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—BY—
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The "Pluck-Me Stores."

The rancorous company store system for defrauding miners and other workmen has never operated so extensively in Pennsylvania as at the present time, and there never was less pretext for it. With the increase of importations of labor from Russia, Poland and other portions of Eastern Europe into the mining regions, the "pluck-me stores" system has become so much extended that cash payments of wages are becoming rare exceptions.

Through carelessness or by design the law requiring semi-monthly payments of wages in cash provides no adequate means of enforcement; and as mine-owners and manufacturers fear no penalty, they treat the law with contempt. By the company store system they are enabled to filch not less than 20 per cent from the workmen who are subjected to it. What makes the system all the more cruel and demoralizing is the fact that forehand workingmen who demand payment in cash find it difficult to obtain employment where the "pluck-me stores" exist. Thus a penalty is put upon economy and thrift, and a premium (such as it is) is given to the unthrifty who are willing to spend their wages at the company store and ask no questions about prices and qualities of commodities. In truth, the victims of this system, whose currency is a monthly pass-book, rarely learn the cash prices of commodities.

An amendment is before the Legislature to cure the defects in the present law, so as to enable workmen in the mines and manufactories of Pennsylvania to receive their wages in cash. This amendment ought to be passed. It is true that the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania has decided that such legislation is in violation of the right of private contract. But Courts make progress with the rest of the community. This company store system for filching honest labor of its earnings is as much in violation of public policy as would be a contract to pay an auctioneer a bribe to buy a horse. When a workman earns his wages he should be paid in cash, according to contract, and not in store truck at 20 per cent advance on cash prices. Let this amendment be passed again and again, if necessary, until the Legislature recognize that the company store system is in violation of public policy, and therefore no longer to be tolerated in Pennsylvania.—*Phila. Record.*

The Postal Telegraph.

The House Committee on Post Offices and Post Roads—the same committee which deferred and delayed action on the Louisiana Lottery bill until its Chairman, General Bingham, yielded to rising public indignation—has defeated a postal telegraph in the present Congress by laying the bill providing for it on the table by 6 to 5.

This ends this reform now. Neither public sentiment nor public need, neither facts nor arguments, neither the plea of the Postmaster General nor the pressure of newspapers has availed with the committee. After months of delay, which brought the measure to point where its passage was well-nigh impracticable, the committee has summarily defeated it. However public opinion may demand this measure, this avails nothing within the narrow circle of the House Post Office Committee, where the influences opposed to this great reform are potent to stave it.

This has gone on long. It will not go on forever. Twenty years have passed since this subject was first agitated, fifteen years since Mr. Sedgwick's purchase of the English line set the example, and ten since the success of this purchase decided most thinking men in favor of a Government telegraph. The decade has seen a steady advance in the demand.

Wanamaker has gone further than any previous Postmaster General in urging it. He has proposed a speedy method of beginning this great reform. It involves no expense for plant and adds nothing to patronage. It simply enables the Government to use telegraph lines for messages as it now uses railroads for the transportation of letters and newspapers by contracting for their delivery. Such a plan is available in the hands of private parties the profitable ownership of the telegraph plant of the country. These owners have seen fit to defeat the plan.

The Government may decide some day to open its own telegraph lines. There is no contract, express or implied, to prevent it. Free competition, as Gould and the telegraph monopoly are always saying, can be trusted to protect the public. The public will suddenly conclude that it can, and set to work to provide it.

This has always been the history of the past. When moderate reforms are rejected more drastic reforms succeed. This rejection is the most unwise step which could have been taken in the interest of existing telegraph companies.

The Half-Holiday Bill.

The proposal under discussion at Harrisburg to establish by law a half-holiday on Saturday should be regarded in the light of such experience as other communities have undergone. It is an experiment which some think will work very well, while others are convinced it will only result in waste of time. Before deciding either for or against the experiment, why not ask others who have tried it as to results. Our neighbors of New York have been indulging in a Saturday half-holiday for several years past; why not inquire of them how they like it as far as they have got? There are, undoubtedly, advantages as well as disadvantages to be looked for; but it is reasonable to presume that the practical working of the Half-holiday law in New York has demonstrated a preponderance of loss or of gain by this time, and it should be a comparatively easy matter to ascertain whether the majority of the people affected by the law are satisfied or dissatisfied with its operation. It will at least do no harm to ask.—*Et.*

Old newspapers for sale.

Against the Convention.

