

socially necessary functions. A railway company cannot be at once "a great public department"¹ and a private business claiming immunity from criticism, or even from regulation. In all considerable industrial struggles, the great, patient, almost silent, "credulous, and ignorant public" is the real sufferer. It is truer than ever it was, not alone in a merely metaphorical, but strictly in an organic sense, that we "are members one of another." "I conceive it to be demonstrable that the higher and the more complex the organisation of the social body, the more closely is the life of each member bound up with that of the whole; and the larger becomes the category of acts which cease to be merely self-regarding, and which interfere with the freedom of others more or less seriously."²

The close interdependence of the parts of our highly organised society, and the dependence of the groups which constitute the commercial world upon each other and upon the public, were conspicuously manifested in the recent financial crisis in London.³ And in the railway crisis which is just over it became clear that an error in judgment on the part of the directors of a public company, or on the part of their employees, or of both, or a breach of contract by one or the other, might plunge the whole community in trouble and a large part of it in absolute misery. The interest of the public as the holder of the great insurance fund from which all the losses due to all such catastrophes must be paid, is really paramount. The objection that it has no business with industrial conflicts, and that these are best left to be settled by the brute forces of the combatants, will not hold water for a moment.

In dispassionately examining the subject of labour combinations, we must regard them not as the outcome of an isolated movement, but as having been brought into existence by a set of conditions which could hardly have failed to produce them.

(1) Lord Tweeddale, chairman North British Railway, to deputation, January, 1891.

(2) "The Struggle for Existence," by Professor Huxley, *Nineteenth Century*, February, 1888.

(3) See for suggestive remarks on this point, speech by Mr. Goschen at Leeds, 28th January, 1891.

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