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THINK AND REFLECT

On the Morality of the Capitalistic
System of Industry.

[Written for THE ECHO, by Cyrille Horst.]

It is frightful to see the death of scores of men on duty in the mines, railways, buildings, at sea, and everywhere; some entombed full of life, others crushed to a jelly or scalded, while others are drowned like rats in a pit or burned alive as the Saracens of Spain were in the good old time. But it is more frightful to be a witness of the moral death of thousands every day the year round; the death, when the body so odiously continues to walk, to lead, and to move its mechanical existence, while there is already no more spirit, no manhood in this useless being. How many such deaths are occurring day by day caused by the saw mill of human spirit, bones and flesh, which is called capitalism?

Still more frightful and atrocious than all death is the manner in which generally other living men treat such morally dead and view that degenerate misfortune which kills one morally. This manner shows all the deepness of the wickedness which the eras of history, civilization, and culture could not exterminate as yet in human nature, and which, moreover, the existing universal competition sustains. Men do not, in general care for causes. They see the effects and judge from them, and that is what makes them think and feel, too often, like animals and brutes.

Look upon that great struggle for existence. All are engaged in it, and every one is unhappy. That is why men seldom pardon the unhappiness of their fellow-men. Rather than aid the wounded they seek to sharpen the pain, to frost the wounds with salt, to blow the little remnant of life out of the wounded in order that they may not hear their groans. These men are anxious to escape their own distress, and the sight of a sufferer calling for their aid and reminding them of their own suffering exaggerates and enrages them, and gives rise to the thirst for his blood.

Men, like hungry wolves, rejoice and triumph when they see their fellow-man weakening and falling. On the field of battle, we are told, the soldiers avert their eyes from the wounded and angrily abuse those whom they believe to be compassionate. They fear that compassion would weaken their power to forget their own danger and to fulfil that vandal work which they are designated for. So it is in the war field. But in the every day life, too, the same war of all against all, the old fight for existence is going on. The aim of this war is personal happiness and the means of it are all the manifestations of force, too often brutal force. The struggle for existence, the bourgeois scientists say, is necessary to humanity in order to bring about progress. But it is merely the progress of a brutal force or craftiness.

Everyone is struggling against others for his own, and against others' existence and happiness. Everyone is anxious to clear the way from all competition. If he manages to bring it about; if he by various means came as a victor out of the fight, he, according to the beautiful theory of those venal scientists, makes humanity obliged to him for his obtained power to perfect his race. The advantages, with the aid of which he becomes a victor, no matter if they consisted in the use of force or craft, or in the capability of doing something base and mean, can be transmitted now to the coming generation, those scientists say; while the faculties of the conquered may be, or not, submerged, or at least suppressed, together with their possessors, and prevented from further development. Humanity must be thankful to such victors. According to this theory the first commandment of men is to always and everywhere remain the fittest, the strongest, the survivor. Without the consumption of the life and happiness of others, for the mere purpose of strengthening their own power, there can be no progress—that is to say no subsistence, no ability for further existence—in that glorious capitalistic system.

The subjugation of the weak by the strong is consequent upon the natural relation of forces. Freedom in its exclusive and one-sided apprehension is an anarchistic principle, an Utopia. Reciprocal interest leads to the foundation of dependence. The law of development, history demonstrates, consists not in the uniform elevation of all to a general level, but in the fact that one, in order

to get upon that level, places himself upon the shoulders of another. That is the logic of the competitive capitalistic system and its scientific defenders. The fittest, the victor. The rich they surround with esteem, they love, they fear, worship and still support gladly. The weak and conquered, the poor they overload with contempt, they hate and refuse to aid. Who has will have more, who does not have will lose all he has.

Oh you pinch-penny of this world, always thirsty for gold, could you live for a moment if all the pains, sufferings, and wounds of humanity were approachable to your compassion, if you have any? The great, generous nature treats us with a certain tenderness. It makes us blind and deaf to a certain degree, and we cannot embrace with her eyes all the monstrosity of the existing wrong, nor do we hear all the cries of suffering not only at large, but in our very Christian city of Montreal, otherwise we would despair and get out of the desire to continue this life. While the church points the eyes of its faithful heavenward, the robbers take advantage of the abstraction and steal the earth.

THE RIGHTS OF CAPITAL.

