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The British Labor Members.

The presence in the British House of Commons of a solid body of Labor representatives, already numbering over fifty, and likely to grow at subsequent elections, is a condition likely to have far-reaching consequences. The course of the party will be followed with keen interest by the people of Greater Britain as well as by those of Britain itself. It is of no use to exaggerate the importance or effect of the innovation, but it is obviously a revolution which may end in the transformation of the whole political and social system of the parent country, and may well have its effect on the empire at large. The Labor candidates who entered the field were about ninety in number, not including some other equally genuine representatives of Labor, such as John Burns, who had formally ranged themselves on the side of the Liberal party. Most of the candidates were under the control of the Labor Representation Committee, composed of delegates from trade unions, trade councils and Socialist organization, and thoroughly representative in character. Foremost in the organization of the Labor committee comes discipline. No candidate receives its support until he promises in writing to "abstain from identifying himself with or promoting the interests of any section of the Liberal or Conservative parties." The members elected by the organization receive the not very liberal salary of two hundred pounds a year. It is altogether likely, however, that one of the measures of the new Liberal Administration will be the payment of members, and in that case the road of the Labor candidate to the House of Commons will become infinitely easier than at present.

"The first thing that must impress any who investigate the records of the Labor candidates is the genuine trade representative character of the men," says a writer on the subject in The London Daily Mail. "It is not many years since the Labor candidate outside certain mining districts was too often a crank who wished to obtain notoriety in the cheapest fashion. This is no longer so. The candidates now are mostly trade officials, men who have worked for years in the ranks of their Labor organizations. There are, of course, a few others, men like Dr. Stanton Coit, whose labor is to teach and lecture, very eloquently, on ethics; Mr. Hyndman, born to great riches; Mr. Philip Snowden, a former Inland Revenue official; Mr. Bruce Glasier, who is an architect turned journalist, and Mr. Gavan-Duffy, who, after serving in various places as a shop assistant, took to lecturing and agitating.

"But these are the exceptions. Most of the candidates have been brought up in mill or mine or workshop; most of them, too, have qualified, on county or borough Councils, or local boards, for the wider sphere. A few

have gone to prison for their opinions. Pete Curran was sentenced to six weeks' imprisonment at Plymouth in 1890, but escaped on appeal; and Ben Tillett, though acquitted at the Old Bailey, yet later found himself within stone walls in Belgium, where the authorities did not appreciate his agitation.

"The candidates represent every sub-division of the grades of toilers. Thus George Haley was born in a workhouse, and Will Crooks spent some time as a boy in one. A. H. Gill, who is contesting Bolton, began life at the mature age of seven by selling newspapers. James Sexton entered a St. Helen's glass works when he was eight, but soon afterwards concluded that life on the ocean would be better, so went to sea. James Holmes started as a plough boy, and rose to farm laborer before finding the post as railway shunter that was to launch him on the road to fame.

"Others of the candidates have come from the very aristocracy of labor, being the sons of skilled mechanics, well educated and thoroughly trained. Thus F. Rose was apprenticed as patternmaker at Maudslays'; William Walker was a Harland & Wolff apprentice, and Arthur Henderson, the present M. P., for Barnard Castle, served his apprenticeship as a moulder at Stephenson's in Newcastle.

"Most of the candidates went to work early, as half-timers in mills as 'trappers' in mines, or the like. Most of them have had experience as workmen of long strikes, when weary days of want have dragged out to weeks and to months. If they add a note of passion to the pleas for labor that the new Parliament must hear, it will be because they have themselves suffered.

"Who are to be the leaders of the new party? Several names stand out before the other. Keir Hardie—even the critics have forgotten his early 'queerness' in his simplicity and devotion—holds a position from which few will try to move him. Will Crooks is a Parliamentary stalwart, and will seem to the newer men a veteran. Robert Smillie is famed throughout trade unionism as a strong man armed. Alexander Wilkie, the leader of the shipwrights, has proved his masterfulness at the annual Trades Congresses. Several others might be named. But while there will be several outstanding personalities in the Labor party there may be no real leader. The proverbial jealousy of labor men of one another will stop that."

Here are some glimpses of the life of one of the leading members of the Labor party, a man who received a majority of more than five thousand votes in the great working class constituency of West Ham:—

"Will Thorne was born to misery. His father and mother, living in Birmingham, were both brickfield workers, one of the hardest and poorest forms of toil. His father was done to death by a horse dealer before his son was nine years old. When seven, Will went to work, turning the spinning wheel at a rope walk; and a year later—at the mature age of eight—he went on the brick fields.

