

Equal Rights

Albert Parsons

November 15, 1884

We continually have it harped in our ears that we are free and equal. That every avenue is open alike to all and all can climb to the top. The road to wealth is open alike to all. This is the sophistry the rich are continually giving to the poor to arouse their hopes and make them contented with their down-trodden condition. The doctrine is both false and stupid. There is no fool stupid enough to think everyone can get on top, though he has a perfect right if he can. Everyone knows that by the very nature of things not one in ten can possibly get there, and not one-tenth of that number can stay there after they get there.

What, then, does all this twaddle amount to about everyone having a perfect right to climb to the top of the pile, if it is not intended solely to quiet those underneath, so those on top will enjoy more safety and quiet while standing on them? Suppose some of those underneath concluded to use a little dynamite to blow off their burdens, might it not be possible that some of these ambitious ones on top would then conceive of some safer way to gratify their ambitions without taking a fellow creature for a footstool to climb up with? When every man finds his fellow man an explosive footstool he will stop trying to use him for a footstool to boost himself up with. Gunpowder brought the world some liberty and dynamite will bring the world as much more as it is stronger than gunpowder. No man has a right to boost himself by even treading on another's toes. Dynamite will produce equality.

Every man has a natural ambition and a natural right to climb, but he has no right to climb at another man's expense. Those who haven't sense enough to see any other method of climbing, let them stay on the dead level, there is room enough. The idea that no man can get all the luxuries of this world with-out standing on the necks of other men is too ill-founded to be longer sustained. One man has no right to live on the profits of another man's labor, under any excuse whatever. He who stands on what another man produces, stands on that man. No matter what the pretext, he is standing on him wrongfully. The under man should knock off the burden and not be longer bamboozled with the idea that he should be patient, for perhaps by and by he may be on top. Down with such nonsense! No man has a right to live on another for one single minute, for any reason whatever. Don't be gulled with this stupid *perhaps, pretty soon, by and by* business any longer.

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