

THE LABOR UNION, THE STRIKE AND THE COMMUNE.

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Labor Unions have been very obtrusive phenomena in these latter years of the nineteenth century. In profession they are voluntary societies of working men for protecting the "rights of labor."

Were they only associations for protecting the lawful rights of laborers, no more political objection could lie against them than against Granger societies, social clubs, art unions, or Christian churches themselves. But their real and main design is far other. Their avowed purpose and practice are: First, to control the discipline which employers exercise over individual laborers, members of the union; and second, to coerce the payment of higher wages by employers to the laborers. Their weapon of coercion for both ends is, the strike. The labor union has its council and executive head, elected by the laborers from among themselves, and its union-fund raised by monthly or weekly contributions from their wages. Each member is bound by strict vow to obey this council and chief implicitly. Here is the working of the machine. Among the laborers of a certain mine or factory is A. B. "A union man" whom his employers find unpunctual, insolent, incompetent for his work, or drunken. The employers protect themselves by paying him off and discharging him: the only possible mode of self-protection left them under the hireling system of labor. But now the chiefs of the union interfere. They say A. B. is under the protection of "the union," therefore the employers shall retain him and pay him full wages, although they believe he does not suit them, does not earn half his wages and indeed is doing serious and permanent injury to the credit of the firm

by "scamping" his work. If the employers decline to submit, they are at once punished by a "strike." Under the orders of the union-chiefs every laborer is to leave his employment at the concerted signal; every wheel in the factory is to be stopped; all production is to be arrested, and the employer's whole investment reduced to a dead capital until such time as the union chiefs may see fit for ending the strike.

Meantime the laborers and their families, after eating up prior savings, draw a small pension from the "union fund," which provides them a scanty subsistence until such time as their punishment works submission in the hearts of their employers.

Or, if the issue between the union and the employers is the rate of wages, a similar strike is relied on to coerce the latter into paying such wages as the laborers think they should have. Such is the theory of the strike.

The moral and economic objections are patent and trite. The period of total idleness is often ruinous to the habits of the men. The system establishes the state of chronic social warfare between employers and employed, instead of that condition of kindly co-operation, which is so essential to happiness of feeling and prosperity in the business. The strike entails a fearful destruction of wealth. All profit on the plant of the employers is lost; while the savings of the laborers are eaten up, in unproductive consumption, and their time, which is their money, is wasted for naught. The community as a body is left just so much the poorer.

Upon this loss follows another sure economic result, which deserves to be more fully explicated. The law is this: Whenever any hindrance or constriction from any cause whatsoever, is applied to production, the practical hardships thereof are shifted over and delivered down by the better endowed members of the community, until they press upon that class owning no property except their labor, which forms the bottom *stratum*. If we compare those hardships to a load or weight laid upon the top of a wall, and the several strata of the community to the horizontal lines of stones, we shall have an exact illustration: the pressure of that load is ultimately delivered down upon the bottom stratum. This result is insured by a universal principle of human nature, the preference for one's

own welfare and the welfare of those he loves, over that of strangers. An individual instance will best prove this. We will suppose the head of a family a stockholder in the manufactory which is undergoing a strike. He is not one whit more selfish or less charitable than any other rich man, or laboring man. The dividends on his stock constitute his family revenue. By reason of the strike those dividends will drop this year from \$2,500 to \$1,800. He and his wife hold a council upon the question, What is to be done? They are prudent people, who do not wish to go in debt. What will they do? Just what all other parents in the world would do, viz: They will so change their expenditures as to live on the \$1,800, while imposing upon themselves and the children they love the lightest possible hardships of retrenchment and retaining as many of the solid comforts of life as possible. Their retrenchments will work after this fashion. Mother will say: "Husband, hitherto we have indulged our girls by having their finer raiment made up by a dressmaker. The girls must learn, with my help, to be their own mantua-makers; they have leisure enough." Father adds: "Our eldest, Emily, is now quite proficient in her music. Why can she not give the piano lessons to the younger girls, so as to save the heavy cost of the music teacher?" "Just so," says the mother: "And we can also dispense with one of the maids; for the girls can very well do the sweeping and dusting of the chambers; the exercise will be good for their health." "And," adds the father, "there is our boy, Tom, who is now a great, strapping fellow, passionately fond of horses. Why cannot Tom groom and harness old Baldy before and after his school hours, so we can dispense with a hired groom?"

So this family adjust themselves to the reduced income, without any real loss of comfort, only, they have to be somewhat more busy and have less time for idling and loafing, which is all the better for their health and cheerfulness, but, "How does this retrenchment work? Upon the under *stratum*." This dressmaker, who thus loses the custom of a large family is Miss Bettie Jones, the daughter of a poor and sickly old widow, whom she must support along with herself, by her needle. On her this retrenchment presses as a real and probably a cruel hardship, but who can blame this gentleman and his wife for their prudent and honest measures? Surely, it would be still

more cruel in them to continue employing Betsy Jones' needle and then fail to pay her. So the professional music teacher who loses three pupils (a fifth or fourth part of her income), is Miss Lucy Hill, a poor but refined woman, who has to support herself and a paralytic father by her music fees. The discharged house-maid is Biddy Malony, the daughter of Mike Malony, and one of a family of eleven; and the father is the discharged groom, who had earned one-third of the bread and potatoes for his family by caring for old Baldy and his stable. Biddy's wages are now gone and she comes back upon her father to be fed, while half of his means for buying food are gone. Here are four deserving poor persons who are hit hard as a consequence of this decline in the stockholder's income. But it is the strikers who are really responsible for these cruel blows.

I have given a particular instance which is thoroughly typical. Other cases will vary endlessly in details; but they will all work under the same principle. In every case where injury or constriction is planned against the resources of the property class the injury designed for them will be mainly evaded and handed down, until it alights upon the bottom class beneath them. Here we have a biting illustration of the folly (a folly equal to its dishonesty) of all the hostilities of "labor against capital." Every blow which the working men are instigated to aim at their employers must prove a boomerang.

