

AN ONLOOKER IN ENGLAND

(Copyright, 1909, for Samuel Gomper, by P. S. Kiddle.)
By Samuel Gomper.

In mentally reviewing my travels of the ten days just passed, I have the sensation of one who has been looking at moving pictures. After a Sunday and part of Monday in Liverpool, I crossed the Irish channel and reached Dublin in the afternoon; re-crossed to Holy Head and visited Chester on Wednesday, spent Thursday and Friday at Blackpool, and Saturday in Manchester, going on to London in the evening of that day. I have met old friends and made new ones, heard many speeches and made a few myself, caught suggestive glimpses of the difference between the English and American labor organizations and methods, and have had before me every hour the evidence of a social situation, atmosphere, and conflict that is an ocean apart from what one sees in America. But in what I have to write today I shall not attempt to go profoundly into social questions; my remarks will rather take the form of moving pictures.

I shall not pretend that I performed any deep social investigation in Liverpool. One might probably take up months in delving into the records and results of the various movements intended to put flesh upon the bones of Liverpool's poor, whose conditions are not so bad as they were some years ago; that the general scheme of municipal improvement, though costly, has had some good results to the working class in houses, education and hygiene. It was clear that the streets were well paved and clean; it could be heard on all sides and read in the local press that the deprived classes were voicing their cry against injustice and in favor of the various projects for the social uplift.

At Blackpool I attended the tenth annual congress of the General Federation of Trades Unions. The duties performed by the American Federation of Labor's representative of our affiliated trade unions, require in Great Britain three national bodies, made up of associated unions, viz.: the British Trade Union Congress, with its permanent parliamentary committee; the National Labor Party and the General Federation of Trade Unions.

The main object of the federation is to give systematic financial backing to its constituent unions during trade disputes. An annual per capita tax is paid into the treasury of each union affiliated; and in case of unemployment due to a controversy with employers, a weekly benefit in addition to that of the particular union involved is paid. The federation was formed in 1897, with 45 societies or unions having 342,000 members; and it has now 131 societies, with a membership of 693,998. The treasury was increased every year until the last, on an average by \$50,000 a year. The reserve fund at the beginning of 1908 was over \$800,000. The stoppage in the cotton trade last year brought unemployment to 45,000 members; and this with many lesser disputes caused an outlay from the treasury of something over \$600,000. In all, from March 3, 1908, to March 1, 1909, the federation dealt with 638 disputes, involving 54,962 persons. The treasury now contains \$370,000.

The "agenda" or program of the meeting comprised little more than matters of routine importance. Except for the democratic idea of having every affiliated union satisfying its members by being represented, an auditor and executive committee might perhaps have attended to all the essential business that was done. Some significance, however, lay in the speeches. The chairman spoke of there having been not one suspension of work (strike) in the previous year that was caused by the demand of a union. All the disputes originated in offensive tactics and orders by employers for reductions in wages or through similar aggressions on labor. This statement brought up in my mind a line of inquiry which I intended pursuing fully before reaching some of the conclusions which it suggests. Why should not the workers, particularly the organized workers in trade unions, ask for more, especially when wages are so low as they are in Great Britain? Surely, the workers will not become larger sharers in the product of their toil unless they make some effort towards its attainment.

Neither of the two questions before the congress which caused any considerable discussion had any bearing on union topics as we understand them in the United States. One of them, relating to the acceptance in trade unions of soldiers trained in trades while in the service, sought to induce the federation to memorialize the war office, the prime minister, and the president of the Board of Trade. This proposition, however, was negatived. The other question, which was of a much more important character, will come up for serious consideration at the Trades Union Congress at Ipswich in September. It relates to national insurance against unemployment, the administration of which will necessitate considerable expenditure, and will create, as some have facetiously stated, many new officeholders. The outcome of the debates at the meeting is stated in these words by the Manchester Guardian:

"It may be taken that the labor members of parliament will continue to look with sympathy on the government's intentions while at the same time reserving to themselves the right of criticism in detail." And the same newspaper adds: "More especially would it be urged that the trade unions should supply a definite proportion of the representatives to be appointed." The opponents of the scheme in the federation advanced the argument that considerable support were attracted to it because of the possible

benefit to themselves as such appointees. It was also pointed out that union members would under the bill that has been prepared suffer under the disadvantage of paying weekly dues both to the union for out-of-work benefit paid by the union and to the administrators of the government's insurance against unemployment. In such case, the union dues might cease to contribute to the union. Further, the fate of the union-insured workmen out of work because of a strike or a lockout would present a difficult problem; and their refusal to apply for work with non-unions might render it difficult for them to procure any benefit at all.

