposed to the best interests of labor itself."

This does not spell moral cowardice. These are not the words of a spineless, truckling, vacillating leader. They are the sentiments of a leader who knows how to answer the question: "Shall the unions or the people rule?"

JOHN HANCOCK, Jr.

NEW YORK, September 24.

Shadow Lawn Casuistry.

Mr. WILSON's speech at Shadow Lawn in defence of the eight hour legislation was special pleading at its worst. The issue of the surrender of the Executive and Congress to the Four Brotherhoods was evaded. In fact, Mr. WILSON interpreted it as a service to the people. What they consider a shame, an ignominy and a backward step in representative government he lauds as a virtue; he and those who cowered under the uplifted bludgeon of the labor organizations are benefactors and forward looking men.

The legislation proposed "was reasonable and was based upon right." That is the regulation plea of not guilty.

It will be observed that Mr. WILSON says that he thought it was his duty "to try my hand at the difficult task of accommodation." But it was in no spirit of accommodation that he entered upon this duty. "The first thing I told both sides before I requested their opinion was that I stood for the eight hour day," he says. What business had the mediator to take sides at once against one of the parties to the controversy?

Mr. WILSON did not regard "the question of the principle of the eight hour day as arbitrable." No one wanted to arbitrate the principle. But the effect of an eight hour day and pay and a half for overtime was arbitrable. "You are asking," Mr. WILSON says he told the railroad managers, "for arbitration of a conjecture." In no part of his speech did the President state the point of view of the railroad managers honestly and fairly.

Fallacious, as a man of his intellectual keenness must have known, was his pronouncement that in relation to the railroads the eight hour day had the approval of society. That was a wanton confusion of sentiment with practical management and the limitations under which work is done on the railroads. And what Mr. WILSON had to say about arbitration was disingenuous, if not wilfully subtle. Arbitration is not essentially a word "associated with the dealings of hostile interests." Mr. WILSON trod on dangerous ground when he said that organized society must never permit any organization to be stronger than itself. All his dialectical skill cannot obscure the application in this case.

What appears clearer than anything else in President WILSON's address at Shadow Lawn is that he designs to use the "Eight Hour Law" as a Democratic campaign slogan. Mr. HUGHES can be depended upon, however, to expose the imposture.

Hughes the Fighter.

With a "regular" smile and a "regular" handshake, and with strong arguments and a fine fighting front, CHARLES EVANS HUGHES has stirred Indiana through and through. Indianians are not now in doubt about "he kept us out of war" and "what would HUGHES have done," their minds are not clouded on the "eight hour" scamp legislation, they see Mexico with clear eyes and are not afflicted with post-bellum economic obfuscation.

Compare the Hughes campaign, as it takes shape and gathers momentum, with the pre-campaign criticisms and some feeble endeavors to justify them by the event. The Republican candidate was "cold"; he would shoot over the people's heads; he had a case, but could not popularize it, and he had parliamentary skill but no argument; his was the temper of the Judge, not the advocate, and he was a partisan pleader and not a patriotic leader. Paradox ruled the prophets.

Mr. HUGHES took the field. His campaign has been cumulative, gaining weight and speed as it advanced. One by one the issues have been made definite, stroke by skilful stroke the picture of Democratic futility has grown on the canvas. And now the appeal to reason echoes in the cheers of multitudes of voters foretasting the glories of "America First and America Efficient."

Will Villa Be a Factor in Mexico Again?

If General BELL's report is veracious FRANCISCO VILLA has set up in business again. He is much too shrewd to operate far from Chihuahua when he has the opportunity to isolate and capture that city by cutting CARRANZA's communications. It must be considered that the real hero of Chihuahuans is not the First Chief, or OBREGON, or TREVINO, but PANCHO VILLA, originally a bandit, but a military genius when he has an army equipped with magazine rifles and field pieces. For several months when he was both commander of the revolutionary army in northern Mexico and improviser of local governments VILLA made his headquarters in Chihuahua and displayed a good deal of talent as its administrator. If his rule was somewhat crude it was resolute and adroit, and he was a popular character. It was VILLA who installed VENUSTIANO CARRANZA at Chihuahua, inviting him to quit Hermosillo in remote Sonora. In those days of reconstruction VILLA collected and spent a good deal of money in Chihuahua. Legend transfigured him. He became a popular idol.

