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The Great Strike

Its Relations to Labor, Property, and Government

E. H. Heywood

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1878

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The Great Strike: Its Relations to Labor, Property, and Government. Suggested by the Memorable Events which, Originating in the Tyrannous Extortion of Railway Masters, and the Execution of Eleven Labor Reformers, Called "Mollie Maguires," June 21, 1877, Culminated in Burning the Corporation Property, in Pittsburg, July 22, Following; This Essay Carefully Defines the Relative Claims of Work and Wealth, Involved in the Irrepressible Conflict Between Capital and Labor, Which Engages Increasingly the Attention of Thoughtful People the World Over. Reprinted from the Radical Review.

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1878

“payable never, nowhere, and in nothing!” Still, wiser and more honest than goldists, the greenbackers require government to take its own notes in payment of debts due itself, and side with productive enterprise against the insatiable demands of speculative piracy. The usury power, which by coercion and bribery has ruled the States from Boston and New York, as the slave-power ruled them from Charleston and New Orleans, for the first time in our history, is beaten in Congress, and thus ”safely defied touches its downfall.” Growing, irresistible tendencies South and West second the purpose of New England labor reformers *to make, not the stealthy usurpations of capital, but LABOR the basis of value in exchange; to repudiate all so-called debts the principal whereof has been paid in the form of interest; and to abolish all titles to property beyond the cost of improvements.* Rejecting the barbarous measures of our opponents; respecting the inalienable right of all to life, liberty, and justly earned property, be it our task to initiate peaceful methods of evolution which, by stripping capitalists of their legal power to steal, will make the claim of labor to its own respected and irresistible. Beneficent exponents of liberty, justice, and the progressive tendency of things, great in numbers, strong in reason and rectitude, working-people can achieve their emancipation without recourse to any measures of defence repulsive to the best instincts of human nature.

Labor Reformers, that these are unnatural and savage methods of progress; that no amount of violence, *nothing short of the entire abolition of property in land and its kindred resources, and the removal of all restrictions on exchange*, will exterminate the invasive and murderous claim of capital to increase and secure to labor its natural right to opportunity and reciprocity. The “Silver-Bill” which, February 28, 1878, over the President’s veto, became law by 196 to 73 in the House, and 46 to 19 in the Senate, indicates a healthier and more intelligent spirit of growth; no mere effort to debase the currency or cancel just obligations as goldists suppose, it means that *a debt paid once in the form of interest is paid forever!* In all ages and nations conscientious people have felt usury to be fraudulent; but, excepting the “repudiation” measures of Moses, Solon, Lycurgus, and other great statesmen who still live in memorable deeds, no just and practicable method of ending this time-honored, gigantic system of theft was ever devised, or associatively asserted, until January, 1870, by the New England Labor Reform League in Boston. Since then the felt right and duty to refuse to pay debts more than once in the form of interest has been a growing force in Labor Reform. When this righteous conclusion, sustained by enlightened science, natural equity, and the inspired teachings of all Bibles, gets into the heads of average voters and jurymen, there will be no power to compel the continued repayment of debts, and governments must cease to be the sleuth-hounds of usurers. Money Reform implies free, honest banking and the abolition of all power to get pay for loans, stocks, labor, or other values more than once. Inflationists do not accept this view any more than a man drifting into the rapids of Niagara accepts the current which carries him over its fearful brink. Knowing little of the laws of value, of natural liberty, or the rights of property which they ignorantly invade, they would by the 365-inter- convertible-bond swindle, make interest-stealing national law; base currency on that political moonshine, “the faith of the nation,” and issue paper dollars

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The Outlook

In all ages and nations, hitherto, capital has relentlessly destroyed property and taken life to sustain its fraudulent claim to increase; armed with what guaranties of liberty the struggles of centuries have bequeathed us, labor gropes its way to *equality in belligerent rights*. Gowen and Hartranft continue to strangle “Mollie Maguires” on Pennsylvania scaffolds; factory lords in New England crowd their operatives, by successive cut-downs, into helpless destitution; Sharon the successor of Ralston, the suicide banker, absent from the seat in the United States Senate he is paid to fill, buying “the rulers” of California like cattle, forces his vast speculative schemes through the legislature of that state; and “Tom Scott’s money” still commands many votes in Congress. On the other hand, a recognized and fearless leader of the workingmen in San Francisco, Dennis Kearney, deliberately invokes the halter to check the merciless extortions of capital; the torch and the revolver are foreshadowed by ominous movements in the middle and Eastern States; and the passage of the “Silver Bill” is a staggering blow at the heart of Usury from which it will never recover. Sharon, Scott, and their fellow-conspirators against right, die by the hands of their plundered victims, the impartial voice of history will hail their slayers as “Washingtons,” “Nat. Turners,” or “John Browns.” Yet while insurrections cause a shrinkage of value in slave-property, and imperilled the lives of slaveholders, nothing short of the extinction of slave laws put an end to chattel bondage. So now, while it is our imperative duty to recognize Kearney, “Mollie Maguires,” and the Pittsburgh Strikers as lawful belligerents in the fight, let us not forget,

their sin differs only in degree from the applauded “abstinence” of Bridget and John, who ignorantly suppose that the interest and dividends they draw from savings-banks are justly theirs. If cities become ash-heaps; if rail-way, banking, and factory figure-heads are “taken off”; if strikers “pass” claims to dividends and stocks, and administer great enterprises on new bases of usurpation, labor-reform, still seeking liberty, equity, and fraternity, still promoting on earth peace and good-will to all, will continue to demand *repeal*, REPEAL of all legislative devices which enable proprietors, without giving equivalents in service, to take the earnings of those who, by unnatural and usurped authority, are made dependent upon them. By discussion and association; by moral appeal to rulers who still believe not, and to common people, militiamen, and “regular armies,” who hear truth gladly; and by incarnating in present, visible life, the essential right and perfect liberty which help all and hinder none, — we shall do our part of the needed work for human redemption, in which the wisest and best of earth’s people have been privileged to serve.

The irrepressible conflict between labor and capital now and then breaks into an event of such general interest, a movement whereby people are acted upon so imperatively, that all classes sense the approach of forces destined to give law to recognized authorities. Not what is commanded, but what is just; not what is accepted, but what is true; not which side can overpower the other, but which will enact right, refusing to be in conflict with the nature and tendency of things,—these are the questions now confronting us. The late rupture¹ between the railway managers and their employees is called a “strike,” which Worcester defines as “a cessation from work, as of workmen to extort higher wages; a revolt; a mutiny,” and which Webster says is “to quit work in a body, or by combination, in order to compel employers to raise wages.” That is, according to the dictionaries, which in this respect correctly reflect public opinion, and the less intelligent exponents of “law and order,” it is disorderly and revolutionary for working-people to have an opinion about their wages, and act on it associatively. Unmindful of the old maxim, “It takes two to make a bargain,” the dictionaries concede the initiative to capital, the child, and admonish labor, the parent, to recognize its child as the source of right and the natural exponent of liberty and order. So long as it is capital *striking down* wages (irresistibly compelled to do so, let us admit), the action is accepted as orderly and proper. But if, obeying sterner necessities, to procure food and raiment for destitute ones at home (if, indeed, they have a “home”), labor objects to a cut-down, or asks increase of wages, “strike,” “dictation,” “force,” “riot,” “rebellion,”—so many epithets of re-

¹ The substance of this Essay appeared in *The Radical Review*, November, 1877; by the kind permission of its editor and proprietor, Benjamin R. Tucker, New Bedford, Mass., it is here reprinted with additions. Originating in a local event, the Essay announces and defends the ethical principles which, more and more, will inspire resistance to the world-wide warfare of capital on labor. It is high time that working-people knew their rights, and how to make those rights respected.

buke fly about, that impartial observers instinctively look for the source of these plantation manners and morals which have survived the abolition of chattel slavery. The lash is indeed out of fashion,² but ghastly spectres of want, gathering around the laborer's hearthstone, are present means of coercion!

² The *New York Times* favors the re-establishment of whipping-posts, and quotes Henry Bergh, the distinguished opponent of cruelty to animals, as indorsing its barbarous suggestion!