Blackpool, as the seaside resort of the factory population of Lancashire, Yorkshire and Warwickshire, presents interesting features. The place, which has a permanent population of 60,000, is visited by 3,000,000 holiday seekers annually, chiefly from June to September. All its constructive work is substantial.

It is the custom of the "hands" of the mills to contribute a small sum weekly to a common fund for the "wakes," as they call their vacation session.

Several peculiarities in the Blackpool crowds were striking. As compared with the Continent, the crowds, they were quiet, slow, unanimated. Perhaps 70 per cent or 80 per cent were young people—very young people. Boys from 16 to 20 years of age were paired off walking with the girls, who were still younger. Collectively, they were the smallest people in stature I have ever seen in an English-speaking community. Not only was the average height hardly more than five feet, but the jaw, body and limbs were thin, chests, and spindle legs were the rule. A London newspaper man, who walked about with me, and who was making his first visit to Blackpool, was as much struck with the diminutive size of the people as I was. "Nothing like it, even in London," he indicated of physical degeneracy. He remarked: "How flat-chested these girls are; what a slovenly gait the boys have! I venture they don't weigh 100 pounds apiece!" Some of the young men who were in volunteer khaki were decidedly lacking in smartness. They might have been wearing the cast-off uniforms of the boys of the military academies of the grammar school, rather than the uniforms of this stunting of a portion of the English race? One of the little fellows himself made this explanation to me: "The sins of the fathers are visited on the child. Before the days of the protective tariff laws, children were put to work in the mills at eight years of age—yes, even at six years of age—and they were compelled to work 12 hours a day. In manhood they beget these youngsters, who themselves often go to work too young."

In Manchester I visited the vast warehouses of the Wholesale Co-operative Society. I shall not tire the reader's patience with the long statistical statements necessary to impress on his mind the truth as to the present status of the society, if he would but read them all. In the last 15 years the increase in the business transacted has been marvelous, the volume in the past year exceeding \$50,000,000. The "Hundred" societies were formed, embracing hundreds of thousands of additional employees. So runs the story. It is 14 years since I last visited Manchester. I was greatly impressed with the great development of this industry, and the commercial concern. I again satisfied myself that the largest industrial regions of Great Britain are staunch supporters of the co-operative movement. The existence of a Joint Council of Trade Unionists and Co-Operatives, peace between the two great economic working class movements is promoted. There are no millionaires in the co-operative business so impressively represented in the Manchester headquarters; no rare geniuses as paragons of success; no "captains of industry"; and yet it is one of the greatest business institutions in the world.

On the train from Manchester to London I fell into conversation with a young college man from New Zealand, where he had lived all his life; but after some years' experience as a civil engineer, he was taking a post-graduate course in England. I put to him the usual queries as to New Zealand's social experiments. From his replies, the nature of the questions may be easily inferred. "All classes are satisfied with the land policy of the country—the breaking up of the immense estates, through compensation to the owners, with the loan system to the settlers, keeps open; and consequently there is little poverty in the country. The exclusion of pauper immigrants and alien races is generally satisfactory. The government railroad system, comprising only 2,000 miles, is less economically and efficiently managed than it would be in private hands. I know of one case in which a line of 80 miles had been profitable to a company and satisfactory to the public, but which, since taken over by the government, has ceased to pay; and the service, at the same time, is less satisfactory than formerly. The bookkeeping in connection with public enterprises is difficult, as outlays are sometimes not charged to the public treasury. As to compulsory arbitration in trade disputes between employer and employee, it is now unpopular both with the employers and the workers. It cited the new well-known cases of the boot and shoe manufacturers who closed their factories rather than obey the findings against them of the government arbitrators, and the case of the butcher workmen who were fined or went to jail rather than work on terms which they deemed unjust. In other words, compulsory arbitration in 'the country without strikes' has ended in showing itself capable of destroying both the business and the liberty of the workers. I necessarily only repeat the summary of the views of this native of New Zealand on English stock for what it may be

WHAT GOES OVER THE END

(From the Seattle Star.)

There was one nice thing about our horse-stealing ancestors who lived six or eight centuries ago—they were frank.

Take it in Merrie England and observe how the people ate. At the head of a long table, in a raftered room, sat the belted-earl. To him the servants first brought all food and drink, and he took his fill.

