

THE LESSON OF HOMESTEAD: A REMEDY FOR LABOR TROUBLES.

THE disturbance occasioned by the differences between the Carnegie companies and the large bodies of organized workingmen employed by them has extended to the whole country. It has been felt not merely in the derangement of dependent industries and of business in general, but as a menace to the common peace. A great Commonwealth has had its entire available military force on duty at large expense to the men and the State, for a long period, and at every passing moment the general Government has been liable to be called upon, as it actually was in a similar but less stubborn affair in Idaho. It, with some of its specially dramatic and significant incidents, such as the strange battle between the private armed forces of the respective parties, the attempted assassination of the chairman of the Carnegie companies, and the unusual punishment of a private soldier for the utterance of a mere sentiment, unaccompanied by any act, has attracted the most profound and anxious attention of the entire civilized world. Occurring, as it did, in this well-ordered Republic, regulated by law, in a land where the people themselves are supposed to be sovereign and to possess the power to right their own wrongs, it is necessarily accepted as a sign or symptom of a fatal vice in our system of government, or in the laws relating to such matters, which promises even wider disaster unless a remedy shall be found.

The question raised by the bloody encounter between the organized workingmen and the embodied Pinkertons on the Monongahela is one which cannot be put aside until there shall be found a satisfactory answer to it. It is but a single incident of a long and terrible warfare, whose persistent barbarity is the darkest reproach of the otherwise peaceful age in which we live. For the settlement of all ordinary private disputes, legal and effectual methods are duly provided. Murder, arson, pillage, and rapine in all other shapes are repressed and punished without any draft upon the reserved forces of the State and without a general disturbance of peaceful communities. Even war is prevented by a gradually crystallizing system of arbitration, which, sustained by enlightened public opinion the world over, has acquired

almost the authority of public law. Here, only, in the controversies between large employers and great masses of workingmen, in those controversies which in the last quarter of a century have reddened the streets of every great European city with blood, and which have shamed this country in many instances, the state stands practically aloof, permitting each separate difference to degenerate, it may be, into a cruel and unequal combat between the capitalist and the workingman, until the moment arrives to crush the latter down in his tracks, to take away his arms, to evict him from his home, and to set his family in the road, in the name of law and order!

Let us look more particularly at the case at Homestead. There was little or no reason to anticipate such an outbreak at the time it took place. The intelligence of organized labor, realizing the futility of strikes, discouraged them; and the intelligence of the capitalist class, summing up the inevitable losses of such conflicts and finding a certain degree of security in dealing with the responsible officials of associated labor, was apparently more inclined to justice and moderation. It seemed as if the time was approaching when the antagonists in struggles of this nature would find a way to prevent them, out of mere respect for the colossal power of one another. The Missouri-Pacific strike, the New York Central strike, even the portentous riots of 1877, when we narrowly escaped universal collision between the forces of organized society and the aggrieved classes, had been forgotten, and we were drifting calmly along, complacently estimating the increase of our National wealth, counting the deposits in the banks, pointing to the "poor boys" who were becoming millionaires by the hundreds as the best evidence of our wonderful prosperity, felicitating ourselves upon the prospect of another good crop and the possibility of a small percentage of the mortgages being paid, when the red sky above Homestead, in the very heart of this hollow prosperity, where the "poor boys" were rolling up, more rapidly than anywhere else, the millions afforded them by tariff bounties, summoned us to look not merely upon a local scene of blood and misery, present and anticipated, but to go to the bottom of our paternal industrial system, to consider the cause of the man whose brawny hands were on the machines turning out the vast product of which we were so proud, and to determine whether or not he also was worthy of the protection of the law.

Has the workman made this situation at Homestead in pure wantonness? Has he imperilled the livelihood of wife and child for any light

or trivial reason? Had he any legal recourse for the settlement of what he deemed his wrongs? What had he, then, done which put him beyond the pale of law when his request for reasonable concession in wages was refused; when he was shut out; when he was told that he must abandon the right of association, which he held most sacred, and which alone in all the controversies of the past had secured him any consideration, and must thereby disarm himself of all power of self-protection if he would keep his home and work at that place and in the only trade he knew? Where was he, with the thousands like him and in the same evil case, to turn for legal relief? To what tribunal was he to resort for the adjustment of his rights and the redress of his wrongs? Was there any adequate tribunal provided by the highly civilized state, which owed him peace and security as much as it owed them to the proprietors of the fortified mills, to the service of which he had adapted his life and his labor? Shall the complaints of men in his condition be met forever only with the policeman's bludgeon or the militiaman's musket?