Impending Fate of the Usurpers

While I do not question Mr. Scott's natural right to manage his own affairs, to set the price on his work, and collect it at his own cost, I think he charges high for his services as railway king, not to mention his extra salary and perquisites as United States Senator from Pennsylvania; and it does not seem best for the people to continue to furnish men and military supplies to help him collect his salaries and dividends by keeping nobly useful workers in the un-American vassalage where he, and his fellow-conspirators against liberty and property, now hold them. So far from supplying more money and bayonets to help him "suppress" the "under dog in the fight," in future revivals of equity, which are to come with refreshing frequency, the State, "we other folks," with non-resistant soldiers, proposes to fold its arms and see "things do themselves"! If, in that impending judgment-day, New York, Philadelphia, and Chicago vanish in retributive flames; if, in the impartial future before whose tribunals we must all appear, eulogies are pronounced upon, and monuments are erected to, the Brutus, the Joseph Warren, the John Brown, or the "Mollie Maguire," who steps forward in this conflict to take the life of a Scott, a Garrett, a Vanderbilt, a Gowen, or a Hartranft, it will not be the fault of labor reformers. We neither advise, desire, or seek such conclusions. In continuing to crucify, *on the cross of enforced poverty*, incarnate manifestations of justice, Mr. Scott and his confederates "know not what they do." In pocketing princely revenues, which they have no moral right to claim,

and having five hundred millions of yearly revenues; as he looks towards Pittsburgh, Scranton, Baltimore, Fort Wayne, Louisville, and Chicago, where the baneful seeds of usurpation and usury blossomed in fire and blood, — well may Mr. Scott be impressed with “the magnitude of the evil.” To garrison these cities with troops, as he requests, would only hasten the inevitable doom that awaits them, unless they speedily become centres of honest distribution. Macaulay’s vision of the English metropolis, “when some traveller from New Zealand shall, in the midst of a vast solitude, take his stand on a broken arch of London Bridge to sketch the ruins of Saint Paul’s ”; Charles Sumner’s impression that the streets of Boston and New York are to flow with blood of their “best citizens”; the explosive materials of which city populations are composed; the impressive achievements, the affluence, the refinements, the prestige of art and civilization undergulfed by volcanic wrath, squalor, and destitution; so much in the nature and attitude of authority to repel and infuriate, so little to attract and inspire respect,— from the visible and invisible worlds omens multiply to admonish capitalists that they had better not fling fire-brands too freely into those powder and nitro-glycerine magazines called cities.

Artificial Subjection.

How to create want, how supply can “corner” demand, by legislative or commercial devices, so as to “make” money without earning it by personal service, is the impelling force of much that is called “business,” but which is really, repressive advantage-taking for speculative increase. The fact of labor’s artificial subjection and impoverishment by capital is so apparent to unbiased observers, that argument to show it would be superfluous, did not recognized exponents of thought gravely assert that, whatever there may be in other and older countries, there is no tyranny of capital in America; that laborers in *our* cities and manufacturing districts, who would not be “crowded out of existence by the mere fact of their numbers,” need not, and should not contest the case with capitalists, but should quietly withdraw and “Go West.”¹ It is said that capital exercises no real tyranny, because labor is free to accept or reject the terms offered. But, bound by subtler chains than of old, labor is enslaved and defrauded by conditions and devices which capital creates and administers.

¹ “The causes which tend to diminish abundance, and restrict the rewards of labor, in the Old World, are not the same as exist in the New The efficient remedy, and indeed the only remedy, against pauperism, in an over-crowded country, must be emigration We have as a source of abundance, and a certain barrier against want, the which no nation of Europe possesses; namely an almost unlimited supply of cheap, fertile land.”—*David A. Wells, at the Detroit meeting of the American Social Science Association, 1875.* “It is only by the most violent figure of speech that the workingman can be called a slave, or the capitalist a slave-holder.”—*O. B. Frothingham, in “The Inquirer.”* “The trouble with the strikers in this case is that they have tried to tyrannize over the companies, over their own unemployed fellows, and over the community at large.”—*F. E. Abbot, in “The Index.”*

Through the morally indefensible claim to profits; through the control of land, watercourses, steam, railways, currencies, and governments,—capital, by sheer compulsive power, is master of the situation; can bide its time, and starve labor into submission. What whips, revolvers, and blood-hounds were to chattel bondage, usurped control of raw materials and the means of exchange, whereby want and destitution are produced to order, is to the profit system. Property does not naturally accumulate, but tends to diffusion and decay. Whether a producer or not, every one is a consumer; if he can do nothing useful he is a pauper, unless, through the lucrative devices of usury, rent, profits, or dividends, he has “legal” power to live on other people. If a pampered child of wealth, untrained to service, a young man, with his bundle of soiled clothes on Monday morning, is “poor” in the presence of his washerwoman, who has will, skill, and strength to put them in wearable condition; naturally, she who can render needed service is “rich,” she will have her carriage and servants in livery, and he be her coachman or errand-boy, unless men’s laws discriminate against her and favor him. “Whoso brings not his son up to a trade brings him up to steal” was a Jewish maxim; if you do not serve, or subsist on gifts, you must beg, starve, or steal. An income without work is unnatural, and could not be, did not special laws make the fraud possible. It was said slavery was the natural status of blacks; but when the laws which gave whites State-force to hold their vassals were nullified, negroes became anti-slaves, and masters but as other men. So the poverty of working-people, their dependence on property-holders, is an artificial condition, which liberty will correct. As wind and tide conspire with skilful navigators, so all the forces of nature help creative service.

More sacred in history than Lexington or Yorktown will be the ground where militiamen stacked their arms, refusing to fire on the insurgents! The intelligent feeling and heroic decision of a Non-Resistant Soldier — the most significant figure towering above common men in the new century of American nationality — have carried this case from gory battle-fields to the supreme court of reason. In vain is appeal to “strong governments and standing armies; Europe has those, but the growing forces of the Commune and the International take the field, not to destroy, but to fraternize, and to say to empires, monarchies, and pseudo-republics, with their savage attendants, “Be no more officers of ours!” The strike is suppressed and capital once more victorious; but victorious as Britain was at Bunker Hill, and Brooks over Sumner bleeding in the Senate Chamber. Whether in thoughtful service in their old stations; whether in prison, wandering as forlorn tramps, or at rest in impartial earth, which receives alike rich and poor, of their cause, as Galileo of the world, the strikers can say, “It moves!”

Mr. Scott, whose pen is cordially welcomed in this debate, says, “The conduct of the rioters was entirely inconsistent with the idea that this movement could have been directed by serious, right-minded men, bent on improving the condition of the laboring classes.” True; for the strike, with all its excesses, was the fruit of *his* system, not ours. Probably few, if any, of the trainmen ever attended labor reform conventions or examined attentively their widely-scattered ideas. But, one with light, air, and warmth, truth penetrates all Being, moving the humblest to nobler thought and endeavor. With the labor issues comes also another great problem, the government of cities. As he contemplates the vast interests involved in a railway system controlling four thousand millions of property

fears that the examples of Baltimore and Pittsburg may be repeated by the affiliation of the militia with the strikers where they may be neighbors and friends.”

Lessons of the Strike

Well, the vast usurpation rests on bayonets, and the bayonets are beginning to think! Two grave and startling lessons the strike teaches: 1. That property held to the injury of others thereby becomes contraband in the war of capital on labor, as in other wars; 2. That it is not only the privilege, but the duty, of soldiers to decline to support capital against right.¹

¹ Since the Secession revolt of 1861, when I opposed war, either to abolish slavery or "to save the Union," I have steadily striven to persuade people generally and soldiers especially to refuse to kill others on any pretext whatsoever, knowing that all differences can be settled better by reason than by bloodshed. Several years ago the same idea inspired the International Working People's Association to religiously decline to bear arms against each other, and I rejoice that the militia, in many cases, refused to fire on the people during the great strike. The following facts which "disgust" the *Chicago Times*, highly delight intelligent friends of Progress:—

"From every theatre of outlawry comes the disgusting report that militiamen have either run away from the strikers or shown sympathy in their proceedings. At Reading, the militiamen in uniforms hob-nobbed arm-in-arm with the strikers. Other militiamen deserted their ranks, saying that they had come to Reading to protect property, but not to shoot down their fellow-workingmen. No steps were taken to arrest or punish the deserters." How could they? Another despatch tells us that "Colonel Good, of the 4th regiment (Pennsylvania militia), withdrew his entire command from the city. It is supposed that he anticipated either a revolt among his men, or some desperate work which his soldiers did not wish to participate in." Another: "As I write a large detachment of troops are departing because the men have refused to shoot into the ranks of the workingmen." Another: "The Norristown company have thrown away their arms, which are now in the hands of the strikers, and the militiamen are distributing ammunition among them." Another: "The Westfield company (New York militia), who were so sadly demoralized and put to flight by the strikers, came into Buffalo this morning with about half their muskets." Another: "The adjutant-general (of New York)

The Usurpations of Capital.

