

Written for this Paper.

## WATCHMAN, WHAT OF THE NIGHT?

It fairly staggers a manufacturer to contemplate the industrial situation at the present time!—*Grocer's Criterion*.

Such is the editorial comment upon this "burning question," and yet in it scarcely an inkling of that situation is given, nor to any extent is there reason assigned for it, or solution offered.

Here and there, from other sources, the facts can be gleaned, if telegrams of strikes and controversy did not supersede the notices which come by regular issue of trade journals and a local press; it is evident that collision, resistance and blood are in the air, that riot and destruction may at any time gain the ascendancy, and if this should be the case, he would be a seer indeed who could determine the limits of such an event. The great strike in the coal districts is having effect on traffic by sea and land; steamships, railroads, factories and all industrial workshops are caught in that struggle, which is said to depend upon mine-owners and mine-workers, both of whom seek for and intend ascendancy, but after lengthy conference there seems only to be an increase of irritation, fierceness and determination. Just why mine-owners should refuse the retention of present wages or deny a trifling advance is something difficult to understand; and why coal should be hurried from English shipping ports and from Nova Scotia by steamers to meet—at increased prices—an unexpected demand here, is equally surprising; for ordinary men would naturally say that it was cheaper, easier and better to pay that advance to home labor, than to speculators from beyond the seas. In Illinois some mines have been fired, and in towns where the water supply depends on coal, every opportunity is given to incendiarism beyond control. The agents of coal mines which have supplied outgoing steamers from New York have negotiated for foreign coal, which can be brought in in unlimited quantities almost, and at near competing prices, seeing that other freight under business stagnation is limited beyond all past experience.

Markets of all kinds are depressed as well, yet there is in moneyed centers a continued and increasing amount of idle funds, albeit the government reserve (it is said) is, by gold shipments, again dwindling below the safety point, as financiers call it. As coal advances from scarcity, there is a closing down of factories and a discharge of men, which in addition to the strikers already out, makes the depression only more profound; and prospectively many thousands more will be added to those already existing, for railroads are taking off trains to economize in coal, and traffic is falling off in such proportion, that if long continued, will mean suspension and insolvency all through!

It is a curious feature of the times that some four thousand men are out on strike in the Pullman carriage works, where contention has hitherto been unknown. The strike of the silk weavers of Paterson, N. J., has continued for now three months, in which some ten thousand persons are

involved, with a loss of wages already amounting to over a million and a quarter dollars; while brick-workers, plumbers, painters and interdependent trades have been out for weeks at a season of the year when they are supposed to be in the full tide of labor, and accumulating a surplus for the certain idle days of winter. Then it is realized that stores are becoming depleted, that credit has passed its limits, and that wholesale and retail dealers are doing business on so conservative a basis that trade nearly amounts to a standstill, with manufacturing closed besides; so that supply is uncertain, for accumulation is not desired, and simple momentary supply will not keep the wheels going!

The outlook is discouraging, to some hopeless, and to all, one of great strain and intense anxiety.

In the mining districts of Pennsylvania and Ohio where there is an accumulating foreign element, serious troubles may occur at any moment, if not directly from the strike itself, at least from those who attempt to prevent non-union men from taking that labor refused by the strikers, save at the prices which they have already determined upon. Force, not only organized moral force, but that force which means violence and destruction, is becoming more familiar and less obnoxious to the laboring mind than ever before. Some things are done and others suggested, which would but a very little time ago, have seemed outrageous and in fact impossible.

Many remedies have been suggested but nothing decisive has been reached as yet. Representatives of labor and its combinations have interviewed managers and proprietors; but confabs have only intensified the opposition, notably with the coke furnace men in Pennsylvania at the Frick works, which seem more turbulent than others, and are in striking contrast with the course pursued in other countries at least. Two and a quarter millions is the estimated number now of strikers and idle industrial workers, which would seem to be a small percentage of the sixty-five millions of a population. But when those dependent upon this class are included, it must mean that near one-tenth of the whole are affected, outside of an immense number who undoubtedly sympathize in feeling, and are prepared to aid and abet their fellow-laborers; not knowing but that they may need reciprocal aid in an immediate future! When it is said that the three months' strike cost the silk weavers one and a quarter millions in wages it slides off the tongue glibly enough; but besides this there must have been considerable wage accumulation prior thereto, or credit, else collapse would have come earlier, though the result—nothing—might have been just the same.

This loss of productive labor is an important one to the nation, and it would seem that some national board of arbitration could entertain these disputes, and allow work to go on in the interim of discussion and conclusion. The main idea in opposition to this is said to be the lack of power in the enforcement of a decision. But surely this is less formidable than even liberty would indicate, for some moral

force would be inevitable to such a tribunal, and penalty of some kind would accrue to the non-acceptor!

The loss alluded to in one line of industrial action is however but a "drop in the bucket" of abortive effort and absolute loss, and it seems surprising that no brain, no sympathizer, no leader has as yet suggested that sacrifice intelligently applied would establish works or secure an interest in works already existing; so that labor in "boards of management" could be represented! One and a quarter million dollars would surely be potent in some section of silk manufacture, yet that amount is deliberately thrown away in vain or for unsuccessful self-defense! It is admitted that labor is unwilling for sacrifice save in its own conventional way. Even in Utah, where there is an unity of interest beyond that found outside, it is difficult to consolidate on this basis, or the working shoemakers might now have owned a larger factory than Z. C. M.I., they being the first to combine. But practice showed that when Saturday night came the majority wanted all they had earned, and had nothing for permanent investment. Many years' observation of strikes here and in Europe, including their cost and failure, have satisfied the writer that many classes of labor have had in their own hands the means of their redemption, but at the instance of demagogues, millions have been frittered away on a forlorn hope, and "the last state of that class has been worse than was the beginning!"

With a vast superfluous supply of labor it would seem that some defense could be secured from the suspension of the general immigration. Five or ten years would do much toward the needed assimilation of our redundant foreign element into the American mass. Those now here would in the meantime become more familiar with our institutions, with the unwisdom of European methods, and with the utility of the ballot box as a remedy for conditions, far superior to that of revolution or destruction! Politicians may fight shy of this, as of other things which would be politic but are not expedient from a party standpoint. But the emergency is not a partisan one. The nation's prosperity, nay its very life, may depend upon this solution of pressing questions, and it would be libelous to assume that there is that lack of brain or patriotism, which neither senses the situation nor dares to apply the remedy! That there are causes for every evil is beyond controversy, and that these are reachable and susceptible of removal is surely within the genius of this Republic. Who wants to think otherwise, or to look for the Stars and Stripes to go down in anarchy and blood—thus frustrating the hopes of millions who have looked westward to the home of liberty, counting on it as a beacon light to all the world, or as a savior by example and influence to the teeming millions, who with their fathers have been the victims of spoliation for ages in the past, and whose hopes for the present and future have centered upon "the land shadowing with wings!"

There have been 30,000 trout recently placed in Green river, Wyoming.