

ODD KINDS OF STRIKES.

WORKERS WHO HAVE UNEXPECTEDLY STOPPED THEIR WORK.

Bakers Who Left a City in a Lurch and Servant Girls Who Dropped their Brooms—Labor Troubles in the Ranks of Musicians and Other Professionals.

The inhabitants of Marseilles recently had an unpleasant experience. A strike in the bakers' shops throughout the city produced a faint copy of the famine scenes in Paris when the German siege ended. Master bakers and men were united in an alarming protest against the edict of a mayor who under an old law appointed an assize of bread. They banked-down ovens and shut shops rather than submit to the interference; and the average citizen, who only wanted his breakfast at the proper hour, saw himself with consternation minus the staff of life.

Great excitement prevailed when bread came in from military bakeries and from ovens seized by the mayor's orders. The quantity was wholly insufficient for a clamorous multitude, and hunger riots loomed on the horizon; but on the second night the municipal price was agreed to, and the peril passed away.

It is hard in these days of upheaval to say where strikes are unlikely. They sometimes occur in circumstances which inevitably bring a smile. Fun was mixed with the anxiety that obtained in the best quarters of West Hartlepool for a short time last spring. There was bustle and laughter in the streets and a general expectation.

"What are you looking for?" a stranger asked. "Don't you know? why, the girls are out. There's a strike procession of household servants."

"Wot a lark!" said one corner man.

"Here come the slaves," said another.

There was trouble in many a kitchen. The maids had discussed their hardships and had the daring to demonstrate. They carried various emblems of their business. In place of flags the spectators saw flatirons and poles used for stirring coppers, coal-scuttles and scrubbing-brushes, props and brooms. The demand of housemaid and "odd girl" was for shorter hours and a weekly half-holiday.

"Define strikes," was a question recently set in a scholarship examination.

A hopeful young candidate believed that he had an apt answer.

"Men trying to rule their masters," he wrote.

Perhaps he would have thought a strike amongst schoolboys a fit illustration. At one time several of these took place in this country. Their memory has been revived by occurrences at a large school in New Zealand which have lately found publicity. The boys prepared a manifesto in the name of justice, and then struck lessons. They objected to so much mathematics and caning and, like the Hartlepool servants, complained of a deficit of holidays.

But they had treated the ungenerous argument of force too lightly. The headmaster swooped upon the ringleaders, and instead of less caning, there was more, and the protest fizzed out like a damp firework.

A few months ago there was a specially lugubrious strike at Paris. It was amongst the grave-diggers and funeral mutes engaged by the city undertakers. They represented that they were insufficiently paid. Before much inconvenience was inflicted on mourners the matter was arranged.

A palace seems a novel place for one of these developments of the modern spirit. But China gives an instance. It was on rather an extensive scale. The Emperor was building the fine and commodious Heho Palace for his mother, the retiring Regent. An army of workmen were there, and three thousand or so were wood and other carvers, whose calling is much stilted in the Celestial Empire by trade pride.

These men knew the date when all was to be in readiness, and, instead of going on to finish, they presented a demand for more "Pekin cash" in addition to three free meals a day. On refusal they came out, and were as threatening in demeanour as if the place were London or Liege. The authorities quaked at the portent, and summoned military aid. Ultimately a compromise was made and the Emperor's plans were saved. It was a warning that might mean much some day.

There was a strike of the Paris postmen lately for a reason that is laughable. Two pairs of trousers are given out at regular seasons to these useful servants of the State. In this case Red-tape made a slip, and nearly left all the post-boys gorged and correspondents at their wits' end for want of letters. The tickets written out for the men to deliver to the tailors only said one pair of nether garments instead of two.

"I don't see it; I shan't go on duty," said one letter-carrier to another.

A league was soon formed to suspend work. Sullen faces were everywhere.

But when the cause of the disturbance leaked out the trouble was quickly adjusted. It was a blunder. There was no intention to graze the postmen less cloth than of old. Assured on this point they resumed duty.

