

"THE ALAMEDA CITIZEN."

Over the bay from San Francisco lies the city of Alameda. It is one of the bedrooms of the metropolis of the Pacific, where an army of San Francisco toilers of the clerk class go from their daily work for refreshment and sleep.

Many of these clerks own little homes, more or less mortgaged, which gives them an invigorating consciousness of having a stake in the country. Nor is this the only stimulating fact in their lives. As their days are spent at work in the midst of great commercial and financial affairs, laboring with their coats on and not for "wages" but for "salaries," they have a feeling, shared even by such of their class as do not own homes, either mortgaged or free, that they are strictly in the swim with the business interests of the nation in general and of the Coast in particular.

They are, therefore, not workmen, but business men. Toward workmen, even toward those whose wages are double their own salaries, they are deliciously supercilious. The workingman belongs in a lower social class, you see. And they take no interest in labor problems beyond the vital question of how to get labor cheap, whereas in business problems their interest is active and profound.

After each daily round of business duties "over in the city," the clerkly denizen of Alameda is said to retire to his more or less mortgaged domicile across the bay, there to enjoy a few hours of hard-earned surcease from respectable toil.

Entering his home, he surveys with satisfaction an interior modeled upon that of the luxurious house of the old man—the millionaire whom he assists in business—as closely as a narrow salary and a little cottage upon a contracted building plot permit. His evening dinner over, a function also remotely modeled after the corresponding function at the old man's, our Alameda friend withdraws to his study, like the old man except on club nights, and dons his smoking jacket. A tawdry and ancient thing, that smoking jacket, threadbare and frayed, perhaps, but undeniably it is a smoking jacket, what remains of it;

and a thrill of pleasure follows the thought that, broadly speaking, this is the distinguishing part of the sartorial array of the old man when he settles down to a sociable smoke with himself at home.

Thus properly garbed, the complacent Alamedan takes his meerschaum from its case with a loving caress and tenderly fills the capacious bowl with Bull Durham. Cigars would be preferred, but good cigars are dear, while poor ones are in bad form, in addition to being otherwise objectionable; and next to cigars, aye, even along with cigars, a meerschaum pipe is correct. Indeed, a meerschaum pipe may even supersede cigars, as a better-class indulgence, if it develops rich color, which the owner may laboriously conserve and progressively admire. To be sure, the pipe ought to be loaded with Turkish instead of Bull Durham, but that is a detail which in the privacy of home cuts no figure. Besides, there is in the use of the fragrant but plebeian Durham a suggestion of sturdy indifference to style, which distinguishes the denizen of Alameda from the mere dude.

With his pipe alight, the Alamedan smokes and dreams—dreams as the Turk dreamed—of a future when suppliant knees will bend before him, even as his own now bend before the old man. Maybe his wife sits by him, and they dream together, he swelling out with a delightful sense of headship within the walls of his more or less mortgaged castle, and she blooming with pathetic confidence in his latent powers of business.

That is the daily routine, with immaterial variations induced chiefly by social obligations and changes of season, of the Alameda habitant in his leisure hours. In his business hours over in San Francisco he strives to copy the manner and manners of the old man with all fidelity. And to his credit it must be said that, comical as he often appears, he is as a rule as diligent in business as the best type of "good nigger" in slavery days.

It is in political times, however, when questions affecting business are at issue, that he becomes most interesting. For then our Alameda habitant blossoms out into the Alameda

citizen—comical, diligent and dangerous.

In political issues in general his interest is only properly languid—like the old man's. Whether government be centralized or localized, he cares little, provided the government is good, because that is the way the old man looks at it. Whether the suffrage be general or limited makes no difference to him, provided it is sufficiently limited to exclude the unfit, which is also the old man's idea. Excessive taxation doesn't trouble him, if it is indirect; though he is sensitive to direct taxation, partly because the old man objects to it, and partly because it is prejudicial to real estate interests, in which he is concerned. For inherent human rights, except his own, he does not care a fig; and is rather inclined to agree with the old man, who approves the conclusion of modern college professors, that the theory of inherent human rights has been exploded. If he knew that socialists also inculcate the doctrine that there are no inherent rights, he might recoil; for the old man abhors socialism, whatever that may be, and of course he abhors it, too. Once in awhile he becomes indignant about bad government, just like the old man; but he is no more a theorist than the old man is, and if you turn the rascals out and put good officials in he is quite content. But when politics meddles with business questions, so as to excite the old man, the Alameda citizen is indeed on fire.

He is not on fire, however, with the fuel of his own independent thoughts. He never thinks independently. He does not consider it good business form for a subordinate in business to do so. The old man thinks for him at the office, and does it well; why not at the polls?

So the Alameda citizen votes the old man's ticket, and holds in supreme contempt everybody in the establishment who does not. When a subordinate is "fired" for not taking a delicate hint at election time, he gets no sympathy from the Alameda citizen. How can he expect to eat the old man's bread, even if he does give the old man his time and sweat in exchange, and then vote against the old man's interests without being "fired?"