Next, we find this attempt to coerce employers by strikes, as futile as mischievous. The pretensions of the labor union must appear to the employers unjust, usurping and even insolent: it surely provokes resistance. But in the contest thus begun the employers have every advantage. They have more means saved up upon which to live; the arrest of production means for them only the retrenchments we have described above; while for the laborers it means destitution and hunger. So the employers hold out longest, and the union men have to submit after all this bootless loss.

But a stronger element of defeat appears. The labor union does not include all the poor men of the vicinage. Many of these need employment badly and are only too glad to accept the wages and the employment which the union men have just disdained and rejected. Thus after a few days' suspension the wheels of the factory begin to revolve again with a new body

of laborers, while the union men find themselves left out in the cold permanently.

Thus the strike system has proved an utter futility, and worse, unless the union men proceed to further measures, which pass at once into criminality. These are always violent and illegal attempts to prevent non-union men from accepting employment, by insults, threats, blows, assaults, and even murders. The union resolves that their late employers shall not exercise their reasonable and lawful rights to form such new contracts of labor as they and the new employes see fit to approve; they decree that their fellow citizens, their lawful equals, while not union men, shall not exercise the inalienable right of every free human being to work for a living, and to make such contract concerning employment and wages as is satisfactory to himself. Thus the union men "picket" the gates of the factory. They denounce the new laborers as "scabs," as traitors to the cause of the working-man. They make violent threats. In extreme cases they proceed to violent assaults, to murder, to arson, to assassination. Thus the labor union is transmitted into a criminal conspiracy. Every intelligent and just mind views these ulterior measures as most outrageous wickedness and despotism wrought under the pretense of defending the rights of the working men. Yet without these outrages their system effects nothing but direct injury to themselves, as to all concerned. Obviously, the concession to their demands means the confiscation of the employers' property, overthrow of law, the raising of an aristocracy of rights in the union men as against their non-union equals and fellow citizens, and the enthronement of the union in the room of the lawful commonwealth, as an absolute commune.

The true logic of the strike system is this: It is a forcible attempt to invade and dominate the legitimate influence of the universal economic law of supply and demand. This law instructs us that generally the relation of supply to demand in any commodity must regulate its price. Under this law all production must proceed in civilized society. It is under this law the capitalist must produce and market the goods brought forth by his mine or his factory. It is under this law the farmer and planter must rear and sell their crops. Labor is also a commodity as truly as wheat, or cotton, or cloth. All though citizens

whose circumstances prevent the successful formation of labor unions must also contract to sell their labor under the dominion of this same law of demand. If the supply offered in the market exceeds the demand, the price must go down: the general law is inexorable: the producers of that commodity must submit to receive less for what they have to sell, and so content themselves with smaller profits; or they must find means to produce their commodity more cheaply. Particular circumstances may in some cases suspend the working of this law partially and temporarily. But as a general law it is as prevalent and regular as the law of gravitation in physics. The advocates of labor unions do not pretend to deny—they expressly avow—that the purpose and end of their system is to contravene this law as to the commodity which they have to sell, that is a particular form of labor. They perceive that the labor union and the strike are expedients from which the great majority of their fellow citizens are utterly precluded by the nature of their occupations, and *that is the very reason why the unionists value these expedients.* They know perfectly, that if all the other forms of labor in the commonwealth found it equally feasible to protect their own occupations from the law of supply and demand by their own labor unions and strikes, the whole system would be nugatory. For instance, what the spinners in a factory gained by forcing up their wages, would be neutralized by what they would lose to the farmers when they came to buy their food; if the farmers also could have a labor union which would force up the price of their crops proportionately and equitably.

From this point of view the thoughtful reader sees, that labor unions are rather conspiracies against fellow citizens and fellow laborers, than against oppressive employers. We observe that these societies thrive chiefly among operatives in mines and factories, among classes of artisans in towns, among printers, among the employes of railroad lines, or of wharves or shipping. This is because circumstances peculiar to their occupations render their measures feasible and convenient. Either they live in the same village or they can easily meet; there is a uniformity in each industry; their compensation is immediately in money-wages for labor. But let us observe how numerous and vast classes of meritorious laborers are entirely

prevented from combining successfully to force their wages up by strikes. The maid-servants and cooks of America, the hundreds and thousands of school-ma'ams who teach the children of the country for pauper wages, the millions of hired farm laborers, the more numerous millions of yeoman farmers who till their little farm with their own hands, the still larger millions of toiling mothers and housewives are precluded from forming any effective labor unions by their dispersion over a vast continent, their diversities of condition, their varieties of products, and indirect mode in which they receive their final compensation; modes involved in commercial complications where the law of supply and demand must inevitably rule. Here appear at once the real purpose and the iniquity of our existing system of labor unions. C. D. is a weaver in a cloth factory. Mr. E. F. is an honest farmer who must buy a good deal of this cloth to clothe his family and himself. One element of the cost of the cloth to E. F. is the wage of C. D., the weaver; but C. D. has resolved that E. F., his fellow citizen and equal, shall not buy that element in the value of the cloth at that equitable rate which should be generally dictated by the law of supply and demand: C. D. will force up that price against that farmer by the artificial forces of his monopoly-ring, his threats and his strikes. But C. D. fully expects to buy the bread and meat for his family from the farmer, E. F., under the strict operation of supply and demand. There is equity and democratic equality with a vengeance! But should any law or labor union enable the farmer to enhance the price of his food-products above market rates as determined by supply and demand, C. D. would declare himself much outraged. His labor union is a good rule for him; but it must not "work both ways."

I have now brought the reader to a point of view from which the justice of three practical remarks will be self-evident. When labor unionists denounce the great "trusts" of the capitalists, the oil, or sugar trust, as monopolies, we have a curious instance of inconsistency and insolence. What are their societies but labor-monopolies? In every essential feature they are the iniquities which the trusts are, only upon a smaller scale. And when political demagogues adopt the cause of these labor unions, to cater for their votes, under the pretense of democracy, they are doing the most anti-democratic thing possi-

ble. Their cry is: "For the masses against the classes!" Yet they are assisting a narrow class to plunder the masses of their fellow citizens.

