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On the “Harmony” Between Capital & Labor

The Robber and the Robbed

Lucy E. Parsons

1878-12-07

Sir: Please allow a constant reader of your highly appreciated paper to call the attention of those everlasting croakers about the “harmony of Capital and Labor” to an item clipped from last Sunday’s *Times*, as follows:

After a week of opportunity for the glass-pressers to reconsider their action inaugurating a strike because the manufacturers wished to manage their factories according to their own notion [in other words, to break up their Union] eleven of their flint-glass houses finally, today, extinguished fires, and the lockout will be a long one.

Does it need, to the thoughtful-minded, any more convincing proof or stronger argument than the above against the possibility of harmony existing between capital and labor under the present arrangement of the industrial system—or that their interest can, in any way, be “identical”?

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The Socialist
Letter to the Editor

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If there had been such a thing possible as the harmony of employer and employed (master and slave) would there, to be consistent, *could* there ever have been such a thing as a “strike,” which means a resistance on the part of the oppressed toward the oppressor—a protest, as it were? Now we all know too well the definition of the words harmony and identity, when couched in plain language, to mistake their meaning. And how there can be found so many apparently honest persons among the wage-class who still hold to this absurd doctrine, is to the average mind simply a phenomenon.

What harmony 'twixt the oppressor and the oppressed, 'twixt robber and the robbed? Oh, when will ignorance be dethroned, and reason and justice reign supreme? When will the masses learn that property is his and his *only* who has produced it—*earned* it? And that the thieves who prate about “managing their own factories after their own notions” never *earned* one-millionth part of what they now hold and claim as theirs? That it is the unpaid labor of those very thirteen hundred men that they, the thieves, have locked out to *starve*, under the plea of managing their own factories after their own notions!

Let the masses understand that these robbers hold this property (which is so much unpaid labor) under the plea of the laws which they themselves [the robbers] have made, and by the sanction of the very men they have locked out to *starve*; and further, that these so-called laws would not be worth the paper they are written on, twenty-four hours after the producers of all wealth had willed it otherwise.

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