

[Continued from the First Page] In the prices of commodities, is fully shown in the following table:—

Table with columns: ARTICLES, In 1860, In 1869, Per cent. Items include Flour, Beef, Pork, Ham, Butter, Potatoes, Rice, Beans, Milk, Tea, Coffee, Sugar, Coal, Wood, and various oils.

By an examination of the above table it will be seen that the average price of the leading articles of domestic consumption in the cities of Lowell and Lawrence for the years 1868-9, over 1860 (making allowance for the varying rates of exchange), is somewhat in excess of 90 (90.45) per cent., but the average is proportioned to the relative importance of the several articles entering into consumption—the quantity and value of flour and meat consumed, for example, being disproportionate to the quantity of sugar, coffee, and firewood—the advance would be found to stand at even a much higher figure.

Again, the following letters, selected from a very large number which have been directly or indirectly communicated, are especially interesting, as showing the individual experiences of workingmen:—

"New York, February, 1869.—Sir:—I perceive that Mr. Greeley has revived the important question of the proportion which wages bear to the cost of living. I am a railroad conductor, and have been so for a number of years. In 1859 my weekly expenses were in a family were as follows, in a letter contrasted with which I give you also the present prices:—

Butter, 50 cts per lb. 35 cts Smoked Beef, 50 cts per lb. 80 cts Milk, 10 cts per qt. 12 cts Beef, 10 cts per lb. 15 cts Onions, 7 cts per qt. 10 cts Coffee, 18 cts per lb. 24 cts Flour, 12 cts per lb. 21 cts Sugar, 12 cts per lb. 15 cts Tea, 14 cts per lb. 24 cts Cabbages 5 per hd. 50 cts Crackers 6 per lb. 12 cts Wood, 5-00 per ton. 9-50 Syrup, 14 cts per qt. 24 cts Coal, 2-25 per ton. 3-50 Cheese, 12 cts per lb. 15 cts Flour, 4-25 per ton. 5-00

"Now, my weekly expenses ten years ago, exclusive of fuel and rent, amounted to \$2.01; the same articles to-day cost me \$3.97; general average advance, 87 per cent. Wages in 1859, \$10 a week; in 1869, \$12 a week. In 1859, I had round money, then, my expenses per month in 1859 were \$10.50; income, \$40; balance for clothing and incidentals, \$29.50, or \$270 per annum for five of us. My expenses now are \$33.76 for five of us, or \$6.75 per month, or \$81.12 per annum. My income now is \$45 per month, or \$540 a year for clothing and incidentals. J. MACDONALD, New York."

The condition of tailors in large cities employed on clothing is strikingly illustrated by the following report of the New York World, February 1, 1869:—"A large meeting of that class of tailors who make clothing sold ready made was held at the Astor Hotel, on the 29th inst. The object was to secure, if possible, an advance on the present wages paid those tradesmen. The audience must have numbered more than a thousand, and were thoroughly unanimous. The speeches were substantially to the effect that the tailor's condition was worse than that of the paper on Blackwell's Island, having, after working eighteen hours per day, hardly wages sufficient to procure food for his family. The bricklayer only worked ten hours per day, and he received, frequently, \$5; while the tailor would have to work nearly a week for that sum. This class of tailors was even more unfortunate than the shop or cabinet makers, who, in many cases, could make \$25 per week. The wages of tailors who do the clothing sold ready-made seldom amounted to over \$12 per week. They could live comparatively like princes on their ready wages have not advanced with the prices of food."

It is also to be here noted, that the above evidence respecting the condition of the working people in the large cities of the eastern section of our country receives the corroboration of Mr. Horace Greeley. Thus, in a recent published communication on the condition of labor in New York, Mr. Greeley says:—"The supposed excess of wages in cities is fallacious in misleading on the point of expense of living in cities, especially this one, is far higher than is or well can be realized in the country. A family of four persons can hardly live decently in less than three rooms; and the rent on the country receives the benefit of the entire wages of an average mechanic in the country. When everything eaten, drank (except water), or worn must be bought piecemeal at high prices, the cost of living becomes enormous. The mechanic who is single, and has only himself to support, ought to deposit at least a third of their wages in some savings bank each pay day, though very few of them do so. They might save, but do not; those who have families to support rarely do better than to pay their way. Only very able, very energetic, or very frugal persons save money in a great city."

