

Human Beings Sold at Auction in New York

An Object Lesson of Conditions Prevailing Among Workingmen

The newspapers of America—at least those who did not deliberately suppress it—printed in their issue of February 13 the following Associated Press dispatch:

"New York, February 12.—An auction of white men on Lincoln's birthday was the spectacle that drew thousands of persons to the Parkside Presbyterian church in Flatbush tonight. The auction was in reality an object lesson of the conditions prevailing among working people and served to get jobs for a number of men. The church was crowded when Rev. John E. Long began an address in which he outlined the pitiable condition of many a man who was willing to work, but unable to secure a position. Outside the church a crowd of 3,000 persons clamored and struggled to get into the already crowded house of worship.

"Rev. Mr. Long introduced Rev. Edward O'Laughlin, who was to conduct the auction. O'Laughlin outlined his plan to which the men present had agreed. This was to offer them, as it were, on the block to the person who would give them a job through which they could earn subsistence and a few dollars besides if possible. The money end, however, was an after consideration, as the men who had come to him wanted food and shelter principally.

Mr. O'Laughlin then led on to the platform fifty men, young and old, all more or less shabbily garbed and displaying in their ways the pinch of want. All of the men wore black masks so as to conceal their identity to all purchasers. Each man was numbered and so they were put on the block.

"No. 10 was the first man presented. He was described as an ironworker and molder, long out of work and in want and willing to work at anything.

"Several men in the audience walked to the platform, and as in slavery days, critically surveyed the subject. One man went so far as to feel of the man's limbs and muscles. It was finally announced that the man had been 'sold' to W. F. Copeland, who would give him employment in an industrial association in New York. The terms were not announced.

"No. 21 was the next put up. He was described as a man who had taken part in the Boer war and had seen service in the United States army in the Philippines. He was an electrician by trade. No. 21 went to a Flatbush family, the name of which was withheld by request. It was announced that the family would give him \$55 a month and board.

"No. 23, a painter, went to a Newark, N. J., man, who promised him \$10 a week, while No. 14, a gray-haired man, was taken away by a young man who said he would give him a home and work at once.

"Thus six men in all were disposed of when, as the hour was waxing late, the spectators, many of whom felt the scenes they had witnessed, formed themselves into a committee, took charge of the remaining forty-four men and promised to find homes and jobs for them.

Rev. Mr. Long and several others then addressed the people outside the church, telling what had been done and asking aid for the many unemployed in Greater New York.

"John D. Rockefeller, who had been invited to be present, sent a telegram regretting his inability to attend."

PLAIN TALK

The following letter is a sample of many such letters received by The Commoner and referring to the New York sale. It is plain talk to be sure, but does not the situation call for plain talk?

Colorado Springs, Colo., February 12, 1909.—
Editor Commoner: I herewith enclose a newspaper clipping that ought to make every true American blush for shame, regardless of party affiliation; but especially Theodore Roosevelt, William H. Taft and Andrew Carnegie, all of whom set up a howl in the last presidential campaign that could be heard in Timbuctoo to the effect that if William J. Bryan was elected president the laboring man would starve to death forthwith. But if William H. Taft is elected, Oh, my! Oh, me! what a picnic would these hungry sons of toil have, beginning on the 4th of November, 1908, and continuing henceforth. Mr. Carnegie was especially vindictive, saying about November 1 that William J. Bryan's

election would be nothing short of a "national calamity."

I wonder what the first great commoner in American politics would say to the three chiefs of the Annanias Club, if he could have heard the siren songs of these soothsayers, on the hustings last fall; then rose from the tomb and appeared on his natal day in Flatbush, New York, and witnessed the "sale" of negroes? No! Not so. No! Not "black savages," but white "artisans,"—skilled mechanics!

Oh, ye gods! Methinks I could have heard him moaning in travail and sorrow, and saying: "And has it come to this? Was my life's work, yea, my very life itself, laid as a ransom on my country's altar, that human slavery might never more exist in the homes of the brave and the land of the free? But what do I see transpiring in less than fifty years? A repetition of a system I gave my life together with millions of other brave patriots, to wipe out! Sons of America's illustrious sires, who is responsible for this crowning infamy of the twentieth century? This human mart—again selling human beings! Who has held the reins of my country and administered its government since 1865? Can it be the legitimate successors of myself? Could such a condition arise under the guidance of those who claimed allegiance to my principles? Equal justice to all, special privileges to none."

"Can this vision in Flatbush, New York, be a reality? Do my senses deceive me, or am I again dreaming, as in days of yore, while yet in my mortal body?—No, no, no, not so, my countrymen, it can not be! Come, oh, shades of my fallen comrades! Look ye upon this infamous sight. You who 'died with me, to set men free.' Reach forth thy guiding hand and let me grasp it, lest my faltering spirit forever perish, and sink back into wakeless oblivion, as I seem to have both lived and died in vain."