It was in Paris again that on one occasion some ten thousand automatic clocks "struck." No pun is meant. They ceased to fulfill their functions. It was a general stoppage, and oddly brought about by a strike of men. Navvies working in the bed of the road had excavated a great hole near to where the electric wires were conducted.

These labourers had a dispute with their paymasters and in a fit of petulance threw down their tools. They left the opening they had made so poorly protected that the side fell in. This sliding down of the earth upset the uncovered wires, with the result that a large number of establishments missed their time-keepers. It was some hours before all the clocks were regulated and going again.

Paris opera-frequenter recently found themselves in the presence of an unusual exhibition of performers' willfulness. There was a strike of chorus singers in connection with a rendering of *Cavalleria Rusticana* at the Opera Comique. The audience were in their seats, and the house was waiting. Up came the curtain, and the opera promised well until the first chorus was reached; but here was disaster for the management and disappointment for the stalls. Not a single male voice was to be heard.

There was soon a rising wind of outside

murmurs, swelling into a storm of protest. Explanations were demanded and had to be given before calm was restored. The male chorus singers had in vain asked an increase of salary, and had then taken a dramatic way of enforcing their claim.

Even through the habits of strict obedience implanted by military discipline the tendency to strikes will now and then appear. There has been a quaint example at Narbonne, in France. It was a strictly musical revolt. The offenders were nearly the whole of the bandmen belonging to the 100th Regiment of French Infantry. Stationed for a while in the town the band was instructed to enliven the public promenade with their martial strains.

But, though they were marched to the bandstand, only two were so weak-kneed as to begin. Like the men in the Opera Comique chorus, they had entered into a compact of silence. No financial grievance existed. The strike was directed at an excess of rehearsal practice which had become a weariness to the flesh. The obstinate players were placed under arrest, but in all probability their conductor had a hint by-and-by to be reasonable in his requirements.

An editorial office has known a strike of sub-editors and of department managers. It is said that Alexandre Dumas père was once nominally chief of a French paper. He displeased his assistants at the awkward moment when preparations should be in full swing. In consequence he found forsaken writing-tables and stands. But Dumas was not easily to be punished. He turned into work at headlong speed, and the paper came out as usual next day. It was literally his own compilation, down to the galling intimation of the fact and the annexed remark that, as his sub-editors were all deserters, the way henceforth would be clear for the public to subscribe.—[Casell's Journal.]

HOW TO JUDGE DIAMONDS.

Alleged Tests That Are of No Benefit to the Average Individual.

"It is very often said that it does not require an expert to tell a genuine diamond from an imitation, and numerous indeed are the tests by which the public—so they are told—may decide the matter," remarked a dealer in precious stones recently.

"That is all nonsense, for there is no easy test which could be adopted with certainty by anyone out of the trade."

"One method which periodically goes the round of all kinds of publications states that if a small hole is pierced in a piece of card and this is looked at through the stone two holes will be seen if the 'gem' is spurious, whereas only one will be visible through a genuine diamond."

"This and similar tests are somewhat useful when loose stones are to be judged, but supposing the diamonds are set in a ring, what then? The test would be absolutely useless to the average individual."

"Again, it is said that, 'looking through a real diamond, the setting is never visible' (which is quite correct), but the same paragraph also states that 'through a false one it is'."

"Where this statement is liable to mislead some member of the already too-gullible public is already explained. Most of our best imitation diamonds—'pastes' as we call them—are covered at the back with an amalgam of quicksilver, etc., after the manner of mirrors; this being done to throw the 'fire' or brilliancy to the front. When meant to deceive the public at close quarters, they are 'close set' and the settings are covered in at the back."

"Relying on this test, a probable purchaser might find that his 'bargain,' instead of being a gem worth fifty pounds, was something dear at half-a-crown."

"It is well-known that diamonds are harder than any other substance and can only be scratched by another diamond."

