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LABOR IN PENNSYLVANIA.

I.

THE population of Pennsylvania, by the last census, was 4,282,891, and in composition approximated more closely to the normal standard than most American States, males being to females as 213 to 214 (excluding decimals); native born to foreign born as 36 to 5, and white to colored as 419 to 8. This is a more nearly equal proportion of sexes than in any of the adjoining States; a smaller proportion of foreign born than in New Jersey, New York, or Ohio, and a smaller proportion of colored than in Delaware, Maryland, or West Virginia.

This population was distributed over an area one-third larger than Ireland, and within one-seventh as large as England, giving an average of but 95 to the square mile, as compared with 159 to the square mile in Ireland and 484 in England. There is here certainly no crowding, and such a population on such an area ought to be able to make good wages for themselves unless nature were exceptionally niggard. But, in point of fact, it may be doubted if there is on the earth's surface another area of 43,000 square miles, which, considering all things, is better fitted by nature to yield large returns to labor. With a temperate climate, with water communication with the Atlantic, the Great Lakes, and the Gulf of Mexico, with rich loamy valleys, and hills underlaid with iron and coal, Pennsylvania has also, in vast reservoirs of mineral oil and natural gas, what seem like the latest and most lavish of nature's contributions to man's service. In all the material of wealth she is, even on the surface, a rich State; but her surpassing natural resources lie below the surface. The stores of heat, light, and motive power, which the energy streaming from the sun for countless ages has accumulated beneath her soil, make Pennsylvania far richer to civilized man than would have been that favored spot in which, according to the old-world myth, the first laborer appeared—to make a living and rear a family without asking employment from any capitalist or dreaming of the need of a custom-house.

And, while in Pennsylvania nature has been so lavish in the materials and opportunities which she offers to labor, her people have not been satisfied, but have endeavored to supplement the gifts of the bountiful mother by invoking the protection of a paternal government. For a time longer than the oldest Pennsylvanian can remember, the great aim of Pennsylvania policy in the sisterhood of States has been the encouragement and protection of Pennsylvania labor. There is something almost touching in the devotion which even the rich and powerful have in Pennsylvania shown for the interests of the laborer. Great manufacturers, wealthy iron-masters, powerful combinations of employers, have seemed to forget all about themselves while they besought Congress to help labor. Nor has this devotion been unregarded. While nature has been most lavish in the materials and opportunities which she has provided for labor in Pennsylvania, Congress has also been most gracious, and the taxes that without compunction have been asked for the benefit of Pennsylvanian labor have been voted without stint. To satisfy Pennsylvania's plea for "the protection of labor," the whole foreign commerce of what would otherwise have been the greatest maritime nation of the world has been sacrificed, until now an American ship is becoming a curiosity on the deep sea; to give Pennsylvanians what upon their own showing is a scant profit of 50 cents per ton, the railways of the Pacific States are compelled to pay \$16 per ton more for rails,* while sections of the country that use no Pennsylvania coal must, to assure protection to Pennsylvania labor, pay on the coal they do use a duty larger than the cost of mining it.

But, in spite of the lavish gifts of the bountiful mother, and in spite of all the fatherly care of the General Government, the conditions of labor in Pennsylvania are anything but satisfactory, as is shown to the most heedless by the constant reports of strikes and labor troubles that come from that State.† Yet the great ma-

* Testimony of Mr. Joseph Wharton, representing several of the great iron and steel companies of Pennsylvania, before the Ways and Means Committee, March, 1886, against a reduction of duties. Mr. Wharton testified that English rails could be placed in San Francisco for \$25.84 per ton, exclusive of duty, or \$42.84 per ton, duty paid, while Pennsylvania rails cost in San Francisco \$42.42 per ton; and that this represented so low a rate of profit that a reduction of 50 cents per ton in the duty would take away the trade from the Pennsylvania makers. "In New Orleans," he added, "the conditions are nearly the same."

† Nothing like a record of these strikes is easily obtained; but I am told by

majority of these strikes are never heard of beyond the localities where they occur. Some of the strikes are trivial in extent, embracing only a single colliery or a single works, and continuing only for a few days. Others involve the cessation of work over wide districts and for long periods. Some of them occur for causes that seem light if not ridiculous—as, for instance, one protracted strike in an anthracite colliery which grew out of an edict that the miners should not keep goats, and which, having been ended by the removal of the “anti-goat” superintendent, has been celebrated by a local bard in the song of “Hopkins and the Goats.” Some of them could evidently have been easily avoided by anything like a spirit of mutual respect and conciliation, as, for instance, a recent strike in an iron works, precipitated by the imperious treatment of a delegation of workmen who had been deputed to present a grievance; some of them are doubtless provoked by employers with a view to their effects upon markets; but others, again, are well-considered attempts to force advances or reductions which involve differences too wide to be settled by any other appeal than the trial of strength, or rather of endurance—for the strike, when unaccompanied by violence, is simply a game of “starve-out,” a trial as to which of two parties will the longer submit to loss, and (on the part of the men) suffering.

