

"BAD? Well, yes, they're pretty bad, but they might be a lot worse, so far as I am concerned."

The cheerful tone of the little man—he was the first to whom I spoke in Nottingham—nearly took my breath away. Here, at last, was somebody not utterly weary of the New World!

"Never say die!" he added, and proceeded to tell me of a stroke of good-fortune that had befallen him some months previously.

One day he and his wife had got down to their last shilling. Sallying out together, they bought some "block trimmings," potatoes, bread, etc., and then returned to their home—which consisted of two rooms—and made a good meal.

While they were wondering where the next would come from, a stranger to Nottingham—a well-dressed woman—appeared at their door, and asked where she could get a night's lodging, stating that she had vainly tried all the hotels. My casual acquaintance promptly offered to provide her with bed and breakfast for three shillings, payable in advance. And so he did, though he was obliged to sit up all night and go foraging in the early morning. Result: The next meal, plus 2s. 2d. in cash.

Due to Many Causes.

Followed a further and a more remarkable confidence. The little man, after drawing the unemployment dole till he was tired, took his £1 to the market and invested 17s. 6d. of it in fish, which he hawked in the environs of Nottingham. In this way he set himself up in business, and when I saw him he had been going strong for nearly three months, his profit in the previous week having amounted to more than £5. Yet self-help is generally supposed to be extinct!

This meeting was a promising start of my tour of Nottingham. But unfortunately, the first cheerful man I ran against was also the last. All the others were more or less depressed, and everywhere there was a general air of gloom.

The industry for which Nottingham is famed was practically at a standstill.

"For months," a lace manufacturer told me, "my machines have been idle, and my staff is now scattered all over the place. If a revival of trade set in to-morrow it would take me weeks, perhaps months, to replace my men, most of whom had been with me for many years."

"The present position of the trade," he added, "is due, in the main, to general causes, but there are other factors, such as dumping and the ruthless attitude of foreign buyers, who, taking advantage of the 'slump,' have been offering prices at which trade on legitimate lines is impossible."

Even in the Worm Trade.

Another lace manufacturer whom I called on laid special stress on dumping, and stated that at the recent exhibition organised by the National Union of Manufacturers—an exhibition open only to Members of Parliament—there were shown samples of Calais, Barmen, and Plauen lace offered for sale in this country, as well as samples of similar goods manufactured in and about Nottingham. The difference in prices, he said, was remarkable.

Equally depressing was the story I heard in other quarters. Trade was paralyzed, or nearly so, everywhere, and I was informed that even the worm industry had fallen upon evil days.

This is Nottingham's monopoly. Many years ago Frank Buckland professed to have discovered in



"Coupons" at Nottingham.



"Lace machinery in all parts of the famous Midland town is standing idle, and even if a revival of trade set in to-morrow it would take weeks, and perhaps months, for the industry to become normal." Our Special Commissioner has visited Nottingham, in the course of his industrial tour of England, and finds, among other things, that the coupon system has been a very bad arrangement for the shopkeepers.

(By T. W. WILKINSON, "Answers" Special Commissioner.)

the town a worm farm, where lobes were bred in countless numbers for shipment to all parts of the habitable globe. Whether this establishment ever had a real existence or not, it is certain that Nottingham worms have a high reputation among anglers, and that quantities of them are sent all over the country.

Gathering them, I understand, gives employment to a number of men, who regularly work at night except in dry or cold weather. Then worms sink deep into the ground, and it would take a steam navy to dislodge them.

In the environs of Nottingham, however, many enterprising men were doing a brisk trade in "out-crop" coal. I heard of a wood in which hundreds were at work, and later I met a number of hawkers' cars transporting the precious fuel from it.

From another "pit" coal was obtained so readily that for a time those engaged in digging it easily made £1 a day.

"But that was too good to last," said one of them. "A lot of miners and their wives stopped the carts and emptied them. Then, as we still kept on, a picket turned back the carts, and we couldn't get any coal away at all. We tried to reason with them, but it was no go. They said we were only helping the factories to carry on and keeping them from winning. So we chucked it."

Instead of Ready Money.

Richer still was a third "pit," some of the men who worked in it making as much as £8 or £9 a week.

Among shopkeepers the gloom was as profound as it was in manufacturing circles. Many of them showed me piles of the coupons issued by the Nottinghamshire Miners' Federation for strike pay, and frankly expressed some anxiety concerning them.

"What am I to do?" asked a retailer. "Neither wholesalers nor banks will accept them, and I have no more ready money than I require to carry on my business. So it comes to this: If I don't soon get cash for these, I shall be up a tree."

In general, only goods have been supplied against the coupons which are now held so largely, and the quantities have been such as to avoid the giving of change in cash. But all the credit transactions have not been of this nature.

