

## DESPOTISM AND SECRECY.

THE two leading strikes of the late labor crisis were those of the Southwestern Railroads and of the Third Avenue Road in this city. One was started and managed by Martin Irons and the other by Joseph O'Donnell. Irons was Chairman of one Executive Committee and O'Donnell of another. In both cases the great body of the strikers had no grievances of their own to complain of. They struck because they were ordered to strike by the man representing the Executive Committee, and they held out because they got no orders from him to go back to work. There have been other similar cases on a smaller scale. In the Paterson silk factory 1,200 persons struck, without knowing why, on receiving a signal made with his fingers by a cigarmaker from Albany, who was also chairman of some committee, and sought to make the owner of the factory conduct the business of his dye-house to suit him (the cigarmaker). Being coldly received in the dye-house, he lost his temper, and snapped his fingers as he passed through the shops, with the above-mentioned result.

In all these cases the strikes failed utterly, but not without great loss both to employer and employed. The employer lost the profits on his business, the interest on his fixed capital, and probably some of his permanent custom; while the strikers lost their wages, and thousands of men and women all over the country lost the amount of a special tax levied on them, or assumed by them to support the strikers while loafing or rioting. A fortnight ago the Third Avenue strike ended in failure, and when it ended, O'Donnell, the man who started it and kept it going, had to resign and get out of the way of his constituents. For some days there was talk of mobbing him, and after having at one time occupied a position so eminent that he peremptorily directed the Inspector of Police not to suppress a riot which he was himself heading—and this with the approval of some of the newspapers—he has utterly disappeared from view, amid the curses of his dupes. More recently the Southwestern strike ended in failure also. Irons is in hiding, or has made his escape, leaving a mob of his former followers and many angry creditors vainly searching for him with hostile intent. In like manner the silk workers at Paterson went back to work ashamed and sorry, and the cigarmaker who snapped his fingers has been expelled from his assembly, or whatever the body is to which he belongs, and deposed from his high office.

Now, what is the moral of all this for working people? Is it not the old moral, which political history has been teaching for 4,000 years, that no man or small knot of men is fit to be intrusted with the exercise of arbitrary power over other men's lives and fortunes? Is it not astounding that there should be found so many white citizens of the United States ready to act as if they had no knowledge of the experience of their race with absolute rulers and secret cabals and committees; of the loss, and suffering, and sorrow which it has undergone at their hands, of the vast expenditure of life and treasure which it has taken to get rid of them and establish government by popular consent and public discussion? Louis XIV. and Napoleon I.

and Napoleon III. were really nothing but Grand Master Workmen, with a lot of Inside and Outside Esquires at their beck and call, who had only to crack their fingers in order to tear people away from their occupations without telling them why, and levy on their property without rendering them an account. Charles I., too, really wanted to be a Walking Delegate, and go about the country and collect money, without letting people know what he wanted it for, but the English would not give him "assessments," or permit him to snap his fingers in their workshops; and on his persisting in the practice they cut his head off.

The strikes which Louis XIV. ordered were on a tremendous scale. He had constantly 300,000 or 400,000 men striking in one direction or another, without ever telling them what the cause was. He himself escaped the fury of the strikers by death, but his successor in the fifth generation perished for his ancestor's sins on the scaffold. Napoleon I. was a still greater organizer of strikes. He kept all France on a strike against the rest of Europe for twenty years. He used to order out a couple of hundred thousand men at a time, and when the wretched strikers asked what it was all about, he used to say, like Martin Irons, that it was to "show his power," and when they begged to be allowed to go back to their factories and fields, he used to say, like Master Workman Powderly, that though the strike might have been unjustifiable in the beginning, it had to go on for the credit of the Order. But the day came at last when, as in Missouri, the patience of the strikers was worn out, and they deserted him, and then, like Irons, he had to run, with a mob after him, and left the world wondering what he had done with all the money. His nephew, Napoleon III., had a somewhat similar experience. He headed and managed strikes in France, and collected assessments, and kept "pickets" out, and stopped trains, and ran opposition stages for twenty years, but at last he organized a bigger strike than he could manage, and he too had to run with the mob at his heels, followed by his Venerable Sages, and his Esquires, and his Local Assembly.