Whatever may be thought of the policy of strikes (and there seems to be a growing feeling of their general impolicy on the part of at least large sections of Pennsylvania workmen), the fact that they so often occur shows anything but just and wholesome conditions in the relations of labor. Men dependent upon their daily labor do not strike for the sheer fun of striking, and even foolish and reckless strikes, when they occur in any number, indicate a chronic irritation that can only proceed from real grievances.

At the request of the editor of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW*, I have recently endeavored to learn something of the conditions of labor in Pennsylvania, particularly in her great mining industry. Mr. Thomas A. Armstrong, editor of the Pittsburgh “*Labor Tribune*,” the organ of the Western Pennsylvania coal and iron labor associations, that an examination of the files of his paper showed four hundred strikes officially reported during three months in 1881. Many of these strikes were in other States, yet, according to Mr. Armstrong, this count did not include anything like all the strikes that actually took place; nor yet was 1881 a specially “good year for strikes,” which have even increased since that time, climaxing apparently in the spring of this year.

tries, and to obtain from the laborers themselves their side of the story. In this and following papers I shall lay the results of this inquiry before the readers of the REVIEW as fully as the space at my disposal permits.

Any examination of the subject of work and wages will at once show how easy it is to convey a false impression with an appearance of exact statement. Thus, when for political purposes it is desired to show how much better off is the "highly paid American laborer" than "the pauper laborer of Europe," the favorite method (and this is pursued even in official documents), is to take the highest rate of wages paid in the particular occupation and assume that it indicates the earnings of the year. But not only are there large differences between wages paid in the same occupation in different localities even in the same State (and how very large are some of these differences in Pennsylvania I will hereafter show), but the rate of wages per day or per week will not give the true earnings unless the time of employment is also taken into consideration.

It is to the credit of the Pennsylvania Bureau of Industrial Statistics under its present head, Joel B. McCamant, of Pottsville, that it has endeavored to avoid such causes of misconception, and has laid more stress upon the important distinction between what it terms "theoretical wages" and actual earnings than to my knowledge has yet been given it by any of our statistical bureaus. In all respects, the reports of the Pennsylvania Bureau show a commendable desire to arrive at the facts without reference to their bearing upon theories, and it is to be regretted that its operations should be hampered by the meagerness of the appropriation made for its expenses.

Coal mining is, next to agriculture, the greatest of Pennsylvania industries, and, consequently, the greatest of her "protected" industries, employing, according to the estimates of the Bureau of Industrial Statistics, nearly 140,000 persons, of whom something over two-thirds are employed in the anthracite mines of the eastern part of the State, and something less than one-third in the bituminous mines of the western part.*

In the report of the Bureau for 1884, the "highest average wages" of miners on contract in the anthracite districts is given

* The figures for 1885 are, in anthracite mining, 95,055; bituminous mining, 44,006.

at \$2.70 per day, and for miners on wages \$2 per day; while in the bituminous region, the highest average wages are given at \$2 per day. What is meant by highest average wages is, the average obtained by excluding districts in which exceptionally low wages prevail, and "miners," as thus used, applies only to a part of those engaged in getting out coal—namely, to those who have charge of the operation of breaking out the coal. In addition to these are inside and outside laborers, whose highest average wages are given—in the anthracite districts at \$1.78 and \$1.40, and in the bituminous districts at \$1.75 and \$1.60, besides drivers and runners, slate-pickers, blacksmiths, carpenters, engineers; and in the coke districts, oven chargers and drawers.

But what prevents these average rates of wages from giving anything like a fair idea of real earnings is the lost time. This loss (exclusive of Sundays and holidays) amounted in 1884 to an average of 128 days in the anthracite and 110 days in the bituminous coal fields, and in 1885, to 111 days in the anthracite, and 112 in the bituminous.

The Bureau of Industrial Statistics makes the following comparison of theoretical and actual weekly wages for 1884, the estimates being based on the "*highest average wages paid*," and the average time of work during the year.