The second thing to be noted is, the groundless and impudent claim of these labor unions that they are contending for the "rights of American labor." This tacitly assumes that the small minority of persons who belong to labor unions are the only people in America who labor. I may digress for a moment to add, that the same insolent falsehood is obtruded whenever the tariff system claims to be protective of American labor: as though, forsooth, the factory hands working upon protected manufactures were the only people who perform deserving labor! Whereas it has been perfectly proved a hundred times that this class of laboring men are but a few hundreds of thousands among the millions who labor in America; that they were already better paid than the average of their brethren; and that this "protection" is but a legalized method to enable them to take something from the unprotected earnings of their fellow citizens without value received, and to add it to their own. To return: there are a few hundreds of thousands of labor unionists in the United States. The census of 1890 shows that at most there may be four millions of persons engaged in occupations whose conditions render a labor union possible, but there are seven and a half millions engaged in the heavier labor of agriculture, under hotter suns and freezing winds, to whom the arts of the labor union are impossible. They must produce and sell their crops under the inexorable operation of the law of supply and demand. And if over supply or partial legislation reduces the price of their products below the cost of production, these millions must simply endure it. Methinks if there could be any honest labor union to "protect the rights of American labor," it should be one which would lift the wages of these tillers of the soil nearer the level enjoyed by the unionists.

The average American yeoman earns about fifty cents per diem with coarse fare by his heavy toil, if we deduct from the price of his farm products a moderate interest upon the capital which he employs, and all the other elements of the cost of production, except the manual labor. In the neighboring town, the unionist bricklayer or plasterer scorns to lift his trowel for

less than five dollars per day. There are a thousand farm laborers to one bricklayer. Yet this one tells us that his conspiracy is for the protection of labor! And what shall we say of the myriads of rural artisans who cannot form labor unions; of the hundreds of thousands of poor teachers and school-ma'ams whose wages are twenty-five dollars per month without boarding, for four or five months of the year? And what of the twelve millions of mothers and housewives who labor for their food and clothing in the most wearying of all tasks, year in and year out, not under an eight hour rule, you may be sure! but somewhere between twelve and eighteen and even twenty hours out of the twenty-four? Are all these not laborers because they cannot be "knights of labor?" Yet the direct effect of the arts of the labor unions is: to raise the price of every roof which shelters, of every chimney and every pound of coal which warms, and of every yard of cloth which covers these worse paid laborers in favor of a small minority already overpaid in comparison.

I am not oblivious of the plea that skilled labor is entitled to higher remuneration. The assumption is that all the forms of labor of the unions are skilled labor; while the toils of these ill-paid masses are unskilled labor. This is exactly false. For instance the effective farm laborer is far more a skilled workman than the bricklayer. The latter has one dexterity which is quite admirable: he strews a handful of mortar from his trowel more quickly, and he presses down brick after brick with its face to the line, more deftly than the plowman could. Very true. But that plowman must be able to do with equal deftness a dozen different things neither of which the bricklayer can do, and in attempting several of which he would be likely to wound himself or break his own neck. This farm laborer must be a horse breaker, must know how to guide the plow, to wield the hoe so as to "cut away the spire of crab grass" within half an inch of the tender cotton stalk without scratching it. He must wield the ax, he must be a rough carpenter; he must be butcher, knowing how to dress a mutton or a swine; he must milk the cow; he must mount the dangerous mowing machine and guide it; he must manage the complicated threshing machine and gin; he must pick two hundred and fifty pounds of seed cotton per day, where the bricklayer could not get one

hundred. It is the farmer who is the skilled laborer, and by that principle ought to receive the higher remuneration.

The third point being noted is, the fatuity of the so-called People's party in associating themselves with the labor unionists in their present passionate efforts to right the wrongs of the farmers. They are precisely as wise as would be the shepherd dogs who should insist upon enlisting the wolves along with themselves to guard the flock. The interests of the Granger masses and of the labor unionists are directly hostile. For instance, here is the yeoman farmer who is toiling to pay off a mortgage on his homestead at a real wage of about fifty cents per day (deducting fair compensation for the employment of his capital, teams, implements, etc.) Does he need a cottage, a chimney in it, a farm wagon, a thresher, a mower, a buggy plow, a rotary harrow?

The labor union men are compelling him to pay much higher prices for each of these things, by their conspiracies. For, of course, all these contractors and manufacturers add in the inflated prices of the unionist labor, in addition to their own profits, upon the cost of every thing they furnish the farmer. But these unionists are drawing from two and a half to five dollars per day for their work, while the farmer gets an half dollar per day for his work. He must sell everything his farm produces (the source out of which he at last gets his scanty earnings) under the resistless law of supply and demand, while they are so juggling with the arts of their conspiracy as to free themselves from that law. Yet we shall find this fatuous Granger enraged against the loan corporation which lent him good money on his own terms, at his earnest entreaty, and fraternizing with the knights of labor who are covertly skinning him!

The principles of the labor unions is virtual Communism. It is instructive to watch the proofs of this truth presented by the development of the union system in Great Britain. The British Liberals in 1845, represented by Joseph Hume and the famous Free Trade Society, announced the *laissez nous faire* free trade in commodities, and free trade in labor, as the very gospel of economics and politics. The first half of the doctrine repealed the protective tariff of Britain and placed her manufactures and commerce upon that enlightened basis of thorough

free trade, which founded the new era of marvelous progress and prosperity. The second half of the doctrine embodied the essence of the Exeter Hall at anti-slavery. Free trade in labor meant for Joseph Hume and his friends that every laborer should be a free man with the right to make his own contracts of labor to suit himself; but to make them, like the farmer, the manufacturer and the merchant, under the common regulation of the law of supply and demand. Obviously, equity demands that if the principle of free trade is to govern other commodities it must also govern labor. For labor is as truly a commodity to be bought and sold, as cloth, or wheat, or iron, or sugar. To enforce the production and sale of all the latter under the free law of supply and demand, while the other commodity, labor, is fenced against that law, is obvious class legislation and injustice to others. Hence, the Anti-Corn Law League hated tariffs and domestic slavery with a hatred equally intense and holy. It is true, that under this free trade *regime* the property and capital of Britain have made an enormous spring and doubled themselves in one generation. It is also true that under the same benignant regimen the labor of the *proletariat* gained greatly in its remuneration, and the comfort of its condition. Measured in gold, the average of their wages has advanced twenty per cent. since 1845; whilst the purchasing power of this increasing wage has been doubled by the results of free trade in commodities and in labor.