The very spot is sanguinary. At or near Homestead Braddock crossed to slaughter in the tangled thickets where the Edgar Thompson steel works stand to-day. The latter place, in full view of Homestead, was the rendezvous of the so-called "Whiskey Insurgents'" army; and it was here, all along the banks of this romantic river, that Alexander Hamilton's brutal expedient of "terror" as a principal means of "strong government" was put in practice, and bands of military marauders were sent out at midnight to raid the peaceful farmsteads, to kidnap unoffending citizens amid the shrieks of their families, and hale them, with blows and sabre-cuts, before a lawless mixed commission. Both Homestead and Braddock's were lighted up by the fierce glare of the fires kindled by the riots of '77, and heard the musketry which did the slaughter of that day. And now again it became the scene of a conflict more portentous than any of them.

Homestead is but one of the great establishments of the Carnegie companies. Opposite is Braddock's, to which must be added Duquesne, Beaver Falls, and others. With the business of the steel companies has recently been incorporated Mr. Frick's more or less complete monopoly of coke-production in the bituminous-coal regions near by; and that gentleman has become the omnipotent single manager of the whole, employing from thirteen thousand to twenty thousand men. The original plant has grown to unprecedented proportions, until the fortunes of the proprietors, united with the fortunes of

a few others like themselves, actually constitute a menace to the free institutions of the country, contributing as they do fabulous sums for election purposes in order to keep in power a party which shapes public policies in their interests as against the interests of all other classes. Nobody disputes their title to this wealth or their right to use it as they see fit, within the limits of the general public safety. It is certain, however, that the greater part of it is but the tribute which iniquitous tariff laws have enabled them to levy upon the domestic consumption of their product. They have, during a long period, enjoyed an enormously profitable monopoly. The State has stood over their vast accumulations and their huge operations with all its police power affording them every possible security. But neither the Union, which granted them the unconstitutional bounties, nor the Commonwealth, which gives them its peace, has imposed upon them any obligation to share with their unskilled laborers or even their operatives ever so small a proportion of the joint earnings of the capital and labor employed in the business. Accordingly when the men look out upon these vast establishments and note the swelling millions rolling into the account of the proprietors under favor of government, they feel that they have a strong moral right to an adjustment of wages which shall not be dictated entirely from the employers' side. And moral right in the common mind is very readily transmuted into legal right.

At Homestead the men were grievously discontented with certain new arrangements proposed by the company. They belonged to the "Amalgamated Association of Iron and Steel Workers," one of the most conservative of the labor organizations. The company refused to sign the scale presented by the association, but announced, instead, an arbitrary reduction of wages, on the ground that new machinery increased the earning power of the men, thus taking to itself all the advantage of invention and experience, while denying it to the other side. When the men came to remonstrate, through their usual committees and in their usual orderly manner, they were met with the ultimatum: Accept the reduction, abandon your organization, and submit yourselves in every particular to the arrangements which our interests shall suggest, and you may work in these mills, but upon no other terms whatever! There was no strike; no time was given for a strike. Going about consulting and planning with their officers and committees, seeking conferences with the company, and otherwise anxiously endeavoring to strengthen their position in the controversy, though doubtless contemplating a strike as a last resort, the gates

were suddenly shut in their faces, and instead of a strike on the part of the men, there was a lock-out on the part of the company. What followed might readily have been anticipated. It is reasonable to suppose that the company did both anticipate and desire it. The doom thus pronounced upon three thousand men and their families could not fail to alarm and exasperate the victims beyond peaceable endurance. It meant practical slavery in those mills, or migration, with all that migration implies. But they did only what their fellows in the absence of just and legal methods of settlement have done elsewhere. They resisted as best they could the introduction of non-union labor into the works from which they had been locked out and which had been insultingly fortified against them in advance. It was not wonderful that non-union men, however urgent their necessities, feared to venture in, or that the sheriff of Allegheny County was unable to raise a *posse* to protect them. Not only everybody in Homestead, but almost everybody in Allegheny County sympathized with the locked-out men.