ANTHRACITE MINES.

	<i>Theoretical.</i>	<i>Actual.</i>
Miners on contract.....	\$16.20	\$8.84
Miners on wages.....	12.00	7.00
Laborers, inside.....	10.68	6.14
Laborers, outside.....	8.40	4.91
Boys.....	3.90	2.07
Drivers and runners.....	8.58	5.32
Firemen.....	9.48	5.75
Engineers.....	11.28	8.84
Blacksmiths.....	11.46	7.16
Slate-pickers, boss.....	9.30	5.60
Slate-pickers, boys.....	3.00	1.70

BITUMINOUS MINES.

	<i>Theoretical.</i>	<i>Actual.</i>
Miners.....	\$12.00	\$7.10
Laborers, inside.....	10.50	6.30
Laborers, outside.....	9.60	5.61
Boys.....	3.60	2.70
Drivers.....	10.50	6.20
Blacksmiths.....	12.00	7.20
Coke-oven chargers.....	10.20	6.04
Coke-oven drawers.....	9.90	5.68
Mine bosses.....	16.80	12.00
Carpenters.....	10.50	7.00

In the forthcoming report for 1885, it is estimated that the total amount returned as paid in wages in coal mining would, if divided equally between all returned as employed, give \$6.67 per week in anthracite mining and \$6.21 in bituminous mining. In this computation boys are, of course, averaged with men ; but, *per contra*, the report states that "there were at least 14,000 persons employed in coal mining who received wages out of the wage fund who are not reported among the average number of persons employed," so that this average, which substantially agrees with statements made by the miners themselves, is probably a close approximation to the earnings per adult. The miners themselves put their average earnings (for miners proper) at from \$35 to \$20 per month, according to locality.

The excess in the number of persons really employed over those returned, which is referred to by the Bureau, is due to the fact that the name of one person is sometimes carried on the pay-rolls where in reality more are employed. This custom accounts for the exceptionally high wages which are sometimes pointed to as evidence of what industrious miners can do. What seem like the large earnings of one man, are thus often, in reality, the earnings of a man and a boy, or of two men, and in one case of which I was told, in Westmoreland County, the credit on the pay-roll of \$86 to one man for a month's work proved upon inquiry to be in reality the earnings of four persons—the man himself, a boarder who worked with him, and his wife and daughter, whose pay for work done around the company's offices was lumped with his.

On the highest estimate that can be made the wages of the Pennsylvania coal miners are miserably low, especially when the character of the occupation is considered. For the coal miner (save when "stripping" is resorted to) works underground in a darkness "made visible" only by the dim rays of the lamp he carries in his hat. Oftentimes he works in places where it is impossible to stand upright. His clothes are constantly wet from the dripping of the rocks, and take what care he may he can hardly escape rheumatism. And besides this, is the risk of sudden dangers—of deadly fire-damp, of falling masses of rock, of unexpected explosions, or of being entombed alive, to starve or suffocate before aid can possibly come. Yet low as are the earnings of these miners, there are certain deductions which must be made from them to get at the true rewards of this hard and dangerous

labor. All miners working by contract, or at the rate of so much per ton (the usual way), must pay out of their earnings for the explosives they use, and for the sharpening of their tools, while all underground workers must pay for the oil and cotton they burn in their lamps. Further than this, the wages are largely paid, not in cash, but in the use of company tenements, and in goods furnished at high prices from "pluck-me" stores.

As a rule, when the operators of the mine control the surface, and where they are not brought into competition with the owners of closely adjacent land upon which stores or dwellings can be built, they will neither sell nor lease building sites, the control of the land giving them better control of their men. The employees are lodged in dreary, monotonous rows of company houses, divided by thin partitions into from two to four tenements of from two to four small rooms. These houses are of wood, built in a cheap and flimsy manner, usually unfinished inside and unpainted outside. The only evidence that there is such a thing as paint in the world (as for whitewash, that seems to be unknown) is generally the company number painted in bold figures; but in some rare cases the doors, and in still rarer cases the whole exterior, has at some time or other been treated to a coat of dull-colored mixture which serves as an apology for paint, and is probably dear to the Pennsylvania heart as a "home production," in the making of which the "pauper labor" of foreign parts has had no share. The rent of these houses differs on different estates, ranging from \$2.50 to \$9 per month—the average seeming to be about what is stated by the Bureau of Industrial Statistics, \$5 per month—and being deducted from the wages earned. This is now illegal in Pennsylvania, the law requiring the payment of wages once a month in cash or *cash orders*; but this, like other legal provisions for the protection of the tenant, is evaded by what the miners term "cut-throat leases," which every tenant of a company house is required to sign. By this cut-throat lease, in which the wife is sometimes required to join, the tenant gives authority for the stoppage of rent out of his wages, waives the benefit of the exemption laws, which reserve to the debtor a certain amount of household effects, and waives also the statutory notice of expulsion, giving legal authority for his eviction at any time upon five days' notice.

