

GILGAMESH AND EABANI :

THE TRUSTS AND THE UNIONS.

BY THE EDITOR.

WHEN the trusts first made their appearance in this country, the people were afraid of their power and cried, "Who will save us from the tyranny of this fearful octopus?" But as capital became organized the laborers themselves banded together and formed unions. The unions grew and made ready to fight the octopus of trusts. In fact, they did so for a while, but soon the two quieted down and lived in peace.

This is a world-old tale and seems to be a repetition of an incident of the ancient Babylonian epic. Gilgamesh, identified with the Biblical Nimrod,* was a mighty ruler in Babylonia, and the people groaned under his scepter, saying,

"Gilgamesh leaveth not the son to his father,
Nor the maid to the hero, nor the wife to her husband."

They prayed for protection to the goddess Aruru, who, with the help of Marduk, had made mankind. She decided to create Eabani, a powerful monster, who would rival Gilgamesh in strength and be bold enough to undo the tyrant.

Gilgamesh, on hearing of Eabani, sent out a hunter to capture or kill him, but the hunter returned, frightened, saying: "He roams over the mountains, feeding with the beasts and slaking his thirst with them where they drink, and I am afraid to approach him. He filled up the pit which I dug, and he tore the nets with which I surrounded him and set free the beasts of the field that I had caught. He does not suffer me to hunt or to make war upon them."

Gilgamesh decided to change his tactics and sent the hunter out again with Ukhat, a beautiful hierodule; when Eabani caught sight of her his heart was touched with her beauty, and he loved her. Then Ukhat told Eabani of Gilgamesh, saying; "Thou art of great stature, Eabani and like unto a god. Why dost thou live with the

*Mentioned in Genesis x, 8-10.

beasts of the field? Come with me to the stronghold Erieh, come to the palace of Gilgamesh, whose power is great and who governs many people," and Eabani listened to her words, and, longing for a friend, he answered: "Come, then, Ukhat, and lead me; show me the palace of Gilgamesh, whose power is great and who governs over many people."

The result was that Gilgamesh, seeing Eabani, contracted a great liking for him, and the two rivals became the best of friends. The suffering of the people was no longer thought of, and the story continues to tell of the adventures of the two heroes; for instance, the slaughter of the bull, the monster that was created at the request of Ishtar to punish Gilgamesh. Finally Eabani meets somehow with a tragic death,* and Gilgamesh would not be comforted. He laments for his dead friend and descends into the world of shades to call the spirit of Eabani back to life.

We need not enter into further details—how Gilgamesh meets the wise Tsit-Napishtim, who advises him and tells him the legend of the deluge, and how, with the help of the plant of life, he recalls Eabani's spirit back to the upper world, etc., but we may point out a lesson in the story of the two rivals: You cannot cast out devils or Beelzebub.†

The people groaned under the tyranny of the trusts and hailed the formation of the unions. But the two rivals have made peace and both do their best to oppress the public. Trusts are combinations of capital, and unions are combinations of labor, both for the sake of monopolizing the market. It is natural that the two should become friends and, instead of waging war, the one on the other, find pleasure in each other's company. Indeed, should it come to pass that one of them should die, we cannot doubt that the other will be sorely grieved and do all he can to call the spirit of the defunct brother monster back to life.

There is nothing new under the sun. The guilds of the middle ages were combinations of artisans that in all details resembled the unions. They were gradually abolished during the nineteenth century and branded as mediæval institutions. Yet under the new name of unions, they originated again in the United States and are praised as the most modern and effective method of offsetting the tyranny of capital. But history repeats itself; Eabani became the best friend of Gilgamesh.

*The tablets that contain the story of Eabani's death exist only in small fragments, and so this chapter of the epic is lost.

†Matt. xii, 24-28.