Unless General TREVINO is reenforced or superseded any day may see the enterprising bandit-general in possession of Chihuahua. VILLA counts upon the inactivity of General PERSHING, since the withdrawal of the American troops is the main question before the conference at New London. VILLA doubtless believes that if CARRANZA accepted the aid of the Americans in a new campaign "to get VILLA" the Carranzistas would desert in troops. That would probably be the case. Apparently the Commission at New London must await developments in Chihuahua.

Food on Ferryboats.

It is comforting to learn that San Francisco and its neighbors in Alameda county are in such a comfortable state of finance that they can afford to build a $22,000,000 connecting bridge across five miles of San Francisco Bay, their common harbor. Yet those who are familiar with the social aspect developed in generations of Oakland, Alameda and Berkeley commuters on their mighty ferryboats, double the size of those New Yorkers are familiar with, will question if something of loss will not be charged against the gain when rapid electric bridge cars make the twenty or twenty-five minute ferry ride a thing of the lamented past.

How those lower deck restaurants, not to mention the snug little bars, will be missed! None of your ready to serve food there! Chops, steaks, ham and eggs cooked to order in sight and while you wait; coffee, rolls hot or cold served with admirable speed by smiling old negro cooks who know their patrons by name, who need not to ask if they want their eggs turned, their coffee mellowed by hot milk or cream.

And how those commuters on the upper decks on clear days, in the roomy cabins in the rainy seasons, talked politics, Shakespeare, the musical glasses—what not! Many an election settled there. Those commuters were the despair of San Francisco and Alameda county political bosses.

"Those ferry politicians," the bosses used to say, "knock the devil out of our calculations." True, many a time. And sometimes put the devil in.

And they were great fellows for art. Literature, too, naturally, for there was the Berkeley influence. Little that is comprehended in man's mental vision but was well backed, or got husky body blows on those long trans-bay ferry rides.

It will be a handsome bridge, no doubt, with decks for overland trains, for slow moving trucks, speedy automobiles. But the lazy half hours on the beautiful bay of illimitable blue! Why, those commuters will become just ordinary folk, no better than Atlantic coast people.

"Let the People Go Hungry."

Mr. BOHM, rotund and smiling, threw back his head. "Let the people go hungry," he said, his eyes twinkling at the reporter who had asked if the distribution of food was to be halted by one upraised mighty hand of union labor leadership gone mad while the other clutched at Father KNICKERBOCKER's throat—"let the people go hungry, it will do their digestion good."

Mr. BOHM enjoys a rare sense of humor. Other folks may not enjoy the turn it has taken. Citizens of less rotundity may regard him with eyes that do not twinkle but glitter.

If anything was needed to make the New York holdup unquestionably superior to its Washington model, it is supplied by the appearance of this ultimate refinement of the gentle art of banditry. If we must be held up let it be by highwaymen who can smile behind the gun and mitigate the oppressive seriousness of the situation with quip and jest.

But is Mr. BOHM quite certain that the rank and file of the army in which he holds a post of more or less high command can smile on an empty stomach? That the misleaders of labor expect to improve their own digestion by going hungry their followers need not suppose.

As Mr. PHILIP GIBBS reports it from the British lines the truth must be in it. A captured German doctor busy under shell fire with British wounded is speaking:

"I am not a fighting man. I did not help to make this war. My work is for humanity, and your wounded are the same to me as our poor suffering men needing my help, which I am glad to give."

Has anything finer been uttered in the war? Has anything finer been done in the war on either side?

The enemy is still standing.—*Major* MORAHT.

The Major, Germany's leading expositor of field operations, is speaking of the battle of the Somme. What he means is that the French and British on the western front stubbornly refuse to confess defeat. How many prisoners and guns will they have to take before the Major sees anything in their offensive to disturb his habitual composure?

Certainly something must be done if Greece does not wish to die.—VENIZELOS.

Greece will not die, and the doctor is her first statesman.

The British "tank" (converted Peoria farm motor) must be a huge success if the German Government intends, as Geneva reports, to complain to the International Red Cross that the use of the machines is contrary to the recognized methods of civilized warfare. How or why it would be difficult to understand. But such a protest would be grotesque so long as Germany is slaying innocents in England from the bomb deck of her Zeppelins.