But these happy consequences do not at all satisfy the laboring men of Britain or the advanced Liberals. The former have generally adopted, with passion, the system of labor unions and strikes; the latter have pushed their theories through socialism to the verge of communism. Both the laborers and their theorists now reject with heat the dogma of free trade in labor. They declare that it is tyrannical, cruel, and the direct road to a wage slavery as degrading and detestable as African slavery itself. They assert the inherent right of the labor unions to enforce their demands for higher wages by violence if necessary, notwithstanding the facts, that this enforcement is a virtual confiscation of the personal property of the employers at the will of others, in the form of this increment of wage, that it is an infringement of the right of non-union men, their own free equals, to work for such terms as suit themselves; and that the

system organized a rebellious *imperium in imperio civilis*, usurping a part of its functions and forces. The socialists argue that since their strikes are utilities unless employers and non-union men can be prohibited by force from contracting with each other, these "scabs," thus accepting the places which the union men have rejected, make themselves the enemies of labor, and are therefore the proper objects of hostility and coercion. They say there is this essential difference between free trade in commodities (which they admit is all very well) and free trade in labor: that the goods bought and sold under free trade are non-sentient and feel no pangs of destitution; but the laborers have muscles and nerves to be worn by overwork, and stomachs to be pinched by hunger, and hearts to be wrung by the poverty of their families: therefore, the laborers ought to be entitled to protect their commodity, labor, against these consequences of free trade. This is, of course, a very shallow sophism, since the goods subjected to the rigorous law of supply and demand are imbued with the element of labor, since their sale is the only medium through which the labor involved in them can get its wage and thus the price of the goods touches the welfare of the laborers who produce them, just as effectively as the price of the labor itself. The socialists then adopt in substance, though perhaps not avowedly, the Malthusian principle of the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence. They argue thus; let the capitalists enjoy free trade in labor, hiring their operatives at whatever price the relation of supply and demand may dictate; then as the proletariat increases in numbers, wages will go down until they reach the lowest level of that wretched subsistence which enables the laborers only to exist, to be miserable, and to propagate heirs to their misery. Their cry now is, "Down with free trade in labor; up with the labor union, the strike, and the forcible coercion of the scab, the traitorous enemy of his class." Let the student see for instance this drift in the recent work of Mr. Benjamin Kid, entitled, "Social Evolution."

In this new phase and deduction of Malthusianism, there is unquestionable truth. It has been verified a hundred times in the depression, in the deficient compensation and misery of free laborers, in hiring commonwealths. Another admission must be made. No existing commonwealth organized exclusively

upon the hireling labor theory has yet found a full remedy for this deplorable tendency, no matter how liberal or even democratic its constitution. Sentimentalists may kick against a great Malthusian law, may call it antiquated, and may vilipend it; but none the less it remains a true and fundamental law of population. No permanent release from its inexorable operation is found in any economic or political expedient. When the means of subsistence increase in any society, population always tends to increase up to the new level. Then, if that new level of subsistence be not farther raised, population will proceed to press upon it and overpass it. The *proletariat* will accustom itself first to part with its luxuries, and then to submit to a scantier supply of comforts; and as long as their earnings are sufficient to support existence, this laboring class will continue to obey nature's instinct to increase and multiply. It is true that since the days of the Anti-Corn Law League, the wages and the comforts of the *proletariat* in Britain have increased handsomely under free trade. But the advanced Socialists insist that this improvement will stop, and will then ebb, as soon as certain other foreign and temporary agencies cease to operate. These are the wonderful expansion of British commerce (which yet cannot expand forever); the opening to tillage of new and vast food producing areas outside of Britain; the amazing improvements in both land and ocean transportation; the wide openings for emigration; the marvelous new applications of physical science to production; the unbroken prevalence of maritime peace over the whole area of British commerce. Behold how under these new and temporary agencies, the *proletariat* population of Britain has sprung forward, with an increase rivaling the mushroom growth of new American democracies, thus giving us another startling evidence of the truth of the Malthusian law. But all earthly expansions must stop somewhere. A colt may grow wonderfully when placed in a rich, fresh pasture; but after five years of age he must stop growing, no matter what his pasture. All earthly advancements must reach their limits. And the Socialists assert that when Britain reaches her limit the Malthusian principle combined with free trade in labor will at once begin to depress the laboring classes of Britain. And this must go on until they become miserable wage slaves

again, like the peasantry of France and Southern Europe before the Revolution; of the Ireland of 1840.

