

but, as I have just stated, domestic commodities in Mexico have not increased in price since the depreciation of silver, excepting those that, like coffee, have their price regulated in foreign markets, but which are not very much used by the poorer classes. So far as foreign commodities are concerned, of course they have almost duplicated their value, because they have to be paid in gold.

Report of Labor Assembly.—The labor question in Mexico was so earnestly agitated during the last Presidential election in the United States that the Chicago Trade and Labor Assembly, desiring reliable information on the subject, sent to Mexico a special committee of two, Mr. Paul J. Maas, who organized the American Confederation of Labor, and Mr. Patrick Enright, of the Executive Board of the Moulders' Union, for the purpose of examining the question on the spot, and that committee presented a report on October 10, 1896,¹ which was widely circulated in this country, and taken as a conclusive proof of the bad results of the silver standard in Mexico, so far as the laboring classes were concerned. That report, however, failed to present the question in a proper light, for the reason that the gentlemen who made it did not know enough of Mexico to fully comprehend what they saw, and they did not remain long enough there for that purpose.

The report of these gentlemen shows their good faith and their

¹ I quote the following extract from that report, which shows how much the gentlemen who made it misunderstood Mexico:

"Wages in Mexico, except to skilled and steady mechanics—always foreigners—are very low. On railroads engineers (Americans) on passenger trains receive \$210 per month, while the firemen (Mexicans) receive \$1.85 per day; freight engineers (Americans), \$250 per month; firemen (Mexicans), \$1.50 to \$1.75 per day; passenger conductors (Americans), \$160 per month; brakemen (Mexicans), \$1.50 per day; freight conductors (Americans), \$200 per month; brakemen (Mexicans), \$57 to \$63 per month; Pullman conductors, \$80 per month (American money), and the porters, \$38 per month (American money), with \$5 per month extra for being able to talk Spanish. The national soldiers (or regular army) of Mexico, called rurales, and who are all ex-bandits, receive \$1 per day. In a broom factory near the depot at Jimenez the men are paid 50 cents, and women and children 25 to 37½ cents per day. In the cotton mills, cotton-seed oil mills, and soap factory at Torreon men are paid 37½ to 50 cents, and women and children 25 cents per day. A cargador (public carrier) has a rate of 12½ cents per hour, but you can hire him for from 25 to 37½ cents per day.

"At Leon, where nearly all the leather goods in Mexico are manufactured, the peon gets his leather cut for shoes, harness, or other goods to be made by him, and takes the material to his hut, where the whole family assists him, the same as in the sweatshops of Chicago. For making shoes he receives \$1 and upward per dozen pairs; on the other leather goods he receives 37½ to 50 cents per day for his labors, working as long as daylight lasts, averaging twelve to fourteen hours per day. Common laborers can be hired for 18 to 50 cents per day. House servants, male or female, receive \$3 to \$5 per month and board themselves. In or near cities peons live in adobe houses and pay a rental of \$3 a year for the ground that the house stands on. When leaving this for another location all 'improvements' the peon has made go to the landlord, or owner of the land, who pays no taxes whatever on the land."

earnest purpose to present fairly the condition of the Mexican workmen, but they seem to have gone to Mexico with a very exalted idea of the condition of the Mexican wage-earner, imagining that it might rival the situation of his fellow-workman in the United States. This was a complete delusion, as there cannot be any comparison between the two; and when they found the true condition of the Mexican workman, they concluded that the American workingman was a prince in comparison with his Mexican brother—a conclusion which I do not consider very far wrong. Their principal mistake, however, was to attribute to the silver standard in Mexico the poor condition of the Mexican workman. If they had been in Mexico when silver was on a par with gold, at the ratio of 16 to 1, that is, when the Mexican dollar had one hundred cents of gold value in silver bullion, they would have found that the Mexican workman was then a great deal worse than he is now, when the Mexican dollar has less than fifty cents of the gold value of silver in it, and they would have come to more just conclusions.

While they understood some matters in Mexico tolerably well, as when they said, for instance, that there was greater security to life and property in that country than in the City of Chicago, they made serious mistakes in others, as when they stated that all transactions were made in cash, when, as a matter of fact, all mercantile operations of any consequence are made on credit; and long credit, too, as credit is the basis of both the foreign and internal trade in Mexico; and as when they said that it is but five years since a law was passed in the City of Mexico compelling men to wear trousers; with many other almost laughable mistakes to point out, which would take too long and would divert me from my principal object in this paper.

I will consider in the two following chapters of this paper, two of the main objections that the committee made to the Mexican laborer.

