

Hard Times and Their Remedy.

Two business men one day met a friend who was not a business man. As he approached, one of the two said to the other—

"Let us obtain his views concerning the depression of business, which is now creating such hard times. He is not himself entangled in business; he is a disinterested outsider, an impartial observer. From his broad outlook over men and events, unbiassed by interest in any one absorbing subject, his candid judgment of the general difficulty is more likely to be correct than ours, we are so tied down to a narrow view of our personal interests."

The inquiry was made. The reply was substantially as follows:

There is much suffering in this country, as every one is aware, and for the general misfortune many remedies are proposed which ignore the cause. Everybody is looking ahead for relief without looking back to discover the true origin of the hard times, and to ascertain from that the sure correction for them.

This country was never more prosperous really than now; the only need is a clear perception of its actual condition, and the adaptation of its forces to this condition.

The remedy I shall propose is a pleasant one, as this suffering country is not really ill, but remarkably well; and the very evils which seem so heavy are the best indication of its thrift, its prodigious vitality, according to my diagnosis of the case; and I think you will agree with me.

The condition of affairs is this:

Vast numbers of men are out of employment. They are consuming and not producing. They desire work, but there is no work for them. Every branch of industry is full, and overflowing. There is a glut of every product, waiting to be consumed. Excessive accumulation had been growing for years, until it culminated in the fall of 1873. Since then labor has been reduced to the gauge of necessity, over production no longer goes on, and many thousand men are now without work. Their work is not needed, but they need work, for they need wages to obtain the necessities of life. Everything produced is produced in abundance by the workers now employed; and the accumulation of an immense over production continues on hand. What is the cause of this apparent evil? *Labor saving inventions.*

One man does the work of many men a few years ago. The rapid increase in production has filled the world with goods, for which there is no demand; yet many persons are destitute and cannot obtain them, for they cannot obtain work to earn money to buy them. Trade is thereby a little reduced; trade apprehends disaster, and practices strict economy itself, thus diminishing other business, and so all business decreases. The unemployed suffer, with too little to eat and not clothes enough to wear, while stores and warehouses are piled to their highest with surplus goods. There is over production and under consumption—the latter the result of the former.

Want of employment is the one great affliction under which this country is now suffering. The difference between gold and paper for money is not a feather's weight in importance compared with it. Common sense indicates and experience proves that so long as the people are honest, it makes little difference what medium of exchange is in use among them, common to them all, and fixed at a certain amount. The nation has gold as the medium of exchange in California, and paper elsewhere, and failures and panics everywhere among knaves and the unfortunate.

However preferable gold may be to paper money, specie payment is not the great need of this time, but employment for the unemployed. They are pointed to the unoccupied lands of the West, but their services are not required there. The people already in the West are sending East enough agricultural products for all. Where shall the unemployed thousands go? Europe is full. There is over-production, with the inconvenience and apparent evil of such a surfeit, throughout the civilized world. What shall the unemployed do? Shall they starve? They cannot live without the means to live. Shall they steal, or shall they be encouraged to exert a better influence upon the world by being furnished with work, wages; the

means of usefulness instead of degradation?

Month after month, year after year, the great idleness continues. The army of the unemployed is increasing in numbers. The amount of work they would do, and wish to do, is not done; is lost forever, a great stream of waste. No adequate measures are taken to utilize this labor, to prevent this needless suffering, to end this painful condition of unwilling idleness. Labor which would make an enormous showing, if performed, is not performed, and the whole nation feels the loss as well as the unemployed. Labor-saving inventions increase in number—as they should; laborers diminish in number, forced out into idleness, to avoid a still greater over production; and no new, great enterprises are engaged in, although to establish them is clearly the remedy for the condition of over production in the existing industries.

The unemployed groan with the hard times, and practise rigid economy from necessity. Their example is contagious, till even wealth complains of hard times, talks of the panic of two years ago, mistakes the real cause of the trouble, feels wary, reduces its expenditures, pinching everywhere; pinching its own nose off by refusing with its money to help relieve the oppression of over production, to revive the activity of business.

Capital hugs its hoarded treasures tighter, instead of boldly and sagaciously and manfully launching out into new enterprises to aid in restoring the equilibrium by giving employment to the unemployed.

