

Bryan's candidacy.

At a banquet to William J. Bryan in Madison, Wis., on the 28th, the Democratic national committeeman for Wisconsin named him as the party standard bearer for 1908. In replying, Mr. Bryan alluded to this remark by saying it is too early to discuss Presidential nominations. Mr. Bryan's attitude toward the nomination for 1908 is no secret. He can hardly be insensible to the fact, obvious to all other intelligent observers, that the tide which is running so swiftly and so strongly, both within and without the Democratic party, against the spirit of plutocracy with which this Republic has for a generation been obsessed, is running also just as swiftly and just as strongly in favor of his candidacy and election. Beyond all dispute he is the choice of the democracy of both parties. But Bryan holds his personal ambitions in the leash of his patriotism. He makes his personality secondary to his principles. Notwithstanding his supreme availability now for the Presidential nomination in 1908, he doubtless realizes that men even more available may have come to public notice when that year opens; and he is not the leader to embarrass his friends or his party by political forestalling. Should a more available man have then appeared, Bryan may be depended upon to recognize the fact and make the most of it for the good of the cause which as yet he preeminently represents. Should no such man appear, there is as little reason to look for a weak, false modesty on Bryan's part in that event as for selfish obtrusiveness in the other.

WAGES OF "THE MOST PERFECT OF ALL THE SERVITORS OF THIS EARTH."

When the opponent of trades unions wishes to make a particularly strong argument in support of his position, he appeals to the public's sense of equity by asserting that the union places all its members, good, bad and indifferent, on a level as to wages. This,

he declares, is not fair to the high-grade mechanic. The union keeps his wages down to the level of the wages of less valuable men, whereas, he should be permitted to get as high wages as he can earn; a thing that he would be able to do were it not for the tyranny of his selfish union.

The fact that there is not a grain of truth in this argument makes no difference to the man who uses it. It seems plausible to anyone who gives the matter no critical attention.

As a matter of fact, the union merely seeks to prevent wages from falling below a certain minimum; the employer is at perfect liberty to pay superior mechanics as high wages as he pleases—there is no maximum limit, except that fixed by economic law. Most employers pay a limited number of extra valuable men a moderate advance on the union scale. The number of these fortunates bears absolutely no relation to the number of first-class men in the shop. Every shop must have one or more high grade mechanics, and precisely as many as must be had get the higher wages, and no more, no matter how many first-class men there are in the shop.

Furthermore, the total amount of the higher wage does not depend upon the recipient's value at all. It depends on what happens to be the amount of the minimum wage. The premium for skill is the difference in wages. Manifestly that difference would not be any greater than it now is if the minimum rate should decline. The difference in skill would remain the same, and, as the premium is not paid as a matter of equity, but purely as a matter of business policy, a decline in the general wage rate would be accompanied by an equal fall in exceptionally high wages.

The following press clipping (credited to the Washington Post) is interesting as a side light upon the question of the sincerity of those who profess a desire that the workman should be paid according to his value, yet who denounce the union as a bar to that:

"Chinese house servants are getting scarce and high priced in California," said Mr. R. B. Lester, of San Francisco. "With many of us this is a source of

real grief, for your Chinaman is the most perfect of all the servitors of this earth. He won't make one mistake a year; he carries out his orders with unquestioning obedience, and he never 'sasses' his employer. With their growing scarcity there has been a corresponding increase in the wages until now a good Chinese cook thinks nothing of asking \$50 to \$60 per month."

Fifty or sixty dollars per month ought not to be too much wages for "the most perfect of all the servitors of this earth," but, mind you, the only reason they get it is because "With their growing scarcity there has been a corresponding increase in the wages."

In further evidence that the grief of the California employers arises from the fact that they are obliged to pay as much for "the most perfect of all the servitors of this earth" as an ordinary American mechanic receives, I beg to present the distinguished testimony of "The Poet of the Sierras," Mr. Joaquin Miller, as given over his signature in the Arena, of October, 1904. I quote:

If the doors were opened to-morrow, so that we could get a good domestic, as was the case a few years ago, for one-fifth the price that we now pay for a poor one.

The "most perfect of all the servitors of this earth" working, a few years ago, "for one-fifth the price that we now pay for a poor one"?

Was there a labor union among the Chinamen a few years ago whose tyranny forced the highest grade of labor to accept, not one-fifth of what he now gets, but "one-fifth of what we now pay for a poor one"?

No. The Chinaman was unhampered by the wicked tyranny of trades unions. He was free to accept any price that his employer would pay. And as for the employer, his opportunity to put into practice his economic theory of the value of individual contracts to the laborer was ideal; it could not have been improved upon. He was perfectly free to pay each individual employe according to his value, not according to the arbitrary dictation of a trade union, which selfishly and tyrannically holds the best workman down to the wage level of the less efficient! Did he do it? Did the employers illustrate their economic theory by paying according to value?

According to the employers?