

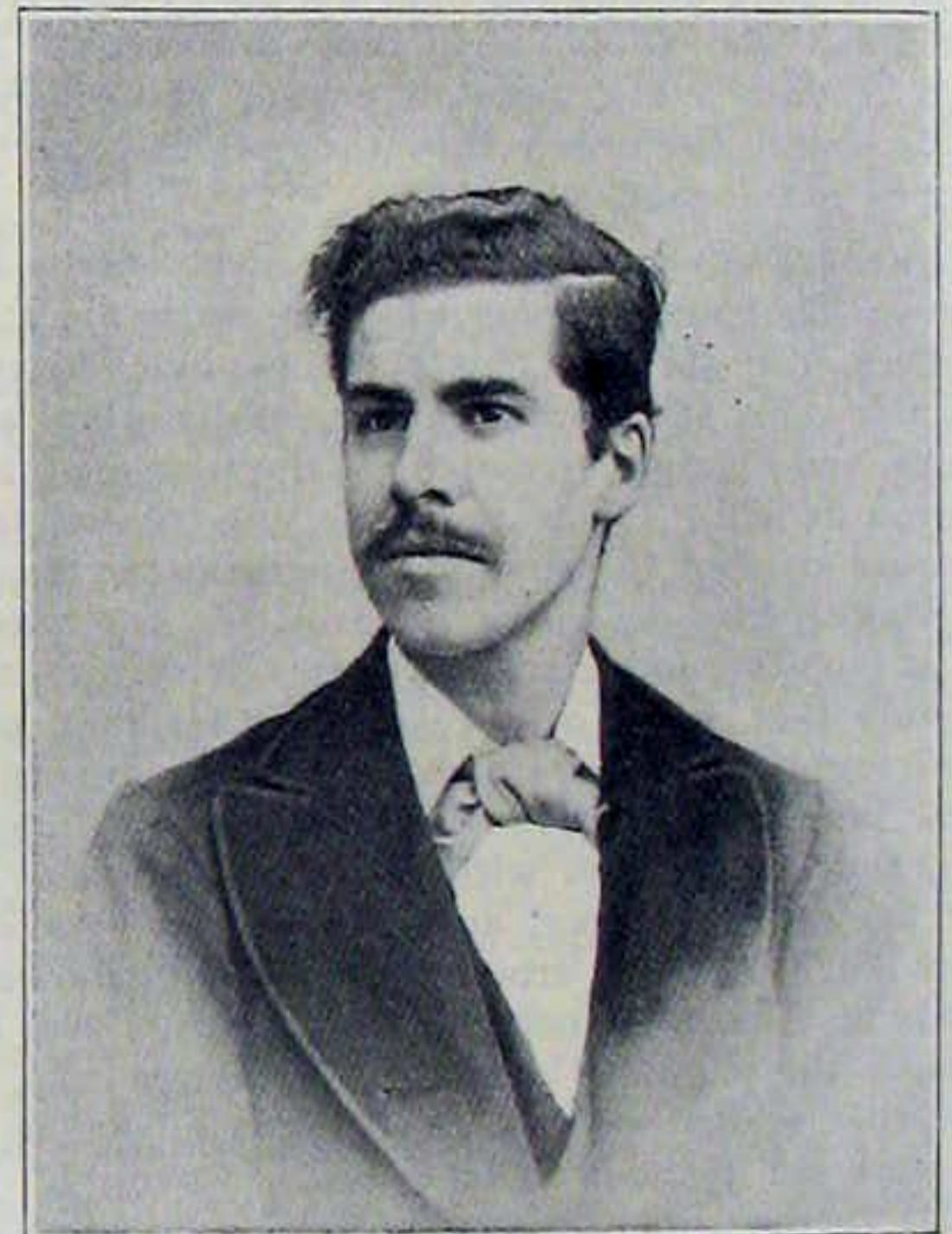
Frank Dleny.



