

It is a common and often inherent weakness of the journalist, that by reason of the medium in which he works, he can, as such, leave no permanent mark on contemporary literature. He is an impressionist by necessity. When not a skilful impressionist he is either a vivid observer or recorder or a mere machine. The essence of impressionism is heat and rapidity of thought. Truth does not always lie at the bottom of the well. It floats often in a medium as light and airy as itself. But heat the medium, and it immediately sinks in proportion to the rise in temperature. As Morley says in his essay on Burke, it will not reveal itself readily to either passion or prejudice. Lane, amongst Australian Socialists, possessed, with some supreme powers, almost all the supreme defects of his craft.

It is a proof, however, of his prescience, that, in order to give practical effect to the theories refining in the furnace of his enthusiasm, he recognised at once the initial necessity of capturing the Trades Unions and, through them, the workers' votes. The Trades Unions were to be the centripetal force, directing the sweep and circumference of that vote. It would require all the dynamic power of the former to produce some defined and set lines of motion to the latter.

At the time when he began to preach his gospel of Socialism, Trade Unionism in Queensland, as throughout Australia, was a somewhat conservative and professedly an eminently practical organisation, whose momentum the organised artisan class could, in cases of emergency, bring to bear against employers. It possessed statutory recognition, and within a sphere which it then regarded both as