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The Week



THE bituminous coal miners' strike is rapidly becoming as important to the general business public as to the operators and workmen directly involved. Early last week soft coal became so scarce in the Eastern markets that the Baltimore and Ohio and the Pennsylvania railway companies seized all the coal they had in transit, no matter who was the owner. Some of the shippers were highly indignant at this action, but others accepted philosophically the railways' claim that they are authorized by unwritten law to make such seizures, in order to prevent the entire suspension of their traffic. The New York Central has discontinued all its work trains and some of its freight trains, because of the lack of coal, while the Grand Trunk road of Canada has closed its shops and refused to make further contracts for the shipment of grain to the East. Several large manufacturing concerns have already shut down, and great numbers must presently follow their example unless the strike is brought to an end. Meanwhile the Cleveland conference between operators and men seems to have ended in failure. The operators proposed a new schedule, on the basis of sixty-five cents a ton for Pennsylvania, but the men insisted on the old schedule, in which the basis for Pennsylvania was seventy-nine cents. The operators urged that, inasmuch as there had been a general fall in wages during the last year, the miners ought to accept a reduction; but the miners replied that the object of the strike was to resist this tendency to falling wages, and to restore business to a normal condition. Each side stood out stubbornly for its contention, though there were signs that each side was gloomy enough over the failure of the conference to reach an agreement.



Meanwhile, in this miners' strike, as in the railroad strikes, the public bids fair to be the chief sufferer from the war, without, at present, any means of protecting its interests. To the philosophic student of life, such an event affords an extraordinary illustration of the slowness with which the public learns lessons in political economy. The whole industry of the country depends upon its ability to make available for its use the coal which was stored up on this continent ages before the discovery of America by Columbus. Our economic methods have suffered these coal treasures to pass into the hands of a small number of men, who have not created them, and whose chief, if not sole, social right of ownership lies in the fact that they have proved themselves possessed of the skill and power to make them available for the community. They have now proved themselves unwilling or unable to do this—unable because they cannot come to terms with their men, or unwilling because limiting the production raises the price. And the country patiently waits, while the factories stop their work and the

railroads their trains, until the quarrel between the two contending parties is fought out to an issue. The time cannot be far distant when the people will interfere, and determine such labor controversies as these, even if it requires assuming a control of the coal-mining industries of the country.



The International Miners' Conference, held in Berlin last week, was anything but a harmonious gathering. On the day that it assembled, a Catholic delegate made a vehement attack upon the Socialists, causing no little bad feeling. Two days later, a disagreement occurred between the English and the Continental delegates which led to the temporary withdrawal of the Englishmen from the Convention. The cause of the disagreement seems to have been the unwillingness of the English delegates to sanction the more radical proposals of the delegates from the Continent. For example, the Continental delegates advocated that employers should be made liable for all accidents to their employees, while the English insisted that the employer should be exempt from liability when the employee had been negligent. Also, the Continental delegates advocated the establishment of a minimum rate of wages for all countries; while the English insisted that national differences must be taken into consideration. The break came when upon some proposition the English delegates insisted that their vote should outweigh that of those from the Continent, inasmuch as they represented nearly one hundred thousand more miners. As the Continental delegates outnumbered the English delegates two to one, they indignantly repudiated this proposition, and the English withdrew amid shouts of derision. The incident points out once more that the times are not ripe for international agreements, except upon the broadest and most general principles. The attempt to establish the same industrial regulations for the well-organized and highly trained workmen of Great Britain and the disorganized and ill-trained workmen of the Continent must, for some time to come, end in failure.



The vague rumors which have been circulating for weeks past regarding corrupt influences at work in shaping the tariff schedules took definite form last week. Upon the authority of the Senators immediately concerned, it was announced that Senator Hunton, of Virginia, and Senator Kyle, of South Dakota, had been approached by a South Dakota lobbyist with a direct proffer of money for votes. More scandalous and more incredible than this report of a bungling attempt at undisguised bribery was the charge, made by a leading Philadelphia paper, that Secretary Carlisle had himself drafted the new sugar schedules, and that the schedules were in fulfillment of an agreement made with the Sugar Trust during the last campaign, in return for a contribution of \$500,000. Campaign contributions, to both political parties, by rich men

and corporations having interests at stake, are believed to be so usual that this charge could not be lightly dismissed. Besides these direct charges were the continued rumors that one Senator after another was speculating in the securities whose value the Senators' action determined. Altogether there was abundant material for an investigation, and, on a resolution offered by Senator Lodge, one was unanimously ordered. The investigating committee appointed was an exceptionally strong one, consisting of Senators Gray and Lindsay (Democrats), Senators Lodge and Davis (Republicans), and Senator Allen (Populist). The Senate is now meeting at ten o'clock, and proceeding more rapidly than heretofore with the consideration of the Tariff Bill. The free-coinage Republican Senators generally sided with the Democrats in demanding the speediest possible consideration of the Tariff Bill.