It is not necessary for me to say whether the whole of this socialist argument will prove correct. My purpose is to point the reader to the violent inconsistency into which it betrays them. They have ever been and still declare themselves the passionate enemies of domestic bondage. No language has been adequate to express their scorn and hatred for the recent social system of the Southern United States. No class of accusers have done more by false accusations, slanders, and vilification to bring upon that fair region an undeserved and remorseless deluge of revolution, war, devastation and tyranny, than these advanced socialists. But now, lo! we find them with equal passion asserting a *doctrine which leads directly back to a form of slavery far more ruthless than domestic bondage*. Every man of sense knows that when he is forbidden by force to work where he chooses, and for the wage which suits himself, even in a lawful occupation, is no longer a free man: he is a slave. The power which commands me where I shall not work is the same with the "slave-power" which commands another where he shall work. Again, when the labor union has forbidden me, a non-union man, to do the lawful work which suits me for the support of my family, I ask them: "To whom then must I look for the subsistence of those I love?" Their answer is: "*Join the union, and draw your weekly pension from the community fund, which will be issued to you so long as it lasts, and you implicitly obey.*" Here again I am enslaved; far worse enslaved than the African bondman of the South; for while the labor union may issue to me, for a time, a pittance which may prevent starvation out of a scanty fund created only by a tribute taken out of my own previous wages, the Southern bondman drew all the time his full subsistence, whether the business of the commune was profitable or not. And to the giving of this livelihood the head of the commune was bound, if not by his own humanity, by public opinion, by statute-law, and by a self-interest more imperious than either. And to furnish this undiminished livelihood there was bound, not a scanty fund gathered by exactions from the laborers' wages, but the whole capital and profits of the head of that commune, including the returns of his own personal industry. But this is only

half the story. If the labor union, that is, the commune, is to have full authority to forbid its members to work, then it must make itself responsible for the full subsistence of the laborers and their families. But if the commune is responsible for this, it must have authority to command the members where they shall work and to enforce that command. Without this power the commune could not possibly fulfill its pledges to furnish subsistence to its subjects. But the essence of slavery is the obligation of compulsory labor, and the dependence upon the will of another for subsistence. *Communism is slavery.* Its advocates cheat themselves by explaining: "But the members elect their own rulers, and this is liberty." A very hollow cheat this, indeed! Let communism be established as a rule of a commonwealth, and this will be the real state of the case. In name the majority will elect masters over themselves, and the unwilling minority. But Democracy and universal suffrage have taught us too well what that means. Nominally the majority was really the official wire-pullers, will determine the choice of the masters over both majority and minority. Should this result not follow and should the communistic elections fulfill most honestly the most flattering promises of the system, still we should have this result: that the minority would be slaves to the majority. And the major mob is always the most ruthless of masters. Let us again make the vital point in this discussion thoroughly salient. The ultra socialist will attempt to obscure it by saying that in the best constituted republic the minority has to obey the majority; and this is not slavery for anybody, but liberty for all. I reply, that herein are two profound falsehoods. The first, that in a true republic the minority do not obey the majority, *but both obey the constitution.* The principle of such government is given by the sublime words of Andrew Melville *Lex Rex*: The citizen does not owe his allegiance to the mere will of the accidentally major mob, but to the sacred authority of the constitution which rules the State. The power which this constitution may have conferred upon a majority is only conventional, deputed and limited. The clearest majority may only exercise that power within the limits prescribed for it by the constitution, and when it exceeds these limits, the will of the majority is no more the righteous rule for the citizen than the howling wind. But the second and more essential

falsehood is here: The true republic does not legislate at all concerning the personal rights, the preferred occupations, the compensations therefor, or the subsistence of their families. All these matters belong to their individual sovereignty as citizens. The republic only attempts to regulate those outer relations of citizen to citizen, which render them social beings, under the principles of commutative justice. But the commune undertakes in addition to command me at what to work, to enforce its command, to fix my recompense, and to appoint the subsistence allotted to me and my family. This invades the whole sphere of my personal sovereignty. It is the essence of slavery. Moreover, all history teaches us, that the more "Paternalistic" any government becomes, be its form either imperial, monarchical, aristocratic or democratic, the more will its officials engross the powers of the State, and the earnings of the citizens to themselves. (The experience is universal), either by avowed class legislation or by unavowed chicanery, they always do it. The cause of this result is plain. The more paternalistic the government, the more of the aggregate wealth, services and rights of its citizens does it handle. That is to say, the more of these do the officials of this government handle. But such masses of wealth and power present to the natural greed of men temptations too strong to be resisted. Now of all governments the commune is most completely paternalistic. Therefore the officials of the commune, by which we mean the all-including commune of the local communes, the commonwealth, will have the handling of all the earnings, wealth, services, and subsistence of all the citizens. Therefore the engrossment of all these by the officials will be the most enormous. For instance, the township institutions of the Russians are communistic. The imperial government is an absolute commune. But the Emperor Nicholas himself, the most autocratic of Czars, declared that official peculation and tyranny were more gigantic in Russia than anywhere in Europe. Thus it appears that communism must be essential slavery, under which the citizens are the slaves, and the master is impersonal and therefore the most remorseless and greedy of all masters.

Now of all the things in the nineteenth century, Southern bondage was the one, which the advanced socialists most hotly abused. They condemned the Southern plantation as the sum

of all villainies. But this plantation was virtually the very commune which they desired to establish, except that the Southern had certain saving differences, which made it better than their proposed form. The capital of the plantation and the earnings and services of all upon it composed the common fund. The labor of the members was compulsory. But the common fund was bound to them for the subsistence of them and their families, fully as comfortable as that provided by the United States for their enlisted soldiers, including housing, fuel, clothing, food, medical attendance, rearing for their minor children and the pensioning of the old, when past active service. The net earnings of the active members, after subtracting the cost of their own subsistence, and a small interest upon the capital furnished them, went into the common fund, to meet the last two drafts. Here was a small but true commune. The head of the commune was not elected by the slave-members, but was hereditary; and this was a great gain, saving all concern upon the waste of time, money and morals, which always attends pretended elections in a paternalistic democracy. But the grand, saving feature in this Southern commune was that one which our socialist most abhors; the legal establishing in the head of the commune of a right of property in the involuntary labor of the members. Our opponents exclaim that this is the essence of slavery! I reply this is very true; but I have shown that their plan must vest in the commune itself (that is in its officeholders) the power of control over the involuntary labor of the members, and the disposal of their earnings, else the society must speedily be bankrupt, and starve its dependents. But this is giving the commune, that is the officeholders, property in this involuntary labor, except in this all important respect: that it failed to enlist any domestic feeling, or any self-interest of the heads in the welfare of members. In such an association what need the officeholders care if a laboring member dies, or if the infants of his family perish of destitution, he loses no property! He has just so many the fewer cares to worry him. For instance, when the crews of the patriot British fleet which conquered the Invincible Armada at Gravelines were decimated by the spoiled beer, which their commissaries furnished, what did these care? Their private profits upon their beer contracts were safe in their pockets. If many