If labor expects to receive fair treatment from capital, it should aid the capital that shows a disposition to effect fair play. The rock of satisfaction in making agreements with capital is uniformity; one firm must have no advantage over another from labor. It is wrong to expect a hat storekeeper to close up when his neighbors are allowed to remain open as long as they please and do a thriving business. If one-half the energy devoted to denouncing men in his position were applied to inducing the other stores to organize and close up, what beneficial results would accrue? But, it is easier to denounce than remedy. It is life and death with a firm to close while others are reaping a harvest. Can not the rules of labor be uniform, as to rates and hours? Then labor can demand its own. It is a difficult thing to maintain a high rate of wages from one employer while there are dozens around him getting labor far more cheaply. Instead of finding fault with the gentleman in question, why not advise people to refuse to buy in any store which should remain open after hours. If you make fish of one and flesh of another you will have a very unpalatable mess for a result. Labor runs too much on sentiment, and sentiment doesn't pay, neither does it fill an employer's coffers or an employee's man. Business principles must be followed in conducting labor organizations. Why not adopt business principles? Your employers, gentlemen, adopt them; couldn't live without 'em, you know. They advertise their wares and goods. Now, why don't labor unions advertise their case? Why don't they publish a list of those who are unworthy the support of union men and women? One-half the funds devoted to futile agitation could be turned to practical use. People need to be educated up to the rights of labor. We cannot blame storekeepers for remaining open while the people demand it. And who demand it but the poor? The wealthy do their shopping in daylight. The poor could do theirs within reasonable hours. By publishing your case and advertising it, you go the right way about it. Resolutions and sentiments don't effect much; your line of battle must be laid down and followed by effective means.—Abridged from the Commoner and Glassworker.

A Golden Wedding.

"Where are you going, all dressed up as fine as a fiddle?"

"I have been invited to attend the golden wedding of Tim Spickens."

"Did you say you were going to attend his golden wedding?"

"Yes."

"People celebrate their golden wedding when they have been married fifty years, don't they?"

"Certainly."

"Then we're not talking about the same man; for the Tom Spickens I mean is not more than thirty years of age, and he wasn't married at all six months ago."

"We are talking about the same man, but you see there are different kinds of golden weddings. I call Tom's wedding a golden wedding because the fair bride, who is a sixty-year-old widow, is said to have thirty thousand dollars all in twenty-dollar gold pieces."

WOMAN'S VOICE FOR LABOR.

What Kate Field Has to Say on the
Attitude of Capital Toward
Labor.

Kate Field is a product of the times—a woman who has advanced the proper ideas of the injustice that have grown up along with the higher development of the world, and she has the power of expressing her opinion on the subject of the wrongs of the laboring classes with mighty, sledge hammer-like blows, which ought to draw sparks of righteous fire from the iron-like hearts of some of the rich and haughty millionaires who hear them. In a late article on the attitude of capital toward labor she says:—

"The attitude of capital toward labor is a gigantic blunder, because it is opposed to Christianity, which most capitalists profess and which few of them, or any other class, practice. Heretofore labor has been the under dog in every fight in every clime, and has submitted to its fate through ignorance and cowardice. Our republic is built upon the principle that all men are born free and equal, and are entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. Every man, however ignorant, is given a vote, and schools are open to his children. Thus labor becomes intelligent and manly and begins to think. 'There's something wrong,' says labor. So labor strikes—sometimes wisely, often unwisely, always to the detriment of individuals, but always in behalf of the brotherhood of man. Growth arrogant by the power and traditions of centuries, capital, like the Bourbons, seems to have learned nothing. It forgets that labor is no longer abject. Labor may be unreasonable, brutal, even mad at times, but it has ceased to be afraid. It has attained the dignity of self-respect. Why does not capital see the handwriting on the wall and meet labor in the spirit of Christ? Why this church-going if it lead not to the golden rule? Labor asks for arbitration? Why not?"