In these mining villages every one, therefore (with perhaps the

exception of a clergyman or two, for the owners generally give or lease lots for the erection of churches) is a tenant upon five days' notice. And the results of such tenancy may be seen. There is not the slightest effort at improvement or adornment. Though a few vegetables are frequently cultivated in a little patch at the back of the house, there is an utter absence of the trees, the shrubs, the flowering plants, which may make even the poorest cottage picturesque in summer, or relieve something of the winter bleakness. Men will not improve or adorn habitations from which they may be driven out at five days' notice, even though, as is frequently the case, they may continue to live along all their lives under such a precarious tenancy.

The mere aspect of the hamlets that in the anthracite fields of Pennsylvania stretch out from the tall "breakers," or in the bituminous regions cluster around the tipples, is to the last degree dreary and forbidding, even in the early summer when nature is in her glory. The impression they give is that of a hard, dull, monotonous struggle for mere existence; of human life reduced to little more than animal terms, and shorn of all that gives it dignity and grace and zest. They suggest the poverty-stricken hamlets of Ireland without being so picturesque.

Strange it seems when passing through the mining regions of Pennsylvania to come across newspaper articles on *Irish* landlordism or to read resolutions of Knights of Labor denouncing "land grabbing" in the Far West. If the Pennsylvanian wishes to see land-monopoly, he need cross neither the ocean nor the Mississippi. From many a point in his own State all of the world there is in sight is the legal property of one man or one corporation. All the other "free and independent" citizens of the commonwealth of Pennsylvania whom one sees there may be cut off at a word from the privilege of earning a living, and be thrown out of what they call their homes at five days' notice.

Traveling in Western Ireland four summers ago, I was arrested on "reasonable suspicion," and taken by a squad of policemen to the house of a resident landlord for examination. As the jaunting-car passed his lodge gates and rolled up a noble avenue toward a spacious mansion, it seemed to me the most striking contrast I had ever beheld—as though at the wave of some enchanter's wand we had left Connaught and entered some more favored country. The poverty, the squalor, the harsh bareness of the life that I had

been seeing, were all shut out by the high demesne walls, and in their stead were grand trees, great stretches of well-kept lawn, bright beds of flowers, buildings and their surroundings that gave every evidence of plenty and ease, and instead of bare-footed peasant women, handsomely dressed ladies playing croquet. All this came vividly back to me as, a few weeks since, after passing through a dreary, squalid street of company houses on the outskirts of Hazleton, I paused a little later and peered through the iron railings that fenced in the grounds and residence of their owner. *There* everything was bare and mean and hard, as though the homes of men were but places to eat and sleep in like the stables of horses. Save the company number, not a vestige of paint; not a springing flower or a blossoming shrub. *Here* beds of color that shamed the glory of Solomon's attire, palms from the hot-house contrasting with the foliage of native shade trees, and everything that betokened wealth and taste.

It is not only in what one sees, but in what one hears, that the same parallelism is suggested. Such stories as that I heard in one place, of how the owner of vast stretches of unoccupied land had refused even a site for a little cabin which his fellows proposed to build for a crippled miner who had fought through the war, remind one of the stories that across the sea he who listens to the plaint of the common people may hear. The gulf between landed and landless is not yet so wide, for our continent is broad, and is not yet quite all fenced in; but there is enough to suggest how the man who owns the land on which other men must live becomes at last in all things their master, and learns to look on them as but wealth-producing animals.