soldiers of General Churchill, Duke of Marlborough, died in the hospitals, this was but so much to his advantage, for he could continue their names upon the pay rolls of the army, and quietly pocket their wages and allowances. The greater the suffering and mortality, the more his riches grew. When British paupers died in the work-house, under the late poor law system, who cared; what official, what tax-payer? The United States had a brief experience in this line, under its notorious Freedman's Bureau. We presume that when these wards of the nation dropped off, the average officeholder felt no emotion but relief. So now, when a hireling sickens or dies, his employer has lost nothing; he has but to hire another in his place. But our Southern communism, by making the labor the master's property, awoke an all-powerful motive for taking the best care of it.

If the laborer died, from over-work or destitution, so much of the master's property was totally lost; if he sickened, its value was impaired. Hence, the statute law, which required a master to provide reasonable subsistence under all conditions of production however profitless, for his bondmen, their aged and their offspring, and which made this provision a first lien, not only upon the annual products of the estate, but upon its fee simple value, and even upon his personal earnings in his separate profession, was an enforceable law; and it was always enforced, if not by affection and self-respect, by all-powerful self-interest. It was not like the rules of ultra-democratic societies, which speciously requiring all officers to use their powers for the public good alone, so commonly remain a dead letter. Hence, while a few masters were tyrannical and stingy, the bondmen in general had better food, clothing, housing, fuel, medical attendance, than any other peasantry in the world. While the employer of hireling labor pushing forward his railroad, his canal, his malarial farm, his mine, his chemical works, cares not whether the laborers lose wealth or life or not, the Southern master, in hiring his bondman to another, always made a part of the contract that he should not be employed in any unhealthy occupation.

The late Southern form of communism was therefore the only one defensible. The theory, combined with the other dogmas of the socialists, outrages every fundamental principle of

human nature and of human actions. It appeals to the prevalent principle of self-interest precisely in the wrong place, stimulating it powerfully in the officeholder's selfishness, neglect and malversation; while it loses its impulse in the work of production for the general behoof. This communism ignores man's desire for personal possessions, his right to an individual home, blest according to his own choice in the use of those possessions, his zeal for the welfare of his children, his right to bequeath to them the proceeds of his own labor. No system can endure, which thus discards the fundamental laws of nature. A structure built without a foundation must tumble. But the folly of ideologues and demagogues may persuade some discontented and misguided commonwealth to attempt the general commune. But it is impossible the attempt should continue. Its only permanent result will be destruction, or enormous mischief to the material civilization, morals and happiness of the society. The people disgusted with the experiment, will speedily struggle back to some political order, less insane; usually to one more despotic and less benignant than that which they deserted. Or else, communism will destroy their wealth and civilization and bring it down to chronic barbarism.

An authentic incident of one of the great "mining strikes" in Pennsylvania well illustrates this. A yeoman farmer was harvesting the products of his little orchards and fields, when a sturdy loafer demanded a bag of apples and potatoes, with the plea that he had neither money nor provisions for his family. "And who might you be?" asked the farmer. "A striking miner, out of work for many weeks, with the Reserve Fund of the Union utterly exhausted, and the strike unadjusted." "And," inquired the farmer, "why did you strike at first?" "Because the company," said the miner, with sundry indignant epithets, "refused to raise our daily wages from one and a half dollars to one and three-fourths." "So," said the honest farmer, "I earned my farm, working at one-half dollar per day, and you reject work at three times that price. None of my apples or potatoes are for such as you." The farmer was right. The acts of the oligarchies are aggravated in injustice by the fact that they were already better paid than the majority against whom they would enhance prices.

The system also carries intrinsic injustice to the capital-

ists in two ways: First, that it demands virtually the right of making both sides of the bargain in this contract of labor and wages. Each party is entitled to make his own side of the bargain; or if the offer made him from the other side does not suit him, to withdraw. There is no visible limit to the degree of this injustice. Strikers say they strike, because wages go below the limit of comfortable support. But what is a comfortable support for a working man? If the strikers are to decide, it may mean Havana cigars, canvass-back ducks and truffles, with *Chateau Margaux* wine. The system encourages limitless extravagance and waste; all at the expense of other people's capital and of the other parts of the working public; second, the capitalists in selling the products of their factories, have to submit to the great law of supply and demand. But the laborers, in selling their labor to the capitalists, insist on evading that law. There is no equity there.

As to the rights of public order and of other laborers, the system tends constantly and violently to pass from a method of mutual protection, into a criminal conspiracy. The sole object of a threatened strike is to compel employers to pay prices for labor in advance of these indicated by supply and demand. If the supply were not full, demand alone would raise the price of labor, and the strike would be superfluous. Now, the strikers, as free men, have an undoubted right to decline work and wages they think unfair. They may be very unwise in declining; but it is their right. And here their right ends. But if the policy stops there, the employers will naturally defend themselves from this coercion, by going into the labor market and hiring at the market price that substituted help which the full supply offers. Thus, if the strike stops where the lawful rights of the strikers end, it is inevitably futile. Of course then it will not stop there. They will go farther to violate the rights of others, who have an indefeasible right to take up any lawful work and wages they choose. Strikers will go to attack this right, by "boycotting," by obloquy, by threats, by terrorism, by violence, by murder. And when dynamite is introduced to punish with death innocent persons, happening to use the appliances of obnoxious employers, the crime is worthy only of devils. To sum up: If the equal rights of other laborers to accept the work and wages rejected are respected; strikes are futile. If

those rights are obstructed by force, strikes are criminal conspiracies. And our point is that the latter is their logical tendency. Unfortunately, the frequency of these outrages as the sequels of strikes, fully confirms the charge. In fine, only three modes are possible for adjusting the wages of labor and interest of capital. One is to leave the adjustment, under equitable laws, which shall hold laborer and property-holder equals, to the great law of supply and demand. The second is, to have the Government fix maximum and minimum prices by statute. The third is to leave these combination of laborers and employers against each other. For, if the one combine, of course the others will. The second plan is mischievous despotism. See its working in the French Revolutions. The third splits society into warring factions, and tends to barbarism.