THE subject of this brief memoir was born in London on the 23rd of November, 1858. His father was a carpenter and builder in a small way of business for himself, but he died while Frank was still a boy, leaving his family to struggle for themselves. Frank was sent to school at Allen-street Church Schools, Goswell-road, but before he was fourteen he had to go out to work and help the family. He obtained employment as a paper boy at a newspaper shop, where he had a rough time, having to rise at four in the morning, and he could not stand the strain. He then went to Mr. W. Wilkinson's, in Ireland-yard, Leather-lane—afterwards in Russell-court, Strand—where he was apprenticed for seven years to the art and business of bookbinding on April 7th, 1873. During the earlier part of his apprenticeship he was a thick set chubby-faced lad, with no suggestion of the ailment with which he was subsequently troubled, but while at Mr. Wilkinson's he met with an accident which left its traces on all his after life. While at the rolling machine, his apron caught in the cogs of a wheel, which drew it in with his clothes and literally rent them from his body, pinching him and injuring him internally so that he was never free for long from an internal hemorrhage that gradually weakened his constitution. Up till the close of his apprenticeship Frank was scarcely aware of the existence of our Trade Societies, and certainly no influence had been exercised to induce him to join. His attention was first called to the question when, on going to Mr. C. Forward's after work, he was asked if he was a member of Society, and it was not until he had got into another shop that he was led to see the benefits of trade unionism, when he joined the London Consolidated Society, on January 9th, 1882. For the first few years of his membership Frank took little or no part in its work, and he was unwilling to attend its meetings because they fell upon a night when he was engaged elsewhere in the Band of Hope work. He had signed the pledge at the age of five years, and since his fifteenth year had been connected with the Bunhill Fields Friends' Mission, both as a Sunday School teacher and in the Band of Hope, and he was largely instrumental in the establishment of a juvenile branch of the Foreign Missionary Society under the auspices of the Society of Friends. After a while, however, he was induced to take a greater interest in the work of the trade, and from that time it has never ceased till his death.

The first time he came prominently before the Societies was on the occasion of the amalgamated meeting at the Holborn Town Hall, March 2nd, 1887, when he moved the adoption of the Joint Trade Committee's second report dealing with the question of the circuit and yapp work. The effect of his speech on that occasion was not lost upon the members of his own Society, for almost immediately afterwards, when the question of the advisability and practicability of amalgamating the Day Workers' and London Consolidated Societies was raised, and a special committee from each appointed to sit in conference, Frank was

elected a member. He was an ardent advocate of such a closer bond of union, and went carefully into the statistics of each to demonstrate its practicability, with the result that he was appointed with another member to draw up the report for presentation to the D.W.S., and the two were sent to the meeting of that Society on September 21st to explain the views contained therein. Through some misadventure, however, they were not admitted, and the meeting rejected the proposal. He was next appointed a member of the special committee for the consideration of the difficulties with "outsigned" members. On May 15th, 1889, an amalgamated meeting of the three letterpress binders' Societies was held at Holborn Town Hall, to consider the report of a sub-committee of the united Executives upon the question of cheap labour, when it was resolved that a joint trade committee should be appointed to remedy and control



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the evils which had crept into the trade. Upon this committee Frank was elected, and by them appointed one of the sub-committee of three for the drawing up of the interim report of October 9th, 1889, the fuller report of February, 1891, which was adopted by the trade on April 16th, and the later recommendations to the trade issued shortly after that meeting. After the April meeting the secretaryship of the committee became vacant, when Frank was appointed to that important post and he held it until his death. In October, 1890, he was elected a member of the Eight Hours Committee, and afterwards, by that committee, one of the sub-committee for drawing up the address to the employers of the metropolis and negotiating with them upon the question.

Owing to the pressure of work on both committees in the early part of 1891, poor Frank was laid by with a very serious attack of bronchitis, which turned to

pneumonia, from which it was feared he would not recover. He did, however, pull through, but the weakness resulting therefrom was ever present with him, and although he seemed to be outstanding the bitter weather at the close of last year fairly well, it at last caught hold of him. On the last occasion of his attendance at the joint trade committee, on January 6th, he was very unwell and was compelled to leave about eleven o'clock, before the close of business. Next morning, though very unfit, he went to work for about two hours, when he was compelled to go home and to bed. He gradually became worse and sank under the exhaustion of a continual fight for breath unrelieved by sleep, on January 14th, 1892.

For many years Frank had been the chief support of his aged mother and a brother who was afflicted with fits; the brother died some three years ago, and now the mother, who was very ill, sank gradually and, having expressed the wish to be buried with her son, died on January 20th.