The gravest and most fraudulent usurpation of capital is property in land, which begets *rent*,—the heaviest tax on business and labor in this and past ages; *rent*,—not merely a charge for the wear and tear of buildings, which is an incidental item of cost, and justifiable as such,—but *ground rent*, an inexorable, perpetual, insatiable claim for the use of land, which, like air and light, is the gift of nature, impartially bestowed on all, and for the possession or use of which no one can equitably take pay. Ownership in mines, forests, and watercourses for what they will "yield" of the fruits of others' labor is equally indefensible. The next usurpation of capital is credit-monopoly, which sustains *usury*, the upper millstone, between which and the lower millstone, *rent*, productive enterprise is ground into whatever results speculative cunning seeks. Four-fifths of the wages class pay for houses, in rent, many times over, yet never own one; three fourths of the employing class pay for capital many times over, in usury, yet are always in debt. While laborers are fortunate if they get paid for service once, "lucky" capitalists, by controlling the three great sources of power and accumulation,—namely, raw material, currency, and compulsory taxation;—get paid for little actual service largely and many times over, in the form of rent, usury, and other invasive gain, and thereby become "rich,"—the creators of the values which others claim to own remaining "poor." A third usurpation of capital is the asserted right of eminent domain, whereby one or more

go through your farm,¹ garden, or house for personal or corporate gain,—not for public service, the only ground on which such a right can equitably be granted or accepted.² A fourth usurpation of capital is the subjection of woman by means which restrict her natural right to self-government and self-support, thereby making her helpless dependence a special force to depress the condition of all laborers. A fifth usurpation of capital is compulsory taxation, which enables it, irresponsibly, to take property and life directly (the other usurpations named enable capitalists to take property, liberty, and life indirectly), to maintain and perpetuate its tyrannous extortions. Not to enumerate further invasions, capitalists, by denying to laborers their natural right to the free use of raw materials, and to the means of exchange at cost, not only enslave and defraud working-people, but make it absolutely impossible for them to live, except by leave of their unnatural masters. The dictionaries, therefore, are right in defining “strikes” as rebellion against the unjust claim of capitalists to so control raw material and exchange as to secure an income without work. But, in defining strikes as *essentially* mutinous and revolutionary, the dictionaries conspire with capitalists against liberty and the natural rights of working-people to property in the fruits of their labor.³

¹ Your improvements I refer to; the land is not, and never can be yours.

² “The right of eminent domain is a right which a government possesses of taking the property of its subjects *for necessary public uses* at a fair valuation.” *Bouvier*.

“The inherent, sovereign power claimed by the legislature of a State of controlling private property *for public uses*.”—*Burrill*.

³ It is needless to say that strikes, *per se*, are always objectionable; agreement and prosperous co-operation are natural and inevitable in the absence of disturbing elements of intrusion and fraud, which it is for the best interest of all parties to eliminate. Personal conflicts may come of trivial causes, but a great, general revolt, like the railway strike, could not have occurred except by the violation of rights and interests common to all. To say it was caused by “agitators,” “communists,” or “doctrinaires,” is about as

to the ruling political and financial magnates, whom he conspires with against labor and property, but no longer waste his eloquence on poverty-stricken strikers.

tions robbery. What he stigmatizes as “Communist repudiation” at the West is the death-struggle of farmers with Usury.² These are the men who, innocently accepting the “go-west” philosophy, are now fighting, not merely for the money they carried with them, but for improvements of the land, which present “laws” enable railway and usury extortionists to take from their rightful owners. Mr. Grosvenor rightly denounces communism, but he launches his adjectives at the wrong men. Truly, as he says, “The Communist is here!” You will find him under the hat of Astor; of Vanderbilt, Scott, Garrett; of every man who accepts gain through compulsive methods. The irresponsible control and distribution of property is the object of our banking system, our railway system, our telegraph system,³ our land-tenure system, our civil-service system, the political party systems, and our whole compulsory taxation system. Compulsory money; compulsory schools; compulsory revenues; compulsory military service, not a law on local or National statute books that would stand a day, were not bayonets behind it! If Mr. Grosvenor seeks “Communists,” let him turn

² The farmer builds better than he knows, for there is no debt where the principal has been paid once in the form of interest. This kind of “repudiation” Moses calls “The Lord’s Release.” (Deut. xv. 1, 2.) It was an assertion of the right of labor to its own which made the administrations of Solon and Lycurgus memorable in history and respected by all intelligent believers in natural equity. (See Plutarch’s Lives.)

³ One night in August, 1877, William Orton, Henry N. Smith, and Jay Gould met Mr. Vanderbilt in his Saratoga parlors, and consolidated the Western Union and Atlantic and Pacific Telegraph companies, divided among themselves and friends seven millions of stock, and agreed to raise the rates throughout the nation. By this quiet transaction an increased tax of millions annually is levied on the American people; yet this munificent raid on labor and business is unnoticed by those fierce denouncers of trades-unionists who think that the hand of one poor man should not be used by speculative robbers to snatch bread from the destitute family of another! In the “dark ages” the robber barons, from their castle caves in the mountains, swept down on the passing trade and industry of the Free Cities. The more lucrative piracies of to-day give the robbers metro-politan residences and imperial revenues by legislative sanction!

sensible as to say that the weather clerk produces storms, or that geologists are responsible for earthquakes.

Capital, Robbery.

In disclosing the invasive extortion implied in the very idea of capital *as authoritatively defined*, I indirectly assert the right of private property. Except by free gift, it is impossible for one to gain a dollar without work, unless another loses a dollar that rightfully belongs to her or him.¹ Between labor, the parent, and property, its child, there is no conflict; an artificial creation, naturally and inevitably perishable, property requires constant repair, the constant aid of labor to continue its existence. Fire, frost, rain, rust, the natural enemies of property,—not to mention thieves,—assail and destroy it, unless labor stands by to defend and preserve it. When, therefore, it ignores its perishable tendency, declines to recognize its natural dependence, presumes to dictate, and demands increase as tribute, property becomes capital,—that is, it becomes robbery. As authoritatively defined, capital is wealth employed in reproduction for the sake of usury.² But the claim of capital to increase is against Na-

¹ “For one very rich man there must be at least five hundred poor, and the affluence of the few supposes the indigence of the many.”—*Smith’s “Wealth of Nations,”* vol. iii. p. 73.

² “Capital is that portion of wealth applied to reproduction which secures a compensation to its owner. If he uses any part of his wealth without multiplying it, it remains wealth, but is not capital. . . . In so far as property does not remunerate its owner, it ceases to be capital.”—*Walker’s “Science of Wealth,”* pp. 58, 59.

Senior, Mill, and others, tersely defined capital as “abstinence;” that is to say, property is preserved not for its own utility, for future use, consumption, but to enable you to plunder others! On the same ground the keepers of “Charley Ross,” the abducted child, who, declining to produce him and take the offered ransom, hold him for a “rise,” should be applauded for their “abstinence”!

Compulsory Distribution of Property

Mr. Grosvenor, in his very able article referred to above, falls into a prevailing mistake that labor reform, or what he calls “communism,” is of foreign origin. It is really only a new assertion of the ideas of self-rule and self-support which Jefferson put into the Declaration of 1776; which suggested the doctrines of “Cost the limit of Price” and “Individual Sovereignty” proclaimed by Josiah Warren from New Harmony, Indiana, in 1830; which inspired Adam Smith’s *Wealth of Nations* a hundred years ago; which Proudhon announced from Paris in 1840; and which appear in the last utterance of John Stuart Mill.¹ Mr. Grosvenor is also mistaken in supposing that labor reform assails the rights of property. If he agrees with Henry Clay, who, in defending chattel slavery, said, “What statute law defines as property, is property,” he is right. But if he accepts the essential principles of political economy, which truly affirm service to be the source and basis of wealth, he is wrong. “Hatred of the rights of property has made insidious war upon it through the forms of law,” he says; certainly. Every law which enables one to get pay for a debt more than once, in the form of interest; for buildings or other improvements more than once, in the form of rent; for railway, factory, or other stock more than once, in the form of dividends, invades property and sanc-

¹ The social problem of the future is how to unite the greatest individual liberty of action with the common ownership in the raw materials of the globe, and an equal participation in the benefits of combined labor.” — *Autobiography*, p. 232.

the pay in money should be proportionately less. If there were no privileges to be protected, the necessities for political government would go on gradually diminishing, and the social autonomy of the people would gradually establish itself outside of the government . ‘The best government is the government which governs least.’ The public treasury ought to be kept, at all times, nearly empty, so that knaves and adventurers may not be tempted to thrust their fingers into it. The people should be rich, and the government should be very poor. The Triumph of the International would throw an effectual wet blanket on the existing lust for public positions, and would cause a return to productive pursuits, and to day’s wages, of many very brilliant, but now worse than useless, members of society.”¹

These extracts also indicate the faith and drift of the labor reform movement. Eight and ten hour laws, tariff intrusions, Granger restrictions, “co-operative” war on “middle-men,” the Greenback delusion, government workshops, State and National labor bureaus, these, though well-meant protests against present injustice, are suggestions of those who either do not discern clearly the spirit and scope of labor reform, or have not succeeded in making themselves understood.

