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HARD ON BUILDING TRADES.

The beginning of the rainy season, which seems to be setting in, brings forcibly to mind the fact that some of the building trades, in fact, all of them, that have to work out of doors must practically lie idle, so far as their particular calling is concerned, during the inclement weather. Even those who are not exposed to the weather are affected. For instance, if the bricklayer cannot work, neither the lather nor the plasterer can do anything, so far as brick buildings are concerned. There is little or no building in the way of erecting modern edifices being done during the winter; so that carpenters will be, as a rule, idle. To sum up, the winter season affects nearly the entire building industry, and throws practically all the men engaged in these trades out of work during several months of the year. Some will say, "Oh, well, if they can't work at their respective trades, they can find something else to do." That is more easily said than done. It is not every one that can readily turn his hand from one thing to another. If a man has devoted his time to learning the carpenter's or the bricklayer's or the plasterer's trade, as a rule he does not know very well how to do anything else, provided he is master of the calling to which he belongs. To be sure, there are those who can be called "Jacks of all trades and good at none," but the man who fits himself for one avocation cannot usually do much at anything else. The result is that many skilled mechanics during the winter season must necessarily be idle.

In view of these conditions, we feel warranted in saying that the men who work at these trades, do not as a rule get enough pay. It is true that some of them from a cursory view of the situation, receive fairly good wages; but when it is considered that they are compelled by stress of weather to remain idle, a large part of the year, it presents another side of the picture to view. The legitimate conclusion is that the men as a rule who work at the building trades, from the building laborer up, (for he is affected just as much as any of them), do not get enough pay. A great many people do not think of this. But then it makes all the difference in the world, "whose ox is gored." These men should get double as much as others of equal skill, who can work all the year.

HONEST LABOR.

What is nobler than honest labor? What is more exalting to a conscientious man than to know that by his own unaided industry, no matter in what calling he has fought the battle of life, that he has been a useful factor in the creative and productive energies of the land? He realizes that he is a man, that he has done something for his fellow-man, and that the world is better and richer for his having lived. His mind is clear, and, what is better, his conscience is clear. He is a thinker. He may be a Hugh Miller, laboring in a Scottish rock quarry, and evolving from his active brain "Footprints of the Creator," or "Old Red Sandstone," books that will live as long as geology is a science. He may be an Elias Howe, giving to the world the sewing machine. He may be the nameless worker who invented the moving blade that made McCormick's reaper famous the world over.

Did anybody ever hear of a Rockefeller or a Vandebilt or a Gould or a Pierpont Morgan or even a Rothschild writing a book or creating an invention that has been a benefit to the world?

The lily-fingered nonentity that turns up his little nose, or sneers at a man because he is a workingman, has no place at the close of the 19th century. He has overslept himself. He should have lived, if at all, 300 years ago. The very foundations of our social and political institutions is the workingman. There may be ornamental work at the top, but without the foundation the whole structure falls to the ground.

THE LABOR MOVEMENT.

One will get some idea of the progress that has been made by unionism in labor matters when it is known that probably the first labor paper published in the United States was started in Philadelphia in 1864. It was published by Jonathan Fincher, and was called Fincher's Trade Review. It was the first paper to advocate reforms in the labor system, such as the reduction of the hours of labor, the increase of wages and the condemnation of prison contract labor, particularly where it came in competition with the work of law-abiding people. When one thinks of this one lone sheet, the pioneer of labor literature, compared with the scores of labor papers that are now being published throughout the land, he may well conclude that something is being done to ameliorate the condition of the workers. It is true the progress has been comparatively slow, but great reforms are always slow. No system, however pernicious, that has prevailed for centuries, can be revolutionized at once. It requires time, for great reforms, like great bodies, move slowly. When we reflect on what has been done and what is being done in the way of labor reforms, there is cause for congratulation, and we believe the time is not far distant when the labor system of our country and the world will be so revolutionized that the producer will enjoy a fair share of what he produces, and the consumer, who only consumes, will be restricted to that portion and only that portion of the product of labor to which he is justly entitled.

A POWER FOR GOOD.

There is no human organization in the world with the power to do good that is possessed by the American Federation of Labor—a power to do good generally, and especially to those who are most in need of it—the toiling masses, on whose shoulders rests the burden of producing all that makes life desirable, aye tolerable, aye possible, for those whose lives are lives of luxury and ease. But the supreme good that the American Federation of Labor can do, and does do, lies in ameliorating the hardships and brightening the lives of those who work. There is

scarcely a humble household in this broad land that does not enjoy more of the comforts of life, few as they may be, than it would were it not for the beneficial influence of this great dispenser of good to suffering humanity—the American Federation of Labor. Many are the benedictions called down upon its head by the untold thousands to whom it has lent a helping hand, and many are the anathemas showered upon it by the grasping, greedy, would-be absorbers of all the earth and all the good things therein, whose grip has been at least loosened, and who have been compelled to relax their grasp on the throat of their fellow-man.

