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EDITORIAL

“IN THE THROES.”

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IT is symptomatic of the struggle between employer and employee that as it grows in intensity and proportion, there are increased efforts made to belittle its significance and extent. The bad labor conditions and strikes of the early years of American industrial life are conjured up and the historically false contention is made that in the past and not the present is to be found the greatest degradation of the working class. Likewise only very recently was it claimed that May Day was losing its significance, because working class conditions in this country were so good as to be unfavorable to the propagation of its doctrines. Unfortunately for them, two of the leading capitalist newspapers just come to hand, furnish information to indicate in how far these efforts to deride the class struggle are true, and in how far these contentions reflect the conditions of which they are the symptoms.

The financial section of the *Evening Post* of Saturday, May 7, contains an article entitled “Business West and South,” in which “one of the three mercantile establishments employing the largest number of salesmen in the country” gives the following picture, drawn from the data of these salesmen of labor conditions in the sections mentioned:

“Poor business in many sections is attributed to the unsettled condition of organized labor. Western Pennsylvania, northern Alabama, southeastern Iowa, eastern Ohio, and Colorado seem to be in the throes, and while conditions are brightening up in Pennsylvania, Iowa, and Ohio, Alabama, and Colorado are still up against it.”

With five states in two sections “in the throes” of labor troubles, who will be so bold as to claim that present labor difficulties are as nothing compared to those of the past? When was there ever a time in early American industrial history that

such a picture was presented?

Bradstreet's, also of Saturday, May 7, observes editorially:

"May Day has lost some of its old time importance as a period from which to date strike or other industrial disturbances, but there is still enough climatic or other influence making for unsettlement to render that day a notable one in the labor world. Agreeably to expectations, there have been, from the standpoint of numbers engaged, a large number of rather unimportant strikes or lockouts occurring this week which, reports to *Bradstreet's* indicate, involved nearly 45,000 men. Strikes of coal miners in West Virginia and Eastern Ohio, boiler makers in New York City, building hands in Philadelphia, vesselmen on all the great lakes, machinists in railroad shops in the southwest and wagon makers in New York are among the important troubles brought into evidence. In addition, strikes of bakers in Chicago and Boston have been especially annoying to consumers, who in some instances have been put to straits to provide for daily wants. Such incidents as the shipment of bread in large quantities from Pittsburg, Milwaukee and other points to Chicago exhibit a harassing character of the labor troubles.

"At no time this year, however, have labor disputes assumed the epidemic character of last year, when the most disturbed labor conditions for nearly a decade existed. In all, about 170,000 men are reported to have struck since the first of the year, or only about one-half the number striking in the same period last year. It needs to be recalled, however, that the real crisis did not come until after June 1 last year, that date seeing fully 300,000 persons idle as the result of strike disturbances, and over 600,000 striking for the year 1903. It is possible that the number idle this year will show great increases later; but it is to be noted that business is quieter this year, conservative labor men are and have advised against extreme demands, and there has grown up a more determined spirit among employers, who are more willing to meet organization with organization, and shut down rather than grant exorbitant demands to the unions. It is satisfactory, therefore, to know that the present rather slow trade and poor crop outlook is apparently not to be further complicated by widespread labor troubles."

These editorial observations of *Bradstreet's* furnish some of the details of the picture "In the Throes," painted by the mercantile house quoted by the *Evening Post*. They re-enforce the fact of the extensiveness of modern labor troubles, an extensiveness such as was unknown in early American industrial history. Further they show that May Day has not suffered at all from the alleged superior working class conditions of the present. On the contrary, they show that such is the

degradation of labor, owing to "the hard times," and the attitudes of the labor leaders and the employees, which are predicated on them, that a more extensive revolt is inadvisable at this time. Labor awaits a favorable opportunity to again make more demands on the employers. Whether this opportunity comes on June 1 or later is immaterial, but come it certainly will. Then the smoldering embers of discontent will burst out into labor conflagrations, or strikes, whose heat and intensity will scorch capitalism, such as it has never been scorched before. The class struggle is on. No amount of fine assertion, written or unwritten, will waft it aside. Capitalism is "in the throes" of it, and will be in ever greater degree until its end.

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