It will be observed that the above evidence relative to the comparative prices of wages and commodities is based upon the report of experience in large cities mainly. To prove, however, that the condition of affairs is the same in the sparsely populated districts of the eastern sections of our country, the detailed results of an investigation recently instituted in the town of North Brookfield, Massachusetts, are here submitted. This town, situated in the central portion of the State, and at a distance from any railroad or dense centre of population, is the seat of a very busy and profitable shoe industry, employing about a thousand hands, male and female, and constituting, apart from agriculture, the main dependence for occupation to the local population.

The investigation was made for the purpose of testing the conclusions of the Commissioner, by a well known citizen of the town, the Hon. Amasa Walker, whose name is a sufficient guarantee for the entire fairness and accuracy of all the statements contained in the following letter:—"To the Special Commissioner of the Revenue. Sir:—The following table, based on the record of ordinary and actual sales, will show you the comparative prices of the leading commodities of domestic consumption in the town of North Brookfield, Mass., in the summers of 1860 and of 1868:—

Table with columns: Commodities, Prices in 1860, Prices in 1868, Percentage of Increase. Items include Beefsteaks, Beef, Pork, Lamb, Hams, Butter, Potatoes, Rice, Beans, Milk, Eggs, Coal, Sugar, and various oils.

An average advance in cost of above quantities from 1860 to 1868, 98.7 per cent.

"The following table will also show you the advance in the prices of labor in the boot and shoe manufacturing establishment of E. and A. H. Bateheller & Co., in the same town, during the years 1860 and 1868, respectively:—

Table with columns: 1860, 1868, Advance. Items include Don't move hands per hour, Piece Work, Russel brogans per pair, Black brogans per pair, Crimping and treeling boots, per pair.

Average advance in the price of labor, estimating equal quantities of each kind, 31.6 per cent.

"From the foregoing statement it appears that the commodities enumerated in the quantities currently used in the common laborer's working ten hours a day at 160 cents per hour, the labor of 20-3 days in 1860, while in 1868, when receiving 20 cents an hour, he would have been obliged to work 34 1/2 days in order to purchase the same amount of goods. This equates to 29 1/2 per cent. advance, or 100 per cent. compared with 1860, exhibits a loss of 41 per cent.—that is, where he then received 100 (reckoned in articles to eat, drink, and wear) for his labor, he now receives but 59 cents."

"In the case of the brogan maker, the best paid laborer mentioned, the loss is not so heavy, but still very severe. His pay has advanced from 15 to 21 cents per pair. To purchase the same quantity of goods he would have been obliged in 1868 to have been obliged to make 325 pairs in 1860, only 229 pairs

A loss in the making of 96 pairs = 7.6, so much work to be done before the workman receives the same amount of flour, meat, etc., as in 1860. This equates to 29 1/2 per cent.; or, in other words, when in 1860 he received 100 he now receives but 70.8 cents."

"Rents have greatly increased, but to what precise extent cannot be so readily ascertained in the case of commodities. The advance cannot be less than about 65 per cent. "Fuel has advanced—say, wood from \$5 to \$7 per cord, coal from \$7 to \$12 per ton—an average of about 60 per cent. "The prices of commodities I have ascertained by a personal examination of the books of one of the principal dealers, and am satisfied that they are correct not only from the showing of the accounts, but from my general knowledge of the market."

"The rates of labor have been obtained from direct inquiry of the largest boot and shoe manufacturing concern in the State, and are undoubtedly accurate and reliable."

"North Brookfield, Mass., Feb. 2, 1869."

Let us now apply the lesson of this experience. On an average, every American workingman who is married, may be supposed to support four persons besides himself. Supporting the cost to be the same as in the Community—and it probably must be more, under retail prices, to secure the same degree of comfort—it will require nearly \$5 (\$24.25) per week. It requires, therefore, a very secure position of American workmen earn that amount? How many do not obtain more than two thirds as much?