The superficial among the journals treat the matter in the same narrow way; fail to analyze the difficulty and understand it, but in bewilderment yield to the general spirit, urging the contraction of all industries, cautioning their municipal governments, and State governments and national governments against employing too many men and thus spending too much money, for now times are hard. Instead of seeking to remove the cause of the continued hard times, they advocate a harder use of the tightening bands and remorseless screws which make times hard.

Corporations discharge all the employees they can dispense with, and cut down the wages of all they retain, because times are hard, and this is their method of helping to make times easier.

Wherever there is an opportunity for a firm to get along with one man less in their employ, they discharge one, turning him out to help swell the legion of the unemployed, sympathetically hoping that some time, some how, times will be easier than now. Public works are neglected, left unfinished, new ones are postponed; for times are hard, and therefore fewer men must be employed. This is economy—political economy! When a calamity comes, add to it. When distress prevails, increase it. This is the statesmanship of the time. This is the public and private policy now pursued throughout this country. Every one talks of the hard times, and almost every one strives to the best of his ability to make times harder. And so the trouble goes on, becoming worse and worse, with no prospect of relief so long as labor continues devoted solely to the limited industries now existing; with the certainty that the distress will not only grow, but will become chronic, and will develop the hideous issue belonging to a chronic complaint. The drift is steady in that direction, and if not soon averted by the beginning of new enterprises everywhere, to furnish employment to the unemployed, the legitimate outcome of this chronic idleness by wholesale will be deplorable.

What desperate efforts the astute politicians are making to discover in their political opponents the cause of the present business depression! Democrats arraign the Republicans, and Republicans censure the Democrats; hard money inflates and denounces soft money; paper money belittles gold; the outs and the ins dispute over the most puerile questions, for there is nothing of any importance between them; all are groping in the dark, searching in vain for a worthy issue, prating of imperfect administration while human nature is imperfect; looking everywhere but in the right direction to discern the plain cause of the business depression. Neither hard money nor soft money, nor the maladministration which is so harped upon, nor any

of the subjects of political controversy at this time, has anything whatever to do with the great affliction, want of employment, which of late years has so diminished the current of business. The fault is not in the Republican theory of government, or the Democratic theory of government. The difficulty is not theoretical, but practical. The question is an industrial question, and the difference between Republicanism and Democracy has had no bearing upon it yet.

The existing "hard times," when rightly understood, are evidence of unwonted prosperity suddenly checked.

When a prominent firm overreaches itself, and its break appals the whole business world, in the panic which ensues labor is thoughtlessly pinched and unmercifully hurt. Labor pinches in return, and the continued mutual pinching produces the continued mutual suffering. A change of course is the remedy.

The only cure for inactivity is activity.

If one man accidentally breaks his leg, it is no reason why all men should be paralyzed with fear, and hesitate to move lest they too should break their legs.

Two years ago last fall, in 1873, when this country was thriving as it had never thriven before, Jay Cooke & Co. made a mistake, tumbled, broke their financial legs, and in falling dragged a few others with them. What did the country do? Help them up as Californians lift their fallen comrades? No; every one stood still, expecting paralysis, and the pulse of business has never beaten with its normal impulse since. The want of confidence continues. Abandoned enterprises remain untouched. Business men expect to fall, and they will fall and continue to fall if capitalists are not soon led to bestir themselves, employ labor, and thus put in circulation money, the circulation of which, and not a change in its material, gives life to trade.

Inactivity and apprehension will accomplish nothing. Unless enterprise is dead the world is to go on! If enterprise is dead, what a rare power heaven vouchsafed to Jay Cooke—to be able to put an end to the progress of mankind!

With the rapid increase of labor-saving machinery it is perfectly clear that the scope of labor must be enlarged in order to utilize the labor which is forced out to seek other employment. New enterprises everywhere must be begun, or serious results will inevitably ensue from so much restive idleness and desperate poverty. The construction of great parks, the enlargement of water works, any and every work which is directly useful, will prove indirectly also a blessing.