A Harrisburg correspondent of a Philadelphia paper gives warning that a strong effort will be made by the corporations to defeat the Constitutional Convention, by which the proposed reform in balloting can only be effected thoroughly. He says:

There is a powerful public and political sentiment behind the demand for a Constitutional Convention, but there is a silent and still more powerful opposition against it, which comes from the corporation power of the State. The people don't like the tinkering with the organic law of the State. The Constitution of '74 was never wanted by them, and they did their level best and squandered a great many thousand dollars to beat it at the polls. They employ the highest legal talent to pick it to pieces; they subsidized the newspapers to cast a doubt upon it, and in Philadelphia they organized one of the most colossal schemes of election bribery the world has probably ever seen to count it out. The people were for the new Constitution, however, and voted so uniformly for it that the gang was simply overwhelmed and buried.

One of the most potent factors that is working in the direction of a constitutional convention is the cry for ballot reform. If this is not given the people by this Republican Legislature the Republican party is destined to feel it materially. If the corporation powers are higher than the dictum of the politicians, is opposed to a convention there will be none. A number of radical changes are demanded in the present constitution. Among these is the elimination of the system of ballot numbering, so that the Australian system can be introduced. The system of biennial Legislatures should be abolished so that there shall be a short session every year, and the present representation of the House cut down somewhat. The old system of special legislation should be restored, so that it would be possible to pass a law that only has a bearing upon a certain locality without making it apply to the entire State.

State Chairman Kerr is taking a keen interest in the proposition for a convention, and has been here and looked over the ground. He has reached the conclusion that the House will largely favor it, but that it will be halted in the Senate. The Democrats will vote almost to man for the convention, and the responsibility for its defeat, if it shall be defeated, will rest upon the Republican party.

The Immigration Problem.

The question of restricting immigration is interesting as it is puzzling. How to keep out the objectionable and to admit the desirable immigrants, or rather how to tell who are and who are not objectionable is not an easy matter by any means. No particular nationality can be put down as totally desirable or totally undesirable, but it is a fact that as a rule the people of one country make better citizens than the people of another, and the figures of 1890 seem to show that the generally undesirable immigrants are increasing in numbers while the generally desirable immigrants are decreasing. The serious aspect of the situation is that the tide of German, English, Scotch, Swiss and Scandinavian arrivals have been checked, while the Slavic and Italian tide is decidedly on the increase. There are many good people among the Italians and Slavonic emigrants, but the percentage of bad is much larger than it is among the others mentioned.

In round numbers, 491,000 immigrants landed in this country in 1890, an increase of 20 per cent over the total of the preceding year. Italy sent 62,000, an increase of considerably over 100 per cent; Poland contributed 20,000, an increase of 5,000 over 1889, while Hungary gained over 9,000, Russia 7,000, Austria 6,500 and Bohemia over 5,000. The total gains from these countries were about 76,000, or 12,000 more than the net gain on the entire immigration from all the countries combined. The falling off was of English, Irish, Scotch, Netherlands and Swiss, while that of Germany just about held its own, with a total of 96,000. These figures show that the increase in immigration last year was among the people whom we have considered less desirable.—*Phila. Call.*

Only One Year More to Live.

Experience shows that the American people rarely occupy themselves with more than one great political question at a time. The tariff issue is in the door, and they will remain until brought to a permanent settlement in harmony with public interest and opinion. In the next House one or more measures removing tariff burdens and inequities will be passed by an overwhelming majority and sent to the Senate. Whether the Senate shall concur in the action of the House by a narrow majority or not, Tariff Reform will be the overshadowing issue in 1892. The Republicans cannot escape from the issue if they would, and the Democrats would not if they could.

It would be rash, of course, to base any political calculations on so ill-defined an element as the Farmers' Alliance. But it may be safely assumed that the Western farmers will not return to the Republican party while the tariff issue shall remain undetermined. As to the South, the Republicans have kindly arrested the danger of Democratic disintegration in that region by interposing the Force bill. Should the Farmers' Alliance, however, organize a third party, it might possibly carry enough Western States to the election for President into the next House, where the Democrats would have an easy victory. But with Tariff Reform as the paramount issue, and with no blunders in the next Congress to provoke a popular reaction, the prospect is that the Republican party will be completely annihilated in 1892 as was its Wig predecessor forty years ago. In the new political alignment that would then take place no necessity would arise for organizing a third party in opposition to the Democracy. The new party would step into the place left vacant by the Republicans.—*Record.*

"On The Trial Of Dan'l Boone."

The Indians accompanying "On the Trail, or Dan'l Boone" company are almost as interesting a feature as their famous Challenge team. They are genuine red sons of the forest. The *Proctor Journal* says of them: "It is worth a visit to the Gaisty this week just to see the little Indian pappees used in the Indian encampment scene in 'On the Trail.' One, a little fellow not two years old, carries a tomahawk almost as big as himself; the other, not a year old, strapped to a board, leaning against a tree, laughs and coos after the most approved Indian fashion. They have been great pets with the ladies this week, many of whom have found their way back on the stage at the conclusion of the performance to pet the little ones, while the mother stood by on guard, but in spite of all her Indian stoicism, evidently very proud."

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