Mexican Labor is not Organized.—It has been observed that Mexican labor is not organized, and this assertion is entirely correct. I have no doubt that in the course of time Mexican labor will be properly organized, and that then it will enjoy all the benefits of organization; and while I recognize that organization is a very great advantage to the laboring man as long as he does not become the instrument of unscrupulous persons who occasionally are at the head of such organizations, they so far have met with serious objections in this country, and it is yet the problem how this matter will turn out, there being great probability that the present conditions of labor and capital may suffer material changes.¹

It is hardly possible for the present that organized labor will be

¹ The danger that the working people will take active steps to change the present conditions of labor appears very plain from the following extract from one of Mr. Henry George's books, a man remarkable for his rare character of simplicity and devotion to duty:

able to dominate the industrial situation to enforce its demands against associated capital which has the entire industrial plant under its control. Socialists believe that the large monopolies which have grown up in the last few years are but the pioneers of their system of a better economical organization of industries, whereby products will be cheapened, enabling everyone to live in comfort. The trusts say they do away with waste and with reckless competition, and the socialists are with them in this. But those who are watching the great social and political movement in the United States cannot venture to predict how huge labor unions and the industrial monopolies are going to find common ground to stand on. It is hardly possible that they can work out a scheme to operate in harmony.

Very many prominent men in this country believe that a great change in social conditions is coming, that labor will have to be given a larger share in the profits of organized industry as the only means of preventing an upheaval of society by the accumulating forces of discontent. Some wealthy men seem to be looking forward to some inevitable readjustment of conditions and are striving to enlist the thinking workmen with them in the development of a plan for the betterment of the condition of the masses of the people.¹

"Near the window by which I write a great bull is tethered by a ring in his nose. Grazing, round and round, he has wound his rope about the stake until now he stands a close prisoner, tantalized by rich grass he cannot reach, unable even to toss his head to rid himself of the flies that cluster on his shoulders. Now and again he struggles vainly, and then, after pitiful bellowings, relapses into silent misery. This bull, a very type of massive strength, who, because he has not wit enough to see how he might be free, suffers want in sight of plenty, and is helplessly preyed upon by weaker creatures, seems to me no unfit emblem of the working masses. In all lands men whose toil creates abounding wealth are pinched with poverty, and, while advancing civilization opens wider vistas and awakens new desires, are held down to brutish levels by animal needs. Bitterly conscious of injustice, feeling in their inmost souls that they were made for more than so narrow a life, they, too, spasmodically struggle and cry out. But until they trace effect to cause, until they see how they are fettered and may be freed, their struggles and outcries are as vain as those of the bull. Nay, they are vainer. I shall go out and drive the bull in the way that will untwist his rope. But who shall drive men into freedom? Till they use the reason with which they have been gifted nothing can avail. For them there is no special providence. Under all forms of government the ultimate power lies with the masses. It is not kings nor aristocracies nor landowners nor capitalists that anywhere really enslave the people. It is their own ignorance."

¹ An article in *Gunton's Magazine* for October, 1897, on what workmen really need, significant as coming from a periodical generally supposed to receive its financial support from some of the millionaires and trust magnates who are seeking to guide the opinion of the laboring men of the country, and to keep them from drifting into the ranks of the Socialists, or enlisting under the single-tax banner of Henry George, is an argument for the raising of the condition of the workmen by means

I am sure that any ground gained or any change obtained by the laboring classes of the United States will react in Mexico, and that the Mexican laborer will finally share in more or less degree the same advantages gained here.

Trade unionism has been carried to lengths in England never known in any other country in modern times, and employers assert that the evils promoted by it have now become intolerable, and that further submission to its exactions means the destruction of the manufacturing interests and of the immense foreign trade of the country.

The savings-banks were established with the idea of assisting working people and encouraging them to save as much money as they could, giving them the opportunity to invest it profitably.