If useful enterprises are not begun, projects of doubtful import will arise and will be carried forward. A war would employ the surplus labor and revive trade; but an unnecessary war leaves nothing to show for it afterwards but ruin. Construction is better than destruction. Whichever form of activity is inaugurated at this juncture will briskly rage, for every condition is favorable. Money in abundance is lying idle. Men in abundance are idle. They are anxiously waiting for something to do. The extra work now being performed in Philadelphia, in preparing for the Centennial Exhibition, is but a drop in the bucket! We have forty millions of people! Canada alongside is rioting to obtain bread. Canada has gold, but Canada wants employment. California has gold, but California suffers likewise.

To continue the existing narrow policy concerning industry would be to blast this country, as some European countries have been blasted, with roaming hordes of unprincipled idlers, human vultures, full-fledged outlaws, irredeemable bandits, their savagery intensified by the savage Indian climate. The only safeguard against that grizzly play of idleness is a speedy return to the normal condition of industry, with its steady growth, beginning with an immediate enlargement from the present contracted sphere of labor to its fullest scope. And this will include new enterprises, for the realm of industry naturally enlarges.

A general business confidence, a general resumption of industrial activity in all its branches, will cause a general revival of trade and general prosperity.

It is so great a work that no one man can do it, however enterpris-

ing. No one corporation, no one State, no one portion of the country can remove a difficulty which ramifies the whole. It is a general depression into which the wheels of business and labor have sunk and they can only be started again into brisk activity by a general movement, every man putting his shoulder to the wheel. As no one man alone can start those gigantic wheels, and as financial ruin would quickly come upon any one man or one set of men who might make the attempt, the National Government is the instrumentality through which the move should be inaugurated. Let Government, with its vast facilities, launch out boldly in the direction of the enlargement of industry, the profitable employment of famishing labor—and the movement will be begun. Nothing will be lost, everything will be gained. Let Government set the example by filling its workshops and encouraging labor by liberal appropriations for useful national enterprises in all parts of the country. The apparent burden upon taxpayers will prove a relief to taxpayers of the greater burden they now bear in the form of charity. It will be the paying of taxes for an equivalent, for work performed, instead of being a tax upon the pocket for individual beggary. The revival of business and labor which will follow will be an incalculable blessing without any additional cost. Let Government thus waken up industry out of its lethargy, start the wheels into brisk motion, and private enterprise will keep them going.

To insure the resumption of business and labor the only incentive required is the start.

If all the people could unite in a compact for that purpose, and would carry out the agreement, the start would be made, and immediate prosperity attend the movement. The people already are united in a compact represented by the National Government, and if the Government is of any use, let us use it. No greater subject demands its attention at this time. It is a matter of urgent importance; and if the Government, created by the people, for the service of the people, will do the people this service, it will be performing its highest function. It will be doing an appropriate work, a legitimate work, a necessary work in the interest of the people. The distress is national and requires a national remedy. —Galaxy.

SYMPATHY FOR CRIMINALS.—Mr. Lansing, Cashier of the Bakersfield Bank, robs it, lies about it, seeks to throw the suspicion of the crime upon innocent parties, reports through cowardice and fear of detection, confesses his felony and finds in the President and Directors of the bank, in the county officials and in Wells, Fargo & Co.'s Express Company, sympathizing friends, who are willing to condone his offense and excuse Mr. Lansing from that term in the State Prison to which his crime justly consigns him. A secret examination is had—and this implicates the magistrate; an insufficient bond is exacted of \$5,000—and this still further implicates the magistrate; the President of the bank goes on the bond, and Mr. Lansing is sympathized and condoned with as an unfortunate man.

We should be glad to know what is the secret spring that governs this eccentric conduct upon the part of good citizens in Kern county; we would be gratified to be let behind the curtain and have all this mystery explained. To us, at this distance from the scene, not having our sensibilities excited by any tender sentiments, Lansing seems to be but a vulgar criminal—a thief, a swindler, and his "conscience" seems to us but cowardice.

If this sentimentality shall extend to the Prosecuting Attorney, the Grand Jury, the District Judge and the Petit Jury, then all we have to say is, that Kern county is a very nice place and a most excellent locality in which to rob banks. —S. F. Chronicle.

—The weather is very precarious for cultivators of the soil just now. The storms keep off hardly long enough for the ground to get sufficiently dry for plowing or digging. This is one of the seasons that make farmers wish their fields had been plowed in the Fall, so that they could have harrowed in their early grain quickly any fine day.

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