Besides, doesn't the old man know, better than any inside subordinate or outside agitator, what is good for the whole force? Isn't he a millionaire because he knows how? Very well then. If he says protection, protection goes, just the same as when he says buy or sell, or mark up or mark down. If he says "sound money," then sound money it is and ought to be with every voter in the place. If he says "leave well enough alone," then the party in power must be kept in power. If he says "give us a change," then the party in power must be turned out.

There is your "Alameda citizen," as Arthur McEwen, a journalist distinguished on both Coasts, discovered, and with a degree of humor we should not attempt to imitate, described him. But the "Alameda citizen" works in many places besides San Francisco and lives in many places besides Alameda, though elsewhere he might be better distinguished by the name "pen-niless plute." He is ubiquitous. Wherever you find a ten-dollar clerk who glances down as from a pinnacle upon twenty dollar mechanics, the chances are more than even that you are in the presence of an "Alameda citizen." Sound him on politics and you are almost certain to get an echo of the plutocratic sentiments in the midst of which he humbly works.

The successful business man is the "Alameda citizen's" god. Success in business is his heaven; failure his hell. He knows his hell is densely populated, but there is so much room, so very much room, in his heaven. And as he is in his own estimation possessed of exceptional business qualities, he expects to climb over the heads of the seething mass of "poor devils" who are doomed not only to failure but to destitution. All unconscious that he himself is part of the seething mass, and 999 to 1 always will be, he hopes to make it a stepping stone to a comfortable seat in his roomy heaven. And the one rule upon which he relies to achieve this bare chance of success is implicit obedience, even in the matter of voting, to the commands of his god—the successful business man.

The "Alameda citizen" is as com-

ical as an organ grinder's monkey, and for similar reasons. His one virtue, taking him as a class, is diligence in business. But both his diligence and his comicality are obscured by the overshadowing fact that he is dangerous.

Any class of voters is dangerous which votes under orders. Such voters are more dangerous, far more dangerous, than voters who are bribed. And the "Alameda citizen" does vote under orders. Without thinking independently on public questions, he simply adopts the sentiments of a coterie of successful business men. The effect is to multiply the voting power of that coterie. Instead, therefore, of getting an expression of citizenship at the polls, we get, so far as the vote of the Alameda citizen is concerned, only a magnified expression of a limited business interest which is selfishly desirous of making and maintaining such maladjustments of industrial affairs as tend to enrich them at the expense of the labor of the masses.

One thing the "Alameda citizen" has to learn, if with his narrow brain and narrower selfishness he is capable of learning anything, is that the activities which he calls business are not all of business; that is, they are not all of the industrial life of which business, so-called, is but a dependent part. Another thing he needs to know is that success in business does not depend alone upon diligence, nor yet upon this and all the other industrial virtues combined. It ought to, but it does not. If inherent human rights were recognized and conserved, it would; but they are ignored, and in consequence legalized privilege in some degree and form is an absolutely necessary condition of business success.

To make business success the reward of the industrial virtues alone, legalized privileges must be abolished or undermined. But that can be done, otherwise than by revolution, only by voting to do it. When the "Alameda citizen" shall have learned this, his intelligence will be sufficiently stimulated, perhaps, to see that in voting the old man's sentiments instead of his own he is probably voting not to abolish or undermine legal-

ized privileges, but to perpetuate them. By that time he will be competent to decide for himself how best to serve with his vote the interests of the people, of whom he is one, instead of those peculiar "business" interests in which his share is seldom more and is usually less than that of the worker in shirt sleeves whom he affects to despise.

But when he does this he will no longer be an "Alameda citizen." He will then be an American citizen, devoted above all things else, as a citizen, to the perpetuation and realization of those human rights of "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" which the American Declaration of Independence declares to be in their nature inherent and inalienable, and which no college philosophy, no pseudo science, nor any counting room code of ethics can set aside.

NEWS

The text of the correspondence between the British and the Dutch governments relative to the possibility of terminating the war in South Africa, which was referred to last week but the nature of which had not then been divulged, was made public on the 4th. It consists of a letter from the Dutch minister in London to Lord Lansdowne, the British foreign secretary, and of Lord Lansdowne's reply.

In the Dutch minister's letter, which is dated January 25 and is phrased with extreme caution, the reasons are outlined which in the opinion of the Dutch government justify friendly overtures for peace from a neutral power. The Boers, it recites, are placed in exceptional circumstances. Being "completely shut in and separated from the rest of the world," their "representatives in Europe are deprived of all means of communicating with the general commanding their forces." In consequence, "the authorities who ought to negotiate for the Boer side are divided into two sections, which are deprived of all means of deliberating together." In addition to this obstacle to peace negotiations, which prevents each section from acting intelligently, "the delegates in Europe are bound by their letters of credence, drawn up in March, 1900, which bind them so strictly to the independence of the republics" that they could not author-