Such is an impartial estimate of the tendencies of the "Trades Unions." The gravity of the prospect is increased; when we consider the passionate determination of their members. They seem more and more in love with their plans and cherish them as their final and complete hope. We are told that the movement spreads continually. It has its propagandists and newspapers. It confederates the different branches of mechanical labor more and more widely. It aspires to hold the balance of power in elections, and will before long, claim to control legislatures and congresses.

Will primary education be its antidote? The negative to this hope seems to be pronounced by the fact, that, thus far, these projects have grown just as primary education has extended, and precisely in the places which most rejoice in its means. The same discouragement follows from observing the species of development produced—an initial grade of knowledge and intelligence, just adequate to the suggestion of a number of unsatisfied desires, and the adoption of the shallow plausibilities of sophistical theories for their gratification; while the breadth of wisdom needed to show the hollowness of them has not been attained; and this dangerous Sciolism is aggravated by the self-sufficiency inspired by a conceit of culture. This primary education exactly prepares a population for the reading and acceptance of superficial newspapers. Without the circulation of newspapers, there would be no "Trades Unions" and no strikes of any moment. The primary school and the newspaper press

play into each others hands in assisting these dangerous organizations. In human hands all the best things are perverted to some mischievous uses, and here we have the perversions of these two good things, the School and the Press. The primary school enables the youth to read. Poor human nature usually craves the less wholesome pabulum for its powers, and here, the superficially cultivated reader uses his little talent to read the newspaper, instead of his Bible. The demagogue, the designing agitator sees at once in the newspaper an engine for swaying just such minds, and he makes one low, sophistical and shallow enough to suit his audience. Thus the country has its literature of "Strikes," Communism, Confiscation and Dynamite, with myriads of readers.

The more rapid progress of the late Confederate States, in the creation and accumulation of wealth, as demonstrated by the successive census returns of 1840, 1850 and 1860, was accounted for, in part, by the absence of strikes. The Negro laborers could not combine; the white found no motive to do so. Thus far the emancipated Negroes have not formed this species of Trades' Unions by the race lines. But the Southern people are now magnanimously giving them a universal common school education. The result will be, as sure as the cycle of the seasons, that before long they will also form their own "trades' unions" on the "color line." They will form them, because their partial culture will exactly prepare them for their sophisms and attractions; because they have already shown a marked tendency toward co-operative associations, and a passionate fondness for them; because, as now free laborers, they must feel the *stimuli* to that course, now almost omnipotently felt by white artisans among us. They will form them on the "color line," if for no other reason, because the whites have already applied that line everywhere in their trades' unions, and that with a passionate vigor.

One of the future problems and perils of the country is this race contest. Where the industrial centers have a million of Negroes, educated up to the use of the stump-speech, the radical newspaper and the revolver, closely organized in trades' unions, then the peace of the country will hang in constant suspense.

Two antidotes have been proposed for the poisons involved

in these unions. One is, the application of the co-operative plan, which has been so successfully applied in England in the work of "distribution," to the industries of *production*? In retail distribution, the Rochdale plan has, indeed, wrought wonders, at least in England. It is still to be seen whether the system can be made to work among Americans, with their eager and intense individuality.

But there appears, on reflection, a fatal difficulty when we attempt to apply it to industries of production. It proposes to identify the relations and interests of the employers and the laborers. It says, these shall be as truly stockholders in the joint concern, and capitalists, as those. But, unfortunately, the difference between employers and laborers, between the property-class and the property-less class, has arisen out of natural and acquired differences of personal attribute, for changing which the methods of co-operation are as weak as "the Pope's bull against the comet." In a country like this, where the laws are already equal, the whole difference between those who have property, and those who have not, has been made by the presence, or lack of "talents of acquisition" in themselves or their parents. The well-to-do families are so, because their working members have energy, skill, prudent foresight, self-denial as also, perhaps, selfishness. Especially does the creation of "saved-up capital," the feature which makes the man an employer instead of an employe, depend on self-denial. The common proverb says: "Riches come more by saving than by making." Political economy teaches the same; showing us that each man's saved-up capital represents exactly so much self-denial, either in him or his forefathers, in reserving present income from the indulgence of present desires, for the distant and remote uses of capital in the future.

Again, sagacity in applying, in investing, in using the previous savings, is more important than either rapid skill in earning, or self-denial in not spending. Here is your rapid, effective worker, who does earn large wages. Neither does he eat them up in immediate indulgencies. His mind is keenly bent on accumulation. But somehow, his money is ever "put into bags with holes." His ventures in investment are ill chosen and unlucky. He has an infinite amount of mental activities about plans and investments, but he ever lacks that "mother-

wit," that sagacious insight, which is a natural gift. And this picture is seen, in this country, more frequently than the instances of poverty from sheer indolence.

Now, if the industry is to be truly co-operative—if the smaller shareholders are not to be deprived of their votes in it, and directed both in their labors and the use of their earnings, by the will of the large capitalist in the concern—which means, simply their slavery—these votes which represent rashness, unthrift, self-indulgence, imprudence, must be equivalent with the votes of the sagacious—of course, then, "the concern" must come to grief. This directive will, which represents the aggregation of all the unwise who have remained among the small, or laboring shareholders, simply because they are unwise, cannot compete with the rival concern, which is directed by the best practical wisdom. The co-operative factory will be a failure; and the association will dissolve in disgust of mind, where the factory of the successful capitalist will succeed. The resolve that the present plan shall be replaced by co-operative factories, which shall succeed, amounts simply to this: "Resolved, that all laborers have the personal attributes of a Peter Cooper!" Nature and Providence concur to make men unequal; they cannot be made equal by the "resolutions" of theorists.