"The President's Own" (it would be the People's Own really), a special squadron of cavalry to escort the President on state occasions, which General WILLIAM E. HARVEY of the District of Columbia proposes, would have seemed undemocratic in the days of JEFFERSON, but in these crowded and more dangerous times there is no reason why the President should not be guarded by mounted men when his public appearances attract multitudes of observers. Moreover, an escort of such a character is in keeping with the dignity of the Presidential office.

Speaking of the negotiations with the railroads and the brotherhoods that culminated in the eight hour law, Mr. WILSON says: "I have recently been through an experience which distressed me." He can expect no sympathy from the American people. His distress was not skin deep, for he carried it off gayly and with obvious satisfaction, not to say exultation; while their distress made every nerve quiver and was such an experience as they do not want to go through again.

Labor is not a commodity.—*President* WILSON.

What Mr. WILSON means is, as the context shows, that the laborer is not a commodity, with which every one will agree. Mr. WILSON's insinuation that there is little or not enough of the human relation between railroad companies and their employees will be resented by everybody who is familiar with the nature and conditions of the service rendered and the rate of compensation fixed for it—an ascending rate, by the way.

It Does.

From the Baltimore News.

Does an echo come back?
The answer is yes in the case of William A. Echo. For William "came back" in the Southwestern Police Court this morning to answer a charge of failing to support his wife, Alvina.

A Domestic Sympathy Strike.

Knicker—Has your wife gone on strike?
Bocker—Yes; she struck as a cook out of sympathy with herself as a dressmaker.

THE SLEUTHS GO TO SEA.

Eric the Blondehound Overcomes a Stranger—Out Goes a Port Light.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I have to report to the stranger who kindly tried to aid me by pointing out to me in the Grand Central Station the other morning a sweet faced little blonde, that she is not my lost sister-in-law. Moreover, the fact that she wore a blue bonnet and kept close to the "Redemption" window is no evidence, as he seemed to think, that she belonged to the Salvation Army.

In our search, Bill, Eric and I have been at sea down the bay. The voyage lasted only about six hours, but it was enough. Rather, it was too much. Bill got into a fight, Eric was seasick, and I was insulted, though gently, by the captain. Bill's trouble started when he insisted on drinking with a stranger. Although there are usually plenty of them around, I make it a rule never to. To avoid doing so, I will often take two or more drinks at a bar at a time by myself rather than invite a stranger to drink with me. This is not selfishness on my part, but caution. Bill's experience proves I am right. Although he is never drunk, as I have said before, he got into a condition of alcoholic abstraction, and in this state he picked up a conversation with a chap he had never seen before. After several rounds, when Bill was treating, the stranger raised his glass and said: "To the Sunshine of Your Smile." Bill, picking up the words of that song, began to howl, "Give me the right"— That was as far as he got. The stranger did, and on the jaw too. At that point Eric came to the rescue. He tripped the fellow up, and while the man was on all fours, seized the edge of his coat in the middle of the back and pulled it over his head. Then by backing away—Eric weighs some forty-five pounds—he forced the man to follow him on his hands and knees until the got the stranger wedged between a stanchion and the bar. There he held him. Bill wanted to kick his assailant then and there, but his position on his hands and knees, with his coat pulled over his head, was so pitiably defenceless that I interfered.

When the stranger was got on his feet and it was explained to him that Bill was merely singing and not howling at his toast, peace was restored and we went to the upper deck. It was dusk. The lights along shore began to twinkle and those on the shipping, one by one, to start out. Bill and I sat on the port side near the rail. It was then the captain approached us. "I beg your pardon," he said, addressing me. "But would you mind sitting in the cabin? Our port light is already lit now, and you know if we have two red lights on the port side it may cause a confusion of signals and perhaps a collision. If you sit on the starboard side it will be all the worse."

"Why, what are you getting at?" I asked. "Your nose," replied the captain. "It is such a brilliant red. Please sit inside till we dock." He had been so polite all through. I didn't think a seafaring man would be. Of course, my feelings were hurt, but I went indoors, as Bill put it. I never tan. I burn. It was the sun that did it. T. P.

NEW YORK, September 23.

THE LOST SISTER-IN-LAW.

Ought the Police to Be Notified, and Who in Thunder Is Eric?

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* You print to-day a letter of "T. P.," and I have seen other letters about Bill, Eric and a lost blonde sister-in-law. Kindly state whether these letters are serious or not. Sometimes they seem to be intentional and sometimes they seem actual. Kindly explain what steps have been taken toward notifying the police. If the poor writer's sister-in-law is really lost something ought to be done about it.