Some landlords, for instance, have accepted the coupons for rent. In many cases members of the property-owning class have been unable to collect their dues in cash from tenants, who have not infrequently offered coupons instead, though numerous householders have been unable to pay rent either in cash or paper. Where coupons have been tendered they have sometimes been refused; but a good many landlords have taken them in lieu of coin of the realm.

A few traders, again, have given cash in exchange for the coupons they hold. One who rashly advertised his willingness to do this had an experience

which he will long remember. On Friday night his place was besieged, and on Saturday morning he was again kept busy for hours in handing out money and receiving coupons in exchange.

Besides the credit represented by coupons, an enormous amount has been given by shopkeepers in the usual way. A small grocer told me that some of his customers owed him £20 or £30 apiece, notwithstanding that they had always been able to get plenty of rabbits, etc., from some mysterious source.

In that respect, I found, subsequently, they did not differ from large numbers of the workless, who have helped themselves to much food on the estates round Nottingham, occasionally with, but generally without, the consent of the owners.

Among the benefactors of the local unemployed is the Duke of Portland, who in the early days of the dispute in the coal trade gave miners and others resident in the district permission to take firewood from plantations on his estate and to kill rabbits in specified woods, etc. The land was, however, overrun by persons from near and far, and consequently the privileges had soon to be withdrawn.

Unemployment Everywhere.

But food from the shops has been mainly added to by poaching, which has been practised on a large, if not unprecedented, scale. A local landowner is said to have remarked that he has involuntarily kept many families for months.

From the shopkeepers I turned to the unemployed themselves, and then got a further cold douche. They swarmed in the market-place, where I met a number who could not say much even for the building-trade. Bricklayers, they stated, are in demand, and plumbers can "get work anywhere"; but for painters, etc., there is "nothing doing."

Several of the men with whom I chatted had been turned off the railways, which in Nottingham, as elsewhere, have helped to swell the ranks of the workless. This is a new phase of the unemployment problem. During previous crises railway companies kept on their servants, even if there was little or no work for them; but of late there have been sweeping reductions in railway staffs all over the country, and particularly in industrial centres.

"They've been killing the goose that lays the golden eggs," said one of the railway men, "and now we've got to suffer. The public is kicking against high rates and high fares. Why, if you wanted it, you could have a whole carriage to yourself from here to London. Fed up, people are. They won't travel if they can help it. As for goods, the motor-lorries are taking them."

What Will Follow?

He finished by sweeping his right arm over the market-place, which at that moment afforded a striking illustration of the new era in transport. Owing to the coal shortage, the trams had been stopped, and now many charabancas were in readiness to take up their services. Some stood near every exit from the spacious mart and forum, their proprietors anxious to make up in part for the bad times through which they have been passing lately. And it looked as if they would be successful, for the tram habit is not easily shaken off, even when money is uncommonly scarce, and people were flocking to avail themselves of the extemporised services.

A scene to muse over, this in Nottingham's great market-place. What next—and next—and next?

THAT'S FUNNY.

CHARLES L. DODGSON, Professor of Higher Mathematics at Christ Church, Oxford, known to most people as "Lewis Carroll," and the author of "Alice in Wonderland," is responsible for the following peculiar calculation:

Write down the number of your brothers that are living. Multiply this by two. Add three. Multiply the result by five. To this add the number of your living sisters. Multiply the result by ten.

Add to this result the number of your dead brothers and sisters. From the total subtract 150.

The right-hand figure gives the number of deaths, the middle figure gives the number of living sisters, and the left-hand figure gives the number of living brothers.

JOHNNIE: "Father, I want to know something."
Father: "Well, what is it, my boy?"
"Do people keep goats in a buttery?"

THE COMEDIAN: "The leading lady is very temperamental. On the very slightest provocation she makes a scene."
Leading Man: "I know she can successfully spoil one."

MR. GOLDBAGS: "Tell me, my child, has that fiancé of yours any money?"
Audrey: "Money, father? Why, as an engagement-ring he gave me a cluster diamond ring studded with pearls!"
"Yes, yes, I know. But has he any left?"

CATS AND CLOCKS!

At first the connection between cats and clocks does not strike one as being quite obvious, but the Chinese declare that the pupils of cats' eyes get steadily narrower and narrower until noon. At this time of the day the pupils look like fine hair lines, and after noon they gradually dilate.

Thus, we are told, the Chinaman has a timepiece in his cat, when a clock is not at hand!
Whether a Chinese cat is any different from an English one as regards the pupils of its eyes has yet to be ascertained; but the writer—although having confirmed the time through his cat's eyes—finds that a strong daylight puts this curious "cat-clock" all out of gear. In a weak light the experiment was certainly successful.

Another of Our Special Commissioner's Industrial Articles Next Week.

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