¹ “International Address,” pp . 15-18 . This “Address,” with an introduction containing a graphic sketch of the history and purposes of The International Working-People’s Association is sent, post-paid, on receipt of price, 15 cents, by the Co-operative Publishing Company, Princeton, Mass.

ture and Equity: it is against Nature, because there is no real increase of value except through labor, but, on the contrary, inevitable decay and loss; it is against Equity, because, if the labor of others protects his property from decay and thieves, the proprietor should pay for that service instead of presuming to ask rent, usury or dividends, where nothing morally is due. For his actual personal service in reproduction, the proprietor should be paid; he should be paid also for the wear and tear of his property, less the cost of defending it, when unemployed, against decay and theft. If he takes profit he is a robber. The claim of capital to increase denies the right of private property; for whatever gain the non-working proprietor takes is the fruit of others’ labor, for which he returns no equivalent. Hence, in behalf of property, as well as of labor, I demand the abolition of capital. Between capital and labor there can be no truce and no compromise; the conflict is as inevitable and irrepressible as between Northern liberty and Southern slavery.³ Strikes are inevitable, liberty is assailed, and business prosperity, in a large, healthful, and permanent sense, is impossible, until the claim of capital to increase is utterly exterminated. In a letter on the strike, printed in the *Boston Sunday Herald*, September 16, 1877, Wendell Phillips said: “Labor and capital must make peace;” that is, you must acquiesce in the claim of

³ Before I had carefully studied the property question, George L. Stearns, a prominent anti-slavery merchant of Boston, one of the founders of *The Commonwealth*, and a heavy contributor to the large fund which made the existence of the New York *Nation* possible, startled me by remarking: “There is nothing more to be said for capital than for slavery.” Josiah Quincy, Sen., sensed the invasive and felonious nature of capital in saying: “When wealth comes into power, the spirit of liberty never fails to go out.” Intelligent readers will see that the natural laws of value and exchange condemn speculative increase, some political economists to the contrary notwithstanding. It can be easily shown—but to go farther into that field is not within the purpose of this essay—that Labor Reform is simply an anti-theft movement; all it asks is that people have intelligence enough to know what stealing is, and character enough to keep their hands off of other people’s property.

the highwayman to your wallet and “make peace” by conceding his perpetual *right* to plunder you! When capital surrenders its felonious claim to increase, there will be peace between it and labor, but never before. Mr. Phillips also said, “The law is to be obeyed and enforced in any event, at any cost.” Did he say so when he stood in the “Old South Church,” to applaud the *Tea-spillers* who broke law and destroyed property? Did he say so when Anthony Burns, *in obedience to law*, was taken out of Boston by slave-hunters? Did he say so when John Brown, *in obedience to law*, was hung? Certainly not; but why? Because he understood those questions but does not yet understand this labor question. If, as Daniel Webster said, “The office of government is to protect persons and property from invasion,” capitalists who take increase are indictable for theft. Capital, considered as property to be consumed, or loaned, the owner paying the cost of preserving it, rests on defensible ground; but since the claim to increase invades liberty and the right of private property, when wealth becomes capital it ceases to have rights which labor is bound to respect.

ambition; and the subjection of the laborer comes incidentally only, and ‘without observation.’ The servitude of the working-class is of indirect, but efficacious, LEGAL origin; the emancipation of the working-class must come, therefore, — the nature of the State being what it now is, — from political action, resulting, not in the making of new laws, — for very few new laws, perhaps none, are called for, but in the repeal of all existing laws that breed, and hatch out, privileges. It is for this reason that the achievement of political supremacy by the working-class has become a DUTY.”

“The members of the International are no office-seekers. They are confident that, with the abolition of privileges, nine-tenths of the existing political offices, since they are constituted as privileges, and with a view to the protection of privileges, will also be abolished. The abolition of privileges would also abolish the necessity for ninety-nine one-hundredths of the current legislation. Many members of the International maintain that office-holders should no longer be paid, as they are now, fancy salaries, but that they should be paid, like other workingmen, simple workingmen’s wages. This plan succeeded well in the Commune of Paris during the siege, and provided a superior class of public functionaries; better men, and more competent men, taken directly from the working class, were hired by the Commune at a dollar and a half per day than had been hired by the old governments at five times those wages. If special honor is attached to any position, that honor should be counted as a part of the wages, and

the workingman has been, and is, brought into 'subjection' to capital. That subjection is therefore arbitrary, artificial, and not natural: it is contrary to the normal order of things. It is impossible to organize a privilege in favor of the workingman, as such; for, as soon as a workingman is privileged, he is a member of the favored classes, and must exercise his privilege, if at all, to the detriment of working-people. The International Association, in its inaugural address of 1864, defines its position as follows: Land lords and money lords will always make use of their political privileges to defend their economic privileges. Instead of helping on the emancipation of labor, they will continue to clog it with all possible obstacles. *The achievement of political supremacy has, therefore, become THE FIRST DUTY of the working class.*"

"Economic laws creating privileges are usually enacted at the instance of persons intent upon private interest, and for temporary purposes, without foresight of the permanent privileges which those laws create. For example, the banking laws were passed in the interest of the stockholders and officers of the banks, without any special intention, or even thought, of bothering the working-people in their indirect exchanges of labor for labor. The giving away of the public lands was, and is, for the purpose of enriching the persons who received them and are receiving them, not for the purpose of leaving future generations of working-men without homes. The immediate purpose is to cheat and rob the people, not to enslave them. The whole thing is one of short-sighted avarice, rather than of concerted

Competition beneficent.

Since labor is the source of wealth and creates all values equitably vendible, it is the natural basis of ownership and exchange. "What one digs out of the earth with his own hands is his against the world," said Calhoun; but if he offers the product of his digging for sale, he can equitably charge only for the labor required to produce it. It being his natural right to set the price on the product of his own labor, and he being the court of ultimate appeal as to whether he will hold or sell it, the only government needed to "regulate" him, when disposed to charge too much for his commodity, is, first, a correct idea of what is the just and honest price according to the principles of natural equity, and, second, the competitive presence of other workers offering their goods in the same free, open market. The "survival of the fittest" is beneficently inevitable; the capitalist is powerless against labor, unless the State, "we other folks," steps in, and helps him to catch and fleece his victims. The old plea of despotism, that liberty is unsafe, reappears now in the mistaken notion that competition is hostile to labor. That statesmen rely more on the "cohesive power of public plunder" than on knowledge of and faith in right; that moralists hold antagonism necessary; that philosophers say, "Peace is the dream of enthusiasts, but war is the natural condition of mankind," show even in thoughtful people, brain and heart benighted with superstition and distrust. "Protective" tariffs, coercive statutes to reduce the hours of labor, government currencies, "co-operative" efforts to cast out imaginary devils called "middle-men,"—all phases of collective intrusion indicate how little their movers know of natural liberty, or of the driving

forces of industrial enterprise. Co-operation, as usually taught, aims not to share costs, risks, losses, but is an effort to divide profits among a larger number of thieves. Whoso ventures to produce a better thing at a less cost than another, is a benefactor to that other and to society; he increases the stock of useful commodities and lightens the burden of labor to that extent. New machines are new saviors. While a single want is unsupplied, “over-production” is relative only, not real. The claim of capital to increase, and the systematic invasion and robbery it instigates, are the devils to be cast out. Competition, the impulse to improvement, growth, is an angel of mercy, the creative spirit promoting plenty, concord, peace.

“Many members of the International are of the opinion that, if strict justice were once established in the world, the tables would be turned, and that some persons who are now dispensing charity to the poor, would be receiving charity at the hands of the working-people.

“‘The subjugation of the working-man to capital’ is not an ultimate fact: there are grounds and reasons for that ‘subjugation’. Those grounds and reasons are to be found in positive and arbitrary legislation which creates privileges. Protective-tariff laws enhance the price of products, and so carry diminished consumption, and consequent privation, into every poor household in the land; they moreover strengthen and confirm the control of the labor market by capital. Arbitrary privileges granted to chartered corporations translate themselves into outrages upon wage-laborers. Restrictions upon the use of a circulating medium based on products, — whether those restrictions are in the form of swindling banking-laws, or of laws (such as those borne on the Massachusetts statute-book) prohibiting the circulation of bills of exchange, due-bills, checks and drafts, and the like, as currency, — deprive the workingman of natural and just rights, and put him at disadvantage. It is not necessary to speak of railroad monopolies, of the giving away of public lands to speculators, and of a thousand kindred iniquities. All laws creating privileges, tend, and work, to defraud the workingman of his fair wages; and it is by the operation of tyrannical and wicked positive laws, and not, as is sometimes calumniously affirmed, by the improvidence of the laborer, that

Purposes of “Communists.”