It is your duty to take the matter up seriously. Perhaps "T. P." does not want to find his sister-in-law. If you know this, why do you go on printing letters about her?

I was much interested in a letter about a pair of handcuffs and a traffic signal. If "T. P." really injured the policeman when he and Bill pushed him off the automobile they ought to be punished.

Please explain about Eric. Is he a detective or is he a dog? He has so much intelligence! CHARLES JUSTUS.

NEW YORK, September 23.

A Call for the Services of Eric.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Do you know if the master of the dog Eric will hire him out for twenty-four hours, so he can find for me that gentleman, husband of Mrs. Author, and ask him why he called "Dago" the man who changed his $300 check? For Dago is the definition of a man who kills for money or inclination, not a nickname for a man that works hard selling coal and trust for $1.25 of ice. DOVERE.

GRAVESEND TOWN, September 23.

Brotherhood of the Burning Bush.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I have often wondered about Moses and the burning bush, and worked to learn why the bush was not consumed.

The other day I read in THE SUN how, in Decatur county, Iowa, two men were sawing down a bee tree when they smelled gas and struck matches to place them against the sawed part. A flame burst forth and blazed up the tree. High flames shot about the men, and they were frightened and ran. In great fear they did not turn aside to see just why the bush was not burned.

Would not a little research prove this tree a brother of the ancient burning bush? B.

YORK, Pa., September 23.

The Right Vocation.

From the Emporia Gazette.

Lawrence Wind has a job with the Santa Fe as call boy.

Some Ginger, Please.

There is too much decorum
In the campaign of to-day,
Too much hot air from the forum
And too much chin music play.

We long for the old bellow
Of the village band serene
When the torches soaked a fellow
To his skin with kerosene.

Not a banner up to greet us
At the Corners, hain't it sad?
Not a pictured face to meet us
In the windows—makes me mad!

Not an ox is booked for roasting;
Say, it makes me feel so blue
When I mention somewhat boasting
Of the old time barbecue.

How I'd like to tramp cahooting
With the fellows at their best,
And Cy Perkins proudly tooting
Soulful music from his chest!

How I'd like to tote a dripping
Good old fashioned torch again!
Nothing doing—fun went slipping
Out of fashion, gives me pain!

HORACE SEYMOUR KULLER.

THE POUGHKEEPSIE BATTUE

Representative Platt Reports the Rout of the Grackles.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I was much interested in the defence of the starling in THE SUN of Saturday by Mr. Archibald C. Weeks of the Brooklyn Entomological Society; also much amused by the seriousness with which Mr. Weeks has accepted the reports of the "outrageous destruction of starlings at Poughkeepsie under the direction of Mayor Daniel W. Wilbur at the request of some wealthy sluggards who, on account of nocturnal revels, had their morning slumbers disturbed by the cheerful whistlings of the birds." Mayor Wilbur must be exonerated of any destruction of the starling family, though it must be admitted that his intentions were apparently destructive of something.

No starlings were destroyed, for the very good reason that no starlings showed up when the huntsmen arrived, and that the birds were not starlings but purple grackles or blackbirds; also for the reason that the grackles had begun to gather far afield for their fall migration and had deserted their accustomed resorts.

The truth of this somewhat historic and diverting incident was that complaints about the blackbirds had been coming to the Mayor's ears for a month, and the game warden had attempted to move the birds to some other roost, remote from city streets, by firing an occasional shot into the trees. Residents had aroused the birds now and then by firing roman candles among them.

These demonstrations had caused a few of the birds to move from one tree to another, and perhaps from one street to another, but had entirely failed to arouse a desire to seek a roosting place somewhere in the woods or fields. They came every evening from a wide section of Dutchess county, where they had been spending the day robbing the farmers of their corn. It was interesting to see them wheeling about overhead just after sunset, before they settled on the trees along the streets; and in the early morning, when the first blush of advancing daylight brought the birds to wakefulness and a renewal of the sense of hunger, they would rise up out of those trees, as by preconcerted conspiracy in restraint of slumber, with a roar like the roar of a mighty cataract.