In fact, how any workingman who can read, and who has any habit of reflection, can bring himself, in the year 1886, in the United States of America, to join any organization in which his life and property can be controlled by arbitrary or secretly prepared orders, it is difficult to understand. For to be, not simply an American, but a modern freeman, it is before all things necessary that a man should make his own contracts; should pay no money, except debts, to anybody who is not willing to render him an account; should submit to no laws or "orders" which he has not been consulted about, or has not had a hand, personally or through his representatives, in making after open discussion. These things are among the essentials of freedom. A man who has only some of them is partially free. A man who has none of them is a slave.

## HOW THE KNIGHTS CONDUCT STRIKES.

EXTRAORDINARY revelations as to the manner in which the Knights of Labor conduct strikes, were made by many members of the order during the late Congressional investigation.

The sessions of the Committee were attended by Charles H. Litchman, first General Secretary of the order, and at present a member of the General Executive Board for the whole country, who was sent to St. Louis by Mr. Powderly as his authorized representative. What Mr. Litchman says as to the morals of striking, and of preventing by force other men from taking the places of strikers, is therefore of the highest significance. Here it is:

"Mr. Parker—What do you call a scab?"

"Mr. Litchman—By a scab, the trades unionist means what the lawyer means by a shyster and the doctor by a quack."

"Q. Do you not acknowledge the right of any man to work and earn wages and support his family? A. When you put the question abstractly, in that way, I must answer it, 'Yes.' But I do not acknowledge the right of any man, at the time a great conflict is raging between labor and capital, to step in between and scab."

"Q. You said a while ago that when a strike was declared, everything in human power should be done to make it effective and successful. What did you mean by everything in human power? A. I would rather not answer that question. The case is not here, and I don't care to make myself plainer."

Irons was asked for his views on the same point with this result:

"Q. Now, do you regard injuring property as lawlessness? A. Yes."

"Q. And killing engines? A. Well, sort of, I suppose."

"Q. Do you regard uncoupling cars and breaking up trains as violence? A. Well, yes."

On previous occasions Irons had been more candid in expressing his endorsement of violence. One witness produced short-hand notes of a speech made by Irons at a Knights of Labor meeting in East St. Louis, while the trouble there was at its height, in which he said:

"Talk to the scabs; go to their houses and talk to their wives, and make them quit. Do everything you can to make them come out, and if they won't, give them some pills and — them out. To hell with the Chinese! To hell with the scabs! We won in the Chinese fight, and we will win this."

At the same meeting, said this witness,

"another Knight of Labor advised the men to be quiet while the militia were there, but as soon as they were gone"—here the speaker winked significantly.

"Mr. Stewart—He didn't reduce it to words, but he looked it?"

"Witness—Yes."

The way in which the teachings of men like Litchman and Irons were carried into practice was perfectly illustrated at De Soto, Mo., and is best told by some of the witnesses from that place. Joseph Cramer, formerly employed by the Missouri-Pacific at De Soto, was thus examined:

"Mr. Stewart—Are you a Knight of Labor?"

"Witness—No; I used to be."

"Mr. Stewart—How did your connection with the order terminate?"

"Witness—Well, on March 14, I was ordered to assist in stopping trains. I didn't go. On the 17th two members of the assembly asked me again, but I said I shouldn't have anything at all to do with such business. On the 18th I received the following written notice from the lodge:

"You are hereby notified to come to the hall and report for duty to the Master Workman."

At first I didn't go, but when they sent again I went. When I appeared, the Master Workman told me to go to the coal chute. I asked what that was for. He said, 'To stop trains.' I said I was not going to do any such thing as that. He said, 'Very well, you needn't do anything, but you can go and swell the crowd.' I replied, I didn't propose to violate any laws or make myself a criminal in any way. He told me I was a coward. I replied, 'Well, I may be, but I'm not afraid of you or any one else; all the same, I'm not going to damage the company's property.'