But the situation was not an especially threatening one. Many such have existed for a long time without serious injury to life or property and without other loss than that occasioned by the idleness of men and machinery. But the class of "protected gentlemen" to which Messrs. Carnegie and Frick belong appear to be, of all human beings, the most impressed with the awful sanctity of their individual right to "do as they please with their own." These gentlemen have been apparently, throughout this trouble, unable to apprehend any other principle. It seems to be not only uppermost in their minds, but to fill their minds wholly, to the exclusion of any other consideration. To all appeals for accommodation; to all remonstrance and argument; to the county of Allegheny, looking forward to an enormous bill of damages; to the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, hurrying eight thousand soldiers from their daily avocations to protect them, at a cost of twenty-five thousand dollars a day; to the people of the United States, who gave them their monopoly and stuffed their pockets with unearned money; to the three thousand operatives at Homestead; and to the women and children whose homes are practically confiscated over their heads and who must follow their husbands and fathers into exile, they answer only that they will do as they like with their own. They will have their pound of flesh; they will take it next the heart, they will crush the "Amalgamated"; they will employ no union men; they will pocket the largest profits—

but they will pay the wages that please them and entertain no question about them.

But how was this programme to be executed? There was no disorder at the mills. The locked-out men lay quietly around them, and the barbed-wire fences and the electric batteries and the hot-water pipes were all useless. There was a dead calm over the whole place. But no non-union man would go near. The sheriff was powerless; and the public opinion of the county, of the State, and of the world was against the proposition of the private owners to use their own—as the sultan of Muscat or the king of Dahomey or an Apache Indian might use his—without the smallest regard to common humanity. In this emergency they turned to a power beyond the territory and unknown to the laws of the State.

The Pinkertons have been compared to the Hessians, but the comparison is unfair to the latter. They resemble more the free companies of the middle ages, recruited by freebooters for freebooting and their services sold to the highest bidder. The agency is a natural outgrowth of existing conditions. It, more than anything else, illustrates the barbarity of our methods, or rather our lack of methods, in such contingencies. We encourage the association of capital; we foster manufacturing monopolies with subsidies; we permit railways to discriminate in their favor; we allow them to combine in trusts; we drive masses of men, skilled and unskilled, to these centres of work; we induce them by public policy, as exhibited in discriminating laws, to adapt their lives and their labor to these favored industries—and then, when disputes arise between the capitalists engaged in semi-public enterprises and the men employed by them, we allow the fight to go on as it will until the general peace is endangered, and finally turn in the power of the State to crush the weaker. But in intermediate stages of the contest the employer must rely upon his own or hired force if he chooses to employ force. It is therefore much to his convenience and frequently to his pleasure to be able to make a draft upon a private standing army duly disciplined and weaponed and open for engagement in any quarrel, and so to make private war on his own account and in his own way. This was what was done when three hundred Pinkertons, armed with Winchester rifles, were secretly sent up the Monongahela, but the sheriff of Allegheny was left as powerless as ever, and the calm at Homestead after the battle was deeper and more ominous than before.

The governor had held off as long as he dared. Any action

whatever on his part must necessarily determine the contest, and determine it against the men. But it was a strained and painful situation. Another onset of the Pinkertons, which might be expected at any moment, would doubtless cause the loss of many lives and widen the breach instead of closing it. For how much of the blood thus shed and of the injury thus inflicted would he be accountable if he should fail to interpose in time? He seemed to have no alternative, after the formal demand of the sheriff, except to call out the troops, and, as a matter of fact, this unavoidable action of the Executive settled the particular dispute between the locked-out Homestead men and their recent employers; and thenceforward the latter could do as they would with their own. The non-union men would go in if they chose, and the armed Pinkertons would follow them if it pleased the company and the governor of Pennsylvania should permit it. The men at Homestead were helpless and hopeless. There was but one quarter to which they could look for lawful succor. Their fellows in the other Carnegie mills, numbering many thousands, might go out of their own volition, instead of being locked out, as was the case with the Homesteaders, and thus reduce the contest to a question of endurance on a larger scale, as it was at Homestead before the disastrous appearance of the Pinkertons and the fateful arrival of the troops.

