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HOW SHALL RAILWAY WORKMEN LIVE?

According to the last census the total number of railway employees (exclusive of clerks, in this country was, in 1870, 154,027. During the period which has elapsed since the enumeration, our railway mileage has increased from nearly 45,000 to 73,508 miles. Allowing for a proportionate increase in the number of employees, as well as reductions in working force due to economical reasons, it is probably safe to estimate that the railroad workmen of the United States number about 200,000 souls. From the statistical tables given in Poor's "Manual of the Railroads of the United States for 1877-8," it appears that while the gross earnings of the roads have fallen off nearly six million dollars, the net earnings have increased nearly by a million, and this is ascribed chiefly to the great economies practised in conducting the operations of the lines. In furtherance of this system of economy there have been, as our readers are aware, reductions in the wages paid railroad employees. These reductions have been in many cases claimed by the persons affected to render the returns for their labor inadequate for a living support; and accordingly the strike, the usual coercive measure adopted by employees under such circumstances, was resorted to, and characterized unfortunately by acts of lawlessness which rendered the question of restoring the public peace far paramount to any of the other issues involved. When such a course is resorted to, past experience has abundantly proved that failure is the rule. The recent difficulty has shown itself to be no exception, and the contending parties stand to-day in practically the same position as to their causes of dispute as they did prior to the outbreak.

There are certain facts which we believe do not admit of argument which should here be postulated, namely, that in this country at the present time the supply of working men is in excess of the demand, that a railway company, or any other employer, is under no obligation to furnish living incomes as such, and that it has a right to regulate its own rates of payment in accordance with its own best interests. While such is the case, it is obvious that coercive measures to compel an employer to raise wages must prove futile. Until, therefore, through the natural working of the laws of supply and demand some condition of affairs more favorable to the working classes shall come into existence, the problem is not how to force employers to improve matters by increasing the revenue of the working men, but how to do so by enabling the working man to obtain the necessities of living out of the means which he can earn. This we take to be the question of all others which is now pressing for solution with reference to the present labor and capital antagonism.

We find in the New York *Times* a communication, very intelligently written by the wife of a working man, in which she sums up the actual least cost of supporting her family, which includes her husband, self, and five children, the latter under nine years of age. As a matter of statistical information this schedule is of exceptional value. It is as follows:

WEEKLY.	
Rent	$2 00
1 barrel wood	25
2 pails coal	16
Burial society	22
Oatmeal	14
2 pounds butter	60
3¼ pounds sugar	40
Half gallon oil	9
2 cakes soap	14
1 pound soda	3
Half pound tea	25
Newspapers	12
Shaving	10
Total	$4 50

DAILY.	
1 quart milk, 6c	$ 42
2 quarts potatoes, 6c	42
2 8-cent loaves	1 12
1½ pounds meat, 20c	1 40
Salt	2
Pepper	2
Mustard	2
Matches	1
Starch	3
Bluing	1
Total	$3 47
	4 50
Total	$7 97

Here is 97 cents more than the dollar a day wages which our contemporary's contributor says she undertook to live upon for some time, and failed. Now, the above are retail prices, and the commodities are probably purchased of small dealers, so that the goods have been numerously handled, and repeated profits thus added. It has been determined by Professor Fawcett, the well known English political economist, that the loss incurred by average working men, on account of their articles passing through the hands of shopkeepers, is about 20 per cent. Deducting the $2 rent, and taking off this proportion from the remainder, we have a balance of $4.78 as the actual cost of the food, etc., less shopkeepers' profits. Now the rent quoted amounts to $104 per year, or about one fourth of the total expenses. This is a large proportion to pay for rent. In England the same item amounts rarely to more than one eighth of the amount of wages earned. We find it stated that the general 3 shillings and 6 pence (87 cents) per week dwelling is largely used by families earning 30 shillings ($7.50) per week, which last is about the same as that earned in the case under consideration.

It will be obvious that the problem before us is how to reduce the cost of living to the working man, and of this we may learn something from what has been done in England. There societies for this very object have for some time been in successful existence. The Permanent Building Society, of Leeds, has furnished healthy tenements at very low rates to about 200 families. In Burnley, another society has assisted hundreds by advancing money on mortgages paid by easy installments. The arrangement is such that the workman pays a small subscription to the society until enough has been contributed to warrant the association buying and conveying to him the house in which he lives. The same has been done by large employers, like the Messrs. Ashworth and the late Sir Titus Salt; and in London there is a large corporation called the Industrial Dwellings Company, which now rents 2,799 tenements, capable of accommodating 12,115 people. Not only has this enterprise greatly benefitted the working men, but as an investment, in five years, it has earned large surplus profits after paying 5 per cent dividends. The rent averages about 50 cents a week for an apartment furnished with every modern convenience.

