

What but death bemocking folly?  
Lay him low, lay him low,  
In the clover or the snow!  
What cares he? He cannot know;  
Lay him low!

Leave him to God's watching eye;  
Trust him to the hand that made him.  
Mortal love weeps idly by;  
God alone has power to add him.  
Lay him low, lay him low,  
In the clover or the snow!  
What cares he? He cannot know;  
Lay him low!  
—George H. Boker.

UNCLE SAM'S LETTER TO JOHN  
BULL.  
HE OBJECTS TO HEROD REPUBLICANS  
AND HORSE MEAT.  
For The Public.

Printed from the Original Manuscript.

Dear John: Did you read Hoar's speech? Who'll be my next senator to square himself with the Lord? You see, John, it's this Philippine business. There's a row between the Herod Republicans and the Pilate Republicans as to which ought to stand for it. The Pilate Republicans charge it up to the Herod Republicans, and the Herod Republicans say there are others just as cussed as they are. Besides, they don't want the Pilate Republicans a-washin' their hands and throwin' the dirty water on them. They say: "You knew all the time something was wrong; that there is no use for a censorship, unless there's somethin' nasty to cover up. Why didn't you vote as you talk?"

What makes the Herod Republican so swearin' mad is to have this Philippine dead cat hung round his neck, just when he is smoothing things over for the next election, and the trusts are givin' him all he wants to answer for.

I'm worried myself, John, about these trusts. They are eatin' me up; but I've got to keep quiet. You see, I voted for 'em—voted for a full dinner pail; and, Jimminy, I got it—got it full of horse meat and Billy O'Margarine. Fact! I'm eatin' horse meat! Never had to do that under any Democratic administration. Never had to do that in America before! Why, out in Chicago they advertise for old horses, "killers," they call 'em. "Highest price paid for killers; will call," and, John, I'm a-gettin' them. Now, I don't object to the Republican party as a party, and I don't object to a dead horse as a dead horse; but I don't want ary one of 'em to make me eat the t'other.

Yours for better times,

UNCLE SAM.

There are a good many necessary evils that are not really so necessary as they are convenient.—Puck.

THE LABOR PROBLEM IN SOUTH  
AFRICA.

In April, 1897, a commission was appointed by the Transvaal Volksraad to inquire into the complaints of the British mine owners and to make recommendations for the removal of the alleged causes of dissatisfaction.

This commission made its report a few months later in a volume of 747 pages, published at Johannesburg, which has been practically inaccessible in England until an association known as the "Aborigines Protection Society" undertook in June, 1901, to republish such parts of it as related to the problem of native labor.

It appears from the report just published by this society that the gold and diamond mine owners were dependent on the Kaffirs for their labor supply, and were put to great expense and inconvenience in bringing their African laborers from remote regions to the mines. They were obliged in the first place to pay some one several shillings and sometimes as much as a pound per head for the business of collecting the natives and forwarding them to their destination. Then they had to pay the railroads for their transportation, and risk getting back the amount later on by deducting the same from the wages of their laborers. In addition to this, they had to feed their workmen on the route and pay the costs of a complicated series of fees and passes which the South African republic—at the instigation of its citizen farmers and alien mine owners—had imposed upon the Kaffirs before permitting them to travel in any direction in search of work.

It will thus be seen that the British mine owner had to incur considerable expense in getting his laborers to the spot, and as he paid them not more than 50 or 60 shillings per month, they would have to work quite awhile before they would be able to pay back with their toil what their employer had advanced in getting them there.

Most of the Kaffirs had been living on "kraals" before engaging to work at the mines, and were accustomed to a simple pastoral life. With their cattle and their small farms they could live comfortably with their families at small cost and with little exertion. Only the strongest and toughest natives could stand the hardships of the mines, and heavy manual labor in the bowels of the earth became quickly distasteful to

these black sons of the forest and the open plain. The result was that most of them would refuse to abide by their agreement and they deserted the mines every year in large numbers.