The workingman or woman who would place a stumbling-block in the way of this great beneficence deserves to be a slave, and is unworthy to share in the benefits conferred by it on the deserving and the undeserving. Like the refreshing shower, it pours its blessings alike on the just and the unjust. It helps the non-union man as well as the union man, for any shortening of hours or increase of wages is shared in by the former the same as by the latter. It would seem that a sense of gratitude, if nothing else, would impel every man who works for a living to give this great institution his hearty support.

PUBLIC MEETINGS.

Would it not be a good idea for the various unions in the city to hold open meetings, say once a month, and invite the non-union members of organizations to attend, and thereby inculcate into them some of the principles of unionism? Those still on the outside might learn something about the respective unions that they do not know—something that would prompt them to cast their lots with their brethren of organized labor, and thus do themselves and workingmen generally a good turn at the same time. These open meetings would give the union men an opportunity to get acquainted with their fellow-craftsmen that are still out in the cold. As it is, the men in the respective unions meet only those who belong to the organizations, and have but little chance to make the acquaintance of non-union members. These meetings would be especially beneficial to strangers who may have just arrived, and be an incentive to them to cast their lots with the union of the trade to which they belong.

It seems to us that much good might be accomplished in this way, and many valuable additions made to the unions that otherwise may be lost for a long time, at least, and possibly forever. This suggestion is thrown out in the hope that it may have the effect of suggesting other ways and means of getting non-union men to consult their own interests and join the unions of their trade.

VALUE OF ARBITRATION.

We notice that arbitration as a means of settling labor disputes is growing in favor. There is no good reason, if both sides have any disposition to do what is right, why all differences between employer and employee cannot be adjusted in this manner. In some states there is a state board of arbitration, appointed by the governor, supposed to consist of men who represent both sides of the question and who are desirous of doing what is right by both disputants. In Massachusetts the state board of arbitration has saved many thousands of dollars to both employe and employer, and much valuable time, to say nothing of the disquiet and generally bad effect on business. Not only this, but a state board of arbitration being an authorized body carries with it a certain amount of authority and influence that commands the respect of both sides. A board of this kind has the effect of bringing together the parties, of hearing testimony on both sides, and of getting at the facts in any given

case as nobody else can. Not unfrequently have the employer and the employe been brought into touch with each other and little differences explained and disposed of in an amicable manner which otherwise might have resulted in an expensive and disastrous strike or lockout.

Where the differences are not too great and the contending parties not too diametrically opposed to each other, it is always best to refer the matter to arbitrators. The laboring man, so far as we know, has never refused to arbitrate. It is always the employing class that will arbitrate only when he can dictate the terms of settlement himself.

A DISTINCTION WITH A DIFFERENCE.

Some of the apologists for trusts try to answer the arguments against them by saying that labor unions are trusts just the same. The comparison is a very unhappy one and will deceive nobody that does not want to be deceived. A trust is a monopoly of a certain commodity necessary to the existence or comfort of the community, to the extent that the trust controls the entire product of such commodity, so that it can cut down the wages of those who produce the article until the producers are on the verge of starvation, and at the same time raise the price to the consumer to such an extent that the profits soon make millionaires out of the managers, and paupers out of the producers and consumers.

A labor union is an organized body of workers in some particular line, who have banded together for the purpose of keeping their wages up to a standard that will allow them and their families the necessities, and possibly a few of the comforts of life, and at the same time shorten their hours of labor sufficiently to give them the necessary time for rest, and a little time to get acquainted with their families.

Another difference is, a trust monopolizes something that has been produced entirely by somebody else, while a labor union asks to control nothing but the product of the brain and muscle of the men who compose the union.

THE RIGHT TO STRIKE AND TO PICKET.

"Our law recognizes the right of men and women to work or not to work, as interest or fancy inclines them, and if any number of employes determine to strike there is nothing unlawful in their doing so. If, by combination, they can obtain shorter hours or higher wages, or in any other way advance their purpose, they are free to strive to win over others to their support by reason, argument and proper appeal.

"I have been unable to find any adjudication in this state that picketing is illegal. Loitering, picketing or patrolling are not ground for an injunction, unless accompanied by threats or intimidation, which plaintiffs have failed to prove."—Extract from a decision of Justice Fitzgerald, of New York.

THE PRICE OF LABOR.

There is a deep and threatening danger in the continued concentration of wealth, and as a nation we should retrace our steps lest we drift too far from the safe moorings. Capital should not have the power to fix the price of labor without paying a decent respect to the wishes of the man who toils. Capital should not have the power to fix the price of labor without paying a decent respect to the wishes of the producer, at one end of the line, and the consumer at the other. With this power, would it not be possible for capital to make labor cheap and living high? Would it not be possible for capital to force the scale of wages to the minimum, while forcing the cost of living to the maximum? This is the real danger.