"Mr. Burnes—Where did this conversation take place?"

"Witness—In the Knights of Labor hall at De Soto.

"Q. With the Master Workman? A. Yes.

"Q. Whose signature was attached to the notice? A. Master Workman McLaughlin's.

"Q. Who brought the notice? A. I don't know, but it was one of the officers who came the second time.

"Q. Here is a list of names of the men who broke open the round-house. Do you know of your own knowledge whether they are Knights of Labor or not? A. Most of them I have met at the lodge, and one of them abused me terribly.

"Q. Who was that? A. Rogerson. He said: 'Do you suppose the Knights of Labor will ever allow you to work in their shops again when they have got through this affair?' I said: 'That is a matter for consideration later on.' He said they were going to win the fight, and I should never be allowed to work with them afterward.

"Mr. Burnes—Did you withdraw from the Knights of Labor?"

"Witness—I didn't withdraw; I was expelled.

"Q. Why? A. For refusing to stop trains and damage the railroad property.

"Q. When were you expelled? A. The same night I refused to go on duty. They also went so far as to say that they would give me twenty-four hours to leave the town.

"Q. Were you present when you were expelled? A. No, but officers of the assembly told me the next morning.

"Q. What were you told? A. That I was expelled for gross violation of the laws of the order.

"Q. What was the violation? A. Refusing to obey the officer's demand to stop trains and destroy property.

"Governor Curtin—Do you understand that there is a law of the Knights of Labor to compel a man to disobey the laws of the United States?"

"Witness—No; and I told the Master Workman so. He said he didn't know anything about that, but I had got to do it."

Henry P. Becker, a merchant of De Soto, testified that he had witnessed several acts of violence by Knights of Labor. He himself formerly belonged to the order, and left it in this way:

"Mr. Burnes—Why did you leave the order?"

"Witness—I was expelled because I was told to go on picket. I said I had done all the picketing I meant to do. The Master Workman pressed me, and I said: 'I'll be d—d if I go on picket.' I walked out of the room, and was expelled. After that I received notice that it would be well if my son did not make himself so busy. I went round to my son at once. He is employed in the office at the depot, and I said: 'You do your duty, and if any one interferes with you shoot him. You do this, and I'll stand by you.'"

John French, a blacksmith formerly employed at De Soto, testified that he had belonged to the Knights of Labor up to the 8th of March, when he retired because he could not countenance acts of violence and intimidation. Further evidence to the same effect was ready, but the Committee declined to hear more, one of the members saying: "I hardly see the use of continuing this line of examination. There is no doubt whatever that the Knights of Labor were implicated in these disturbances, and that the Master Workman gave notice that no trains should go out."

Finally, as to the character of the tyranny exercised over the Knights of Labor by the organization, two bits of testimony may be quoted. One is from the examination of Joseph Cramer, who was expelled from the De Soto Assembly for refusing to obey the Master Workman's order to stop trains and damage the railroad property:

"Mr. Stewart—Is it a principle in the order that members shall stop trains and damage property?"

"Witness—I don't know about that, but a man has to obey orders."

The other is from the examination of John

Doyle, formerly a tinner in the Missouri-Pacific shops at St. Louis:

"Mr. Burnes—Why did you go out?"

"Witness—Because I was ordered to.

"Mr. Burnes—Would you have gone out except for the order?"

"Witness—No; I didn't suppose it would do me any good, but when a man belongs to an order, he has to obey it."