The Homestead situation is liable to be reproduced at any other place in the country where multitudes of men are assembled in the conduct of large enterprises. The people of the United States and their governments, State and Federal, are in danger of being plunged into violent conflicts, not of their own making, and in which they have no interest other than the maintenance of the public peace. As to the duty of the State in regard to them, their prevention and repression, or the restraint and punishment of those who cause them, even enlightened opinions seem to differ very widely. The governor of Pennsylvania has shown by his action what he deems the duty of that State under the circumstances and in the present state of the law. He had no choice but to enforce the laws as he found them on the statute-book, and no power with which to do it, in the face of a turbulent community, less warlike than the militia. He might—I believe that he should—have preceded, or at least have accompanied, the order to the militia by a proclamation warning the discontented men to obey the letter of the law, reciting the personal consequences of further disobedience and the necessity of stern enforcement, and at the same time commanding the armed Pinkerton forces and all other

armed bodies, except only the sheriff's *posse*, to disperse or to retire instantly beyond the limits of the Commonwealth, whose peace they threatened. Such a proclamation might have prevented further conflicts between the Pinkertons and the Homestead men, and it might have saved the people of the State the expense and peril of military operations. But the governor doubtless had better information, and he may have been well assured that only the actual presence of an overwhelming force would restore peace and prevent bloodshed. He could not pause to consider the merits of the dispute on either side or to weigh the hardships which might ensue to one or the other.

But the duty of the State in the large sense is not limited to the suppression of mobs. It is confronted by the higher duty of preventing mobs, of depriving mobs of all decent excuse for existence, and of removing the grievances which in labor controversies are alleged as their occasion. Whether these grievances exist or not must be submitted to some other arbitrament than that of clubs and guns, hot water, electric batteries, and dynamite, in the very near future, if any peace is to be kept in the land. The steadily increasing concentration of workingmen in large numbers in mills and mines and at railway terminals has changed all previous conditions. Capital massed on one side and men massed on the other make a situation to which neither the common law nor the statute law of our foregoers is at all adequate. The principles of those laws are as applicable and as effectual to-day as ever, but they need elaboration and the support of new machinery. A dispute between an employer and eighteen thousand men—the number said to be in the service of the Carnegie companies—who with their families make sixty or seventy thousand souls, cannot be satisfactorily disposed of by ordinary judicial procedure. While executives, courts, and juries are confessedly unable or unwilling to cope with unlawful combinations of capital, how can we expect them to deal promptly, successfully, and justly with vast multitudes of aggrieved laborers, too often technically at fault? Is the spectacle of trusts and gigantic conspiracies of corporations overriding constitutions and laws unchecked and practically unopposed calculated to encourage scrupulously legal and orderly conduct on the part of men situated as were these at Homestead? The danger and the damage to the community and ultimately to the individual citizens who are oppressed and pillaged by such combinations are infinitely greater than any to be apprehended from the disorders of which workingmen, organized or unorganized, have ever been guilty. But in the one case

the State defends itself with writs and bills in equity; in the other with its rifles. Why not the writs in both or the rifles in both? Why the summary suppression here and the tender toleration there? Because the corporate offenders are powerful, often more powerful to command and to corrupt than a weakly-officered State to resist, and do not hesitate to employ special privileges to harass and plunder the very people who granted them. Ambitious politicians too frequently prefer to find a specious way to serve them rather than to oppose them; and the workingmen clearly understand the difference in the treatment of the two kinds of law-breaking and the reason of it.