This tendency was accelerated by a determination on the part of the mine owners to reduce wages to the lowest point possible. But the lower the wages were reduced the more the Kaffirs would desert, and although stringent laws existed to punish them for breaking their contracts, these laws for the benefit of British mine owners were seldom enforced by the South African republic. It is a thankless task to enforce a fugitive slave law for the return of somebody else's wage slave, and so no doubt the Boers regarded it. Perhaps they did not blame the Kaffirs very much for preferring an agricultural life to that of a contract miner. Anyway, in their stolid Dutch fashion they continued to ignore the complaints of the British, and contented themselves with polite excuses and a general do-nothing policy, which greatly incensed the mine owners.

Finally, the "Industrial Commission of Inquiry" was appointed by the Boer government and the British mine owners were invited to appear before it and state their grievances and their recommendations.

Extracts from the report of this commission are interesting reading. Not only do they throw a curious side light on the part that the labor question played in bringing about the South African war, but they expose the true relations which exist between capital and labor in all countries. The mark of benevolence being laid aside the capitalist mine owner bluntly states the conditions of the labor problem as he understands them.

A gentleman by the name of George Alba presents the capitalist's views of the situation to the commission as follows:

The reduction of native labor is necessary for two reasons; the one is, to reduce our whole expenditures; and the second has a very far-reaching effect upon the conditions which may prevail with regard to native labor in the future. The native at the present moment receives a wage far in excess of the exigencies of his existence. The native earns between 50 shillings and 60 shillings per month, and then he pays nothing for food and lodging; in fact, he can save almost the whole amount of what he receives. At the present rate of wages the native will be enabled to save a lot of money in a couple of years. If the native can save 20 pounds a year, it is almost sufficient for

him to go home and live on the fat of his land.

Happy native! To have a home and land somewhere that he can go back to and live on! He is not a thorough wage slave as long as he has this option. Mr. Alba continued:

In five or six years' time the native population will have saved enough money to make it unnecessary for them to work any more. (I. e.—in the mines.) The consequences of this will be most disastrous for the industry and the state. This question applies to any class of labor, and in any country, whether it be in Africa, Europe or America. I think if the native gets sufficient pay to save five pounds a year, that sum is quite enough for his requirements, and will prevent natives from becoming rich in a short space of time.

After some further explanations were offered in reply to the questions of the Boer representatives, the following conversation took place between Mr. Alba and a Boer member by the name of Smit:

Mr. Smit—Do you intend to cheapen Kafir labor? How do you propose to effect that?

Mr. George Alba—By simply telling the boys that their wages are reduced.

Mr. Smit—Suppose the Kafirs retire back to their kraals? In case that happened would you be in favor of asking the (Boer) government to enforce labor?

Mr. George Alba—Certainly—a Kafir cannot live on nothing.

Mr. Smit—You would make it compulsory?

Mr. Alba—Yes. I would make it compulsory, and without using force a tax could be levied. If a white man loiters about he is run in. Why should a nigger be allowed to do nothing?

On his own land, that is. Take it from him by taxation—a brilliant idea, quite worthy of an Anglo-Saxon philanthropist—reduce him to the status of the proletariat in Christian England and America.

Mr. Alba (continuing)—If there is a famine in the district the government has to pay for it, and that falls back again on the industry. Therefore, I think a Kafir should be compelled to work in order to earn his living.

Mr. Smit—Do you think you would get the majority of the people on the Rand with you in trying to make the Kafirs work at a certain pay?

Mr. Alba—I think so.

Mr. Smit—Would it not be called slavery?

Mr. Alba—Not so long as the men earned a certain amount of money.

It would be called "the dignity of labor" and is so called elsewhere in this report by one of the British mine owners.

Mr. Smit—If a man can live without work, how can you force him to work?

Mr. Alba—Tax him, then. If I have five pounds to spend, I don't want to do any work; but if the government passes a law that all gentlemen at large (who you may know in South Africa often call themselves that) must pay three pounds per month tax, there only remains two pounds, and I am forced to work!

Mr. Smit—Then you would not allow the Kafir to hold land in the country, but he must work for the white man—to enrich him?