The evil that underlies the present savings-banks everywhere is that the money of the depositors is not employed lucratively. Everywhere is a glut of deposits in the other banks, and they have invaded the domain which once belonged exclusively to the savings-banks. In Mexico City the three principal banks have on deposit more than one hundred million dollars, the owners of which wanted to lend upon first mortgage to any amount at seven per cent. The National Bank alone has from ten to twelve millions in specie of its own for which it can find no use, and naturally cannot assist its depositors in their search

of the organization of labor in trades unions, the only form of "trust" possible for those who have merely their skill and labor to sell for wages:

"The writer says: 'The great fact about the whole matter is that the material progress of labor can be achieved only as wages rise, and prices, through the use of improved methods of production, decline. Nothing can be of real service to labor which does not promote one or the other of these movements. The single tax will not do it. Socialism will not do it. Whatever will create among laborers new desires, habits, and tastes, new demands for comforts and refinements, new ambitions for higher individual and social life, strong enough to make them organize to enforce these demands, will do it. Starting from this basis, we find a wide range of beneficent influences which can be utilized to our end. Clean and well-lighted streets, public parks and baths, model tenements and good sanitation will promote discontent with vile conditions of home life. Free museums, libraries, and art galleries will instill a higher range of tastes and wants. Kindergartens and ample school facilities will do the same. A shorter working day will give the rest and leisure necessary for an adequate home and social life.'

Continuing, Mr. Gunton remarks: "Public policies which encourage the increase of manufacturing industries will thereby promote the growth of towns and cities, and thus give the environment so necessary to the operation of high-wage forces. Trades unions offer the medium through which these forces can be centralized and brought to bear upon the industrial situation with a power and effectiveness which cannot be resisted."

Still another distinctively Socialistic device is adopted by Mr. Gunton, who remarks that "labor insurance will remove the necessity of rigid self-denial and parsimony through all the years when men should be enjoying the full benefit of their earnings, and taking advantage of those opportunities which disappear as age comes on."

for a form of investment that is exceedingly limited. Of course these banks offered the Monte de Piedad¹ all the money it could use at three per cent., and the depositors in its own savings-banks suffered accordingly. If the saving habit had been developed in the Mexican working man this would have been a terrible blow, but, unfortunately, he has not yet arrived at that point. He is still wasting his daily dollar, confident that he will earn another to-morrow, but forgetting that he will not always be young and strong, agile, clear-sighted, and of steady nerve.

We must create the saving habit by tempting the well-paid Mexican workingman to save. This can easily be done by inverting the action of the Monte de Piedad, which created a savings-bank to furnish it with cheap capital for its business. What is wanted is a universal system of savings-banks throughout the Republic of Mexico, whose deposits will be used for lending upon pledges at the French and Belgian rates for the profit of the depositors. This is a new departure, but it is the old wholesome law of mutuality which has proved so successful. This system is known in Europe as the Scotch bank, where all the profits of banking above expenses and working capital go to the depositors.

Feast Days in Mexico.—The Catholic clergy of Mexico encouraged the custom of having a great many feast days, which were, besides, very profitable to the church. Over one-third of the year, not counting the Sabbath, was given up to religious festivals, during which all work was stopped. So objectionable were the results of this system that, when, in 1858, the laws of reform were enacted separating the church from the state, the feast days were reduced by law to a very limited number—about six only in the year; but, as happens with all legislation in conflict with the actual habits of the people, the law has not been faithfully complied with, more especially because it does not provide any punishment for the offenders. This fact makes foreigners in Mexico consider native labor unreliable.

Immigration from the United States into Mexico.—It has been also stated that the condition of things in Mexico would not warrant the emigration to it of citizens of this country. To be sure, I would not advise anybody without capital or who is not an expert workman to go there, because he certainly could not compete with native labor; but to those having small fortunes and willing to put up with the inconveniences and discomforts of a new and foreign country, Mexico offers a field for profitable labor and investment hardly to be equalled anywhere else.

If the laborer in the United States goes to Mexico and drawing the same pay in silver as he did in gold, goes down to live in the same style and on the same food as the native laborer, occupying the same class of

¹ A national establishment to loan money to the poor, at low rate of interest.

position or work, he will find it cheaper than in the United States, but to go to Mexico to eat the same food, to wear similar clothes, and have the same comforts as in the States, he will require two silver dollars for every one dollar received in the United States, and then be worse off in that he has no society and no pleasures.

Not to repeat what I have stated on this subject, I refer the reader who would like to know more fully my views about emigrating to Mexico to the chapter on "Immigration from the United States," in the paper entitled "Geographical and Statistical Notes on Mexico," pages 125 to 129.

Conclusion.—I should be very glad if the explanations made in this article result in dispelling some of the errors prevailing in this country in regard to the conditions of labor in Mexico; and I hope that, in case restrictions against Mexican trade are discussed, they will not be urged on the ground that our articles are produced with peon labor. I sincerely hope that both countries, instead of acting in a manner contrary to the ends of nature, which has placed the one beside the other, and has given them different climates, productions, and possibilities, will co-operate with the purpose of nature, and not interpose other obstacles to reciprocal trade than those that are absolutely necessary for their mutual well-being and progress.