

be afforded to women who are now pining in enforced idleness, and sighing for Protestant nunneries, while the daily war with Bridget would be at an end.

I would not make light of these inconveniences or of the present disturbance of trade. The tendency of a moment may be good, and yet it may give society a very bad quarter of an hour. Nor would I attempt to conceal the errors and excesses of which the unions have been guilty, and into which, as organs of corporate selfishness, they are always in danger of running. Industrial history has a record against the working man as well as against the master. The guilds of the middle ages became tyrannical monopolies and leagues against society, turned callings open to all into mysteries confined to a privileged few, drove trade and manufactures from the cities where they reigned to places free from their domination. This probably was the cause of the decay of cities which forms the burden of complaint in the preambles to Acts of Parliament, of the Tudor period. Great guilds oppressed little guilds: strong commercial cities ruled by artisans oppressed their weaker neighbours of the same class. No one agency has done so much to raise the condition of the working man as machinery; yet the working man resisted the introduction of machinery, rose against, destroyed it, maltreated its inventors. There is a perpetual warning in the name of Hargreaves, the working man who, by his inventive genius, provided employment for millions of his fellows, and was by them rewarded with outrage and persecution.

Flushed with confidence at the sight of their serried phalanxes and extending lines, the unionists do like most people invested with unwonted power; they aim at more than is possible or just. They fancy that they can put the screw on the community, almost without limit. But they will soon find out their mistake. They will learn it from those very things which are filling the

world with alarm—the extension of unionism, and the multiplication of strikes. The builder strikes against the rest of the community, including the baker; then the baker strikes against the builder, and the collier strikes against them both. At first the associated trades seem to have it all their own way. But the other trades learn the virtues of association. Everybody strikes against everybody else: the price of all articles rises as much as anybody's wages; and thus, when the wheel has come full circle, nobody is much the gainer. In fact, long before the wheel has come full circle, the futility of a universal strike will be manifest to all. The world sees before it a terrible future of unionism, ever increasing in power and tyranny; but it is more likely that in a few years unionism, as an instrument for forcing up wages, will have ceased to exist. In the meantime the working classes will have impressed upon themselves by a practical experiment upon the grandest scale, and of the most decisive kind, the fact that they are consumers as well as producers, payers of wages as well as receivers of wages, members of a community as well as working men.

The unionists will learn also, after a few trials, that the community cannot easily be cornered; at least, that it cannot easily be cornered more than once by unions, any more than by gold rings at New York, or pork rings at Chicago. It may apparently succumb once, being unable to do without its bread or its newspapers, or to stop buildings already contracted for and commenced; but it instinctively prepares to defend itself against a repetition of the operation. It limits consumption or invents new modes of production; improves machinery, encourages non-union men, calls in foreigners, women, Chinese. In the end the corner results in loss. Cornering on the part of working men is not a bit worse than cornering on the part of great financiers; in both cases alike it is as odious as anything can be,