Evidently this Boer is taking a sly stolid enjoyment in the rare sight of a benevolent Briton unmasked.

Mr. Alba—He must do his part of the work of helping his neighbors. How would the government like us to sit down and say that we have enough money; where would the state drift to?

Where, indeed? Possibly not into the South African war!

Mr. Alba (continuing)—There is always competition in labor, and when once a man tastes the fruits of his labor, he will work.

Without hypocrisy this is meant to read: "Whenever once a man is deprived of the fruits of his labor, he will work—at any loathsome and killing task."

Mr. C. J. Joubert, minister of the mines, now takes hold of the witness, and probes for further expressions of the commercial longing for the reestablishment of slavery—the British being credited with its abolishment in South Africa.

Mr. Joubert—You said yesterday that if a law could be made for enforced labor, it would be a great assistance. Is that your opinion?

Mr. Alba—Yes.

Mr. Joubert—Is there a law in England to get forced labor?

Mr. Alba—No; nowhere in the world as far as I know.

Mr. Joubert—Then why would you like it here?

Mr. Alba—I have not asked for it. But I told you what the consequences would be if we reduced the price of labor and the natives refused to work here. Then I suggested to impose a head tax, and I think Mr. Smit asked me if I thought it would be a good thing to have forced labor. I—as an employer of labor—say it would be a good thing to have forced labor, but another question is whether you could get it. You could exercise a certain amount of force among the natives if you impose a certain tax upon each native who does not work, or if he has not shown he has worked a certain length of time. . . . The law then should be for the native that if he does not work for a certain number of years, or if he is too rich to work, he must pay.

Mr. Joubert—You know of no other country where there is such a law?

Mr. Alba—There are no Kafirs in any country I have been in, but the rich man who does not work has to pay a higher tax than the poor man who has to work. . . . The proportion of taxes goes up in proportion to a man's wealth.

Alba probably knows this to be false, but hopes the Boer does not. If it were true, the rich man would be compelled to go to work again.

Mr. Joubert—But although in London there are no Kafirs, there are poor whites?

Mr. Alba—Oh, yes!

Mr. Joubert—Are these compelled to work?

Mr. Alba—You do not need to tell a man to work there; he will work if he can only get it!

Having no kraals to retire to — no lands to live on.

Mr. Joubert—Is it the same here?

Mr. Alba—No. A Kafir can get work if he will come.

Mr. Joubert—But still they live?

Mr. Alba—Who?

Mr. Joubert—The poor at home.

Mr. Alba—Oh, yes! They live!

The report before me gives extracts from the testimony of 14 mine owners and managers who practically agree in their plea for a reduction of wages, and an urgent demand that the Boer government shall use its powers first as a detective agency in compelling deserter to return to the mines, and secondly as a slave driver in taxing the natives so heavily that they will be driven by hunger to forsake their kraals and work in the mines for a bare subsistence wage.

It is vastly to the credit of the members of the Boer commission that they replied to the insolent and inhuman demands of the British mine owners by refusing flatly to recommend to their government the imposition of a higher tax on the long-suffering Kafirs (who are already taxed beyond the limits of a white man's endurance) or any measure that would be equivalent to forced labor.

Under British pressure they did recommend, however, "the establishment of a government department for the procuring and supplying of native labor for use in the gold mines"—and of a local board by which the British owners could practically control the action of the Boer government in the matter of labor representation.

The recommendations of the commission were naturally distasteful to the Volksraad. That they were not satisfactorily carried out was one of the complaints (on the part of the British) which led to the breaking out of the South African war.

The "Aborigines Protective society" adds that "they are now being zealously and imperiously urged upon the present administrators of the Transvaal."—Miss Caroline H. Pemberton, in *International Socialist Review* for September, 1901.

Dublin, N. H.

Postmaster General Payne has received a letter from a resident of a little town in the state of Washington, complaining that the postmaster there is trying to make a profit for himself out of the sale of postal cards. The letter follows:

"To the General Postmaster, Washington, D. C.—Dear Sir: Our postmaster told me that he loose money