

human freedom on the Great Lakes is still in progress. Ten thousand seamen have been on strike against the shipowners (known as the Lake Carriers' Association) since the month of May, 1909, and the battle is still being waged as bitterly as in the beginning. The Lake Carriers, by the way, are really controlled by the Pittsburg Steamship Company, a subsidiary of the Steel Trust.

The strike was brought about by an attempt on the part of the shipowners to compel the union men to hand over their union books and cards to the employers and to pledge themselves never again to join a labor union "as long as they sailed for a living." This the Lake Carriers called "open shop."

This was followed by a further attempt on the part of the Lake Carriers to inaugurate an industrial passport system which they had dignified by the name of "welfare plan," but which was modeled upon the police system of Russia and the notorious English shipping federation scheme which brought about such havoc on the English merchant marine, resulting in the employment of Asiatic labor on over a third of the vessels of that country; 70,000 Asiatics had to be employed because the federation scheme so lowered the wages and conditions that white men could no longer be induced to ship on those vessels.

The "welfare plan" passports of the Lake Carriers, obtained only after registration of name, personal appearance, past history, etc., are intended to keep the seamen under constant control of the shipowners, whether the seamen are employed or not. While ashore these passports must be exhibited to the shipping masters of the Lake Carriers, the holder being required to frequent certain places called "assembly rooms" while out of employment. Upon being given a job the seaman must deposit his passport with the ship's master, who will return it to him when he leaves the vessel, provided the master has been satisfied with the services of the seaman; otherwise the passport is taken up and returned to the Lake Carriers, and the sailor is forever blacklisted. Every owner, shipping master and ship's officer has the full authority under this "welfare plan" to at any time, for any or no reason, blacklist any sailor or marine fireman or cook. Afloat or ashore, constant restraint and espionage is to be applied to every seaman. It was a deliberate attempt on the part of the shipowners to establish serfdom on the Great Lakes. The seamen are on strike to prevent this.

The American Federation of Labor has indorsed the strike and has pledged moral aid, should it be needed, financial aid. But at present the seamen are asking nothing except the moral support and the active sympathy of all workmen. They make this request of union men everywhere: "Pass the word along, brother, there is a strike on the Great Lakes; advise all unemployed workers to keep away."

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The British Parliament.

The resolutions relative to the Lords' veto, of which formal notice was given by the British ministry in the House of Commons on the 21st (p. 275), were formally moved on the 29th, pursuant to the agreed program (p. 293), and the debate upon their adoption began.

Old Age Pensions in France.

The workmen's pension bill which has been the subject of legislative controversy in France for four years, passed the Chamber of Deputies in the latter part of February, and on March 22d passed the Senate in somewhat amended form by a vote of 280 to 3. The Associated Press dispatches thus describe the bill:

The benefit of the law, which has been modified to include in its scheme the previous old-age relief law, will be enjoyed by about 17,000,000 persons, including every category of workers except railroad employes, miners and seamen, who already enjoy pensions. As all state employes are retired upon pensions at a specified age, this law, therefore, practically extends the old-age pension system to all the laborers of France.

The plan involves contributions from three sources for the creation of the pension fund. First, obligatory yearly contributions from the wage-earners amounting to 9 francs for men, 6 francs for women and 4½ francs for minors; second, the contribution of the employer, which equals that of the wage-earner, and, third, the contribution of the state.

Even the experts differ as to what the last will be, but the generally accepted figure is 180,000,000 francs (\$36,000,000) for the first year, the amount decreasing until the scheme works normally, when it will be about 125,000,000 francs. The beneficiaries are to draw their pensions at the age of 65, or after thirty years of service, with certain diminutions for advance payment. The full pension at the lowest unit of contribution will be 414 francs per annum; except for farm laborers, whose contribution and pension is slightly inferior.

The London Nation calls it "a timid and exiguous scheme, which confers a miserable dole on a contributory basis, the burden being divided between the worker, the employer, and the state;" and says proudly: "The timidity of the democratic party which rejoices in the bold name of Radical-Socialist, and obeys the spur, not of a Labor, but of a Socialist group, makes a striking contrast to the achievement of our own Liberalism without adjectives."

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Theodore Roosevelt Angers the Egyptian Nationalists.

