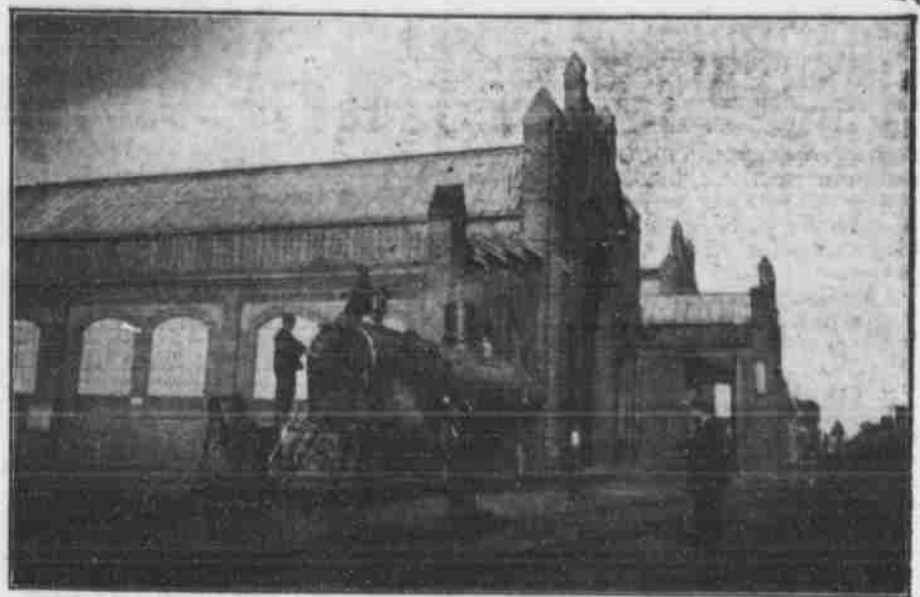


Hard Work, Low Wages and Long Hours



GERMAN WORKMEN AT LUNCH TIME.



THE BIGGEST ENGINE WORKS IN EUROPE.

(Copyright, 1903, by Frank G. Carpenter.)

BERLIN, April 1.—(Special Correspondence of The Bee.)—Is any American workman out of a job? If so he had better look for another at home. As far as I can learn, the labor market of Europe is overstocked. There are something like 1,000,000 idle workmen in England. The industrial centers have many out of employment and in London there are frequent parades of the poor. There is no room for extra workmen in France, and Germany is still in hard times.

This country was on the boom for thirty years. It began to grow when France paid over her millions to Germany. Factories and workshops then sprang up all over the empire. The people flocked from the farms to the cities and the country changed from an agricultural to a manufacturing one. Trade was pushed in every direction. The towns grew and wages rose.

This state continued until about 1900, when, owing to over speculation, the balloon of prosperity burst; the gas that came from it asphyxiated some of the banks and they failed and factories all over the empire began to shut down. Within fifteen days 22,000 men were discharged in Berlin for lack of work, and the industrial establishments all over Germany either dismissed, cut down their force or shortened the working hours. This condition of hard times still exists, although things are looking up in some branches, owing to the increased demands from the United States.

I have spent a large part of this week in some of the most notable factories of Germany. I have gone through electrical establishments employing thousands of hands and have examined among other works those of the Borsigs, the biggest engine makers of the continent, having the place in Germany that the Baldwins hold in the United States. The most of these factories are running with less than their usual number of men and some which pretend to be full are giving short time.

The Borsig factory is one of the most prosperous in Germany. It has a large foreign trade and it is somewhat owing to this that it keeps its men busy. It is one of the big engine works of the world, although not as large as the Baldwins'. It builds on the average about four locomotives every week and it has already built more than 5,000.

These works are situated at Tegel, just outside Berlin. They cover thirty acres and employ about 2,500 men. The establishment has also mines and works in Upper Silesia, which employ 5,000 hands, so that altogether the force is a large one.

This factory was founded over sixty years ago by A. Borsig, and it still belongs to his sons. In the United States it would be run by a corporation or trust, but in Germany some of the biggest of such establishments, such as the Borsig and Krupps, are owned in one family. The two Borsigs who now manage the works are each under 40. They are active business men, and spend their time in the factory, knowing personally all that goes on. Indeed, it is said that either of them could make an engine if he had to. I met the younger member of the firm, Mr. Conrad Borsig, during my stay at the works and he furnished me an English guide to look over them.