The Commissioner, from an inability to obtain sufficient reliable evidence, did not, in his report that the conclusions arrived at in respect to prices and the condition of labor throughout the Eastern and Middle States applied equally and so extensively at the West. So far, however, as the Eastern States are concerned, it tends to show that like causes have everywhere tended to produce like effects. A single example may be added, viz.: the report of a very careful investigation instituted in Vermont, and referred to in the report of the Commissioner for that year, in respect to the relative advance in the price of commodities and of labor in a Western manufacturing town in the centre of a rich agricultural district—the town of Cavendish, State of Vermont. This investigation showed that while the advance in wages employed in the manufacture of agricultural machinery was from 55 to 60 per cent. in Vermont, the advance in the cost of living, as deduced from the prices of sixteen of the leading articles of domestic consumption, viz.: flour, corn, meal, buckwheat flour, beef, butter, eggs, potatoes, apples, onions, dried apples, coffee, sugar, syrup, molasses, and maulins, showed an average increase of about 130 per cent.

The average increase in the rate of wages paid to the laborer engaged in the manufacture of agricultural implements in the same town, during the period of years under comparison, was also shown to have been 57 1/2 per cent.

But I am well aware that you will endeavor to answer this new evidence as you have done in the evidence presented in the report, by the assertion that labor is immeasurably better employed at the present time than it was in 1860. This answer, however, is far more specious than the former. The assertion of large numbers of men to the army, created in many departments of industry a deficiency of skilled workmen, which has not to this day been fully supplied. If, therefore, certain specialties of industry are more profitable than taken as the standard, it might be expected that labor is more fully employed in 1869 than it was in 1860. There has been, furthermore, a large increase in what may be termed "unproductive" population, as well as a large increase of population; consequently the specific number of laborers of all kinds employed throughout the Northern States is unquestionably much larger than in 1860. But that labor is more fully employed in 1869 than in 1860, is now immeasurably more fully employed than in 1869 and 1860, is an assertion not supported by any sufficient evidence; the two latter years having been, not as represented by you, the darkest periods ever seen by the laboring people of America; but really the two most prosperous years that the nation has ever experienced. Under this head I propose to submit some evidence.

The report of the General Superintendent of the city of Philadelphia shows that the net amount expended under their direction was \$250,789 for the year 1856; \$259,445 for 1859; \$230,517 for 1860; and \$423,868 for 1867. The number of persons relieved is given, on their report, as 104,642, as compared with 85,232 for the year 1867. The present population of Philadelphia may be estimated at about 750,000; of this number 378,000 live in the city of Philadelphia on the 31st of January, 1869, as before stated. 104,642 persons received relief on account of poverty during the year. It, therefore, appears that during the year 1868, 106,260 (or one person out of every 14 in the city of Philadelphia) were wholly or partially incapable of self-support—a circumstance that does not tell strongly in favor of a great material prosperity on the part of the people!

The Commissioner, furthermore, agrees that in the city of New York the number of persons seeking employment, and the demands for relief on behalf of the poor, have never been so great as during the past winter.

The following extracts from letters recently addressed to the Commissioner by leading manufacturers in various sections of the country furnish further evidence in respect to the relative condition of labor and wages, which can be better understood by the following letter:—"COLT'S FIRE ARMS MANUFACTURING COMPANY, HARTFORD, CONN., March 4, 1869.—"To the Special Commissioner of Revenue—Sir:—So far as our memory serves us, we would say that we have at the present time a somewhat larger number of applicants for work at our works than we have at any time since we have been in business than in 1860. The wages paid by us at present are about fifty (50) per cent. above the prices paid in 1860."

"OFFICE GENERAL SUPERINTENDENT, BUFFALO AND ERIE RAILROAD COMPANY, BUFFALO, N. Y., March 16, 1869.—"Our present prices are now only 30 to 40 per cent. higher than in 1860, and we have no difficulty in procuring all that we require at these rates."

