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THE HIDDEN HAND IN MODERN STRIKES.

The Knights of Labor is an organization which dates back to 1869. For three years its existence was kept secret. But we may be sure it was not inactive. The probability is that, then as now, it ordered strikes to take place. The hand that withdrew the men from the workshops and stopped the machinery was unseen. But its motions were not unfelt. A general society of this kind must know less of any particular department of industry than the men and women who are engaged in it. It would seem to be the natural right of each department of labor to judge of the gravity of its own grievances and decide for itself when it should resort to the extremity of a suspension of labor and when it should refuse to do so. This privilege each department of labor seems to have, in a measure, given up to a central authority, which can have but an imperfect knowledge of the condition of each separate department of labor. For the several branches of industry to submit to this guidance was surely an act of great rashness. The motive for the surrender of its autonomy by each separate branch was to gain the power of combined numbers to enforce any demands it might have to make. It was thought that the common purse would be strong enough to enable strikers to hold out longer than they could if each labor section were left to its own unaided efforts. In this belief there was a certain amount of truth. If the organization of the Knights of Labor could strike a blow in one place to-day and another somewhere else when the first victory had been well secured, it might make a series of small conquests in detail. As an army, metaphorically speaking, marches on its belly, a strike can last only so long as there is something in the larder. A large army of strikers soon taxes the strength of the commissariat; and the larger the army, the more difficult is the task of the purveyor.

If a strike in one department of labor is followed by a strike in another department of labor, and if the two armies of strikers virtually depend upon the same commissariat—and to this it must come in a protracted siege—it is only a question of time when the resources on which the combined strikers depend must give out. The strikers' chances of success must, in such a complication, depend upon the disorganizing forces they may set in motion. If the commercial telegraph operators could, by quitting work, have put an end to business

telegraphing, they must have won. If, when they failed to do this, or to come anywhere near it, the Knights of Labor could have compelled obedience to their order that the railway telegraphers should quit work, a new disorganizing force would have been set in motion. But if, still falling short of victory, the locomotive engineers had obeyed a call to bring the trains to a stand, the disorganization might have compelled society—for society would have been the principal to be dealt with—to capitulate. What the conquest of anarchy would have been worth, when it had been gained, is another matter.

But, happily, the Knights of Labor are not omnipotent. They cannot command obedience to their orders. The second order given, in the crisis of this strike, was given to the railway telegraphers, and, with few exceptions, it was disregarded. This is the strongest condemnation that could be pronounced upon the brotherhood. The railway telegraphers have claimed the right to judge for themselves, where their own interests were in question; and their decision has been a practical repudiation of the autocracy of the Knights of Labor. This organization promised a great deal more than it could accomplish: it boasted that it would, in a certain eventuality, call out the railway telegraphers and the locomotive engineers. In reliance on this confident promise, it may fairly be presumed, the commercial telegraphers left work. They now see how they have been deceived. If they had known that they would be left in the lurch, they would not have been likely to take the course they did. Surely they are not bound, a day longer, by the orders of an organization which, wilfully or through weakness, has broken faith with them.

So conspicuous a failure as this will deal a severe blow to the prestige of the brotherhood. Henceforth the Knights of Labor will be a less puissant name to conjure with; and perhaps the several branches of labor will re-assert their own independence. They have trusted enormous powers to the Knights of Labor; and those powers have been neither well nor wisely used: what is more, they have not been successfully used. Against the tyranny or the bad judgment of the brotherhood the railway telegraphers have made a practical protest, and the locomotive engineers would have done the same, had the opportunity been given them.

There are some, perhaps several, outside matters with which the brotherhood proposes to deal. That modern pest, the newspaper interviewer, has its uses: through this medium we have been told something, by an unrevealed brother, about the organization and its aims. In general, it may be said to give itself out as an industrial and social reformer. Among other things, it is a currency doctor; a worshipper of the rag baby. It demands a place and unstinted care for that bantling. It is going to banish all bank currency, when it gets strong enough to do so; it is going to substitute productive and distributive co-operation for the present action of capital and labor; it is going to make war on capital, in the legislative arena, as well as in Trades' Unions rooms. This is only a very small part of

what the brotherhood proposes to accomplish. It intends, apparently, to declare a general social and economic war; and it expects to succeed by an appeal to disorganizing forces. If its hand is to be against every man, on what ground can it appeal to the public for sympathy and support? The brother told the interviewer a great deal too much. But we ought to be thankful for the revelation. When any man sees his neighbor attacked, he may expect his turn to come, if not next, soon, in the order of the universal programme. Let us again thank the leaky brother of the secret order and forgive the interviewer, who can be beneficent, on occasion, if generally pestilent.

A brotherhood whose plans include war in so many directions is sure to provoke retaliation. And, in the present strike of the telegraphers, retaliation has been provoked. The time has come when the men ask to know the terms on which they could get back. They are told in reply that it is an indispensable condition that they shall free themselves from the trammels of all secret societies. This imperious condition, if it stood alone, would be unjustifiable. But it does not stand alone. The operators have allowed a foreign element to interfere between themselves and their employers. The brotherhood, under whose direction they placed themselves, acts upon the most arbitrary principles. The Companies feel that they can never be safe so long as the operators are liable to be called out, at a day's warning, by a secret society, with which they have no contract. The Companies' contract is with each man separately. The men have of course a perfect right to belong to any or all of these societies; and the Companies have a right to say that they will not employ society men. Both parties are standing on their extreme rights; and so long as they maintain this attitude, they cannot come together again.

But the question involved in this strike is solving itself. The natural laws of supply and demand are quietly working out the problem. New hands are obtained, old hands return, stragglingly, to work. Telegraphing goes on, while the strikers are idle and their resources diminishing. The strikers are more hurt than the Companies at whom they have struck. Every day the Companies are better able to do without the strikers, whose services have now been withheld for a month. Every day, the strikers feel the pinch of diminished revenue more and more. The contest, now practically over, can have but one ending: the discomfiture and defeat of the striking operators.

THE WHEAT HARVEST.

The summary of the August report of the Ontario Bureau of Industries contains some information of interest apart from the conclusions it enables the secretary to reach with respect to the extent and condition of the crop of wheat in the Province as a whole. The sheet issued on Saturday repays analysis:

The acreage of wheat, spring and fall together, in the Province of Ontario, was 1,775,000 acres in 1882, which was an extra-