The chief foe of “law and order” now seems to be what is termed the “Communist.” Years ago it was the “Doctrinaire,” a scholarly agitator who, in 1815, represented a class of politicians seeking to establish in France a Constitution resembling that of England; “a philosophical party regarded by their opponents as theorists.” So the “Communist,” when stripped of the blood-red outfit, the daggers and revolvers with which imaginative capitalists clothe him, is a mild-eyed thinker, foolish enough to suppose people should be permitted to mind their own business. That king of terrors, the Paris Commune, simply proposed local self-government of cities and towns, like what we have in New England, instead of military centralization which now, under the so-called “Republic,” as formerly under the empire, prevails in France. The forcible redistribution of property and indiscriminate slaughter of capitalists are “communistic” measures which exist only in the fertile imaginations of affrighted knights of the quill. The “bloody International” is the coming peace party of the world. Those who think it worth while to read about and understand the purposes of this rising power will find them concisely set forth in the address of the French Section of Boston in 1873, or in the more recent manifestoes of the Italian sections in Europe. Favoring that kind of government which “governs least,” they propose to relieve labor and business of the crushing burdens with which the intrusive laws of capitalists now encumber them. To indicate something of the ideas and purposes of “incendiary” Communists and “bloody” Internationalists, I give a few extracts from the above-mentioned “Address”:—

Property in Raw Materials fraudulent.

“The best manure for land is the foot of the owner,” said Dr. Franklin; property inheres not *in* raw materials, but in the improvements made *upon* them. The work done,—sharpening a stake, building a city, turning a furrow, opening a mine,—the expenditure of life upon raw materials, measures the extent to which they can be justly held or exchanged as property.¹ Since raw materials are not the product of human effort, they cannot equitably be held for gain, either through rent for their use, or price in sale; and since it is the natural right of every one to do her or his best, at her or his own cost, all monopoly of the means of exchange, of trade, currency, banking, travel, or transportation, is invasive and immoral. Hence, all accumulation of property from others’ earnings, through pretended ownership of raw materials or monopoly of the means of exchange, is extortion by invasive methods from its rightful owners, the la-

¹ “Since the essential principle on which private property is based is to assure to all persons what they have produced by their labor, it cannot apply to what is *not labor product*, the raw material of the earth.”—*John Stuart Mill*.

“Cost is an equitable, and the only equitable, principle for the government of prices in the pecuniary commerce of mankind.”—Josiah Warren, “True Civilization,” p. 99.

“Equal quantities of labor, at all times and places, may be said to be of equal value to the laborer. In his ordinary state of health, strength, and spirits,—he must always lay down the same portion of his ease, his liberty and his happiness. . . . Labor alone, therefore, never varying in its own value, is alone the ultimate and real standard by which the value of all commodities can, at all times and places, be estimated and compared. It is their real price; money is their nominal price only.”—*Smith’s “Wealth of Nations,”* vol. i. p. 33.

borers who produced it. And since it is a conceded principle of statute and the Common Law, as it is a self-evident truth in natural equity, that stolen property may be reclaimed by its rightful owners, no matter in whose hands it may be found, unless the holder can show that he or she gave a just equivalent for it in open market (there can be no truly free market while property in raw materials and monopoly of the means of exchange exist), the producers of value may justly take possession of what they alone can furnish a labor title to. All exchange is properly taken to be equitable in the absence of evidence to the contrary,² as a person charged with crime is justly regarded as innocent until proved guilty. Whenever proprietors can be shown to have appropriated the earnings of others without rendering an equivalent in service for it, their claim to such property is morally void. And if it can be shown that property is held to the injury of others, by the laws of nations, as well as of Nature, such property then and there becomes *contraband*, and may rightfully be taken possession of, or destroyed, as the aggrieved party may think best. Moreover, since land and other raw materials are as necessary to life as are air and light, and since they take life who take the means of living, all proprietors who hold raw materials for gain otherwise than by personal labor upon them, destroy life to the extent that they thereby deprive others of these natural and indispensable means of living.³ The existing system of ownership, founded, as it is, on the

² “Three distinct species of property are known to the Common Law of England: viz., 1, goods and chattels of all sorts; 2, money; 3, claims or liabilities, such as a debt called a *chose in action*. A thief cannot legally sell stolen goods to another except in open market. With respect of money, if the owner finds it in the hands of the thief, he may recover it. But any one who has taken it in the way of trade from the thief may hold it against the original owner; that is as Lord Mansfield said, money cannot be recovered after it has been paid away in currency.”—Macleod’s “Theory and Practice of Banking,” pp. 82, 83.

³ William B. Astor once said to Edward Everett: “I am reputed to own millions of wealth, yet all I get out of it is my keeping—my board, clothes,

posed to advancing tendencies. To expect, respect, and encourage growth is the beginning of social wisdom. The Republican party of Ohio, in a recent election, partly to win votes, but probably as the best suggestion it could make, proposed as a remedy government control of railroads. That is, they proposed to cure an evil by increasing it! Mr. Scott, in the venerable pages of the *North American Review*, calls for more soldiers; the modest purpose of his literary effort is, in the words of the *New York Sun*, to induce “the American people to raise a standing army of fifty thousand men, and maintain it at an annual expense of fifty million dollars, in order to enable him, with greater security, to reduce the wages of his employees”! The *Evening Post* and the *Nation* pray for a “strong government,” whatever that may be. Mr. Grosvenor, quoted above, expects social concord when those leisurely citizens who are forbidden, by lack of a job, to “go gaily to their work,” with “thousands of little tin pails glistening in the morning sunlight,” shall be good and wise enough to “Go West.” But probably the new order of things, steadily approaching, has a mind of its own, namely, that we all may as well condescend to be governed by the laws of Nature until we can make better.

The New Order.

The new order of things, which labor reform heralds and the strike hastens, will prove every way beneficent, if people's minds are large and well-informed enough to receive it. In this respect nothing could be more encouraging than the general revival of thought on the labor question which the strike promoted.¹ The growing impression that, if something is not done, "something will do itself," in a way not altogether satisfactory to established interests, indicates commendable deference to the progressive tendency of things. Lord Brougham said the English government survives because it knows when to bend; according to Daniel Webster, the right of revolution always exists; and Dr. Arnold of Rugby saw that nothing is so convulsive as the strain to keep things where they are when op-

¹ "A worse danger to our institutions than Mississippi or South Carolina could show now stares us in the face, and can no longer be laughed at or ignored. The whole labor question now demands, as never before, the consideration of our wisest men."—*Boston Herald*.

"The scene in Pittsburgh on Saturday night and Sunday was altogether too strong a reminder of Paris under the Commune to be agreeable."—*Boston Advertiser*.

"The magnitude of the evil to be met and dealt with can hardly be overstated."—*Thomas A. Scott, in "North American Review."*

"By the light of flames at Pittsburgh we may see approaching a terrible trial for free institutions in this country. The Communist is here. In other lands he has forced property to prefer despotism to spoliation, and intelligent labor to prefer despotism to anarchy. This enemy touches the railway system, and, as if by magic, two hundred thousand miles of rails, which bear the commerce of a continent, are useless; two hundred millions of property are deprived of present value, and a half-million of workmen are thrown out of employ."—*Wm. M. Grosvenor, in "International Review."*

supposed right to hold raw materials for gain, and otherwise to secure an income without work, is destitute of a defensible moral basis, and aggressively invades the liberty, property, and lives of useful people; hence all intelligent friends of *natural* law and order will conspire to overthrow it.⁴

and washing." True; but in claiming to own the vast estate which, mainly through rent, was accumulated from the earnings of others, for which he returned no just equivalent, he kept thousands of his fellow-beings in destitute dependence, who otherwise would have availed themselves of natural resources and exchange to obtain comfort and competence.

⁴ The newspapers have fallen into line to defend the railway companies, who thus have brought all the great guns of public opinion to bear on the side of the fight, so the strikers have got the worst of it before the community. We have been so handled that if a workingman stands out to speak his mind, the public have theirs so full of pictures of him and his doings in the illustrated papers, that he is listened to as if he was a convicted rough pleading in mitigation of penalty, instead of an honest and sincere man asking for a fair show. . . . The man able and willing to work, and for whom there is work to do, is entitled to wages sufficient to provide him with enough food, shelter and clothing to sustain and preserve his health and strength. The employer has no right to speculate on starvation when he reduces wages below a living figure, saying, if we refuse that remuneration, there are plenty of starving men out of work that will gladly accept half a loaf instead of no bread.

To regard the laboring class in this manner is to consider them as the captain of a slave-ship regards his cargo, who throws overboard those unable to stand their sufferings. Let those who knew the South before the war go now among the mining districts of Pennsylvania, and compare the home of the white laborer with the quarters of the slave; let them compare the fruits of freedom with the produce of slavery!

"But we know the question is a difficult one to settle—we do not want to force it on with threats. The late strike was not intended to break out as it did; things broke loose and took a direction we regretted. We find ourselves answerable for results we had no share in or control over. Nevertheless we accept the event as a symptom of the disorder that is consuming our body, and pray the country to look to it—it is not a passing complaint."—*A Striker in "N. A. Review,"* Sept.-Oct., 1877.