Finally Mayor Wilbur decided that something must be done, something really drastic, even destructive. He advertised for ten trusty huntsmen and got them. On the appointed evening he mobilized his forces, and as the last level rays of the setting sun were gilding the housetops of the city they stole stealthily through the streets, headed by the Mayor in his automobile, to the scene of action. The huntsmen were deployed as a line of skirmishers at the word of command, and fearlessly took their positions under the favorite roosting trees, where the week before the nocturnal congress had assembled. Four small boys, two girls and a few curious residents constituted the interested audience of thousands. They waited in silence. A downy woodpecker drummed a lively rat-a-tat on a neighboring dead limb and every man jumped to attention. A flicker flew overhead with a loud "week-a-week-a," a returning warbler in one of the lower branches said "zee-zee," and a crow well out of range said "haw, haw." Twilight deepened into dusk. Dusk advanced toward darkness, and two feathered creatures were seen to settle in the trees. Bang, bang, and down they came—both robins.

Darkness was deepened above by the flaring of the electric street lights, and the order to break ranks was given. Such is the story of the Battle of Garfield Place. EDMUND PLATT.

POUGHKEEPSIE, September 22.

ABOARD A DREADNOUGHT.

An Admiring Visitor Is Astounded by a Sign on a Door.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* It was recently my privilege to spend some time at sea upon our latest and largest superdreadnought. One day an alarm was spread through the ship calling all hands to their stations for battle practice. I watched the huge triple gunned turrets swing outboard, their guns trained on a destroyer on our beam; heard the ranges continuously bawled out: "Eight four double o, scale five seven; eight two five o, scale five four," and so on; and saw the men working with watchlike precision loading and simulating firing the torpedo defence guns, setting an example all well drilled football teams should emulate.

Truly, thought I, this ship is invincible. I then noticed for the first time small red crosses, with a black arrow beneath, painted in various and frequent places. Asking a friendly officer what they represented I was told that they indicated the location of the nearest battle dressing stations located in many places throughout the ship. Frank admission on the part of the designers, constructors and workers of the ship of her vulnerability.

Pondering this paradox, I turned toward a door, and raising my eyes to the lintel I beheld, in large type, "Ladies." Was I after all on an excursion steamer or merely in a dream? The shouts and commands and clanging of the shells in the breech were realistic enough. Surely I had seen no ladies on board, or else had been deceived by their wearing the regulation uniform. In my perplexity I turned again to the officer.

"Oh, that," he replied, "is merely another step of a benevolent Secretary in democratizing the navy."

WOODBY SEAMAN.

BOSTON, September 23.

Overworked Baseball Players.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* In these days of disturbed labor conditions it is singular that the most temperamental laborers of all, the professional ball players, simply dote on overwork. The union rules of the Baseball Players' Fraternity seem to have been made to be broken. We have only to refer to the frequency with which the major league pitchers strive to win two games in one afternoon, something unprecedented in the major leagues except during the time of Joe McGinnity, the "Iron Man." In the short time of five or six weeks have been recorded the deeds of Davenport, Tyler, Rudolph, Benton, Perritt and Demaree, who mounted the pitching hill to make it two wins in one afternoon. Of course all of the above notables won their first games, otherwise they wouldn't have been permitted to come back in the second.

What is the incentive that actuates these hurlers to do more than their lot? Is it because they love to bowl their opponents over twice in one afternoon, or is it because they love their managers so well they wish to show their affection? We'll have to draw our own conclusions, but to the man in the street it appears the motive is the desire to obtain a portion of the world's series plum, which grows so luscious at this time of the year. A. D.

NEW YORK, September 23.

THE PRECARIOUS SITUATION OF OUR MERCHANT MARINE.

Plain Facts About Recent Maritime Legislation and the Probable Effect of the Shipping Bill.

I.

Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo has coined the phrase, or popularized the phrase, of a naval auxiliary merchant marine. It is a well chosen and an extremely well balanced phrase, because it defines the dual uses of a merchant marine, from the national point of view first as a naval auxiliary, and secondly for commercial or merchandise purposes. To-day Great Britain is employing upward of 2,000 merchant ships for naval and military purposes, ships that in peace times are used for peace purposes, ships that afford employment to British labor in British shipyards in their construction and that afford employment afloat for Britons—ships, their officers and crews, that are a part of the naval reserve auxiliaries of Great Britain. Great Britain could not maintain her position as the premier nation of the world without her merchant marine any more than she could maintain her prestige and power without her colossal navy.