Not only might similar societies be established here: but others might be started for supplying working men with the necessaries of life at prices certainly *minus* the retail profits already noted. These last could evidently be begun on a small scale and with little capital. The railroad companies themselves might establish stores for their men, or benevolent societies such as the Young Men's Christian Association would here find an excellent object for their philanthropic efforts. A few persons in well-to-do circumstances in every railroad town could easily subsidize such sources of supply, and eventually change them into co-operative establishments as the men learned to live on their reduced incomes. Nor need the work of the benevolent end here. Some of the railroad companies now, in order to prevent their men joining unions, afford them all the advantages of life insurances, etc., which the unions offer. Outside societies for this purpose might also be organized. We have benevolent societies for the care of children, for the aged, and for sailors—why not also for railroad employees whose life presents many analogies to that of the sea-faring man.

It may be said that in dealing with so great a class the laws of demand and supply, inexorable as they are, should only be considered, and that philanthropy has here no place. We think otherwise. The life of a railway employee has its duties and dangers which cannot, morally viewed at least, find compensation in the market rate of wages. Here is an immense number of men who in their daily work expose their lives to constant peril, greater, says an eminent statistician, than that of the soldier in battle. They are subject to peculiar and painful diseases, produced by the conditions under which they work; they are subjected to every hardship of inclement weather and of absence from home, and through all they are obliged to keep tireless watch. Their record is one of unflinching devotion to duty, even in the face of imminent death, and to their hands are committed the safety of enormous wealth, vast interests, and human life. The benevolence of the community may safely rest upon such a showing. Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt has already emphasized this fact by his gift of $100,000 to the employees of the New York Central and Hudson River Railroad, over which he presides. This is one good example, and we hope to see it imitated. The workmen, however, do not ask alms—true charity in their case is to show them how to live on what they can honorably earn. And it is by such action as this that strikes may be caused to become forgotten weapons.

EARLY CONNECTICUT MANUFACTURES.

Very few of our readers are aware that patents, or exclusive privileges to manufacture certain articles, were granted by some of the colonial governments, but such is the fact. The General Assembly of Connecticut took the lead in this encouragement of the growth of infant manufactures, and it is therefore very probable that this is the reason why so much manufacturing is carried on within her borders, and so many of her sons are engaged in the same line in other States.

In addition to the special grants hereafter given, the Assembly passed at least three general acts for the encouragement of discoveries and inventions; one of which, passed in 1663, related solely to the discovery of mines; a second, dated 1672, was enacted for the same purpose, but it had an additional section which forbid the passing of monopolies, "except for such new inventions as shall be judged profitable to the country, and for such time as the General Court shall deem meet;" and a third act, passed in 1715, enacted "That if any person or persons shall set themselves on work to discover any commodities that may be of use for the country, for the bringing in a supply of goods from foreign parts, that is not as yet of use among us, he that discovers it shall have due encouragement granted to him and the adventurers therein" (Statutes of 1715, p. 5).

Many of the special privileges granted will be found to be more of the character of monopolies, or bounties for the introduction of new trades and manufactures, rather than patents for new inventions, but the latter are not wanting.

The first individual or private grant that we find is that issued to John Elliot, in 1708, which gave him the exclusive right for ten years of manufacturing pitch, provided he started the manufactory within two years.

In 1717, E. Hinman obtained a grant giving him the exclusive right to make molasses from corn stalks for ten years—a right which he probably would have found no one to interfere with if he had not had the grant.

A third grant, issued in 1718, gave the exclusive privilege for 20 years of setting up oil mills for the manufacture of linseed oil, to Messrs. Prout, Mansfield & Atwater.

The next patent appears to be one issued to Ebenezer Fitch, in May, 1728, which granted to said Fitch and Co., the exclusive right for 15 years of erecting slitting mills, "to slit and draw out iron rods for nails, and other artificers in iron."

In the same month a patent was granted to Samuel Higley and Jos. Dewey, giving them for ten years "the sole practicing of the said art of steel making," which "said art" seems to have been a method discovered by them of converting iron into steel by the cementation process.

Another patent was issued for a similar process to Messrs. Fitch, Wyllys & Walker, in 1740, for fifteen years, on condition that they should begin operating within two years.

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