Labor insurgent.

In the light of essential principles of natural equity, which I have briefly stated, let us now glance at the salient points of the great railway strike. Breaking out on the Baltimore and Ohio, at Martinsburg, West Virginia, July 16, 1877, it flashed West, North, and East, until, within one week, one hundred thousand men were insurgent, four thousand millions of property imperilled, and business, far and near, shuddered at impending disaster. Of the origin, progress, and suppression of this electric uprising,—its contagious unity, its aggressive purpose, its desolating incidents of burning and bloodshed,—the reader is already informed. Its remote cause lurks in the political, financial, commercial, and social usurpations of capital which I have briefly sketched, and which everywhere make working-people, creators of wealth, poor, and successful manipulators of others' earnings rich. Intelligent and careful study of the rights of property involved in the strike shows that the great bulk of wealth held by the managers of "trunk lines" does not morally belong to them. It also shows that this wealth is held, mainly, to enrich its "legal" owners, regardless of the injury which they deem it "necessary" to inflict on labor and business. I pass, as incidental, stock-watering,¹ bribery of Legislatures and Congress, and other "necessary" frauds which railway magnates practise to

¹ "Starting with an inflation of fifty millions by the New York Central and Hudson by Vanderbilt, the tidal wave of Vanderbilt railroad inflation flowed westward on the roads to Chicago and onward. The distance from New York to Chicago is 982 miles. The various companies forming the line from Buffalo to Toledo had previously gone through various stages of inflation, besides in all cases paying large dividends in cash. Two companies from Buffalo to Erie were consolidated by Vanderbilt in 1867, increasing their capi-

of asserting Natural Right. When William of Orange was told that certain of his critics sought to be martyrs, he replied: "Tell them they shall not have a chance in my reign." The consummate statesmanship of Abraham Lincoln is apparent in nothing more than in his steady refusal to employ retaliatory measures or punish enemies. To the chastening influence of his humane thought and to the clear-seeing, firm philanthropy of Charles Sumner, it is largely due that the annals of the Union are so free from vindictive bloodshed in its treatment of insurgents. What have labor reformers done that they should be hung to order by the dozen, when slaveholders, who shed a deluge of blood, and sanctioned the sickening cruelties of Libby Prison and Andersonville, go free! That Governor Hartranft and the railway kings could have permitted, much less incited, the judicial massacre of June 21; that President de facto Hayes and his political and financial advisers can think the trainmen's revolt is "suppressed" by the measures which they have employed, or now propose,—indicates a dearth of statesmanship in the seats of power, and the prevalence of utter ignorance of the labor question and of working-people among those who now presume to govern.

of life with a ferocity which shocked the civilized world, re-enforced the miner's cause with the disinterested moral feeling of all observers, and kindled in working-people everywhere a prophetic sense of fiery retribution to come. After the executions of June 21, which, as a barbarous exercise of power, are without a parallel in the judicial annals of modern history, newspapers said that the order to which these men belonged was "practically dead;" in the flaming lesson of Pittsburgh on July 22, editorial seers can ponder their vaticinations, and capitalists study the tendency of their vindictive policies. I recall the dark deed here not so much to note the fact that capital, not labor was the invasively responsible actor in this atrocious savagery, as to remind capitalists and other injudicious exponents of *de facto* "law and order" that they are the last persons who can afford to send these grave issues from conscientious tribunals of reason in the realm of mind down to the fierce arbitrament of passionate physical force.⁴ Government is never so weak as when it makes martyrs of opponents, and never so wicked as when, itself the usurper, it kills those "guilty"

of the Reading Railroad. He saw the necessity of doing something, and did something. He employed the detectives, and has taken an active part in the prosecution of the murderers at the risk of his own life. . . . Of course it cannot be told what vengeance the unhung Molly Maguires may yet take for the death of their comrades yesterday, but, when the ropes were placed about the necks of the eleven murderers, the Order to which they belonged was practically dead. So ends the only thoroughly organized attempt to reproduce on American soil the barbarities of the English trades-unions."

⁴ A clear-headed Englishman, at cool distance, calmly watching the progress of events here, says: "Those who produce can destroy. The match-box is in every house! The welfare and lives of the wives and children of the Workers must naturally and righteously be more sacred to them than the property of the usurers. If the existence of huge quantities of food and goods which the Producers have made is used as an excuse for depriving them and their dearest ones of food and clothing, then 'property will be in danger,' and who will be to blame? If strikers are 'ruffians,' it is you who make the ruffians, ye usurers, and it is well that you should not always escape from the consequences."—*W. Freeland, Editor of "The Socialist," 52 Scotland Street, Sheffield, England.*

gain power and property.² I say *incidental*, because, gigantic as these frauds are, they still are trivial when compared with the enormous tribute which labor and business now pay, the stupendous piracy now accepted as legitimate, in the form of dividends on stock. On this claim to perpetual dividends, to fraudulent increase, the tug of war is to come.³

tal from \$2,800,000 to \$5,000,000. In the subsequent consolidation to Chicago, one million was added to this. The road from Erie to Cleveland had, in the previous six years, divided 120 per cent. in stock, 33 per cent. in bonds, and 79 per cent. in cash. Costing less than \$5,000,000, it was now consolidated at \$12,000,000. Vanderbilt got control of the road from Cleveland to Toledo in 1866, and then made a scrip dividend of 25 per cent. on \$5,000,000. The roads from Erie to Cleveland, and from Cleveland to Toledo, were consolidated in 1867, on a basis of \$22,000,000 capital. In 1869 the work of consolidation from Buffalo to Chicago was completed, on a basis of \$57,000,000, which, in 1871, was increased to \$62,000,000, with further privilege of increase to \$73,000,000. The Vanderbilt line from Buffalo to Chicago unquestionably represented at least \$20,000,000 of fictitious capital, on which he is collecting dividends by taxing the people and oppressing workmen."—*Cincinnati Gazette.*

² Jay Gould once said under oath: "I needed the Legislatures of four States; and in order to acquire them, I created the Legislatures with my money. I found that this is the cheapest way." Naturally Mr. Gould now says: "We shall shortly find ourselves living under a monarchy. I would give a million dollars to see General Grant back in the White House."

³ It is remarkable that neither party in this tremendous conflict sees the real issue. Voicing the claim of capitalists to increase, the New York Sun, August 11, 1877, said: "Railroad directors and managers are trustees strictly. It should be felony for them to make a profit out of their trusts beyond their salaries and the dividends on their stock. . . . Every dollar that the road-bed and locomotives of a railroad can possibly earn belongs to the stockholders." When *The Sun*, which claims to "shine for all", sees for itself clearly enough to realize that one who, through dividends, gets pay for stock more than once *is a robber*, the distinguished editor of that influential newspaper will begin to comprehend the situation, and be better prepared to teach his half million daily readers. Working-people, on the contrary, seem to suppose that the question is one of what they can live on, not what is due them. Not yet awake to the fact that capital, not labor, has written, and still writes, most of the books on political economy, they accept the atrocious doctrine of Ricardo, that "the natural price of labor is that price which is necessary to enable the laborers, one with another, to subsist, and to perpetuate their race without either increase or diminution." When the factory operatives of Fall

Of the immediate cause of the strike the *Baltimore American*, of July 26, 1877, said:

“If this striking down of salaries to a point below the requirements of life has been for the purpose of continuing to pay eight or ten per cent. dividends, then the railroads have committed a great wrong, which should be remedied at the earliest practicable moment. They have, in that case, taken advantage of the necessities of their employees, and driven them into open resistance to what they conceive to be both tyranny and oppression. They may complain of the men combining for mutual protection, but are there not evidences in this strike that the railroads had also formed a combination against the men? On the 15th of July all the five trunk lines ordered a reduction of the wages of their firemen to the extent of ten per cent. That this simultaneous act was the result of a combination will scarcely be disputed. If, therefore, the officials of different railroads have the right to combine to force down wages, no one can dispute the right of the men to combine to prevent their reduction. But in so doing they must commit no unlawful act, infringing private rights.”

By the statements of the officers of the Baltimore and Ohio, its net earnings in 1876 were nearly four and a half millions,

River and New Bedford protested against reduction of wages because their families were suffering, their masters replied: “This is a matter of business, not charity; we run for profit.” True; but business for speculative profit is robbery, and the question is what is justly due, not what operatives “need.” The cool arrogance with which factory lords crowd their operatives into distress and misery to secure dividends, clutch what they can take, and make “laws” to sanction the claim, suggests stirring times in this quarter when the people seriously ask what is due them, not merely what they can live on.

rashly, staking what there was of this world to them in defence of the natural right of coal-miners to live by their labor. They were members of the “Ancient Order of Hibernians,” in the preamble to whose Constitution are these lines:—

“Brethren, the Supreme Being has implanted in our nature tender sympathies and most humane feelings towards our fellow-creatures in distress, and all the happiness that human nature is capable of enjoying must flow and terminate in the love of God and our fellow-creatures.”