As Mr. Roosevelt, after his year's big hunt in Africa (vol. xii, p. 300) came northward across the Soudan he gave advice to the Soudanese to be loyal to their English rulers, and in general gave warm approval to the English protectorate in Africa. This aroused fears on the part of the Nationalist party of Egypt, who stand upon the platform of "Egypt for the Egyptians" (vol. x, pp. 12, 35; vol. xii, p. 541), that the weighty influence of the distinguished American traveler who seemed to have no scruples about meddling in local politics, might be thrown against them. In advance of his arrival in Cairo, the headquarters of the Nationalists, therefore, the Sheik Ali Youssef, the head of the

party and the friend of the Khedive, published an open letter to Mr. Roosevelt, in which he said:

You are now traveling through the valley of the Nile, where you see luxurious verdure and tranquillity among the inhabitants. You do not suppose that we consider these blessings are all grants given by Lord Cromer during the quarter of a century he was here? We fear that the wealth and happiness you will see in Egypt, which is occupied by a foreign power, will dazzle your eyes and lead you to advise the audiences that will come to listen to your speeches to preserve the status quo, and that you will eulogize the British occupation. If you do this you certainly will modify the pleasure of the Egyptians who are anxious to meet you. We hope you will not address us in the same terms you addressed the Soudanese, and that you will give satisfaction to the people of this country by a word of justice and sympathy. For if a conquered people cannot find a defender like you among great men, you who can give lessons by your speeches to strong powers as well as to weak nations, we may bid farewell to liberty and perish.

Mr. Roosevelt arrived at Cairo on the 24th. Observers report that there was a strange undercurrent of hostility on the part of the populace, which was, however, given no outward expression. On account of a dread of what might happen some functions arranged for the visitor were altered or foregone, and advice appears to have been given to the American guest to leave questions of political import untouched. This advice was not taken, at least for Mr. Roosevelt's climax speech, delivered at the University of Cairo on the 28th, which had been anticipated with some alarm. The students of the University ostentatiously absented themselves, and the audience consisted chiefly of English, French and Americans and a few Egyptians. Mr. Roosevelt told the Egyptians of their unfitness for self-government, the preparation for which "is not a matter of a decade or two, but of generations." He further violently denounced the assassination by a Nationalist student of the Egyptian Premier, which occurred on February 20. While the Nationalist Party was not responsible for this assassination, there has been sympathy with the act as a political necessity. This sympathetic attitude Mr. Roosevelt also denounced in the strongest language, using words no Egyptian, and, indeed, no Englishman, ever had dared to speak. In fact, say the dispatches, although Butros was assassinated a month ago, the assassin has not yet been tried, the English apparently being unwilling for some reason to proceed promptly with the case. After the address had been delivered a native officer is quoted as saying: "For 3,000 years we Egyptians have suffered alien rule. How much longer must we wait before we are competent for self-government?" Walter Wellman writes to the Chicago Record-Herald that "others declare that Colonel Roosevelt is throwing his influence to the British in order to repay the obligations incurred by him in Uganda and during the

voyage down the Nile. Neutral observers assert that the natives would never stand such a talk from an Englishman or a Frenchman, and wonder why they take it from an American." On the evening of the day of the University address the leaders of the Nationalist Party, angered almost beyond expression at the speech, called a hurried conclave to voice disapproval of the American's interference in Egyptian affairs. The meeting was violent, and the counselors of moderation were quelled only after strong argument. At its close, however, the Nationalist leaders had been instructed officially to express the anger of the party at what was termed Mr. Roosevelt's "unwarranted action to discourage the Egyptian nation in its struggle for independence."

NEWS NOTES

—Again Menelik, the great Negus of Abyssinia, is reported to be dying (vol. xii, p. 1256.)

—The first primary election under the commission form of government in Kansas City, Mo. (vol. xii, p. 711), came off on the 28th.

—The first election under the Des Moines plan in Sioux City, Iowa (p. 182), was held on the 28th, and A. A. Smith was elected mayor.

—At the second election in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, under the Des Moines plan (vol. x, p. 1233; vol. xii, pp. 114, 519), J. M. Miles was re-elected mayor.

—The second election at Des Moines under the Des Moines commission plan (vol. xii, pp. 322, 331, 519) came off on the 28th. Issues were complex and the result was close.

—The mountain town of Mount Hope in West Virginia was wiped off the map by fire on the 24th. Only six houses were left standing. Nearly 3,000 persons were made homeless.

—Charles J. O'Malley, successor of Dr. Judge (vol. x, p. 902) as editor of the New World, the official organ of the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Chicago, died on the 26th at the age of 53.

—While the United States cruiser Charleston was engaged in gun practice in Philippine waters on the 28th, the breechlock of a three-inch gun blew off and killed eight men, seven of them instantly.

—Between three and four hundred persons, gathered for a public ball in the coachhouse of a hotel in the little Hungarian village of Oekoerite on the 27th, perished by fire. Hardly any one escaped.

—An amicable adjustment of difficulties between the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen and Engineers and the General Managers' Association of the Western railroads (p. 254) was made on the 23d.

—A State land congress for Arkansas, held at Little Rock, adjourned on the 25th after adopting a resolution providing for the appointment of a committee to promote the industrial development of the state.

—A petition for an initiative vote under the new Constitution of Michigan has been filed in Detroit with a view to securing a popular vote in that city