

THE RICHMOND PALLADIUM
AND SUN-TELEGRAM

Published Every Evening Except Sunday, by
Palladium Printing Co.
Palladium Building, North Ninth and Sailor Streets.
Entered at the Post Office at Richmond, Indiana, as Sec-
ond Class Mail Matter.

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Why Not Fix Prices?

"The belief is now almost universal among the peoples of the world that high prices are due to profiteering and that prosecution of the profiteers or the fixing of a few prices will drop us back on the pre-war level of prices overnight," says Homer Hoyt, formerly of the price section of the war trade board in the Nation's Business for September.

"If congress starts to fix prices, it must fix thousands of prices. If it fixes retail prices, it must fix wholesale prices or else the retailer will be forced out of business. If it fixes wholesale prices, it must fix costs, for the supreme court will not issue a writ of mandamus to compel a manufacturer to produce at a loss. If it fixes costs at a lower level, it must inevitably fix wages at a lower level, for wages are the ultimate basis of cost. Wages are the chief element in the expense of putting raw materials on the market, and wages are the chief factor in fabricating these raw materials into finished products. Thus the end of the gigantic price-fixing undertaking would be a lowering of wages. Lower prices brought by lower wages would be a fruitless trade."

Working at Full Speed

Disabled soldiers and their families have been concerned about the time consumed in arranging for training with the federal board for vocational education.

A knowledge of the procedure necessary for the board to legally place the man in training will do much to clear up this misunderstanding. The central case board is working at great pressure, as are the district boards. Almost 1000 cases are being reviewed by the central case board every day. These cases have been previously passed on by the district officers, but certain evidence must be in the possession of this central board before the man's case may be approved.

The official army discharge and the military or naval medical report are very essential. These documents are the proof that the disability was incurred while in the service, or that it is in some way traceable to such service.

Having established these facts, the board must determine that the man's disability is the cause of a vocational handicap that must be overcome through a course of training. The new vocation for which the man is to be trained must be examined, with the view to its suitability and the man must be steered away from over-crowded occupations.

The process reads smoothly. But note the obstacles: discharge papers are missing and it takes time to get duplicates, medical certificates are lost, and more time is wasted in renewing them. Insufficient evidence on vital points must be completed. Time is consumed in supplying the facts which must be in the possession of the board before government money can be used for training.

In some instances men must be brought to the district offices for personal interviews on examinations. Personal desires must be considered in the light of economic advantages. In other words, the reeducation of disabled soldiers, sailors and marines is a great big human problem, the man's future is at stake—he must, if possible, attain independence as well as satisfaction; the best interests of the community is in the balance, non-productive citizenship must be controlled. Thoroughness in investigation is the right

Time For Action in Mexico

From the Kansas City Star.

THE latest outrage against Americans in Mexico, the detention for ransom not of civilians, as in former cases, but of army officers, emphasizes both the inability of the Mexican government to perform the obligations of a government and the futility of the weak and temporizing policy of this government toward that lawless country.

Looking back upon the long record of murders, robberies and kidnapping of Americans in Mexico, a record extending now over many years, unrelieved by reparation or any action save the most formal protest by this country, it is not difficult to understand why the authors of these outrages feel that they can continue their operations, with ever growing boldness, without fear of being held to account.

Mexicans of all factions, the so-called government at the capital—which is a government alone by the recognition and sanction of the United States—and the bandit gangs that control so much of the rest of Mexican territory, seem to have at least one policy in common, which is to show contempt to the United States government. They seem to have agreed that this country, its laws and citizens can be defied with both safety and profit. Any bandit leader who needs funds for his operations has only to raid an American company's plant or carry off American citizens, and the Carranza government when remonstrated with has only to profess that it is not a government in the particular part of the country where the outrage was committed.

It is useless to pretend that this condition ever will end while this government sits by and merely protests. Mexicans do not understand protests. They interpret this

of the disabled man. A little forethought on the part of the discharged soldiers in securing beforehand the necessary evidence and a little patience on the part of the public will help in the accomplishment of the work.