"PRESIDENT, E. I., March 16, 1869.—"The cost of labor with us since 1860 has advanced from 60 to 70 per cent., but it has not kept pace with the increased cost of living during the time, and we feel that either the former must advance

"Those who perform piece-work cannot rely upon constant employment as those who work by the hour, which accounts for the difference in price."

father or the latter soon decline, to enable our operatives to live as well as formerly.

"W. G. AWEML, President "American Screw Company," "CITY POINT MACHINERY WORKS, Boston, March 16, 1869.—I have had compiled from my books an accurate statement that the average number of men employed in my works during the first six months of the year 1869 was 358 1-13, while the average number employed during the corresponding period just closed was but 52 2-13, with very little prospect of improvement until some alteration is made in the tariff laws relative to repairing the duties on raw materials and the necessaries of life."

"HARRISON LORING, New York, March 6, 1869.—In answer to the statement that labor is now immeasurably more fully employed at an advance of from 80 to 100 per cent. over the wages of 1860, we would state that in our branch of business is not so. For two years past we have been employing fewer men, and at some seasons of the year, we have been running short of men. The wages of our men, as compared with 1860, are only 25 per cent. increase."

"CAR BUILDERS, No. 47 East 27th Street," "BRIDGEFORD, CONN., March 3, 1869.—"Sir:—We employ more labor in our business than in 1860, but the advance of wages is only 80 or 100 per cent. above that rate. Probably 50 per cent. would be nearer correct."

"WHEELER & WILSON," "Sewing Machine Company," "PENN (IRON) WORKS, Philadelphia, March 4, 1869.—At present labor seems fully occupied, judging from the very few applications made for positions. The advance of wages has not been over 60 per cent."

"MEYER & LEVY," "March 9, 1869.—"We employ more men in our branch of business is unquestionably more fully employed now than in 1860. An examination of our prices now paid for labor shows an increase of between 40 and 50 per cent. over the prices of 1860."

"IRON WORKS, HARTFORD, CONN., March 8, 1869.—Investigation shows that the average number of men employed in our works from September, 1859, to the present time, is not greater than in the same months of 1868 and 1869; wages about one-third greater at the latter period than during the former."

"PHILADELPHIA, March 9, 1869.—"Skilled labor in our business is more fully employed than it was in 1860, at an advance of wages equal to from 60 to 90 per cent."

"STUART, PETERSON & CO., "Manufacturers of Tin and Brass Goods, "OFFICE ASSISTANT SUPERINTENDENT P. R. R., ALTONA, Pa., March 19, 1869.—We have now a great many applications for common labor, but few for skilled labor. The former are mostly from other sections of the country, where they have been thrown out of their regular employments by the stoppage of the manufacturing, or by a reduction of wages. The latter are mostly mechanics required on railroads; and all they could do for us would be common labor. The percentage of advances in labor in 1868 over 1860, named by you in your report (viz.: 80 to 100 per cent.), is not correct. The average advance for common labor \$1 per day, and are now paying \$1 20. Yours, etc., JOHN RILEY, "Assistant Superintendent."

"How could seem as if no further evidence could be required to prove that the statements made by the Commissioner in his report respecting the comparative average prices in labor and commodities in 1860 and 1867-8 were not, as charged by you, "skilfully manipulated" and "garbled," but were in all respects fair and truthful.

I come next to the consideration of the statistics of life insurance and savings banks, which have been referred to in the report of the Commissioner in respect to the comparative condition of our country was in all respects better in 1867-68 than in 1860, or, indeed, than at any former period. A very slight examination of the statistics of the life insurance companies tends to show that you have failed to comprehend their true meaning and significance.