Overgrown and transgressing corporations thus offending against the public, which created and protects them, should be driven back within the strictest limits of their charters, or their charters forfeited, and at the same time a new class of corporations in the interests of labor might be invited and encouraged in American States. Suppose, for instance, that the "Amalgamated Association," or, to present a smaller subdivision, the iron and steel workers of Homestead, incorporated for the purpose of furnishing labor. The men, who lately imagined themselves efficiently organized for all proper purposes, and who have been so rudely undeceived, are members of it. This corporation contracts with Mr. Frick for a given amount of work of a given character. The corporation deals with the men; Mr. Frick does not. It collects wages and in turn pays dividends. It employs and dismisses, or admits to its membership and expels. It hears and redresses grievances. Its existence manifestly renders such outbreaks as the one under consideration almost an impossibility, since the men manage their own corporation and their own business in their own way. It is a counterpart of the capitalist corporation which confronts it. It will sue and be sued; it will collect damages or pay them. It will prosper or not, as other corporations do.

Would such a thing be feasible? Of course not while our one-sided laws remain as they are, while the aggressions of a moneyed corporation are unrestrained and those of a labor association are crushed out in blood. But the State can make it feasible. It can make this labor corporation for all the purposes of its creation quite as responsible as the Carnegie companies, and it can regulate the conduct of both classes of corporations and provide methods for the settlement of disputes which would relieve the sheriff and the militia of a large part, if not the whole, of their disagreeable duties.

The first objection to this corporation is that it would have no

means wherewith to answer in damages for breaches of its contracts. But it can be given means by a provision in its charter requiring that a sufficient percentage of its whole earnings shall be withheld from distribution and invested in public securities, never to be disturbed or expended except for that purpose. The second objection is that its membership would be fitful and shifting. But would it be necessarily more so than the stockholders of other corporations? The latter usually, it is true, pay in money; but the former would pay in solid labor, of which money is but a measure. Such a corporation, if managed with one-half the conservative skill and judgment that have marked the administration of the affairs of the "Amalgamated Association," could well be trusted to arrange the details of its business satisfactorily to all its components and to those with whom it might contract.

But the State has not discharged its duty by merely granting a charter to a labor corporation, with even the most careful and elaborate provisions for its safe management. It must also provide for the peaceful settlement of disputes between the aggregations of capital on the one side and the aggregations of men on the other. It must do this not only in justice to the parties immediately concerned, but in justice to itself. Provisions for arbitration, provisions for speedy litigation in default of arbitration, provisions for preserving conditions against radical changes while the legal settlement is in progress, provisions against call-outs, lock-outs, and strikes in the interim, and, above all, provisions against evictions of workmen and the introduction of armed forces—these are the outlines which the wisdom of a legislature bent upon a fair solution of the most difficult problem and the removal of the gravest danger of modern times might be expected to fill in with details that would not defeat the great object in view.

Many large employers prefer to deal with labor organizations, loose as they are, under present conditions, rather than with the individual men; and some of the associations have been of incalculable benefit in preserving agreeable and profitable relations between employers and employed. The "Amalgamated Association" has been one of these, and its management has in an unusual degree commanded the confidence of the public and of all those having business with it. The labor corporation suggested would be that perfection of organization which would best serve the rights and interests of all concerned. It would bring to the front the best character and the highest talents on the labor side, and the responsible manufacturing or mining corporation would be able to buy its labor from an equally responsible cor-

poration having it to sell, and to carry on its business with an almost absolute certainty that the contracts between them would be faithfully and voluntarily observed, and, if not, would be readily enforced. This, with the obligation upon each not to strike or to lock out or to evict until a question properly raised and pending should be judicially determined, would probably save the public from these gigantic disturbances, which shake the whole State and therefore sternly demand the public intervention of the State for their suppression.

Is it worth trying? Is the public peace worth maintaining? Is it better that American operatives and miners and other classes of laborers too numerous to mention should go on, their hearts swelling with a bitter sense of wrong and continuously on the very verge of turbulent outbreak; or that they should have legal justice, with appropriate tribunals as wide open to them as to those whom they too frequently are compelled to regard as their conscienceless adversaries? Shall we go on forever in this brutish old way, standing off from these dangerous disputes until they degenerate into lock-outs and strikes and riots, only to interpose with the crushing power of the State when it is too late to consider the merits of any of the questions involved, and the naked and cruel letter of the deficient law must be enforced without inquiry and without mercy?