Kate Field is a woman, and with the natural intuition, so-called, of her sex has grasped and expressed in a few words the pith of the labor question. It is true that labor is no longer abject. Union has removed that condition, and at the same time was the means of teaching labor that upon it even the millionaire must live, if not performed by hirelings, then by himself, or death will come. Modern Christianity has a grand object to battle for in the more complete emancipation of labor by the more thorough diffusion of the idea of the brotherhood of man, the doctrine so eloquently taught by the founder of the religion we profess. Happily the movement of Christian spirit is in this direction, and when it becomes generally accepted and the various churches unite upon it to the exclusion of the petty controversies continually going on, not only among each other, but among the individual members of each, over questions of little or no interest to the mass of human beings, then the progress towards a more Christian-like and equitable condition of the two classes of labor and capital will be rapid and gratifying. The employing class needs to be inculcated with the spirit of justice to labor, and labor needs to be taught forbearance and justice on its side and the assurance that men possessing riches and employing labor are not necessarily the enemies of the poor. How better can be taught these things than through the churches? Sermons on these living questions of the times will bring to the houses of God men who could never be induced to go to them to hear long doctrinal sermons. There is too much of the spirit of animosity existing between employer and employe, and it is by the removal of this that the relative positions of both can best be improved, and peace on earth, good will toward men, be at least in part secured.—Reading (Pa.) Evening World.

Give us a Penny.

Once again this journal feels constrained to urge on the Dominion Government the desirability of issuing a two-cent copper coin, and withdraw from circulation the five-cent silver coins. The public advantages would be very great. In the first place there would be a large profit to the public treasury, for the two-cent bronze coins would cost only about one-third of their face value, and the difference between their cost and their face value would be so much profit

for the public treasury. This, however, is only a trifling advantage, the real benefit arising from the greater exactness which would be introduced into the domestic transactions and purchases of the wage-earning classes. At present the universal price of all small commodities is five cents, and this is the case because the universal coin is the five-cent piece. If that coin were withdrawn from circulation and a two-cent bronze coin substituted, the universal price of all small commodities would be two cents, and the wage earners would be benefited correspondingly. Those who are familiar with domestic transactions in the Old Country know that the same articles which are sold for a penny in England cost five cents, or two-pence-half penny, in Canada. "Put a penny in the slot" and in England you can obtain a choice of a thousand and one useful articles. In Canada you can do nothing of the kind, for there is no penny; and the thousand and one articles, each cost two pennies and a half. The class which suffers is the wage-earners. There is no reason whatever why this should be the case. If the Dominion Government would issue a two-cent bronze coin, and gradually withdraw the silver five-cent piece the reform would be brought about unconsciously and imperceptibly, and every consumer would be benefited.—Bobcaygeon Independent.

COST OF STRIKES.

The fifth annual report of the Massachusetts State Board of Arbitration and Conciliation was transmitted to the Legislature last week. The experience of the Board has tended to prove that strikes and lock-outs are expensive methods of dealing with differences of opinion. They seem well calculated to leave behind in the minds of workmen a smoldering sense of grievances unredressed, and on the side of the employer a feeling that undue pressure has been exerted at the time when he was least able to withstand it. The strikes in that State during the past year have been almost without exception disastrous to the organizations concerned. The yearly earnings of the wage earners directly affected by the controversies of the year are estimated at \$4,056,195, and the total yearly earnings of the factories involved amount to about \$12,044,525. The total expense of maintaining the Board has been \$8,108.86.

THE WORKINGMEN PAY IT ALL.

We often hear laboring men say they pay no taxes, and yet they do not know that labor pays nearly all the taxes. The landlord may pay taxes on the house he rents to the laborer, but he includes the tax in the price of rent. The merchant pays taxes to the State, but he charges it up in the price of goods which he sells to the laborer. The banker may pay a tax to the Government, but he gets it back in his interest. The laborer may not borrow direct from the banker, but the landlord, the merchant and the contractor who does borrow it charges it up against the laborer. Therefore do not be deceived because the tax collector does not call on you in person, for he gets into your pocket in some way, and gets nearly all the taxes that are collected.

"Contentment is Better Than Wealth."

While honestly striving to better your condition, be content with your station in life and do not yield to an inordinate desire of abandoning your present occupation for what is popularly regarded as a more attractive avocation. Remember that while the learned professions are overcrowded there is always a demand for skilled and unskilled labor, and that it is far better to succeed in mechanical or manual work than to fail in professional life. Be not over eager to amass wealth, for they who are anxious "to become rich, fall into temptations and into the snares of the devil, and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which draw men in destruction and perdition." A feverish ambition to accumulate a fortune, which may be called our National distemper, is incompatible with peace of mind. Moderate means with a contented spirit are preferable to millions without it. If poverty has its inconveniences and miseries, wealth has often greater. A small income is suggestive of abstemious habits, and abstemious habits are conducive to health, while wealth is a powerful incentive to excessive indulgence, which is the fruitful source of complicated diseases.—Cardinal Gibbons.