This testimony of members of the order presents a complete picture of the Knights of Labor organization as it exists to-day. It is an organization whose authorized representative regards "labor" as meaning only laborers who belong to the organization, and who does "not acknowledge the right of any man, at the time a great conflict is raging between labor and capital" (meaning between Knights of Labor and their former employer), "to step in between and scab" (meaning for an unemployed man not a Knight of Labor to take a vacant place formerly filled by a Knight of Labor). It is an organization in which such an utterly worthless fellow as Martin Irons becomes absolute dictator over 5,000 men, so that they are bound by oath to obey any order he may give. It is an organization in which a Martin Irons possesses and exercises the power to order a strike which affects not only these 5,000 men, but all the industries of half-a-dozen States, because he fancies that a railroad official in one of these States meant "a slight on the order" when he discharged an inefficient workman. It is an organization whose local assemblies have ordered members to stop trains and damage railroad property without being called to account by the governing body, and whose authorized representative justifies such action by saying, when asked to define what he means by doing "everything in human power" to make a strike effective, "I would rather not answer that question." It is an organization which binds the member by oath to obey implicitly any command of anybody who chances to be his superior officer, no matter if that superior officer orders him, suddenly and without reason, to stop work, give up a place with which he is entirely satisfied, and leave his family without means of support, or even to break the law and by force prevent another man from working in his place—any act of disobedience bringing down upon the offender the vengeance of the organization: "*when a man belongs to an order, he has to obey it.*"

#### ONE OF MR. GLADSTONE'S DIFFICULTIES.

A GREAT deal of the trouble which Mr. Gladstone is experiencing with his Irish measures is due to the fact that to most Englishmen the whole Irish question is a complete novelty, and the island a terra incognita. It would probably be found, if the matter could be investigated, that only a very small number of Englishmen, prominent in public life, have ever been in Ireland, or, if they have ever visited that country, have stayed there more than a few days, or have seen more than one small class of the community. The same reasons, too, which keep Englishmen from going to Ireland have always kept them from studying Irish questions, or indeed giving them any attention except under the pressure of some such necessity

as the holding of an Irish office. And then the persistent grumbling of the Irish ever since the Union has produced in most Englishmen the impression which grumbling always produces on people who know little and care nothing about the grumblers—that is, the impression that they are born grumblers and that nothing would satisfy them. A "man with a grievance" is always, even to his friends, a serious bore. After they have heard his story once or twice they cease to care whether it is true or not, and are inclined to believe that it is not true.

Moreover, the Irish, with all their oratorical gifts, are on the whole ill fitted to make a serious impression on English audiences, even if they get a hearing. Their rhetoric is too fervid, just as that of Frenchmen or Italians is, for the cold English temperament. Their exaggerations and flights of fancy excite disgust and distrust in the English mind. So that even if Englishmen had been disposed to listen to them, they would probably not have succeeded in making much impression. To these difficulties we must add what we may call the natural imperviousness of the English mind. As Matthew Arnold says, Englishmen "have become, in a certain sense, of all people the most inaccessible to ideas, and the most impatient of them; inaccessible to them because of their want of familiarity with them, and impatient of them because they have got on so well without them that they despise those who, not having got on so well as themselves, still make a fuss for what they themselves have done so well without."

Now, Mr. Gladstone's announcement fifteen years ago that Irish grievances were real, and could be redressed, and must be redressed, was really a disturbance of English life by the introduction of a new and essentially repulsive idea. His proposal to disestablish the Irish Church and to interfere between landlord and tenant was a new idea, which the English mind apprehended with difficulty and reluctance, and which first gave him the reputation in English clubs and drawing-rooms of being a dangerous man, who concocted strange and startling theories of English duty. His home-rule scheme is, of course, still more alarming and incomprehensible than anything which has gone before. Accordingly when it first appeared it absolutely shocked the middle and upper classes in England. They looked on it as a wild and grotesque concoction of Gladstone's brain, and, besides this, absolutely gratuitous. They had heard of home rule, but they had not considered it, or turned it over, or "taken it in," as the phrase is, or dreamed that anybody of note or consequence was disposed to treat it seriously. They were disgusted with both Gladstone and the Irish for having such an idea, seeing how well Englishmen had got on without it. Nobody in England, they said, felt the need of a Parliament in Dublin; why, then, should the Irish want one, and why should Gladstone propose to give it to them? They pronounced it, therefore, as Mr. Arnold does, in a recent letter to the *London Times*, a "leap in the dark." All novelties in legislation in England are to the English mind "leaps in the dark." Catholic emancipation was one. Lord Eldon