By means usual in defensive warfare, these men, known in slang phrase as “Mollie Maguires,” did their best to resist the merciless extortions by which land lords and rail lords amass wealth from the mines of the “Keystone State,”² which are a free gift of Nature, first to those who descend into their dark and dangerous caverns to work them, and, next, to consumers of coal who give an honest equivalent for the labor of producing it. Arrested, tried, and convicted on evidence which would not be taken in any court against men of wealth or position,—evidence which was called for by their leading oppressors, and furnished to order by an “Agency” which, for money, works up “cases” of this kind,³—these eleven manual laborers, “all dying like men,” “all protesting their innocence,” were put out

² Ex-Senator Cameron is said to have bought, forty years ago, a spur of Broad Mountain, Pennsylvania, for one hundred dollars, which has since been rated as “worth” one million dollars, and to have “made” out of it, at times, one hundred dollars per day!

³ The *Boston Herald*, a bitter enemy of these martyrs to labor reform, said: “A little while before, a man had been quietly set to work, to whose bravery, coolness, and faithful service the final triumph of justice is chiefly due. This was James McParlan, a young detective connected with the Pinkerton agency of Chicago. He joined the Order, and became intimate with its members, plans, methods, and secrets generally. . . . The man whose courage and persistence and brains have done most for the unravelling of this mystery, the punishment of the guilty, and the protection of peaceful citizens, should not be forgotten. This man is Mr. Franklin B. Gowen, the president

The Mollie Maguires.

“Whom the gods would destroy, they first make mad,” often proves true of the deluded exponents of arbitrary power. Without interrogating that mysterious force, the Logic of Events, or presuming to divine the purpose of invisible Intelligence or Intelligences, it is apparent that life-taking repression inflames the very spirit which it aims to quench. When capital slew all that was mortal of the hero of Harper’s Ferry, a New England poet¹ wrote:—

“Not any spot six feet by two
Will hold a man like thee;
John Brown will tramp the shaking earth
From Blue Ridge to the sea,
Till the strong angel come at last,
And ope each dungeon door,
And God’s Great Charter holds and waves
O’er all his humble poor.”

How that slain laborer’s Purpose led the stormy strife, “marching on,” till the nation and the world rang with the hallelujahs of negro emancipation, history tells. One month before the great event in Pittsburgh, which gives nerve and purpose to the growing thought of toiling millions, Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Reading Railroad, and John F. Hartranft, Governor of Pennsylvania, strangled on a capitalists’ scaffold eleven labor reformers, guilty of resolutely, perhaps

¹ Rev. Edmund H. Sears, in *The Monthly Religious Magazine*, December, 1859.

and a dividend of ten per cent. was paid on its stock. Nevertheless, while ten per cent. dividends were being declared, the wages of employees were repeatedly cut down, until first-class brakemen and firemen, who had been on the road years, were paid but one dollar and fifty-eight cents, and second-class employees but one dollar and thirty-five cents per day. Besides, men frequently were paid for but four or five days in the week, and often had to bear their own expenses while away from home on duty.⁴

The *New York Times*, of Saturday, July 21, said:

⁴ James H. Graff, an intelligent citizen of Baltimore, writing to *The Word*, September, 1877, said: “The causes of the strike have been of long continuance, and are owing chiefly to the grinding policy of the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad and its president, John W. Garrett, who has always acted as if he were the Lord Proprietary of Maryland, and the State a mere adjunct or principality attached to the Railroad Company. Mr. Garrett, that the Company may shortly pay a dividend of ten per cent. to the capitalists, notwithstanding the gross mismanagement of the road, the lavish expenditures in the way of large salaries to the president’s favorites, and bribes to the city and State politicians who are owned body and soul by Mr. Garrett, has been cutting down the wages of the employees until the men do not now get enough to keep them from starvation. Some of the employees, under the present schedule of time and wages, as I have been informed, were only receiving about eight dollars per month, and finding themselves when compelled to lay over at way stations, and, upon being threatened with a further deduction of ten per cent., the men struck and appealed to their fellow-workmen to do the same.”

The well-known newspaper correspondent, “Gath,” adds: “Mr. Garrett is the father of the great riot. He has little or no knowledge of human nature, and had experimented upon his operatives so frequently and so successfully that he had no idea they could make a successful strike. At last they had no alternative but to strike or die. He never kept up any relations of reciprocity or sympathy with his men, and yet indulged the dream, at times, that his mere monetary success would make him President of the United States. People in this country do not respect money dissociated from democratic charity. Mr. Garrett will hardly die with the fame he expected. He is not popular in Baltimore with the rich; he is not known to the poor. A respectable man in many respects, he forgot his plain duty to the men he employed. He never sought to improve their condition, though they were very faithful to his interests. He cut down their pay three times in the course of a few months,

“It is reported that some of the men who struck on the Baltimore and Ohio Road have been earning a sum hardly sufficient for subsistence, and that the proposed reduction would leave them less wages than are adequate for the support of life. If this is true, it is deplorable, both as regards the condition of the men and the condition of the railroad corporation. It is no less deplorable that men needy enough to accept the reduced terms can be found. Just now, however, this is not the question. Ours is a free country, and the right of a man to get the best price he can for his work necessarily involves the converse of the proposition: a man or corporation may procure labor at the lowest possible cost. It is a pretty bad state of things when able-bodied men are obliged to work for three or four dollars a week, and pay extra expenses for board out of that.

Of the posture of affairs on the Pennsylvania Central, the *Boston Herald*, of Thursday, July 26, said:

“The general account of the road, as made up by its own officers on the 31st of December last, shows that, after paying the \$1,510,984.49 into the surplus fund, there was in the treasury a cash balance of \$1,854,945.29, and in the hands of freight and passenger agents (*sic*) \$1,758,400.77. Thus it appears from the company’s own figures that, after having salted down in the surplus fund more than a million and a half of dollars, paid an eight per cent. dividend and all interest upon bonds, taxes, and expenses of every name and nature, there was in

and yet increased their work. Like another Pharaoh, he made his bondmen build bricks without straw.”

those bewildered, invasive “Unionists” are forgotten in the redeeming fact that four million chattel slaves went free. Trades-unionism attempts a monopoly of labor in behalf of equity and liberty,—the best move that many now can see to make against the coercive sway of capital. It is an attempt to hold labor “for a rise,”¹—a speculative sin of which capital has a monopoly! When these two great forces lock horns in conflict, the question is whether the outs—those in search of work—shall be used by invaders to crush the invaded. Sunk in ignorance and squalor, working-people, like capitalists gorged with ill-gotten wealth and power, are capable of all sorts of invasion and tyranny; but this does not alter the fact that they are the aggrieved party, and that capitalists must recede from their usurpations before they, or their “governments,” have any moral right to call insurgents to order. Humble indeed was the request of the strikers; they asked only bread, which was theirs without asking. Capital gave them bayonets.

¹ Except where trade-unionism attempts to “protect” it by monopoly, “labor is almost always offered for sale without reservation of price; other commodities almost never. . . . Labor, differing in this respect from every other commodity, will not *keep*. . . . It is around the hired laborer that the real contest rages.”—Thornton “*On Labour*,” p. 70.

The Capitalists, Invaders.

The powers, that were, “virtuously” raved against slave insurrections, but the “law and order” which murdered Nat Turner and John Brown is now seen to have been the sinning cause of those labor “riots;” and negroes with their friendly white conspirators are remembered with gratitude for their efforts to destroy a wicked system. The Pittsburgh strikers were very moderate in their demands, and marvellously discriminating in their methods of asserting them. Those who so hastily and hotly denounce them will be more likely to command the respect of intelligent listeners, if they candidly inquire what basis, in right, reason, or the general welfare, there is for the extraordinary power which Thomas A. Scott, and his aids, Governor Hartranft of Pennsylvania, and President *de facto* Hayes, presumed to administer in this struggle for life against invasion. Careful study of the grave issues involved discloses the fact that capital at every point was the aggressor, and that most of the alleged “crimes” of the people were strictly defensive of their natural right to property in their own earnings. Washington, Adams, and the rest threw off the British yoke from their own necks, but “constitutionally” held negroes in bondage, “one hour of which,” Jefferson said, “was fraught with more misery than ages of that we rose against;” yet we make out a case for them, knowing that the main issue was whether or not the Colonies had the right to secede from Great Britain. Garrison, Grant, and Greeley, in “the war for the Union,” crushed out secession, the cardinal principle of self-government, the pivotal force and philosophical method of peaceful evolution; yet the “bloodshed and burning” of

the treasury January 1, 1877, available cash assets derived from profits of the year previous amounting to \$ 3,613,315.06. In view of such a statement, not only of solvency, but of a prosperity almost unexampled in the history of railroads in the United States, it will be hard to convince the people that the recent change in the schedule of wages and hours of service of the intelligent men by whom this enormous wealth was earned, was either reasonable or just. Still, it was a mistake for the employees to attempt to right their wrongs by brute force.”