The power of the sole landlord enables the operator or superintendent to exercise such control as he cares to and may deem prudent. He may enact dog laws, goat laws, chicken laws, liquor laws, or any other laws that he pleases, short of the point of producing a general revolt; may regulate trade and control amusements. No stores are allowed that will interfere with the "pluck-me" store, and in one case brought under my observation a widow who lived in a little house put up and then abandoned by a former company was prohibited by the new lessee from selling the candies, tape, and shoe-strings by which she had managed to eke out a living. In some places no one is allowed to live in the village unless employed by the company, a young man born on the spot

and still residing with his parents, being compelled to leave if he goes to work elsewhere than for the "lord of the manor." The post-office and telegraph office are in the company store, and the miners often do not like to take labor papers and never think of telegraphing on labor matters. Any objectionable person can readily be got rid of without the need of assigning a reason. For instance, an acquaintance of mine in Carbon County told me how, some years ago, he had returned to the village where he had lived when a boy, and taken board with an old friend. Offended by an act of the superintendent which he deemed a piece of petty tyranny, he passed him one morning on the road without saluting. When he returned at night he found his host and hostess in consternation, the man having been informed that he would no longer be needed in the mine, and notified that he must within five days vacate the house in which he had lived for eight years. No reason had been assigned, and what the reason was they could not imagine. "I know what is the matter," said my informant, "and I will fix it." So preparing to depart, he went next morning to the company's office, and asking to see the superintendent, said, "There is no need for you to punish these people on my account. I will leave the place at once." He left, and the man and his wife are living there yet. Power of this kind is of course frequently used for good purposes. The quarrelsome and dissolute may be banished and liquor-selling prohibited. If liquor is purchased it must be from some traveling wagon or at a neighboring town.

This power of turning a whole population out of their homes at five days' notice is a tremendous weapon for compelling submission in case of a strike, and gives point to such threats as that which a great coal king is credited with during a strike some years since, "I will break this strike or turn Schuylkill County into a howling wilderness."* But though sometimes resorted to, and, as I write, a newspaper item tells of a wholesale eviction in a coal field in Illinois, where the same system prevails, it does not seem to be as freely resorted to on a large scale as one might expect. The explanation seems to be that the operators, even in cases where they do not find milder measures suffice, shrink from arousing the passions that would be engendered by a wholesale eviction, or fear that, having driven the laborers away, they might be troubled to get them back again. From whatever cause, the power of eviction

* He broke the strike.

seems in Pennsylvania to be more used to get rid of objectionable persons and make individuals subservient than to coerce bodies of men.

Company houses, though general, are not universal. Even where they exist, the Italians or Huns, now to be found in considerable numbers in the mining districts, are often permitted to put up little shanties of their own on ground-rent, with the stipulation that they are to work for the company. There are also some places in which native miners are permitted to build houses for themselves on monthly ground-rent. And in some places, generally where there is adjoining property on which lots can be bought, they are permitted or even encouraged to buy lots, the usual price seeming to be from \$100 to \$150 per lot, mineral rights being of course reserved.* But the possession of their own houses is for obvious reasons not generally desired by men who may at any time be thrown out of employment, and sometimes operates to make the miner even more dependent than if he lived in a company house, since if for any cause he loses work, he may be obliged to abandon or sacrifice his home.† Rather than do this, he sometimes adds to his day's work a walk of miles to and from the mines. And even though he may find work in a mine not far off, he is sometimes obliged to board up his own home and live in a company house, or else pay rent for one, whether he lives in it or not, the rent of their houses being considered by the companies as a rebate to which they are entitled on the cost of labor.

In England, the miner obtains free of charge what coal he needs for household use, and this was formerly the custom in Pennsylvania. Now, however, the rule is, that he must pay for it. In some places a monthly charge for coal—usually \$1, but sometimes \$2—is added to the rent, and, in addition, 60 or 75 cents per ton is charged for hauling. In other places, the miners pay for their coal at the rate of from \$2 to \$2.75 per ton.

It seems to be the universal custom that mining supplies—powder, fuses, oil, cotton, etc., must be bought of the company. As the miners put it, “If you go elsewhere to buy powder, you

* One cannot help noticing in all these small towns how much the price paid for land for living purposes exceeds its value for other purposes—being in reality a speculative or monopoly, rather than an economic, rent.

† One coal miner writes to the Pennsylvania Bureau that in the effort to keep in work he had to move five times during 1885.

must go elsewhere to burn it." And it seems to be as universal a custom for the company to charge the miners from twenty to one hundred per cent. more than the ordinary prices. The great corporations like the Reading and the Lehigh Valley Companies, which have so largely displaced individual operators in the anthracite coal regions give, however, some countenance to the saying "Lions do not catch mice," since whether from conscience, from disdain, or because their managers have been too busy with larger methods of extortion, they have not yet established company stores, but let their miners buy their household supplies where they please. With these exceptions, the company, or as the miners call it, the "pluck-me," store system is general in the Pennsylvania coal regions. The "pluck-me" store is not always kept by the company, but is sometimes farmed out or conceded to a separate firm, in which the superintendent or other members of the operating company have interests.