The Stupidity of Red Tape

An ex-lieutenant, writing to that excellent new publication, the American Legion Weekly, reports an interesting grievance. He says:

"I have in my possession a pay check for the month of February, 1919, calling for \$227.99. The check also calls for the equivalent in francs, 1,242.55, and on the check is stamped the rate of exchange for that month, 5.45. In June I presented this check for payment at the post of finance offices, 104 Broad street, New York, and was offered \$190 for it, due to the fluctuation in the value of the franc. I then took the matter up with Washington. Here is the answer I received:

"The Secretary of the Treasury, to whom the question of payment of these checks was referred, decided there was no authority under existing law authorizing disbursing officers to cash these checks at a rate of exchange different from that authorized by the treasury department for the month in which such checks are presented for redemption."

"In other words the government gives me a check for \$227.99, charges this amount as paid out on its records, and when I present the check four months after payment, decides to give me an amount equivalent to \$37.99 less than its face value. Can you beat it?"

We would say offhand that it would be hard to beat it, unless by some other evidence of stupidity in red tape administration of government departments. Why all the rigmarole in such matters? Whenever it seems desirable to do something promptly and fairly, it almost always appears that there are laws and rules to prevent it. The government expressed this soldier's pay in terms of francs as well as dollars, and now that the franc has become cheaper, the soldier must take the loss. Who gets the \$37.99?

Wanted: A Steady Hand

The Brooklyn Eagle presents figures showing that the railroads of the country, far from being abundantly supplied with money, are in dire need of funds. It says:

"An expert has taken occasion to inform the house interstate commerce committee that fifty-six of the railroads under federal control, including practically all of the New England lines, are not paying operating expenses; that only twenty are earning the amount to be paid as rental, and that the rental deficit for this year will aggregate \$600,000,000, which estimate is based upon the showing made for six months of 1919. The president of the Savings Bank Association of the State of New York, says:

"If congress proposes to build a foundation for American prosperity it must extend a steady hand to the one great enterprise without which this country cannot go forward. If congress does not take courageous and constructive action now, the progress of a generation toward a regulated system of privately owned and operated railway transportation will be destroyed and the 66th congress will have forced government ownership under conditions and with results which the future alone can assay."

"What congress proposes to do is not known. What must be done is not involved in mystery. There is a limit to the time during which any business can be run at a loss. There is apparently no limit to the burdens the carriers are expected to bear, with or without complaint. They can be saved from going from bad to worse by an invasion into the domain of constructive as distinguished from destructive 'statesmanship.' It is belated, but better late than never."

OUCH!

Washington Post.

Maybe the ordinary traveler wouldn't know the difference if there should be a railroad strike.

Condensed Classics of Famous Authors

HARDY

II.

Thomas Hardy, probably the most searching and profound novelist of our own time, was born June 2, 1840, in Dorsetshire, England. In his dream of becoming a poet, but he studied and practised architecture as a profession, and architecture as a means of expression, and architecture as a means of expression.

He never surpassed in happy and delicate perfection of art." In this and his next novel, "A Pair of Blue Eyes" (1882), he begins to show itself as a master of description, and so potent throughout Hardy's writings.

"Far from the Madding Crowd" (1874) was his first popular success. It reveals Hardy's superb power of depicting nature as symbolic background for his characters, an organic part of the action of his story. This was the earliest of what he called his novels of character and environment, and included "The Return of the Native," "Tess of the D'Urbervilles," his masterpiece, and "Jude the Obscure." Not until he was 58 years old was his first volume of verse published and he was 64 when he wrote "The Dynasts," started the

first part of his stupendous epic world.

"FAR FROM THE MADDING CROWD"

BY THOMAS HARDY

Condensation by Alfred S. Clark

Before Bathsheba Everdene came to Weatherbury as mistress of the manor house, time seemed to have forgotten the village. The spook-clad sheep herds in the thatched-roof cottages might have been, as far as appearance went, their own ancestors of four centuries before. Little happenings seemed tremendous. The pulling down of a novel was a stirring event; the transformation of a well into a pump-shook weatherbury like a revolution.