He passed the dishes down the table to his guest of noble blood at his right and to his wife at his left—and they ate their fill.

Next the dishes passed to the children of the house; to the poet, the doctor, the lawyer, the scholar, the priest and to others who lived by their wits rather than by their hands; to the classes who fed in idleness because they flattered the belted-earl or pleased his senses.

And after the intellectual parasites had fed, the bowmen, spear-men and huntsmen might dip their fingers into the now-cold crusts and sop the gravy with druses; they, too, might drink from the great flagons—drink the liquor that stood just above the bitter drags.

And so the table was full.

But below the table, upon the rush-strewn floor, were the people who, in the gentle language of the day, were called "clods," "vokels," "clowns" and "churls." All these people did was to do the work. They raised the crops and harvested them. They butchered the beef and made the ale and wine.

And there on the floor they got what was left after their noble master and his family, friends and flatters and men-at-arms had had their fill.

What the man on the floor got was governed by the state of the appetite of the "upper-lasies."

And he fought with half-starved dogs for the bones and crusts the last soldier tossed among the rushes.

Very frank but rather coarse. Nowadays the man who does the work "is his own master." He works for wages and buys what he will. But when Patten, the belted-earl of wheat, puts up prices, the farmer who, raised the wheat, last year gets no share of the increase; and the man who works for wages gets just so much for his dollar.

And when Armour, the belted-earl of the jungle, raises the price of meat, the stockman gets no extra copper, but the workman's stew is thinner.

Not only are there belted-earls to feed and their bank accounts to fatten, but there are diamond tiaras to be bought for the wife and autos for the son; there are the steam yachts and the priceless paintings.

And then there is the college; to endow and the library to build; the church must have a new pipe organ, and the literary symposium must be fed. There must be supporters for Reggie's chorus girls and for the "Ladies' Union" and the "Brotherhood of Bookbinders" and the "League of Women Shoppers" and the "Electrotypers' Union."

A. W. Sullivan, general manager of the Gould Lines—"The morale of the men is the strength of the management. The environment of our engine and train men off duty and the welfare of the employees are of vital importance. The 12 branches and two hotels under association management on the Gould Lines have given admirable results."

Alfred E. Marling, vice chairman of the international committee, responding to the preceding address, said in part: "I have never heard such testimony concerning the work of the Young Men's Christian Association as I have heard tonight from these officials—an unqualified endorsement of the expenditure of thousands and thousands of dollars, purely from economical considerations."

Railroad Men in Y. M. C. A.

Railroad men associated with the Y. M. C. A., numbering 1365, met in conference at St. Louis for five days this last month. The July number of the "Association Men" has a four-page account of the meeting.

Railroad men from every department of the service attended the conference.

"Conference Features" were as follows: Five days of speeches, songs and sermons which sometimes were promulgated as "I was at a democratic dinner at which president and section met together, and the official plan in having been a section of St. Louis, the railroad men moved and mellowed by the washings and messages."

Many railway officials spoke at the conference. The following are a few short extracts of their speeches.

Geo. W. Stevens, president of C. & O. R. Co.—"After twenty years' experience with the Railroad Associations on the lines of the Chesapeake & Ohio, I am firmly convinced that it is a good investment and one that ought to be encouraged by the railroad."

A. Price, general superintendent of Canadian Pacific—"Up to one year ago the Canadian Pacific was interested in but one association—St. Revelstoke, in the heart of the Rockies. In the past year, they have completed and put into operation three new buildings for the men of their lines who have no homes but hotels. The day has gone by when young men of the association are looked upon as 'sissies' and 'young men'."

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Steamfitters Consolidate

Portland now has but one union of steamfitters and helpers. On last Friday night the U. A. Fitters and Helpers joined the U. A. Fitters and Helpers in a body.

This magnificent work was brought about by the executive committee of the Building Trades Council.

The steamfitters of Portland have been engaged in many bitter controversies, due entirely to the fact that the men did not understand each other, being divided into two organizations.

The Building Trades Council requested a joint conference of the two unions, and this was brought about on Tuesday of last week. The U. A. local offered to accept the I. A. boys at a cost of \$1 each, giving full benefits immediately, consisting of \$5 sick benefit and \$10 per week strike and docket benefit, death and out-of-work benefits. The I. A. local considered the proposition the following night and unanimously voted to accept the offer.

