

CAUSE OF HARD TIMES--THE OUTLOOK.

BY FRANK M. BLISH.

WHILE there are many reasons advanced for the terrible business depression that came upon our country last year, it has always seemed to me our trouble in Lincoln and in Nebraska, came more than anything else, from being suddenly called upon to pay our debts. We had been passing through a period of rapid expansion and progression and this meant, as it always must, a great deal of borrowed capital.

Debtors were in many instances able to offer additional securities but confidence had been destroyed and the creditor for once, must have his money; nothing else would do. There were many reasons assigned for this destruction of confidence: some said the pending tariff legislation, others the free silver agitation, still others the heavy failures in Europe and Australia, crazy speculation, and excessive extravagance in living. Whatever the cause or causes the result was the same. Economy became the family motto. The householder bought only for absolute and immediate needs, the merchant tempered his sales accordingly, the jobber took no chances on a declining market and the manufacturer, having no demand for his product, was obliged to shut up shop altogether, for the time being. Thus the summer, fall and early winter wore away and when the average merchant counted up his assets the first of the year he found them materially reduced, but with a proportionate decrease in his liabilities.

While he had generally made no money for the year's work he now had his debts where he could handle them and his only safe plan for the immediate future lay in cutting corners wherever possible and waiting for something better to turn up. It had been a long pull and a hard pull and the conservative man did not propose taking any new chances. There was very little of an encouraging nature up to March 1. Since then there has really been a marked improvement, which still continues. This is particularly noticed in those lines of merchandise handled directly by the farmer. Old stocks are giving out and orders for replenishment are more and more numerous. I am told by several of our best houses that their sales for March, up to this time, have exceeded those for the same period a year ago. From all of this it would now seem that we may confidently anticipate a fair volume of spring business, and there are many who predict good times for the fall and winter, provided our autumn harvest turns out a plentiful one. One of the results of the panic, sure to be more or less lasting, is the desire for cheaper living. Prices have steadily declined to a minimum and in many instances far below the cost of production. This has been met pretty generally by a proportionate reduction in wages. This decline has been so marked that it is said more than one-third, in the decrease, in volume of all sales last week was due to decline in prices of things consumed. This would explain in part the decreased bank clearings noticeable each week. The outlook appears healthy and confidence is certainly and steadily returning. It is a tribute to our resources that we have been able to proceed so far as we have, with the work of liquidation, under most discouraging conditions, maintaining our credit in the meantime. Surely such a record will prove of inestimable value in that approaching day, when capital, shorn of its present timidity and fear, again seeks remunerative investment.

THE DINNER PAIL BRIGADE.

Scene at a Regular Meeting of Lodge No. 601 of the Dinner Pail Brigade.

MICKEY O'HOULIHAN, the president, raps to order. The secretary calls the roll and it is discovered that nearly half of the members are absent, most of them because, being out of a job, they are behind in their dues. Old clothes and preserved hard tack are distributed by the relief committee consisting of Messrs Patsy Patterson, Billy Jones and Tommy Thomas.

Then poverty marked Bill Hoogan addresses the chair: "Mister President," he says, "Every wan of us voted for Mister Cleveland in nointy-two. Some of us were republicans before, but we voted for Cleveland because we thought the poor man would have a chance with him in the white house. The Dinner Pail Brigade stood by Grover, and now, it seems to me, it is toime for us to show our gratitude for the benefits he has give us. If inny wan doubts our prosperity, let him look at us! [Commotion in some parts of the hall,

where members are lysterically crunching hard tack and trying to find a fit among the old clothes.] But it isn't that ov which I wish to speak at prisint. I want to call attention to the manner in which Mister Cleveland has taken care ov the byes as is mimbers ov the Dinner Pail Brigade and wot voted for him and worked day an' night for the dimmycratic party. Look at 'em! Mister Morton, ov Nebraska City, and Mister White, ov Plattsmouth, and Mr. North, ov Columbus, and all the other fellers wot's got government jobs under Mr. Cleveland are active members of the brigade. And then there's Brother Harley and Brother Miller of Omaha, two of our neediest and most desarving members—they get fat jobs. I tell you Mister Prisidint, it was a great day for the poor man when Grover Cleveland was elected. I move that we endorse the action of the administration in appinting dimmycratic workin'men to the good jobs, and propose three cheers for Grover, the poor man's friend."

The motion is carried with a whoop, and the members stop eating hard tack long enough to give three lusty cheers. Jasper Jinkson rises and offers the following resolution:

RESOLVED, That we ask Mr. Cleveland to continue in his good work in appointing to public office such men as really need the office or rather, the salary attached, and to that end we demand the appointment of Brother Andrew Jackson Sawyer to the office of United States district attorney for Nebraska.

Tremendous enthusiasm is manifested at the reading of the resolution. It is adopted without a dissenting voice and the meeting adjourns. The members button their coats up to their chins and go out into the street to look for jobs.

MUSICAL.

The past week was productive of three musical events of general interest in this city; the Mendelssohn Quintet club concert, Mr. William Leonard Gray's lecture on history of music at the conservatory on Monday afternoon, and Miss Daisy Tuttle's song recital on Wednesday evening. Several musicals and recitals are contemplated for next week.

As an index of the advance along musical lines, is noted the number of parlor musicals, which are becoming more and more popular with our people. Lincoln has made rapid strides in musical culture and taste during the past three or four years, and the foundation is laid for much greater things in the future.

Next week will be begun in these columns a sketch of the different church choirs of this city, one each week being taken up in turn; after which some of the leading choirs of other cities of the state will be noticed.

The Oratorio and Mendelssohn societies are at work on the music for their forthcoming concerts, the former in May and the latter April 18, at the Lansing.

The writer had the pleasure of attending the meeting of the musical department of the Woman's club of Omaha, on Wednesday afternoon. The audience was composed of about two hundred of Omaha's most cultured ladies, who gave evidence of being full of interest and enthusiasm in the subjects under consideration. The first number on the program, a paper by Mrs. Charles Hull, "Epoch of the Netherlands," was illustrated by three selections from Palestrina's music, (a) Missa, (b) Improperice, (c) Motet. Another paper on "Martin Luther and the Reformation Music," was read by Miss Julia Knight. The illustrations were Luther's "Cradle Hymn" and "Ein feste Burgh." These papers were both well written. The musical numbers were supplied by the following well known musicians and singers of Omaha: Mrs. E. A. Cudahy, Mrs. T. J. Rogers, Captain Kinzie, Mrs. Harry Buckley, Miss Edith James, Mrs. C. E. Squires, Mrs. Ely, D. H. Wheeler, Jr., Mr. Abbott, Miss Clara Hawley and little Miss Kittie Hobbie. The musicals are given every two weeks.

The series of organ recitals given on Sunday afternoons in the First Congregational church in Omaha by Mr. Tabor, the organist of the church, has aroused interest in this class of music, of which we have so little in the west. These organ recitals are established musical features in the eastern cities, some organists giving them on Saturday afternoons, others on Sunday.