These "pluck-me" stores seem to well deserve the name the miners have given them, the prices charged in them running from 15 to 100 per cent. above ordinary retail rates, and probably averaging from 25 to 40 per cent.* Quality, too, is sometimes in inverse relation to price, as when a miner bitterly complained to me that while fresh roll butter could be bought for 25 cents a pound, the company store charged 45 cents a pound for butter "strong enough to pull a car up a slope." It is doubtless true that there are some company stores content to charge only ordinary prices, but in the course of conversations with miners representing pretty much all the mining districts of the State, I only heard of one. In this case the company store has passed to the widow of a deceased member of the mining firm, and this lady, who lives, I believe, in New York, has issued strict orders that prices shall not be higher than in ordinary stores.

From the store-keeper's stand-point, there can be no prettier business than the company store. It has all the economic advantages of the best co-operative store without any division of profits. There are no bad debts, no dead stock, no expenses for advertising or showing off goods, or in any way attracting custom. In

* From detailed statements of prices in a number of localities I do not think this too high an average. I heard in Hazleton of a store-keeper who made a bet with a friend that prices in company stores in that vicinity would average 45 per cent. above Hazleton prices, and on investigation won it.

purchasing, they know just what is wanted and can get the very lowest rates, and in selling have no competitors to introduce more taking goods or to cut prices. Charging ordinary rates, they would be very profitable, and charging such prices as they do, it is no wonder that they are looked on, by the smaller operators at least, as yielding no inconsiderable part of the profits of mining. In the bituminous region, it is said that the company that runs a store can afford if need be to sell coal at from a quarter to a half cent per bushel cheaper than the operator who has none, and were it not for their control of transportation, the great companies like the Reading could not sustain in the anthracite regions the competition of operators who thus get back a good part of the wages they pay their men.

There is no avowed compulsion in dealing with these stores, but it nevertheless as effectively exists. The operators would doubtless declare that the men are free to buy where they please, and that they only maintain the stores for the convenience of their employees. There are two things that *do* make it convenient for the men to deal at these stores. 1st. Where the company owns the land of the village no other store is allowed to be set up; and 2d, as the miners are only paid by the month, and that from two to three weeks after the end of the month, they are frequently unable to purchase elsewhere. But, in addition to this, it is generally well understood that men must make their purchases at the company stores, and if a man fails to do so he will receive a hint from one of the "bosses" (foremen), or be quietly informed at the end of the month that his services are no longer needed. I was told by one of the delegates to the Miners' Convention in Altoona of a case which occurred a few months ago in Elk County, where a miner's wife brought a basket with her into the company store. The store-keeper took occasion to raise the lid of the basket, and finding in it a purchase she had made at another store, her husband was the next day discharged without explanation, though the cause was well understood. Nor are such stories incredible. Men accustomed to believe in a pluck-me tariff are not likely to see much impropriety in a pluck-me store, and there is no difference in principle between the searching of a trunk to see that an American returning from abroad has not bought anything of low-price foreigners, and the inspection of a market-basket to see that a miner's wife has not bought anything of a low-price

store. And I am quite sure that Professor Robert Ellis Thompson of the University of Pennsylvania could, if he chose to, make quite as good an argument to prove that Pennsylvania miners are profited by being compelled to pay high prices to their company stores, as he does to prove that all Americans are enriched by being compelled to pay high prices to their protected producers. It is, at least, not to be wondered at, that the proprietors of these company stores, being accustomed to believe that the nation at large should be protected from cheap goods, should endeavor to protect their own miners.

And further than the compulsion to buy at the company store in preference to buying elsewhere, it seems to be generally well understood that the man who spends the largest part of his earnings in the store and has least cash to take on pay-day, gets the best work. With the small earnings of the miners, it is, under these circumstances, no wonder that a large proportion of them have usually on pay-day only what they call "bob-tailed checks" to receive—the credit for work done being fully offset by the fixed charges and store bill. I have heard it asserted, with general acquiescence, in two representative gatherings of coal miners from various districts, that not half the miners have usually any cash coming to them on pay-day, and that this is the habitual condition of many from year's end to year's end. It is indeed possible for the miner to live in this way, since all that he absolutely requires can be obtained at the store, even to tickets for Young Men's Christian Association exhibitions or other entertainments, in neighboring towns, which are patronized by the mining magnates. So, too, the company pays the taxes of its employees, deducting the amount from their wages—for, in Pennsylvania, "protectionism," which originates in the desire of the rich and powerful to throw the weight of taxation on the poor and weak, is carried to the levying even of county taxes—and while the borrower is taxed by the State on the money he owes, the laborer is taxed by the county on his "occupation." So, too, the company pays the doctor, deducting generally 50 cents per month from the wages of single men and 75 cents from married men (which, however, does not cover all family charges). So, too, it often pays church dues, deducting the amount from the wages of the employed. Other charges and contributions to which the company has no objection can of course be paid in the same way. I have even heard of a store order being given for

the putting of a patch on the toe of a shoe. This system, of course, operates to make the company the great all-in-all of the district.

