

The Higher Life



OUR American cousins are having a good deal of trouble just now in attempting to locate the causes of high prices. Many and various reasons are advanced, yet the brave enquirers look for difficult explanations and miss the simple, evident causes. My friend, Mr. Byron Holt, lays the major portion of the blame on high tariff through whose favor the protected combines of the country collect, as he claims, \$108 yearly from each family in the land; the remainder of the rise is due to depreciation of money and increase in land values. Mr. James J. Hill explains the trouble as due to gradual rise in value consequent on decrease of natural resources. Prof. Simon N. Patten enumerates four causes: lack of capital, bad distribution of population, separation of producer and consumer and, lastly, the new status of women. That old excuse given by Adam "the woman thou gavest me" crops up again and is enlarged upon in the following manner. In "ye olden times" women contributed to the wealth of the family. Under her hand, wool became cloth, cloth became clothing, fruits became preserves and pickles for winter use; a few cents worth of covered wire and some yards of ribbon were converted into the Easter hat or autumn bonnet, she cou'd even cut her husband's hair and dress her own. Now, however, all is changed. Markheim & Co. supply our clothing, Lipton our preserves and pickles and the latest milliner from Paris designs the grand creation known as "the newest hat." The kind Professor did not say a word about the "new status of man." Our grand-fathers made most of the furniture found in their homes, could make, or at least repair, their own boots, could saw their own wood and

cut kindling, could shave themselves or trim their own beards and do a thousand other services for which we now pay some one else—their status should also be considered.

Mr. Sophein, a close student, accounts for the whole increase by the following two reasons: higher standard of living and over generous charity of the American people. No one will deny that we have risen to a higher standard of living. People in general are better fed, better clothed, better housed and better equipped for work than they were twenty or thirty years ago. The necessities of life do not average so much higher than when we were boys; flour is cheaper, sugar is cheaper, clothes can be bought at a very moderate figure and fuel has not advanced much in price. Meat and house-rent show the greatest increase, but we should remember that many who now want butchers meat three times per day ate it only once in former days and then dined off cheaper cuts and very often used salt meats. Nor had their houses steam or hot-water heating. Clear of the kitchen fire the houses, except at evening, were seldom heated. Their fuel cost much less, and the comfort was proportionate. Fur and fur-lined coats were not so common. But are we unwise in trying to improve our condition? Walter Bagehot is very right when he says "People are never better off; they think they are." If wages and salary increase we adopt a higher standard of living and see our bank-accounts remain at their former level.

The second reason I shall give in Mr. Sophein's own words. "The Americans are the most charitable people in the world if a beggar adopts the fashionable way of soliciting aid. The country is the elysium of the 'dead-beat' and we support him. Herr. Blatter crosses over from his German hinterland to lecture on Women's Headgear and the Currency Question. Mr.

Moimeme tours the country speaking to 'enlightened audiences' on the Living Simple and the Policy of Augustulus Maxim Corkervitch, persecuted patriot, descants on the barbarity of his fatherland. All these 'dead-beats' live in luxury and take home purses filled by charitable Americans. Mrs. Woody invents a new religious cult, Scientific Christianity or Evangelical Sanitation, builds a temple costing a cool million, amasses a bank-account that puts her on 'Easy Street' for the remainder of her days; another 'dead-beat.' The traveller goes to the 'Grand Alexandra Castle Union Hotel,' pays \$25 per diem for accommodations that could be given at a profit for \$3.75; the management, however, want the money and the good man cannot find it in his heart to refuse. The 'Gold Brick Mining and Milling Co. Ltd.' of Sharksville advertises stock of five cents per share and good-hearted American workmen and farmers buy a thousand shares each to help out another 'dead-beat.' The good people must give assistance to the men who own 'Paradise Paragon Park' and the car-line leading thereto. The boys and girls of the family undertake this part of the charity giving. They must patronize the 'restaurant in connection' and help to wear the wax off the dance-hall floor. The result is that we spend so much money in charity that we can not afford the necessities of life. Our fathers spent their evenings at home and at work. Instead of dining at the Grand Hotel they carried a lunch in their pockets when going away for the day. They could not afford to support humbug religious cults or so called cultural lectures. They were a hard-working, thrifty, saving people and we, their descendants,—well ! I may as well speak the truth—we are foolishly extravagant.'

The man may be right. The Canadians follow the same course, and should give these remarks a few moments of serious thought.