

A Pair of Jacks

By Earl R. Browder

SINCE Mr. Gompers has found his power failing him, he has picked up a couple of apprentices to help carry on his appointed task of fighting everything progressive in the labor movement. These understudies of the ancient reactionary are Matthew Woll and Chester M. Wright, both of whom have been performing within the past month, while their master has been off the job. Their zeal is doubtless as great as that of Mr. Gompers, but their performance is amateurish. Try as hard as they will, they cannot bark with the same lusty vigor as does the old watch-dog of reaction. In their own feeble way, however, particularly as the annointed of Mr. Gompers, they demand a certain amount of attention.

The Thunders of Silence

Matthew Woll is the "front" of the Gompers family. He it is who makes the speeches. He gives the interviews to the capitalist papers. A particular task of his during the past year has been to make speeches and give interviews denouncing the Trade Union Educational League and the amalgamation program. In the course of the year, under the beneficent rain of his maledictions, the League has grown mightily in scope and power, and the amalgamation movement has swept the country.

Some good friend of Mr. Woll must have tipped him off that he was helping rather than hindering the League. We will not accuse him of figuring it out for himself. The idea, at any rate, pierced his cranium, and on April 6th Matthew Woll issued a momentous statement to a waiting world. It was carried by the Associated Press to all corners of the land, and millions of American citizens learned, while they drank their morning coffee, that hereafter Wm. Z. Foster, the Trade Union Educational League, Amalgamation, the Labor Party, Russia, Lenin, and Trotzky, and other things Mr. Woll does not approve of, will no longer be mentioned by respect-

table people. The thunders of silence are invoked against all "red" persons, organizations, and policies.

We were sorely frightened when we first saw this pronouncement in the *New York Times*. Was our great asset to be taken from us? Would the air no more be filled with curses and denunciations against the League, sounds which we have learned to love? Would, instead, dead silence reign?

But a ray of hope warmed us when we looked at the free advertising space which this call for silence gave us. We sat down to figure out

how many inches, and how many millions of circulation, it would come to when all the members of the Associated Press carried the story of Mr. Woll's curse. Using slide-rule and an insurance computer, we calculated that Mr. Woll's boost for the League used 189 tons of paper, which, placed word upon word, would reach to the moon and back again. Here is a silence that is worth while. It can be heard from coast to coast. It reverberates throughout America.

We turned to the next page of the *Times*. Staring us in the face was a story from Cleveland,

telling about a great meeting of needle trades workers of all crafts where the program of the Trade Union Educational League for one union in the clothing industry was unanimously adopted. Heading another column is a dispatch from Nova Scotia, relating how the militant steel workers and coal miners employed by the British Empire Steel Company, are engaged in a campaign of organization, and have invited Alex Howat and Wm. Z. Foster to attend their demonstration on May Day. News is news, we ponder, and while the League continues to make it perhaps it will be printed anyway, in spite of Mr. Woll. Perhaps, who knows, Mr. Woll himself may continue to issue statements. The world is bright again.

MENCKEN ON GOMPERS

TRY to think of an American labor leader writing good English, or even ordinary intelligible bad English. The effort takes one into mysticism. Is William Z. Foster an exception? Then don't forget that Dr. Foster has been solemnly repudiated by the Sacred College of American Labor, and that in most American states the circulation of his compositions is forbidden by law, always with the consent of the local Federation. Old Gompers is a far better specimen of the normal American labor leader. He can neither think nor write. His ideas, in the main, are simply dull parodies of those of Judge Gary, and his style is no more than an enfeebled copy of that of the Hon. W. G. Harding.—The Smart Set, April 1923.