The stir of the great world without its romance and passion and tragedy—these came to Weatherbury with Bathsheba. There was a new arrival to be discussed, a great-boned, ruddy-faced shepherd, Gabriel Oak, who beat out a fire that menaced the wheat-fields, and remained to work for Bathsheba. Fanny Robin, a servant disappeared, lured by a soldier's red coat. These were things to agitate the heads of the rustics who gathered at nightfall at the old malthouse to drink and moralize.

Their heads would have wagged even more had they known that Gabriel Oak, only a few weeks before, had been his own master, and had vainly urged Bathsheba, then a penniless maiden, to marry him. Things that had seemed commonplace enough in the world. A man had died in Weatherbury; a dog had driven to death a flock of sheep. These were but the inevitable tragedies of life, and yet the one had suddenly made Bathsheba an heiress; the other had driven Gabriel out upon the highways to seek work. Chance or fate had kindled a fire. Gabriel had saved the wheat, and the two lives that had been flung so far apart were brought near again.

The pain of seeing another win her whom he loved would be intense but Gabriel preferred even this to life where he could not see her. Bathsheba was young, beautiful, wealthy, but rarer than these was her high spirit.

She was the stuff of which great men's mothers are made. She was indescribable to high generation, hated tea parties, feasted in shops and loved at crises.

The spirit, however, was to flame more brightly later, after her impetuosity had plunged her into the crises that was to prove her worth.

In all Weatherbury, one man alone was heedless to her charm. This was William Boldwood, "the nearest approach to aristocracy that this remote quarter of the parish could boast of."

She resented being ignored, and in a moment of thoughtlessness, sent him a valentine that fanned into flame passions that Boldwood had hidden from the world.

At the shearing supper held in the great barn, Gabriel could see that Boldwood's suit was prospering. He was madly in love. She no longer discouraged him. Neither Bathsheba nor Boldwood were thinking then of a song she had sung earlier in the evening, when the shearers reclined against each other at suppers in the early ages of the world.

Yet afterwards how often were they to recall with a shudder the words that Bathsheba had so lightly sung:

For his bride a soldier sought her. And a winning tongue had he:

On the banks of Allan Water.

None was as gay as she.

That very night the soldier came into her life, came as she walked about the farm to see that all was secure. Her skirt was caught as she trod fearfully through a growth of high firs; she heard the mutter of a man's voice.

A dark lantern revealed a spur entangled in her skirt, a young and slender man clad in brilliant brass and scarlet. It flashed like a gleam of romance in gray days, that scarlet coat that was afterwards to be remembered as so sinister a portent.

The man was Sergeant Troy, a light-hearted scoundrel whose ready flatly sounded sweeter in Bathsheba's ears than the stemmer longing of Gabriel or Boldwood. He courted her romantically, wooing her with his sword. She stood a few days later in a hollow of ferns, and about her flashed his whirling, edged weapon, in slashing so close to her that she could hear its sharp hiss as it carved out in the air her lissome figure. And when he turned to leave her, he stooped swift and kissed her on the lips.

Gabriel tried to warn Bathsheba, but she scorned his reproaches. So he bore silently with his grief and he did not tell her that Troy had beguiled little Fanny Robin away from Weatherbury. Boldwood, whose heart never before had beat faster at a woman's approach, could not control his anger. He shouted maledictions upon the man who had robbed him of all that made life joyous. His madness precipitated that which he most dreaded, Bathsheba's marriage to Troy.

The hasty marriage led swiftly to sorrow. Troy celebrated the wedding by a revel in the barn where he and all the jovial rustics were soon hopelessly befuddled. Gabriel dared not drink with them. The creeping things

of the disabled man. A little forethought on the part of the discharged soldiers in securing beforehand the necessary evidence and a little patience on the part of the public will help in the accomplishment of the work.

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