"From then, without a break, save when out of work or on the tramp, he endured the burden of toil. He had three orphan brothers to help to maintain. Now he was in a metal rolling mill, now he was busy wheeling coke, now acting as a builder's laborer. There were intervals when no work was to be had, and when he trudged from place to place, hungry and homeless. By the time he was twenty his days had settled down to a routine of brickfields in summer and gas works in winter.

"Early in 1883, when nearly twenty-four years old, he secured employment in the Beckton gas works and settled in West Ham. If anything more could be wanted to impress the horrors of poverty on his mind, he had it there. He saw civilization at its worst. West Ham is the refuge of the starving and of the unfit. Thousands of families each live in one or two rooms there, often without sufficient food and clothing, with the poorest furniture and the filthiest surroundings, lacking everything that makes life pleasant or wholesome. Thorne witnessed such life daily. He emerged a Socialist of the most extreme type, and an open advocate of class war between rich and poor. To him capitalism was, and is, a curse to be ended.

"Those who knew him about this time describe him as austere, almost saint-like in appearance and life, with a face pallid from the fierce furnace, and with eyes that told of much reflection on the meaning of life which he had found so hard. He was a teetotaler, and lived in the simplest fashion. The master of men was emerging.

"The laborers in the carbonizing departments of the London gas works were then toiling for twelve hours a day. Thorne called them together on a piece of waste land in Canning Town, and urged them to establish a union. On the first Sunday eight hundred gave in their names, and within two months the membership had reached ten thousand. After a peaceful struggle, lasting three months, an eight-hour day was secured by all the carbonizing men in the London gas works. Within six months the leading gas works of the province followed suit.

"Thorne entered public affairs as a mem-


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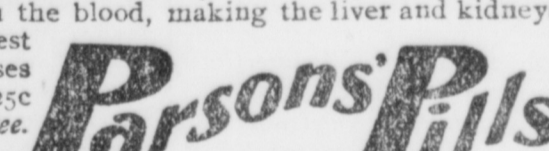
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ber of the West Ham Town Council with the avowed purpose of doing the best for the workers. He had now a strong following of voters. In 1899 he and his friends secured a majority on the borough Council, and their record was a memorable one. He was made deputy Mayor. It must be confessed that in constructive municipal work the Labor party in West Ham failed. They tried to make the place a model borough. They only succeeded in making a record for extravagance.

"Under them, debt and rates and local obligations increased. They paid the unskilled workers out of all proportion to their market value; land was bought which the municipality does not want; houses were built for workingmen which wait in vain for sufficient tenants; schemes were started which would have only been excusable had West Ham possessed untold wealth, instead of being one of the poorest districts in England. The stories of West Ham extravagance soon became the talk of the country. The Council chamber itself became a bear garden, and the scenes in it week after week were little short of scandal.

"The workers of Canning Town ever on the brink of starvation, have listened to his promise and have sent him to Parliament to get for them that which, with all their work, they cannot obtain for themselves—the right to live, with an assurance of bread for themselves and for their children. What can Will Thorne do in Parliament? His extreme views will be modified by those of the more sober and restrained of his fellow Labor members, for under the law of the Labor caucus he must come into line with the majority. Many who know him best anticipate that he will adapt himself to his surroundings as others have done before him. Even should this not be so, men will remember that an him speaks one who from childhood to the best years of manhood suffered and often starved among the poorest and hardest worked of the people, one of themselves."

Civil Engineers Endorse Forestry Propaganda.

At the recent annual meeting of the Canadian Society of Civil Engineers, held in Toronto January 30th to February 2nd, a resolution was passed strongly endorsing the work of the Canadian Forestry Association and recommending particularly:

The establishment of a school of practical applied forestry in a forest reserve, the students thereof having qualified in technical schools.

The preservation in their natural condition of the head supply sources of all larger streams by constituting them forest reserves.

The preservation of the remaining woodlands and encouragement of reforestation, in the older parts of the country, by means of reduction or remission of taxation on woodland and on land being reforested.

A Plea for Soup.

A learned doctor, pleading for soup on every dinner table, says: "A person comes to dinner weary and hungry and needs first something to stimulate the secretions of the stomach. The first course, hot soup, does this by its action upon the nerves which control the blood vessels. Taking the soup slowly is an aid to digestion, and if not a favorite dish fish or oysters can be substituted, serving the same purpose. The joint or roast can then be taken with benefit to the system, and the game, vegetables and sweets should follow in their order, not necessarily in courses for the plain family dinner, however."

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