It is true that some of the greater employers, and among them those most highly "protected," deny the right of the public to regulate their business in any way whatever. They would naturally prefer to pursue unmolested the course which has so marvellously enriched them at the common expense of consumers and workingmen. They have cultivated the feudal spirit until it has become the master-passion. They will be naturally reluctant, like the barons—which in many respects they are—to yield the privilege of private warfare. They will, beyond question, prefer the Pinkertons and the soldiers to the milder and fairer methods of the proposed law. They will insist upon their alleged right to use their property precisely as they see fit and to make any contract which seems to them good. They are doubtless perfectly sincere and conscientious in this remarkable claim, and the almost ludicrous solemnity with which it is made and repeated seems to have imposed upon some minds besides their own. But it will not stand a moment's examination.

They are utterly mistaken in their first and fundamental assumption. No man in civilized society can do what he pleases with his own. He cannot do what he likes with his own skin if a public

necessity requires a different disposition of it. His blood and his bones belong to his country. They are taken when his country needs them. His property, no less than his life, is held at the call of the State. But recently eight thousand men were taken bodily from their daily avocations and their comfortable homes and encamped upon the hills about Homestead, without in the least consulting their individual pleasure. Mr. Carnegie's business and the business of other men situated like him challenge public regulation by reason of their very immensity, to say nothing of the public contributions to them by the unjust operation of monopoly tariff laws. If not as clearly subject to such regulation as common carrying, they are certainly as plainly so as money-lending, education of children, poison-vending, powder-making, and hundreds of others. If the law can prohibit Mr. Carnegie from running a "pluck-me store" in connection with his business, it can prohibit him from doing anything else which is unjust and unreasonable, and especially anything which provokes or tends toward a breach of the peace. If the State chooses to say him nay and to lay down the limits of his freedom, he can have no right whatever to go on dealing with three thousand men here, and five thousand men there, and ten thousand men elsewhere, according to his private impulses. All private property is held and enjoyed subject to the public safety; and the contention that great plants like that of the Carnegie companies, built up mainly by public bounties, are exempt from the rule would be nothing short of monstrous.

To this proposed regulation, therefore, of the transactions between employers and their workingmen there could be no reasonable opposition. The State, which upon all established theories of our free institutions is supreme, can never be said to have discharged its sovereign duty until it has opened the way to peaceable and orderly settlement of such disputes and compelled all parties concerned to walk in it.

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CAMPAIGN COMMITTEES: PUBLICITY AS A CURE FOR CORRUPTION.

MUCH good fruit was borne to us by the Civil War: the extinction of slavery, the development of the National idea and spirit, the increase of our credit in the world at large, the creation of National courage and of an heroic fibre in our American manhood. But there is the reverse picture: war in our case, as in all others, left an immense heritage of loss and evil, much of which fails of due consideration or estimate. It trod ruthlessly in its red wine-press the finest moral life of the Nation; and who can calculate the precise extent to which we still suffer from the withdrawn energies and extinct moral forces of the young men who offered themselves a willing sacrifice at their country's call? The war gave us an enormous increase of the gambler's spirit in business, with its consequent speculations, false aims and methods, and their dark train of embezzlements and defalcations. It also fostered seeds of a serious corruption already existing in our political life and planted fresh ones. The emergency which it presented was so extreme, its importance was so overwhelming, that men on either side of the great question felt that everything short of the main issue must be sacrificed.

In such a crisis neither men nor methods could be scrutinized too closely; indeed, the very lack of time in the swift march of tremendous events forbade such scrutiny. The result was that a certain spirit of moral recklessness, a carelessness as to just how things were done and by whom parties were led, was begotten in the people and has survived the era of the war. This was accompanied by extreme public lassitude which naturally followed the excessive exertions and sacrifices of war-time. The conditions were wholly favorable to the growth of corrupt political aims and practices. Added to this was the existence of an extreme party spirit, which caused party lines to be drawn very rigidly. Men still felt that it would not be safe to grant the enemy anything; it was enough, under the circumstances, if a man were a good Republican or a good Democrat, or even if he professed to be such, to intrust him with almost any amount of political