The coal miners of Pennsylvania are not, however, what in this country we call peons. As a class, the coal miners are not allowed to run in debt to the company. There are some exceptions, as, for instance, when a man working under contract is doing unprofitable work as a preliminary to getting at profitable work, or when it is otherwise certain that he will remain and work out his indebtedness; but the rule is that until wages have been earned they cannot be drawn against at the store. This rule is often enforced to the very cent, and I have heard of five potatoes being held back out of a bushel, because the miner's credit fell a few cents short of the price. But through the store the miner can get his wages as soon as he has earned them, while to get them in cash he may have to wait a month or six weeks. And feeling it hopeless to try to get more than a living, many of the miners seem to resign themselves to getting all they can at the store, as the way of getting the best living, the "bob-tailed check" men being preferred employees.

The feeling in Pennsylvania against company stores, which is bitter and deep, has in it something more than objection to their high prices. This is the point on which the miners dwell in talking about the system, but beneath that there is, I think, a matter of sentiment, the man (and especially the female man) who can buy where he pleases, feeling himself freer than one who is obliged to buy at one particular place. The store of the great Cambria Iron and Steel Company (not a mining but a manufacturing company) at Johnstown, Pennsylvania, sells as cheaply as the individual stores, but if I am correctly informed is nevertheless much disliked by the men. The only explanation I was able to get is that the having to purchase at the company store marks a social distinction—the people who are able to buy where they please constituting a sort of superior class of freemen. Perhaps, also, this feeling may in some part be accounted for by a story I heard from a traveling salesman, which at least illustrates what from the store-keeper's point of view is one of the great advantages of these stores. He had gone into Cambria for the purpose of introducing a brand of smoking tobacco made by a Cincinnati house, and in order to create a demand for it had distributed a large quantity of tobacco among the workmen. But when he came to

try to get an order from the company store he found he had reckoned "without his host." On no consideration could he get them to take any of his tobacco. "But what will you do when the men come here and ask for it?" he finally said. "We will sell them something else," was the prompt and decisive reply.

Besides the complaints as to the "pluck-me" stores, there is much complaint among the Pennsylvania coal miners as to the accounting of their work. This is done in the anthracite regions by measurement, the coal being brought out of the mines in cars supposed to hold two tons with an allowance for fine coal, and in the bituminous regions by weight, the coal paid for being that which remains after running over a one-and-a-half-inch screen.

There are complaints that the cars are in many cases too large, and that the weight is in many cases false. To meet these complaints a recent Act gives the miners authority to employ a check weighman at their own expense. Where this has been done the miners assert that it is with the most satisfactory results, but the law has not generally been taken advantage of, the reason assigned by miners being that the men are afraid of falling under the displeasure of their employers by moving in the matter.

Similar to the complaints of this kind are the complaints of "dockage." When a car is drawn out of the mine it bears a tag showing the number of the miner to whom it is to be credited. This is taken by an under-foreman who is called by the miners the "docking boss." It is his duty to see that the car is properly filled, and that the coal it contains is free from slate, rock, or slack. If it is not in his opinion up to requirement in these respects he reduces the credit to the miner *half a car*. The miners complain that this system is habitually used to reduce their earnings, and that by the presence of a few pounds of slate, or the falling out of a little coal, things which it is impossible totally to prevent, the men are made to lose, and the company to gain, half a car load of coal. Incidental proof of this feeling among the miners was given me by a conversation I heard in Schuylkill County, in which two worked-out old miners took part. Both stated that they had refused the place of "docking boss" in a manner which showed that they regarded it as a most discreditable occupation.