Once more: however co-operative, a factory must have executive officers, directors, salesmen, treasurers. These must handle all its earnings and assets. Supposing the system to receive the wide extension necessary for its healing fully the relations of labor and capital, shall we find enough *honest laboring men* in America to fill all these responsible places? Or would so large a portion of the ventures break down through defalcations of officials, as to spoil the experiment? The *morals* of the strike system do not seem very well adapted to breed strict honesty!

The other proposal is, that the quarrels of labor and capital shall be prevented, by making the National Government itself the general industrial manager. The Democratic theory is, that the Government reflects the combined will of all the people. This, then, is the right agency to direct industrial pursuits. Let the Government be in place of the corporations and capitalists.

Here several plain thoughts give us pause:

First. If this plan will be good, it will be because the Government direction will be better than that of the corporation or personal will. If, then, the Government is to confer this advantage on some industries, it must confer it on all. Otherwise we shall introduce inequalities and favoritisms most odious to Democratic theory. If it undertakes to operate all industries, it becomes a worse than Chinese despotism, a machine so vast as to crush out all individuality, and to break down hopelessly by its own weight.

Second. The success of the Government's management in all these industries must depend supremely on the competency and honesty of the Government's officials. They must constitute an immense host. Personal motives to zeal and fidelity will be largely annihilated. Is there enough of this high integrity in America, to work the huge machine? The present Government seems to have a deal of trouble in finding enough honest officials for its present small functions!

Third. The Government is practically represented in the person of the magistrate. But, by the nature of Government, "he beareth the sword." His power is essentially punitive. Transgressions against his will must be held as "crimes" and "misdemeanors." Shall his industrial functions as the manager of numberless laborers be enforced by this species of sanction? Shall the Government hold that the *employee* who has not watched his power loom, or chiseled his stone aright, is to be corrected as the petty larcener is? If not, how else? Under slavery, this negligent laborer might have been corrected by the birch; under our present hireling system, he is corrected by dismissal; but under this Governmental plan all industries, as we saw, must be equally the Government's; and whither shall it dismiss the lazy *employee*? To banishment from his country? Hardly. To idleness? If he is still to have from the Government his subsistence, this would be a mockery of punishment; rather a reward for idleness and an injustice to the true workers. There appears no mode of dealing for this industrial Government, except to treat defect of work in the citizens as larceny is treated.

This suggests the fourth and hardest question of all. If Government is to be general, not to say universal, industrial agent, it must see to it that all whom it employs and subsists do

their honest share of the work. For otherwise, the idlers would be rewarded for their sin by being set up as an aristocracy above the faithful workers, to live at ease at the others' expense. Each citizen then must be held responsible to Government for the diligent and useful employment of his time, under some efficient penalty. But the "Government" as such is an abstraction, which directly touches no man. It must act through persons clothed with official power. The meaning, then, would be that the citizens must answer to some *officeholder*, representing this sovereign Government, under some penalty, for doing his share of work. But this means *slavery* it is its exact definition. The conception of this governmental plan is communistic; and every thoughtful man knows that communism means either anarchy or slavery. It may be objected: The Government's clerks and postmasters now work precisely under that system, and are not slaves. The reply is first, that probably they sometimes do feel that they are virtual slaves; but chiefly, that they become *employes* of Government now by their own free application, and may resign when they feel oppressed by their superiors, and thus free themselves by returning to private life. But on the plan discussed, all this would be different; the Government would be compelled to exact the adherence of its workers,—as it does of its conscripted soldiers, whose condition is that of bondage for their term of service—and to refuse this privilege of resigning.

There appears then, no remedy, except in the firm and just administration of the laws, coupled with wise and equitable commercial and industrial legislation and the propagation of industry—economy and contentment among the people by means of Christian principles. There is no attitude for the Government towards "strikes" except the legal and righteous one. If operatives choose to form a society to forward their own interests, they have a right to do so, provided they do not infringe other people's. If the society chooses to "quarrel with their own bread and butter" by rejecting a certain work at certain wages; they have a right to do so. *But their recent employers have equal right to go into the labor market and hire others for that work at those wages; and all other laborers have equal right to that work if they are willing to the wages.*

The moment the "union" goes an inch beyond the mere

withdrawal—the moment it begins to obstruct, terrorize, or beat, or murder the employers and the new *employes*, it has become a criminal conspiracy; the State should put it down with as prompt and firm a hand as they would put down highway robbery or foreign invasion. To the clear and just mind this is clear. But is there any American State which performs this duty? Alas no! We are more likely to see the State Governors corresponding with and conciliating the “strike,” the power whose very end of existence is “to be a terror to evil doers,” bowing to the conspiracy of evil-doers, who ought to be howed before the majesty of the law. Pitiful sight!

Property is always cautious, apparently timid, at the beginning of collisions, for it is conscious it is valuable; it has much to lose. But, because it has much to lose, property always defends itself resolutely when pressed to the wall. And when the period of caution has passed, property defends itself successfully. For money is power, and the talents of acquisition which gained the money are power. One thing has already become clear to the thought of property: that when the hour of forcible defense comes, the militia of the States will be worthless. They are too near the rioters. Property will invoke, as the only adequate force, the standing army of the United States. And, as the industrial centers are numerous and populous, the United States must have a large, a widely diffused standing army to invoke. Thus the property-holder will be educated by his needs and experiences in the hour of trial, to think of his State as the *Cipher*, the Washington Government as the only *Power*. The discontented classes, who must at last be restrained by force, will be educated to regard State authority as a shadow, and Federal authority as the substantial fear. The surest result of the approaching strife will thus be to complete the practical extinction of State sovereignty, and the consolidation of the federation into one empire. It will be an empire governing by the bayonet.