Our great foreign trade affords rich opportunity for the use of British ships. Our foreign carrying directly contributes to the prosperity of the British Empire, because Britons build most of the ships and Britons run most of the ships that engage in our foreign carrying. The British makers of shipbuilding materials, the owners of and workmen in British shipyards, the owners of the ships and the men who run the ships, all profit, and profit most richly, out of the foreign carrying of the United States. Were ships useful only for mercantile or commercial purposes, our dependence upon aliens for the necessary supply of them for our needs would be most unwise. Because, after all, it is largely for the marketing of our surplus products—and our surplus products grow by leaps and bounds—that we need merchant ships in peace times as well as in war times. Great Britain is our greatest rival in seeking foreign markets. Her own surplus products come into direct competition with ours in foreign markets, and she possesses superior means to those this nation possesses for reaching and holding and developing those markets for her surplus products. When, however, we depend upon Great Britain as largely as we now do for our ships and for the men to run the ships that engage in our foreign carrying, a carrying directly competing with British carrying, what a weapon we place in British hands for handicapping our foreign trade! And how astutely Britons make the most of the advantages we so thoughtlessly yield to them, advantages vital to our own healthy national, industrial, commercial and maritime growth.

During the last two years, the war years, that is, British shipyards have all but ceased building merchant ships, which has thrown a burden of merchant ship construction upon the rest of the world that it was unprepared for and which it is being overwhelmed in endeavoring to take care of. So that we see that our economic reliance upon Great Britain for the merchant ships we need is an uncertain and an unstable reliance. Our surplus products that seek foreign markets are withheld in our own country because of the lack of merchant ships available for their carriage, so large a part of British mercantile shipping being used for naval and military purposes and so large a part having been destroyed by enemy ships.

II.

In his last annual message to Congress President Wilson preached about the need of an American merchant marine, and he laid stress upon the dangers attending our utter dependence upon foreign ships. "It is high time," he declared, "that we repaired our mistakes and resumed our commercial independence on the seas." Why? Because, President Wilson said, "it is a question of independence." Is there any question paramount to that? Is not "independence" a fundamental necessity? "Our independence," said President Wilson, "is provincial, and is only on land and within our own borders." Our lack of a merchant marine has robbed us of our independence, an independence that the President declares "is only on land." This is fundamentally true. Why, then, is not more made in this campaign of our need of true national independence, as Mr. Hughes so well says, "both on land and on sea"?

President Wilson declared that "such a situation is not to be endured." He continued: "It is of capital importance not only that the United States should be its own carrier on the seas and enjoy the economic independence which only an adequate merchant marine would give it, but also that the American hemisphere as a whole should enjoy a like independence and self-sufficiency, if it is not to be drawn into the tangle of European affairs."

The situation must have been most clear to the mind of President Wilson. In explaining it to Congress that great body of national legislators should have heeded its tremendous national importance. But it did not. Quite the contrary. It proceeded with a degree of partisan fatuousness, of sectional bitterness, and of economic unsoundness, to do everything that it should not do, pretending thereby to make provision for remedying this most dangerous situation, when, in fact, its remedies make the situation more dangerous.

The President clearly stated the condition, but he and his Congress have bungled, fearfully, in providing the remedy. And the Congress did this, not of its own volition, but at the direction of the President, or of his Secretary of the Treasury—in any event the shipping bill just passed is wholly an Administration measure.

It provides for a shipping board. A shipping board could perform useful functions, under proper restrictions, but it should not possess too great power, dangerous power, until the need of that power has been clearly demonstrated. This board is to attempt to regulate transportation by water similarly to the manner in which transportation by rail is now regulated. It does not purpose wholly to regulate such transportation, however; it confines its regulations only to "common carriers," leaving private carriers free of its regulatory powers. And, it is believed by able lawyers, the regulations, the restrictions, the penalties it purposes imposing upon "common carriers by water" are inapplicable to our foreign rivals, and only applicable to our own "common carriers by water." The result of this must, necessarily, force into the hands of foreign carriers by water the great bulk of our foreign carrying, and so it is likely to defeat the very purpose of its enactment.

III.