"By taking advantage of the general knowledge of this fact, many a swindler has palmed off a crystal by showing his dupe how it will scratch a piece of glass."

"No, you may take it from me that there is absolutely no sure test by which any one unaccustomed with stones can decide the difference between real and imitation. Why, we in our line and jewellers generally, decide the question by looking at the doubtful article. To an expert there is something in the appearance of a diamond—it's 'fire' and 'look' of hardness—quite unexplainable—which the best of imitations never did, and I believe never will, possess"—[English Paper.]

Settling With His Conscience.

A couple of tourists staying in a town in close vicinity to Loch Ness had a fancy, one Sunday, to have a row on the loch. They accordingly sallied forth in search of the boatman, whom they met just leaving his house, books in hand, and dressed in a fine glossy black suit, making for church.

"We want to go for a row," said one of the tourists.

"Did ye ken that it's the Sabbath?" was the reply. "Ye'll no get a boat frae me the day; forbye I hae ye to ken that I'm an elder of the kirk."

"Yes, yes," expostulated the tourists, "that's all very well for you, but we don't want you with us—you can go to church."

"Ay, ay," said the elder, "but just think what'll the meenister say."

"Never mind the minister; he won't know, and we'll pay you well."

"Ay, weel," said the elder, "I'll let ye the boat. Dae ye see von green boatie doon among the rushes? Well, she's ready wi' the oars inside. Jist ye gang doon there an row out ta the middle, an I'll come doon to the bank an' sweer at ye; but never ye mind, jist row on, an' I'll ca' for the money on Monday."

No Beef For The Nervous.

An able doctor in New York, in prescribing a diet for individuals troubled with nervous dyspepsia, mentions roast beef and mutton. It may interest him and those who are nervous through dyspepsia to know that Dr. Levenne, who is at the head of the great Rothschild hospital in Paris, always begins his treatment of nervous patients by prohibiting the use of beef absolutely. Beef he believes to be the most exciting food that can be taken into the system. He declares that it should only be eaten in considerable quantities by those who work a great deal in the open air or who have very lymphatic temperaments, such as English laboring men. In all cases of nervous trouble Dr. Levenne orders the substitution of mutton for beef, and I have known a number of his patients who attributed a great improvement to this one rule of the able French physician.

HOW WAGNER COMPOSED.

He First Made Skeleton Sketches and from These he Elaborated.

What use, then, did he make of the piano in composing? The correct answer to this is given in the following remarks by Praeger, who, during a visit to Zurich in 1856, had an opportunity to see the composer at work on "Siegfried": "He did not seek his ideas at the piano. He went to the piano with his idea already composed, and made the piano his sketch book, wherein he worked and reworked his subject, steadily modeling and remodeling his matter until it assumed the shape he had in his mind." In other words, while Schubert wrote as a fountain produces water, and Beethoven put the results of his persistent reflections on his themes on slips of paper, Wagner used the piano as a sculptor does his clay, to mould his themes into various plastic motives. But that was all; the delicate lace-work of the orchestral score was all pure mental work which no physical manipulation at the piano could assist. . . . Wagner thought out his operas in orchestral colors; his very ideas are often conceived in colors; and instrumental combinations which the piano can no more reproduce than it could have suggested them to the composer. There are in music emotional sensuous ideas, as well as intellectual "themes" and in an opera the former are fully as important as the latter. The magic helmet motive in the "Nibelung's Ring" would lose half its charm if presented in a different orchestral coloring or played on the piano; but this is not the fault of the composer; it is a mark of his superlative genius.

After he had his musical motives satisfactorily arranged in his head, how did he proceed to put them on paper? First he made a sort of skeleton sketch—as painters make preliminary sketches—the ideas being roughly jotted down on a few lines of music paper; and from these the orchestral score was subsequently elaborated.—by Henry T. Finck.