Think of it, Theodore Roosevelt, W. H. Taft and the sage of "Skibo" castle—Andrew Carnegie—all this comes to pass under the reign of Lincoln's successors in office—the apostles of prosperity, the bearers of glad tidings of great joy of the proverbial "full dinner pail" "speelers," fellows that are fairly "reeking" with good promises before election, so-called republicans but in reality Tories, federalists. Back, "harkers" to the inquisition of the suppression of free speech—chief enemies of a republican form of government, haters of human liberty—free speech and free thought. Apostles of the "square deal"—"I don't think." For shame, you who are directly responsible for this sale of human beings, in the center of enlightenment, not in a benighted land, but under the very light of the Goddess of Liberty—the hub of America—New York.

As the boys used to say in Kentucky, "wouldn't that start you down the pike?" Yes, sold to the "highest bidder," having their limbs felt of and examined to see if they're "sound" in wind and limb. Precisely as the slave buyers used to do on the block in the south, when buying negroes. Oh, ye gods and little fishes, where will this prosperity that Theodore, William H., and "Andy" told us about last fall, finally land us? Yes, marked thus: "Sold to W. F. Copeland; sold to N. J. Man," etc., and so on. And so they were led from the platform with black caps over their heads, like a condemned murderer to the gallows. Sold for bread.

Where is your boasted prosperity when men sell themselves that they may obtain food to sustain human life? For shame, for shame on your empty campaign promises, empty, meaningless, promulgated to deceive! May God have mercy on you, as you'll need it before you die. Do you think the American people will not resent this blot upon their fair civilization and love of fair play? Wait and see.

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MEN WHO CAN'T GET WORK

At least one service has been done by the sensationally named "auction of white slaves" in a Flatbush church. Whatever the motive may have been, the incident has called vividly to public attention the fact that there are many men willing and able to work who can find no work to do. Heretofore that statement was disputed by the optimists or the incredulous like

Commissioner of Charities Heberd, but no man is going to offer his services for board and clothing if he can find better remuneration.

The fact that forty such men appeared behind masks and were willing to endure an indefinite period of servitude can not well be denied. It is significant of a social and industrial condition which must be dealt with by the men who form our constructive statesmanship. This auctioneer failed signally to meet the evil which he brought so forcibly to public attention, because bidders could be found for only five among his lot of forty.—Brooklyn Eagle.

THAT FISH PROBLEM

The Commoner has received a number of replies to the "fish problem" printed in Current Topics, issue of February 12.

Mrs. Maria Ferguson, Jacksonville, Cal.—The answer is 111 fish.

J. B. Fashant, Annandale, Minn.—111 fish.

Wm. R. Leshner, White Deer, Pa.—111 fish.

S. E. Wilkison, Roseville, Ill.—Number of books in Old Testament, 39; number in New Testament, 27; total 66. Multiply by 3, number of apostles at transfiguration, making 198. Divide by 2, number of books written by Luke, makes 99. Subtract 13, the number of times the Israelites marched around Jericho, leaves 86. Multiply by 30, the number of pieces of silver Judas received, equals 2,580. Divide by 12, the number of spies sent into Canaan, equals 215. Add 7, the number of letters in Jericho, equals 222. Divide by 3, the number of apostles called the "Sons of Thunder," equals 74, which represents the number of fish caught by Charley.

Mrs. W. Cartwright, Wilber, Neb.—Sends an answer, which is exactly like Mr. S. E. Wilkison's, giving the result as 74.

Paul V. Arbaugh, Portland, Ind.—I see in your issue of February 12 a problem handed you by J. N. Taylor, of Geneva, Neb. I herewith inclose the question I have worked it as I understand it. My result is 111, that being the number of fish Charley caught. Please state correct answer in next issue and oblige a boy thirteen years old.

Myron DeFount, a fourteen-year-old boy living at Percival, Ia., writes: "I read about the fish problem in The Commoner of February 12, and my solution is 111 fish. Here is the way I have worked it out: (Master DeFount gives the same answer as given by Master Paul V. Arbaugh, 111.)

This problem was copied by The Commoner from the Geneva (Neb.) Gazette. It was originally printed, it seems, in the Adams County Record, published at West Union, O. It seems that the number of fish caught by Charley would equal 39, plus 27, times 3, divided by 2, minus 13, times 30, divided by 12, plus 7, divided by 2, or 111.

There seems to be some disagreement as to the number of apostles called the "Sons of Thunder." Some have sent in their solution giving three as the number. If they will carefully read Mark 3:17, they will find the apostles were James, the son of Zebedee, and John, the brother of James.

Mrs. W. Cartwright, Wilber, Neb., writes: The number of fish Christ used in feeding the five thousand may be figured thus: Add to the number of letters in the name of the first Christian martyr the number of the chapter in the book of Isaiah that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when Phillip went up in his chariot; subtract the number of letters in the name of the mountain on which Moses died; divide by number of letters in the name of the woman who was one of the fifteen judges of Israel; multiply by the number of letters of the first king of the divided kingdom of Judah; add the number of letters in the name of the man who built the first temple; subtract the number of letters in the name of the man who led the Israelites across the Red Sea; add the number of pieces of furniture found in the court of the tabernacle, and subtract the number of books in the Bible; this will give the number of fishes Christ used in feeding the five thousand.