"Life Insurance.—In respect to life insurance, the case is simply this:—In 1860, the system throughout the country. There were also but comparatively few companies, and the majority of those were of recent organization. In 1867-8, however, the system had become well established, and the number of companies were greatly multiplied—those of New York alone having increased from eight in 1859 to thirty-four in 1868; while the competition for business had become so keen, that the number of agents, who, stimulated to effort by liberal commissions, scoured the country in every direction, and by personal appeal and opportunity induced applications for policies. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the number of policies issued during the period under consideration, is therefore, a very great increase. It is not, however, to be wondered at, that you attempt to prove that the performance of statistics of this character, tending to prove a material change for the better in the condition of the masses of the people during the period under consideration, is therefore, a very great increase. It is not, however, to be wondered at, that you attempt to prove that the ratio of disease and mortality throughout the country had diminished, because of the unexampled sales by travelling agents of certain popular works on temperance and health, and the fact that many of those who take out policies of life insurance in the Eastern States, but a very small proportion belong to that class whose prosperity is the most sure index of the prosperity of the people, viz.: the savings banks of the country. In like manner the statistics of savings banks are referred to by you at length, as showing a highly prosperous condition of the masses. Properly considered, however, they indicate a very different state of things. The first, and almost the only fact, which arrests the attention of a mere superficial observer in examining these statistics, is a large apparent increase in deposits from 1860 to 1867 or 1868; and this fact you have overlooked. The accumulation will at once show that a very great part of the apparent accumulation referred to is mere inflation. For example, let us take the case of Massachusetts, where the statistics are favorable:—

In 1860 the savings bank deposits in this State were \$45,664,000 In 1867, in currency, \$80,451,683, or in gold, at 135 " 59,579,000 Increase in seven years \$34,825,000 Or \$4,397,000 less than simple interest (gold) for seven years on the aggregate of 1860 were not made good in 1867, if we reckon only their simple natural increase at interest; or, in other words, it has been found that the sum in the possession of the depositors of savings banks (not counting withdrawals) was expected in view of the sum they already had in 1860.

It is evident that some cause had eaten into the accumulation which existed seven years previously, and had occasioned the withdrawal of portions of that accumulation. Of course, it was to be expected that withdrawals would take place, but in an ordinary condition of affairs the new deposits would certainly equal those which would be withdrawn, and in an advance of such a nature as this we do not find this to be the case. On the contrary, the laboring classes, so far as they are represented by the depositors of 1860, had not been able to keep at interest the sum (reckoned in gold) which they already had in 1860. They have been either less frugal or more unfortunate than in 1860 fairly to be expected.

This, be it observed, is calculating the natural increase at simple interest. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that the sum in the possession of the depositors in 1860 was not made good in 1867, if we reckon only their simple natural increase at interest; or, in other words, it has been found that the sum in the possession of the depositors of savings banks (not counting withdrawals) was expected in view of the sum they already had in 1860.

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annual increase from 1850 to 1860 with the average from 1860 to 1867. Thus, from 1850 to 1860 the deposits increased at an average annual rate of 12 per cent. (gold), while from 1860 to 1867 the annual average was only 8 1/2 per cent. currency, or 4 1-13 per cent. gold. During the years 1859 and 1860, moreover, the very years you have described "as the darkest periods ever seen by the laboring people of America," the deposits in the savings banks, not only in Massachusetts, but of all the other States, increased in a ratio that has almost no precedent in the history of the country."

But I beg of you to observe, further, that if the total sum of \$80,451,683—the amount of the currency deposits in the savings banks of Massachusetts in 1867—were reduced to the proportions which it truly bears, when compared with beef, bread, clothes, or rents—which the laboring people of Massachusetts wants money for—it would be found that the workman's investment in a savings bank, under your regime was very much like what Mr. Johnson wished a capitalist's investment in Government bonds to be. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that a profound sense of thankfulness that even the principal was recoverable at the maturity of the promissory obligation. In order to render this fact perfectly apparent to you, let us reduce the total sum of \$80,451,683, to the amount of the currency deposits in the savings banks of Massachusetts in 1867—were reduced to the proportions which it truly bears, when compared with beef, bread, clothes, or rents—which the laboring people of Massachusetts wants money for—it would be found that the workman's investment in a savings bank, under your regime was very much like what Mr. Johnson wished a capitalist's investment in Government bonds to be. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that a profound sense of thankfulness that even the principal was recoverable at the maturity of the promissory obligation. 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