

ONE THING AND ANOTHER AS SEEN BY SPARTACUS

Collier's Weekly declares, and gives figures to prove the truth of what it says, that a man stands a greater chance of being wounded or killed in working for a railroad corporation than he does in the army or navy in time of war. War is safer. Peace hath her victories, says the poet, no less renowned than those of war. Had he lived in these piping times of prosperity he would have added that peace hath also her casualty list, and, were he honest, he would add that this fact is due to the overweening desire for profit and yet more profit.

Figures to show the slaughter on Canadian railroads are not available, but it is safe to say that in proportion to the number of employes and of passengers carried, it will be equal to that in the U. S. A. In that land of the free there were in the three months ending September 30, 1906, 10,850 casualties to passengers and employes, an increase of 2,913 over the preceding three months. This does not include accidents to so-called "trespassers" and other outsiders among whom the mortality is greater than among all other classes combined. In the three months under consideration there were 1,891 collisions and 1,781 derailments. That is to say, two trains crashed together on an average every hour and fourteen minutes. Accidents of the former class were due largely to the practice of overworking employes, which Senator La Follette's Hours of Labor Bill is designed to stop; those of the latter to cheap and defective equipment, as well as to undermanned inspecting forces.

Danger to life and limb is by no means confined to railroading. The workers in many industries know not what moment will be their last and in the majority of cases this is due to the desire to increase profits by cutting down expenses. After some terrible explosion in a coal mine which has killed or maimed scores of men, there is often some talk that something should be done to force mine owners to take proper precautions against such accidents. Congressmen do not work in mines, but they do travel. They travel in Pullman cars, which are seldom smashed or ignited, and so travel at less risk than the common herd in the ordinary coaches, but they are liable to dislocations if nothing worse, and so an attempt in the way of reform is introduced into congress in the shape of Senator La Follette's bill which, of course, is bitterly opposed by the railroad lobby. As the railroads are a very important part of that class which owns all legislatures body and soul, the fight is very apt to go against the bill.

So well known is the fact that the big corporations are the controlling force of legislation in the United States that there has been or is about to be formed a People's Lobby to look after the interests of the "people." Needless to say, the "People" are the smaller capitalists who have their hands full in maintaining their "right" to plunder the working class in face of the obstacles presented by the wicked trusts. The working class is outside, which is as it should be, for with unfailing regularity at every election the workers declare by their votes that this satisfies them. Anyone able to read and with brains sufficient to understand a tithe of what he reads can see that the same force is in control of legislation under the much be-lauded and be-slobbered British constitution.

Nearly, if not quite all, the reforms which we "enjoy" are brought about by the triumph of the interests of one section of the capitalist class over those of another. If it were really an humanitarian impulse dictating the reduction of working hours in railroad occupations it would include the reduction of working hours in many other occupations, but capitalism is a stranger to humanity; material interest is the only thing that will wring reforms from the robber class. History proves this to be the case and such being so it is folly for the working class to enter politics in order to demand reforms. Reforms are as bitterly opposed as is the program of Revolutionary Socialists. Sometimes the indirect pressure brought to bear by working class agitation has materially assisted in producing some legislative abortion such as the Alien Labor Law. As the power to enforce such laws rests with the class injured by their enforcement, it does not need a Solon to prophesy the inevitable result. In spite of the experience gained, the majority of the working class, including many honest but misguided Socialists, still think that the panacea for social ills lies along the path of reform. As the only way to obtain anything from the capitalist is along the line of his material interest, it is easy to see that in the event of his very existence being threatened he would be only too pleased to hand out eight hour laws, old age pensions, government ownership of railroads and of other "natural monopolies," etc., if thereby he saw a chance to lengthen his ride

on the backs of the workers, and any such reforms would be enforced lest the workers should clearly see that the only way to salvation is by taking and operating the means of wealth production.

The growth of the Socialist vote is the only means we have of judging of the strength of the movement and our friends the enemy have just the same means. At the present time the getting of our candidates into the legislature is not of great moment. A Socialist M. P. or several of them can do little or nothing. The only advantage the cause has in having M. P.'s is the advantage of the opportunity for propaganda, for parliamentary speeches have a wide audience. The "Labor" M. P., when such exists, loses this opportunity of advancing the interests of his class, for, by some strange aberration of intellect, he imagines he is representing and should work for the interests of both employer and employed—the wolf and the lamb. Reforms will come when the Socialist vote grows big enough to cause the capitalist class to fear for its existence, and the vote will grow in proportion to the amount of steady propaganda work carried on.

Our reform friends always and everywhere overlook the fact that almost all the reforms they advocate are in force in some country or another. Municipal gas and trams, in which some peculiar virtue is supposed to reside, are common enough in England, fairly rampant, in fact. "Cheap homes for the poor" are to be found in that country, too, built by the municipality. Yet we all know enough of English conditions to know that they could not be much worse. In Germany there is a system of old age pensions and the government owns the railroads, yet the Socialists increased their vote at the recent elections by a quarter of a million. Evidently all is not bliss there yet. In New Zealand reform is almost completely victorious. Compulsory arbitration is in full force there, but does not find the unemployed man a job nor will the prospect of a measly pension at the age of 65 fill his stomach at the age of 40. There is no hope in reform, absolutely none. When the next period of trade depression comes, as come it surely will, will some reformer kindly point out which of the measures he advocates will find jobs for those looking for them, and how it will work out that way, and oblige

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Chancellor Day of the (Methodist) Syracuse university has again broken out in eruption. Among the chunks of wisdom belched from his interior we find the following: "I know the poor. I have been among them and have studied them. I know that they are the chief support of upward of 10,000 saloons in this city; I know that they are the chief cause of intemperance and shiftlessness, and then the blame is put on the hard-hearted corporations." We also know the poor and have not the slightest doubt that they support the number of saloons in the city of New York mentioned by the volcanic chancellor. But that is by no means all they support. They support this entire capitalist civilization with all of its vile, degrading and harmful institutions, not forgetting either the saloon or the heavenly soporific joint. With all of this paraphrenalia and its attendant horde of useless human trash from saloon keeper to sky pilot upon their backs, it is no wonder the "poor" are poor.

"L'Humanite" reports serious discontent among the Garde Republicaine in Paris. In one of the barracks recently the men refused to perform certain duties to which they were ordered and sang the "Internationale," with special emphasis on the lines calling on soldiers to fraternize with the working class. They hooted the officer who attempted to enforce the order in the usual peremptory manner, and the disturbance ceased only when he adopted a more conciliatory tone. The capitalist papers kept silence about the matter and the soldiers were not punished.

When the Chicago Federation of Labor sent a delegation to the city council to protest against the passage of an ordinance granting street railway privileges worth something like \$100,000,000 to some gang of capitalist thieves, a detachment of police was sent to the meeting. Even the thickheaded workman may in time get wise as to the purpose of the law and all of its machinery.