We walked together through the thirty-odd acres of buildings where the steam engines are made, now stopping to watch the men in the foundries pouring red hot metal into the moulds, and now going through the rooms where the vast boilers are riveted together. There was a noise like the thunder of many hammers which almost deafened me. Huge traveling cranes, running overhead, lifted boilers weighing many tons as easily as a mother lifts her baby and machines bored through steel as though it were cheese. Here they were making screws, there lathes were cutting iron like pine, and here the parts of the locomotives were assembled and put together for shipment to all countries of the world.

After leaving the works I went through the colonies which the Borsigs have built for their workmen. Such institutions



THESE BOYS GET 25 CENTS A DAY.

are becoming quite common in connection with the larger German factories. The Krupps have constructed towns as homes for their employes and there are other large iron making companies along the Rhine which have done likewise. These I shall describe when I visit that region.

Here, near Tegel, the Borsigs have bought a large tract of land and have built houses about it which are rented out to their workmen at such prices as will make them pay a low interest on the investment. None but employes and their families are permitted to live in these houses and the accommodations are such that they receive more for their rent than they could get anywhere else. There is an open space, covering many acres, in front of these houses. This has been planted with forest trees and it will some day be a beautiful park.

The Borsigs treat their employes well. The men seem to be satisfied and I am told their condition is superior to that of other German factories. They work but ten hours a day and such as continue with the firm a certain number of years are given pensions.

Germany is a land of low wages and long hours. In the steel and iron industries \$5 per week is good pay, and in the textile mills the wage is still less. Mechanics think they do well if they get 15 cents an hour, and on the state railways the best paid engineers receive only \$10 per week. Firemen are paid from \$5 to \$7 per week and porters less than \$4. Workmen employed by the city force are paid equally low, the boys cleaning the streets receiving 25 cents a day. On the government works the average day is nine hours, but it is longer everywhere else.

The most of the factories of Berlin claim to have a ten-hour day, and as the labor unions are strong here they can hold that time to a certain extent. In other parts of Germany the working day averages eleven hours, with no Saturday afternoons off, and in certain sections it averages twelve hours and over.

There are many clerks in this city who work as much as fourteen hours every day. The stores open about 8 o'clock in the morning, and the most of them do not close until 9 o'clock in the evening, and the restaurants and cafes much later. Nearly all stores are open until 2 p. m. Sunday, although they are closed during church hours. Some storekeepers are so pious that they will not allow an advertisement to be exposed at this time. There is a glass case of such advertisements under the railroad at the Friedrichstrasse Bahnhof. Between 10 and 12 on Sundays some of these advertisements are covered with paper, which is torn off as soon as church is out.

Speaking of time in the stores at an investigation some years ago it was found that 45 per cent of the establishments worked their clerks fourteen hours a day, and that in 6 per cent of them they worked

sixteen hours. In nearly all places there is an hour or so off for lunch.

In the country districts the hours run from sunrise to sunset, with very few holidays. The great exodus from the farms to the cities has somewhat increased farm wages, but they are still low, being competed with by the gangs brought in from Austria, Russia and Poland at harvest and seeding times.

I am told that the Poles work for as little as 25 cents a day, with poor food thrown in, and that there are farm districts where the ordinary hand gets only 15 cents a day. Throughout Prussia 50 cents is a good price for farm work and in some sections the wages are 40 cents for men and 25 cents for women.

A great deal of farm work is done by the women. They spade and hoe, weed and do other back-breaking work. They commonly follow the plow and scatter the manure, working side by side with the men.

Some farmers hire married couples renting them small houses on their estates and taking the rent out in wages. Such a tenant agrees to give all his work to the owner of the estate and to take 35 cents a day for it in winter and 50 cents per day in the summer. The man's wife may get 20 cents a day in the winter and 25 cents in the summer. At such wages if one has a good healthy wife, he may possibly earn as much as \$200 during the year.

Women in Germany are everywhere poorly paid. I have already given the wages in the big stores, where as nicely dressed and as intelligent girls as you will find in any of our department stores of the United States get from \$8 to \$12 a month and board themselves. The average wages of female clerks are from 25 to 50 cents a day, and it must be a very good clerk indeed who gets the latter.