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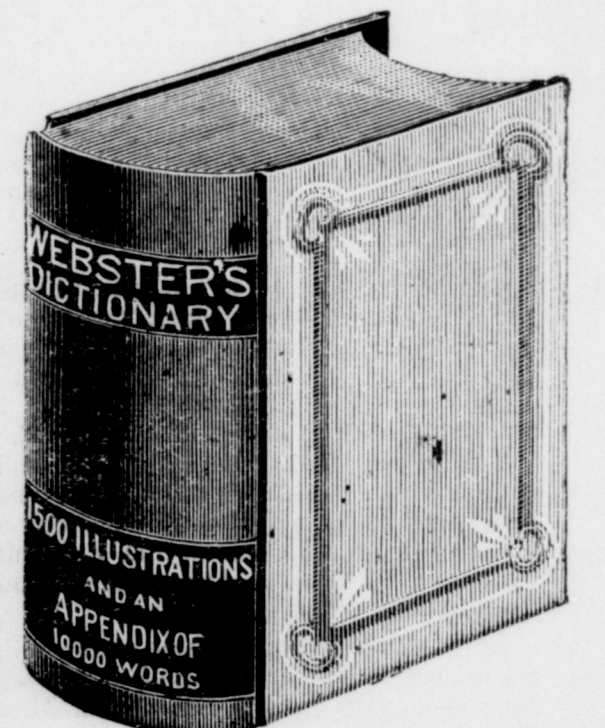
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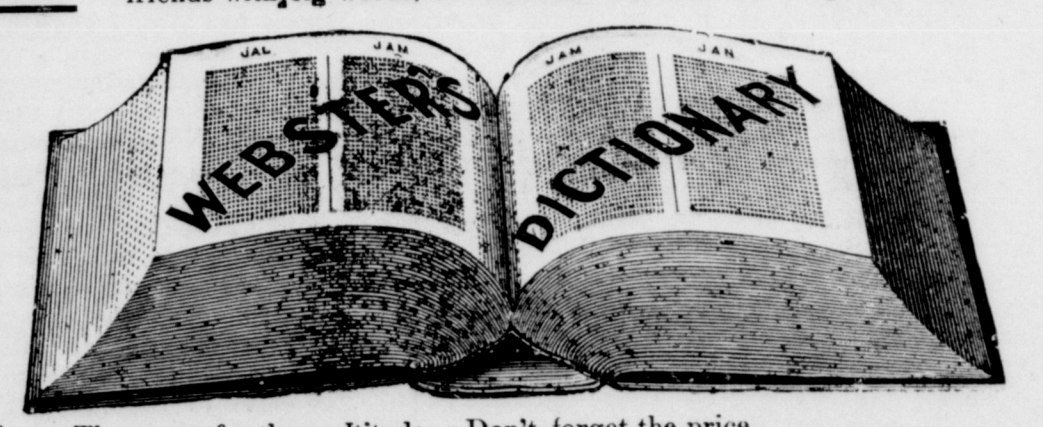
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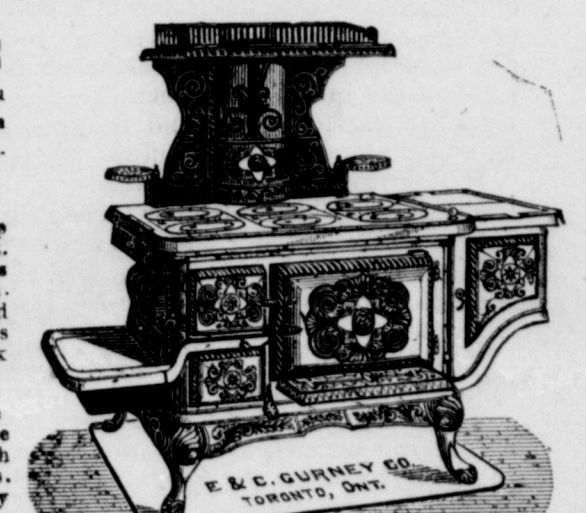
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