The funeral took place on Saturday, January 23rd, when the remains of mother and son were interred in a private grave at Bow Cemetery. Nearly an hour before the time for starting, a quiet self-possessed crowd had begun to assemble in and around Raherestreet to pay its last respect to the dead comrade. Inside the house the mourners were shewn into an upper chamber where the polished wooden coffins lay side by side covered and surrounded by wreaths of beautiful flowers that shed a sweet perfume over the darkened room. At the head of Frank's coffin was the wreath of white lilies and Neapolitan violets from the women at Messrs. Nevett's, where he used to work, and at the foot the men's tribute from the same establishment. A great wreath from the strikers had a scarlet centre, and a monster wreath lay close by from the men at Messrs. Burn & Co. Altogether there were twenty floral tributes, including one from the Eight Hours and Joint Trade Committees, one from the "Perseverance" Band of Hope, and others from the shops of Messrs. Bell & Co., Davison, Longman, Smith Bros., etc. The coffins bore brass plates with the following inscriptions:—"Frank Dleny, died 14th January, 1892, aged 33 years"; and "Mary Elizabeth Dleny, died 20th January, 1892, aged 78 years." After the coffins and wreaths had been arranged upon the two open hearses, the mourners entered the six carriages in waiting. The first three were filled with the relatives and near friends of the deceased, the Rev. Philip Gast, and Mr. R. A. Goddard, secretary of the Eight Hours Committee. In the other three were, C. Nevett, Esq.; J. Ballantine; W. Bennetto; W. Best, president V.B.S.; G. Dyson; W. H. Edmunds; W. C. England; T. Fennell, B. & M.R.C.U.; W. Field, who represented the strikers; C. W. Goddard; H. R. King, secretary L.C.S.; W. Rawlinson, D.W.S.; G. Reid, president L.C.S.; and W. Woodcock, chairman of the Eight Hours Committee. As the procession moved slowly away through the dense crowd that surged around, every head was uncovered as it passed, even strangers standing bare-headed at the unwonted spectacle.

From Bancroft-road, Mile-end, where it had been arranged that those who desired to follow afoot were

to meet, the spectacle was mournfully imposing, for drawn up on either side of the road were 700 or 800 men, some wearing rosettes, all bare headed and with sad faces as the procession passed through their ranks. Then they fell in behind, four deep, and marched in wonderful good order, with "measured tread and slow," to the cemetery. It was twenty minutes to five before we entered the little chapel, where Mr. Gast read a few simple prayers, and the gloom of evening was settling down before we stood beside the open grave surrounded by a great mist-covered sea of upturned tearful faces, and were awed by the dull thud of the clods upon the coffins below. Then Mr. Gast addressed us all with words of homely comfort, and the boys from Frank's Sunday School class sang the hymn beginning "Hold Thou my hand!" Mr. F. Rogers next spoke to those engaged in the struggle, of the lessons to be learnt from Frank's work in the trade, and a member of the Sunday School spoke of his work there. Then with faltering accents came another hymn—

"Sleep on beloved, sleep, and take thy rest;
Lay down thy head upon thy Saviour's breast;
We love thee well; but Jesus loves thee best—
Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!"

and the night gloom grew thicker and thicker as the benediction was pronounced, and the great crowd of about 2,000 people began to disperse with the hymn "For ever with the Lord" ringing in their ears. It was a sight not to be easily forgotten, this funeral of a simple workman, but to those of us who knew him, it was accompanied by a moving pathos which was irresistible.

"Thine is a perfect rest, secure, and deep—
Good-night! Good-night! Good-night!"

From the time of Frank Dleny's first appearance in the work of our Trade Society, we have had the assurance of his vigorous and unsparing efforts on behalf of its members, which at that time only needed the tempering of experience. He was slimly built, of medium height, dark in complexion, with almost black hair and moustache, and dark eyes that lighted up and glowed with the intensity of internal energy whenever he was aroused to action. His voice was clear and resonant, and he had a style of short incisive sentences filled with pithy metaphors and quaint expressions that never failed to keep his audience engrossed with the subject on hand. He had a large contempt for small meannesses and tricks of debate, but plenty of patience for smaller and less-informed minds than his own, and would put himself out of the way to explain and win over an antagonist who erred from lack of information. He was rarely angered, even by the sneers of supercilious and captious critics, but he generally had a crushing rejoinder at command, which he could deliver with such sledge-hammer force, that it seemed to flatten out the man as well as the argument it was directed at. Opponents sometimes felt hurt, but Frank was of too kindly a disposition to mean to wound. He was impervious to ridicule or satire, for he had no jot of vanity to hurt.

While on the platform he was from the first a power in our trade, yet it was particularly in committee that his ability was most tested and best displayed. Platform speeches are poor things by which to test a man,