The following petition, presented to Governor Pattison in April of this year, is a presentation of miners' grievances in their own words. Clearfield is in the bituminous region, and it may be re-

marked that less powder is used in bituminous than in anthracite mining, and that what the men attribute to the inspector in warning them to use less powder is a desire to avoid putting the company to expense for ventilation, and to furnish it with an excuse in case of accidents. Some of the other matters referred to will be explained in subsequent papers :

To His Excellency Robert E. Pattison, Governor of Pennsylvania :

The undersigned citizens of the County of Clearfield, representing Miners and Mine Laborers, would respectfully represent :

That there is at this time a strike of the miners of the Clearfield region for an advance of ten cents per ton in the price of mining coal. That we deprecate striking as a remedy to redress our grievances ; that we offered to leave the whole matter to arbitration, but the coal operators refused our overtures therefor ; and that the only remedy left was to refuse to work at the price given by the operators. Our reasons for refusing to work for forty cents per ton are :

1. The average wages of the miners in this region per month, for the last year, has been about (not over) twenty dollars per man. That out of this amount they must furnish their own tools, pay for tool-sharpening and also powder and oil. That the operator compels the miners to put out 2,240 pounds of coal for forty cents, where the scales are properly balanced, and where they are not so balanced, it takes from 2,500 to 3,000 pounds to make one ton. That out of the above average monthly income of the miner he must pay expenses as follows :

Rent	\$5.00
Tool-sharpening	50
Powder and oil.....	2.00
Coal for family use	1.60
Total.....	<u>\$9.10</u>

This amount, deducted from the amount received monthly, leaves a balance of \$10.90 to support and clothe the family.

2. That the law allows a check weighmaster on each tipple, but if the miners elect and put one on he is not permitted to touch the scales, and is required to stand and see the cars weighed by the company weighmaster as they run across the scales at the rate of from four to seven miles per hour, the length of the scales being about eight feet, the cars being about the same length, and the distance from center to center of the wheels being two feet eight inches, it being impossible under these conditions to get the exact weight.

3. That at nearly all the mines the workmen are required to deal at the company stores under pain of being dismissed from employment. That at these stores they are compelled to pay from twenty to thirty-five per cent. more for the necessaries of life than they could purchase the same for elsewhere. That the mine bosses and superintendents compel the miners to deal at these stores, and that the operators receive a percentage for sending their men there

to be robbed. We believe these stores to be a curse to any community, as they detract from the independence of the workingman, and drive out honest competition. That G. W. Van Dusen & Co. are the only proprietors of such store who reside in our midst. That Frank Liveright & Co. are the proprietors of the leading pluck-me store in this region, and control the orders from miners in the employ of Berwind, White & Co., R. H. Powell & Co., Kittanning Coal Company, Coal Run, and various other places, and that the said Frank Liveright & Co. reside in Philadelphia, and that the miners so controlled by them number not less than 3,000, and we believe that the actual number is greatly in excess of this statement.

4. That the laws now on the statute books of Pennsylvania in favor of miners and mine laborers are a dead letter so far as their execution is concerned. That the mine inspector for this district, John M. Watt, does not attend to his duties as the law requires. That his sympathies, as we believe, are with the operators; that when he visits this section his consultations are mainly with the operators or the mine bosses, and upon such visits the men are warned against using powder in the coal, in order to avoid smoke, and a consequent increase of foul air. That if any laborer or miner complains of any of the above grievances, reasons are found for his speedy discharge, and if he is so fortunate as to be the owner of a little property, he is, in many cases, obliged to sell it at a sacrifice and leave this region in order to secure employment.

5. That the Berwind-White Coal Company have monopolized the greater number of the coal operations in this region; that we believe the said Berwind-White Coal Company are large shareholders in the Pennsylvania Railroad Company, and to a great extent control its actions. That the said railroad company at times fail to supply the smaller operators with cars, and discriminate in favor of the large shipper. That we believe Berwind, White & Co. are instrumental in bringing about such action, and we charge them with prolonging the present strike, believing their object is to crush out the smaller operators in order to obtain full control themselves.

6. We are opposed to any monopoly or syndicate having control of this or any other coal region, believing it to be detrimental to the best interests of the community and the State at large.

We, therefore, your committee, appointed at a public meeting of our citizens, respectfully submit the foregoing, and pray your Excellency to take such action in the matter as you in your wisdom may think most proper, and with as little delay as possible. Respectfully,

H. J. MCGOWAN, WHITE NIXON, J. M. LEHMAN, JAMES WHITE, Committee.

It may be added that the Clearfield miners, though at last forced to resume work at the old price, gained a promise of just weight, cash payments, and freedom to buy where they pleased.

HENRY GEORGE.

(To be continued.)