The worst feature of the shipping bill is that which admits foreign built vessels into our coast and Great Lakes carrying. Never before in all our history has this been permitted. Our domestic carrying has been confined by law running ninety-nine years, and the restrictions of a prohibitory character imposed upon foreign ships previous to that time, to vessels built in the United States, owned by our own citizens and commanded and officered by such citizens. As a result some 15,000,000 gross tons of shipping, documented and undocumented, are engaged in our domestic carrying, and this shipping has a value far exceeding a half a billion dollars. Besides, we have American shipyards in which at the last census it was shown $126,000,000 of capital was invested, a capital that has largely increased of recent years, if, indeed, it has not doubled. All of this domestic, home built, shipping is subjected, or will be subjected, to the competition of foreign built shipping, just as soon as the shipping bill begins to operate. The shipping board has the power to form corporations and to buy and build, to lease and charter, foreign vessels and put them into any American trade, foreign or domestic, in competition with American built ships, and lines of ships, as it will, for "the purpose of carrying out the purposes of this act," unless it can persuade private American capital to do the things the board thinks it is necessary to do to execute the act.

In practice this act will greatly reduce the value of American built vessels in domestic carrying, perhaps to a point that will ruin their owners and force reorganizations and ruinous readjustments. But, by letting foreign built vessels into our domestic carrying, in operation the act will destroy American shipyards, and thus leave the United States wholly dependent upon foreign shipyards for merchant ships—merchant ships that members of the Administration over and over again have said, officially, are essential naval auxiliaries. How is it possible for a clear minded man to comprehend the dire situation of the United States, lacking a merchant marine of its own, as clearly as President Wilson does, and then force into reluctant Congress the passage of an act that will make more acute the dangers of our maritime situation?

If the dependence upon foreign shipyards for our foreign carrying is as dangerous as President Wilson pointed it out to be—which it is—then how doubly dangerous it is for us to render outright doubly dependent, wholly dependent, upon foreign built ships for our foreign carrying, foreign and domestic. We allow foreign shipyards to build the ships we require for our foreign and domestic carrying, merchant ships we should need for auxiliary naval and military purposes, when we have an abundance of the cheapest materials for shipbuilding in our own soil, innumerable mills fashioning those resources into shapes necessary for assembling into ships, and skill abundant for building the ships? What matters such an additional cost in building merchant ships so long as we need such ships as naval and military auxiliaries? We make this nation be dependent upon any other nation or nations for merchant ships that are necessary naval and military auxiliaries, when we have the materials and the men and the capital and the trade for which to build all the auxiliary merchant ships we need, either foreign or domestic, [illegible]

IV.

With all of his fine words, and his clear understanding of the need of our national needs, President Wilson, by his deeds, has made it clear to us that he is undependable as a leader in the great emergency that faces this country in the building up of a naval auxiliary merchant marine. Neither he nor a Democratic Congress is dependable. They have had a chance, they have made bad matters worse, they have bungled [illegible] have pretended to want to [illegible] situation that they have but [illegible] in making more dangerous and [illegible]able. They have laid the foundation of the shipping act, for the rehabilitation of industry they have pretended to want to build up. They could make our dependence upon foreign ships far greater ever before, and they would dry up its source, the shipbuilding industry which we should depend on, and which we should above depend, American auxiliary marine.

Let us, then, elect to control government those who will advance the maritime and economic interests of the United States through the building up of a real American merchant marine, home built, home owned, officered and manned by American citizens. Let us intrust the great work to urgent hands to Hughes and a Congress Republican in both branches. ALEXANDER H. [illegible]

An Applicant for a Trucking Job.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* I want the trucking job of moving the furniture and personal effects of President Wilson, Josephus Daniels and other members of the Cabinet out of their respective residences on March 3 next. I know there will be competition for this job, but the fact that I was one of the delegates to the Baltimore convention who supported President Wilson's candidacy, and one of those who praised his Administration during the first ten months of it, should entitle me to a preference. Will THE SUN help me get this? LAWRENCE GODKIN.

NEW YORK, September 23.

September Twenty-fifth.

The eyes of Mars now blare with hate,
With anger wild, terrific,
Because Balboa on this date
Discovered the Pacific.

C. E. S.

A Memorial Service for Seth Low Proposed.

To THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* The death of Mr. Low should not pass without fitting public tribute to eminence as a citizen. In many ways his was almost an ideal life, a note of which, from his youth up to his latest years, was civic service. It is not enough for the Chamber of Commerce and other organizations