Berlin is filled with sweat shops. It is one of the manufacturing centers of Europe and it has tens of thousands of sewing girls engaged in making mantles, cloaks, men's and women's clothing, jackets and infants' wear. Many of these sweat shops are in the cellars and some in the attics. The houses look well on the outside, but within you find scores working away in little rooms and not a few working and sleeping in the same room. The police regulations require that the rooms be of a certain size, but today there are thousands of men, women and children who live in cellars in this most beautiful city of Germany. There are other thousands in rooms which cannot be heated and many of which lack ventilation and light.

Nearly all the sweat shops pay their employes by the piece and that at such a rate that only the best sewers can make as much as 50 or 60 cents a day. There is a fine for every mistake, and trumped-up fines reduce the receipts below the amount agreed upon. I am told that few sewing girls earn as much as \$2 per week. Girls make jackets for 20 cents apiece and shirt-

waists for 25 cents. You can get a girl to come to your house and sew for less than 50 cents a day and you can hire a dress-maker who will cut, fit and make a plain dress for you in two days, charging you 50 cents per day for her work and perhaps 40 cents per day for the girl who helps her.

Music teachers are paid as little as 25 cents a lesson and singing teachers the same. Girls in some factories receive less than \$2 a week. In others they get \$3, while forewomen receive from \$6 to \$10. Some figures taken by the government not long ago showed that cloak makers were earning \$2 a week and that girls on underclothes received from \$1.25 to \$3.75, the latter being paid for skilled hands and overseers. Think of making collars for from 1 to 2 cents apiece and cuffs for 20 cents a dozen and you have an idea how some women work in Berlin. I have heard of places where button holes are made by hand for 1 cent a hole and where if the place to work and the thread and needles are furnished by the employer a reduction of 25 cents per head is made.

The percentage of women workers in Germany has rapidly increased of late years, owing to the enormous number of men required in the army. It is estimated that there are more than 7,500,000 German women who earn their own living, and this is an increase of more than 1,000,000 within the last thirteen years. Of these 40 per cent are employed on the farms, 20 per cent in domestic service and 10 per cent in public offices. About 7 per cent work in the factories and 4 per cent act as servants in the hotels and in the beer and wine rooms.

Within the last few years the men have been trying to keep the women from doing certain kinds of work in the factories and foundries, and the unions are generally against the employment of married women when their husbands have work.

But how can people live on such wages? They cannot if you use "live" in our sense of the word. It is the general opinion that things are cheap in Europe. They are not. Here in Germany good things cost as much as in the United States, and many things more. A fair price for beefsteak is 25 cents a pound; mutton, 20 cents, and veal the same. Good butter costs from 20 to 30 cents a pound, sugar 7 cents and flour 5 cents.

Germany has to import a great part of its food. We send it much of its breadstuffs. Russia is its poultry farm, and Holland and other countries its butcher shops. Eggs are imported by the millions and they sell for 30 cents and upward per dozen. An ordinary chicken costs 50 cents, and it is a poor goose that won't bring \$1.

Clothing is somewhat cheaper than with us, but the better kinds are equally high. Shoes cost so much that the average workman wears sandals of wood with toes of leather. I see men so shod on the streets of Berlin and the clack, clack, clack of the wooden sole is heard in every factory. Fuel is high, and altogether the necessaries as well as luxuries cost much.

Many people cook as little as possible. You can buy all sorts of eatables all ready cooked, and this is done by both rich and poor. You can get roast beef, roast chicken, and puddings ready to warm up in every block, and the delicatessen shops will supply you with a cooked dinner ready to take home and serve if you want it.

There are but few free lunch counters and public soup houses where you get things for nothing, but there are many cheap restaurants where the poor are supplied at cost prices. Some of these are managed by the charitable women of the city, and that under the patronage of the empress herself. They are known as the people's kitchens and are open to all. In them you can get a dinner for about 5 cents. A bowl of soup costs 3 cents and a cup of good strong coffee 1 cent. The rooms are very clean and well kept and the food is nicely cooked. As you come in there is a cashier who gives checks for the articles wanted upon payment of the money, and by presenting these checks at the luncheon coun-

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