The I. A. sprinkler fitters retain their charter and are recognized by the Building Trades Council and the U. A. fitters and plumbers.

The U. A. local, much to the pleasure of all interested, gave a spread of drinkables and edibles on the evening of the amalgamation of the two organizations.

LONGSHOREMEN ELECT.

An election was recently held by Longshoremen's Union No. 5 at which the following officers were elected for the ensuing term: Hugh Fitch, one of the stalwarts of the union who has been on the waterfront for thirty-five years, was elected president; W. A. Gilie, vice president; E. D. Gano, secretary; M. Aamodt, treasurer; Jerry Hurley, financial secretary and business agent. These officers constitute the executive board.

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Are You A Union Man?

Then See That This Label is on Your Custom-Made Clothing.

It is an indication of fair conditions, and takes the place of boycotts, strikes and lockouts.

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The Printing Pressmen's Union
The Bookbinders' Union
The Lithographers' Union
The Engravers' Union
The Electrotypers' Union

See That This Badge is Worn by Teamster Who Does Your Draying

To Make Study of Ourselves

The citizens of Portland are studying themselves. We live and have a general knowledge of what is taking place in our given line of industry or walk of life, but have little or no means of getting accurate and complete information about them.

It is the purpose of five separate commissions, formed last week at the Y. M. C. A. building, to make a study of the many phases of our life. This information will be put in convenient form for all who care to study the same.

One commission will study the life of the boy. Every sort of facts about our boys will be compiled. Their number, what they are doing, of what effect our child labor laws have upon them, how many and how long they are in school, what they are doing for advancement in life—all these facts will be studied and recorded.

The second commission will study religious life and doing of every kind and form; another the educational doings, the fourth one will delve into our physical life, while the fifth commission will study our vocational life.

The latter commission is now studying the employment agencies of the city. It is getting the facts about our free employment bureau, investigating the work done by the commercial agencies, the labor unions, church and philanthropic bureaus, etc.

This idea of studying ourselves originated in the work done by a group of scientists in the study of Pittsburgh this last year.

The work here was brought about largely through the efforts of Harry Stone and W. M. Ladd.

It has just been discovered that Rip Van Winkle took his 20-year nap while his wife was getting ready for the theatre.

UNFAIR LIST

Barbers—J. F. Brink, 87 Fourth street; L. D. Brink, 754 Suffolk street, and all saloons that do not display the union bar card.

Building Trades—The "aks."

Carpenters—G. W. Gordon, J. W. Bailey, W. S. Buckner, Nickelodian on Russell street.

Cigar Makers—United Cigar Stores and all cigars that do not bear the union label.

Iron Trades—Portland Artificial Ice Company.

Musicians—Rose City Orchestra.

Painters—H. P. Christianson and all shops that do not employ union men.

Printing Trades—Werner Printing Company, Akron, Ohio.

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Ship Carpenters—Joseph Supple and the Portland Shipbuilding company.

Stationary Engineers—Portland Enterprise and Yosemite Brewing Agency, Crystal Ice company, the Liberty Ice & Coal company, and the Independent Ice & Coal company.

Walters and Waitresses—Jake's Restaurant, 263 1/2 First street; George Ritchie's Restaurant, 232 Yamhill street.

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Hascall Engineering company, 3 First street. Main 617-A4487.

E. O. Orlist, 215 Alseky bldg. Main 5879.

F. M. Rankin, Archer Place station. Phone Taber 949.

A. E. Meserve, 200 East Thirty-third street. Taber 341.

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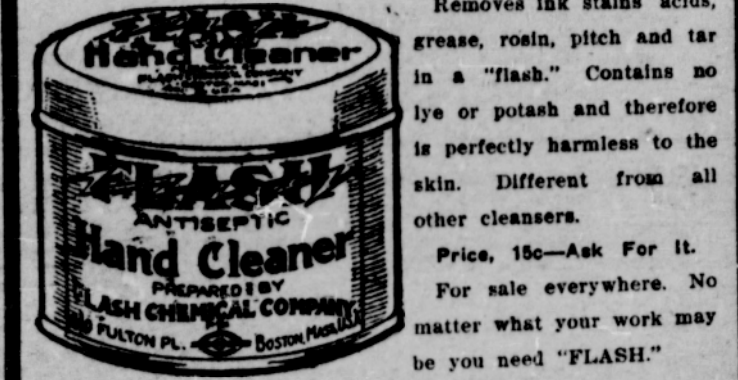
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