Another leading capitalist newspaper, fully indorsing the above statements, concludes as follows:

“If these statements of the financial condition and the business of the roads are true, there is no good reason for the reduction of the wages of the employees, unless corporations are allowed to justify themselves by the plea that the men are so situated that they must accept such wages as they see fit to offer. If this defence is received as sufficient, the corporations will need no other, should they undertake to compel this class of employees to serve them without any remuneration.”

The Rail Kings, Oppressors and Thieves.

These unquestionable facts, from sources which will not be accused of having special sympathy with labor as against capital, indicate the state of affairs at many other points which the revolt reached. According to Poor's *Manual of Railroads*, the net dividends on railway stock in this country in 1876 amounted to sixty-eight million and thirty-nine thousand dollars: in 1873, to sixty-seven million one hundred and twenty thousand dollars. These dividends were paid not only on money actually invested, but also on fabulous amounts of watered stock, making the actual dividend paid to "owners," in many cases, more than twice the eight or ten per cent named. The net profit of American roads, reported by the same authority, including as it does large additions to surplus funds, is vastly more than the above limit. While it is true that a large amount of railroad stock pays no dividends,¹ the lines on

¹ I need not say that these non-paying roads are not run on labor-reform principles; their depressed condition may have resulted from fraud, mismanagement, or too little business along their lines to enable them to pay even running expenses. It is a noticeable fact that most railroads are originally built with money contributed by private individuals and local, State, or National municipalities, to facilitate communications and help business, and that the original stockholders rarely get dividends, or even recover the principal. The money is "made" out of them by subsequent "owners," who control and run them for what their docile patrons "yield." Statistics show that if the leading lines were run on the labor-cost principle, the average passenger rates would be about one-half of one cent per mile,—that is, about one-fifth of present rates! Readers can imagine what an increase of communication and of business, what going to and fro for knowledge and service

hardest and most exhausting and repulsive work is paid one dollar per day, while the expensive figure-head, the President, for work which he would much rather do at the same price, than serve as gravel-tosser or fireman, receives, in salary and dividends, from one hundred to one thousand dollars, or more, per day? When liberty is respected, the hardest and most repulsive work will be paid highest,—not lowest, as now, under this systematic repression called "law and order."

comparatively innocent property was scrupulously respected, shows clear moral discrimination guiding a retributive tornado, and ranks that event in history with casting British Tea into Boston harbor and the sublime heroism of John Brown at Harper's Ferry. The different sections of the Labor Reform movement with which I have the honor to serve do not think the destruction of life or property a judicious method of advancing any reform. We reject the philosophy of strikes, oppose trades-union monopolies of labor, and discard every other style of associative or legislative intrusion to settle this question. Personally a non-resistant, I would not take another's life to save my own. Asking no favors for labor but that it be let alone, I seek to abolish capital,—that is, robbery,—by unrestricted enterprise, by peaceful methods of evolution looking to opportunity and reciprocity. But as our sympathies are with the Colonial right to self-government against British invasion, with slaves against masters, so impartial observers recognize the Pittsburgh strikers as morally lawful belligerents, and concede to them all the rights of defensive warfare. Many students of labor so far transcend the dictionaries that they concede to the strikers the right to cease work, but furiously denounce their efforts to prevent under-bidders from taking their places. The zeal of these thoughtful partisans of capital is commendable but unintelligent; it is commendable because coercion, at all times and in all places, is ill-advised and abortive; the more you attempt to enforce obedience or agreement, the less you have it. It is unintelligent, because it overlooks the fact that the rail lords hold their places, and fix their own salaries and the salaries and wages of their employees, through successful usurpation and robbery. If "supply and demand" is good for employees; if train-men should be hired at the lowest market-price of their labor,—why not fill the offices of President and Superintendent with the lowest capable bidder? If the beneficent law of supply and demand prevails on those roads, how does it happen that the

which the strike most intensely prevailed have accumulated vast wealth, and pay high dividends, at the cost of crowding their operatives to the verge of starvation. Hence the strikers on the Baltimore and Ohio, and Pennsylvania Central, asked very much less than justice: they asked only a very small part of what is actually due them out of the earnings of those roads. Their request was refused, offers of arbitration and conference were insolently rejected, and military force, State and National, was invoked to put them down. In all the parties to this struggle, and among all the observers outside of it, probably there is not one person who can sincerely say that the conduct of the managers towards their men was just. The unanimous opinion among all classes, on the contrary, is that their conduct was plainly unjust. Yet government and the leading exponents of both the great political parties and of the newspaper press, fiercely sided with injustice against labor. In asserting their natural right to live by their labor, and a just claim to ownership in at least a part of their earnings, the strikers fairly represented the claims of labor, and also the morally defensible rights of property. The officials, on the contrary, represented the existing financial, commercial, and political power of the strong to plunder the weak. In siding with capital against labor in such an issue, government reveals its own despotic, felonious character, and makes plain to all eyes the kind of "law and order" which good citizens are called upon to support.

would result if railway managers worked for honest livings instead of for profits. The present Josiah Quincy of Boston can furnish convincing figures on this point.

The Strikers Lawful Beligerents.

Ought labor to contest such an issue, or quietly withdraw and succumb? Every interest of liberty, of justice, of order and civilization, demanded that labor should contest this case. In the early years of the American rebellion against British invasion, after “rioters” had shot “red-coats” in the streets of Boston, and “property” had been “destroyed” by the insurgents, Lord Chatham, in behalf of liberty and creative enterprise, said in Parliament, “Thank God that the Colonies have resisted!” The inspiring unanimity with which labor associations in the States, Canada, and Europe, indorsed the strike; the irresistible sympathy of all disinterested observers with the weaker side; the earnest desire of business men to induce the rail lords to concede something to the trainmen; and the prompt refusal of the militia, in many places, to fire on the people, indicate the tendency of the real and permanent forces of society to side with right against usurpation. Ignorant of their rights and of means to make those rights respected, working-people often take measures of resistance which are abortive and indefensible. In this case, the deed which electrified the nation, and made the battle in Pittsburgh, Sunday, July 22, the Bunker Hill of a new revolution, was born of impulse, not of intention. No labor association advised, the defrauded trainmen themselves did not intend, burning railway property; the reckless firing of over-zealous and

misinformed soldiers on unoffending citizens provoked it,¹ and thanks to that Over-ruling Intelligence which makes men do, impulsively, better than they know or intend, the torch of resistance taught the rail lords, and all other aggressors upon human rights, a lesson which is seriously studied the world over. Since the wealth of the Pennsylvania Central was largely accumulated out of the earnings of others, who thereby were defrauded of their rightful property, and since it was used to enforce and perpetuate the impoverishment and subjugation of working-people, the burning of it, *while adjacent private and*

¹ The Grand Jury of Alleghany Co., Penn., after careful inquiry into the causes of the so-called “Pittsburgh Riots,” reported, November 19, 1877, that though “met by an unexpected impediment in the refusal of the state officials to testify,” the calling out of the militia was evidently unwarranted; for “the authorship of the proclamation which was issued in Governor Hartranft’s name, could not be traced beyond the Pennsylvania Railroad depot; the Governor certainly did not authorize it, as he was slumbering in his special car near Salt Lake City.” Before any collision occurred the Pennsylvania Railroad officials were importuned not to attempt harsh measures, but a sad fatality seemed to attend their councils, and orders were given to clear the tracks. “The testimony is conclusive and overwhelming that without orders from the commanding officers the soldiers commenced to fire on the crowd, “killing instantly ten citizens, the coroner’s jury reporting twenty-two deaths Saturday and Sunday. Regarding this chapter of the tragedy as the beginning of the riot, the Grand Jury said it was “an unauthorized, willful, and wanton killing by the private soldiers, which the inquest can call by no other name than murder.” In conclusion they said: “First, that by cool judgment and practical good sense the mob could have been controlled, and bloodshed prevented; second, that the riots followed inevitably the conduct of the military too largely controlled by railroad officials; third, that there was not sufficient authority for the presence of the Philadelphia troops, nor for the important proclamation and orders issued in the name of the Governor; fourth, that if the civil authorities of the State had been present, or the conservative advice of citizens had been listened to by the soldiers, the calamity might have been averted; fifth, that the frightful condition of society, Sunday afternoon, was the result of the meddlesome and insolent course of State officials, civil and military; and that it was the citizens of Pittsburgh who, recurring to the first principles of society, and arming themselves with such primitive weapons as clubs and disabled muskets as the flying soldiers had left them,” finally restored order.