In the Missouri Democratic Convention the expected conflict between the supporters of free coinage and the supporters of the Administration resulted in a victory for the former. The opposition to free coinage seemed confined to the large cities. Even upon the Committee of Resolutions the free-coinage men were in the majority. Three members of the Committee, all from St. Louis, presented a minority report, reaffirming the silver plank in the National platform; but this report was voted down by a majority of three to one. The free-coinage resolution reported by the majority and adopted by the Convention was not, indeed, all that Mr. Bland could desire. While it demanded "the restoration of the bimetallic standard as it existed under the laws for over eighty years prior to the demonetization of the standard silver dollar in 1873," nevertheless it contemplated the possibility of a new ratio in order to keep the two metals in concurrent circulation. It, however, affirmed that before changing the size of either the gold or silver dollar it should be determined whether gold has risen in value or silver has fallen. As students are agreed that prices have remained practically uniform in the countries using a silver currency, this resolution would mean that the silver dollar should remain unchanged. Nevertheless, its wording must have been extremely distasteful to Mr. Bland and the radical silver men, who hold that a freely coined silver dollar would have the same value as a gold dollar, at least until enough silver could be coined to take the place of all the gold now in circulation.

Another stage in the conflict between the people of Serbia and King Alexander was reached on Monday, when the King accomplished another *coup d'état*, abolishing the Constitution of 1888, restoring that of 1869, and transforming the Government from a constitutional monarchy, with the power in the hands of the Legislature, and the King as its chief executive, with freedom of speech, of the press, of the Assembly, and of conscience, into a practically absolute monarchy. This radical and critical step has undoubtedly been taken under the advice of ex-King Milan. The Skuptchina, or national legislature, will be immediately dissolved, the Cabinet will be reorganized, and the fight between the King and the people of Serbia will be brought to a crisis. Nine-tenths of the Servian voters are Radical, more than nine-tenths of the members of the Skuptchina were Radicals, and the King, having found it impossible to rule the country in the face of an overwhelmingly hostile majority, has chosen to abolish the Constitution and constitutional government, and take the reins in his own hands. The *coup d'état* was so unexpected that the Radicals are temporarily thrown into

confusion by it, but the excitement throughout the kingdom is intense. The army is being held in readiness for any popular uprising, many army officers suspected of Radical inclinations have been retired, and many Radical leaders have fled the country.

The feeling is growing in London that a dissolution of Parliament is close at hand. Sir William Harcourt is reported to have informed some of the Irish leaders that a general election may be looked for in July, and it is said that a similar intimation has been conveyed to the Liberal authorities. The Government will give its first attention to the Budget, then probably to the Registration Bill, and after that to the Evicted Tenants Bill. If the small majority should hold together after the passage of these bills, the disestablishment of the Church in Wales would come up, but there seems to be a very slender prospect that the Government will get beyond the Budget. It looks very much as if the Liberals were putting things in order for an appeal to the country. The National Liberal Federation has called a conference, to be held at Leeds on June 20, to take action on the attitude of the party toward the House of Lords. The manifesto declares that the time has come to give definite expression to the feeling of the party concerning the Upper House, which it calls "a standing menace to everything which we understand as representative government." Lord Rosebery believes strongly in a second chamber, but he believes in modifying the organization of the House so as to bring it more directly in harmony with the political development of the country. He is understood to favor the limitation of membership, the creation of a number of life peers, the exclusion of members who are unworthy to sit as legislators; he is also understood to favor the admission into the House of Commons of members of the peerage. There have been several agitations against the House of Lords, which have passed through various stages of intensity and have died out. There is not the slightest probability that the English are going to make so radical a change in their Constitution as would be involved in the abolition of the House of Lords, but it looks very much as if some serious modification in its organization would be effected. One proposition which will come before the conference at Leeds will be a proposal to limit the veto power of the Upper House to a single session. In other words, when the House of Lords vetoes a bill, if it is passed by the House of Commons at a subsequent session, it will become a law. It is understood that a considerable number of peers favor some change in the organization of the Upper House.

The English Cabinet has lost a useful member by the retirement of Mr. Mundella. The late President of the Board of Trade was not in the front rank of Parliamentarians or platform speakers, but for more than twenty years past he has rendered good service to the Liberal party, and also to the country, during the periods he was in the Education Department and in the Board of Trade. During his recent tenure of the presidency of the Board of Trade he inaugurated several important reforms, chief among which are the establishment of the Labor Department and the introduction of the representatives of seamen to the marine and harbor boards at the seaports. After the revelations which were made in the Bankruptcy Court concerning a New Zealand Land and Loan Company of which Mr. Mundella was a Director, his retirement from the Cabinet was inevitable. It was not made clear that Mr. Mundella himself reaped any immediate advantage