

THE GREAT COAL STRIKE.

Lessons Drawn From an Incident of Bible History.

BY A PRESBYTERIAN ELDER.

The Chicago Interior of a recent date had a somewhat unique, and yet practical article on "The First Strike in History"—the "labour troubles" which resulted in the ten northern tribes of Israel, receding from the kingdom and setting up an establishment of their own in Samaria. They wanted concessions which Rehoboam refused, and then, under the rallying cry, "To your tents, O Israel," they declared their independence. Jeroboam played the part of agitator and "walking delegate" and he was the only man who made out anything of the strike. The people of the ten tribes, who resented the tasks and burdens laid upon them by Rehoboam, "built for Jeroboam the capital they had refused to erect for the surly feel descended from David and Solomon." The net result was that the people of the ten tribes gained nothing for themselves by the strike; Jeroboam had his ambition gratified; the ten tribes set up a second class kingdom and neither the kingdom of Israel nor that of Judah ever wielded the influence or won the respect which the parent kingdom attained under David and Solomon. "The strength of Israel was forever broken and her ancient splendor forever lost."

The Interior moralizes in the following fashion: "From that day to this, under every form of government and all changes of society, strikes have taken place. In nine cases out of ten they have arisen from a sense of injustice. They have been brought to a head by ill-mannered and violent speech upon the part of men conscious of power; and they have been fomented by other men whose sole hope of gain lay in the disturbing of present relations. But in the end neither of the original parties ever gains all it seeks. For years, for ages, for generations it may be, millions of wretched sufferers have cause to regret an outcome which might have been avoided by the soft answer, the gentle word, the patient consideration or perhaps exaggerated complaints; and a nation which ought to have led the progress of the world becomes a jest and a byword among stronger neighbours who see God's people destroyed by their own folly."

Does not the Interior's historic "parable" if we may so style it—illustrate very vividly the true inwardness of many a modern labor strike! The families of the strikers and the innocent public are the people who suffer most; the salaried leaders of the strike and the so-called "walking delegates" are the people who "rake in the shekels."

Just now we have a gigantic coal strike on in the United States. The coal barons, the Rehoboams of the piece, can probably stand the pressure; so can the leaders in the strike, the Jeroboams in the play, so long the salaries contributed from the wage earning of the strikers' hold out; but the innocent public are suffering, or at least will suffer before the curtain is rung down on the play; and by and by the strikers' families will feel the pinch, and the men will lose more in the few months of idleness they have chosen than they can make up in as many years, even if they gain or partially

gain their point. What a magnificent folly a labor strike is. There should be some better method of solving labor difficulties in a Christian country in this enlightened age. Unfortunately the Rehoboams and Jeroboams are not all dead yet.

We have no right to assume that the faults are all one side. There can be no doubt that, with some exceptions, the coal barons of the United States are a thoroughly selfish and heartless lot, caring little or nothing for the welfare of the men whose labor brings value to their investments. They have learned nothing from the lessons of the strike which rent Rehoboam's kingdom in twain and made a king of the shrewd and cunning agitator by the strike, the majority of people would have precious little sympathy for them. But, as already noted, the innocent public and the innocent families of the strikers, are the people who suffer most seriously, and this is a phrase of the question which the strike leaders should have considered if they wished to enlist the sympathy and support of the great public on behalf of the complaining miners who, without doubt, had substantial grievances that should be redressed. And then, since the inception of the strike, the miners have largely forfeited their claim to public sympathy by resorting to mob law and violence. If there was no Golden Rule in the attitude taken by the coal barons, there was surely no Golden Rule in the resort of sections of the striking miners to illegal and violent measures. The fact is the strike leaders, in ordering a strike have let loose a demon they cannot control—the reckless and unreasoning foreign element among the coal miners. It was the right of the coal miners if they were dissatisfied with the conditions under which they labored, to cease work; but they had no right to interfere by force with men who were willing to take their places, nor had they any right to destroy property. By such conduct they placed themselves in the wrong and materially weakened an otherwise good case. Passive resistance to wrong, would have been much more effective; it would have enlisted public opinion on their side and that in time would have told effectively on the coal barons.

Probably the coal barons will see the advisability of making some reasonable concessions to the miners, who, in turn, will be glad to accept something less, perhaps very much less, than they demanded. And then, possibly, both sides will see that their difficulties could have been settled by a little forbearance and consideration along the lines of the Golden Rule, which would have prevented the development of the violence and bitterness which has been evoked in the struggle, and which would have saved thousands of people the enormous losses which the strike involved. It was General Sherman who said "War is hell." How much better in principle is a modern labor strike?

Sparks From Other Anvils.

The Presbyterian Banner: Humor in the pulpit should grow naturally out of the subject itself and should come out upon its surface as the bloom comes upon the peach. It should steal into the sermon quietly and unobtrusively and be no more than a hu-

morous turn here and a gleam there. It should never be the coarse humor of the street, but the delicate refined wit of cultivated minds.

The Lutheran Observer: The man whose gifts and operations are in every way different from our own may be quite as useful as we, and with his different ways may do a work we could not do. In his choice of the Twelve, Christ himself illustrated the fact that there is no talent, temperament or individuality for which his kingdom does not provide room and scope.

Christian Advocate: What is the use of getting disheartened in the struggle of life? Is anything ever gained by faintness of spirit? The true policy is to steer right onward. To a believer in God this is the natural and easy course. As long as we feel sure that our Father's hand is at the helm we cannot be afraid of ills or accidents of any sort.

The Herald and Presbyterian: The Sabbath is of divine origin and sanctity and necessity for the best interests of man. The wholesale attempts to destroy it are conspiracies against the throne of God, and although those guilty may for a time go unpunished, yet we know that it must be, and can be, well, in the long run, only with those who fear God and keep his commandments.

The Sunday School Times: Are we willing to see another side than our own? We all think we are; but are we? On the answer to this depends much of our usefulness and influence in our communities. There are not two sides to every question; but there is another side to many a question of which we are now seeing only one. And if we are on the wrong side, it is of far greater importance to us than to anyone else that we should consider the other side, and acknowledge our error. It was said of a certain man that he was always ready to see two sides of a question,—his own side and the wrong side. There are others who are as open-minded as he.

Interior: The average boy and young man seem to think that life is divided into two separate parts. One is the period dedicated to fun, wherein a fellow ought to have the very gayest time that he can possibly make out to have, and cut down study, thinking and work to the lowest limit by which parents, teachers and circumstances can be pacated. The other is the serious period, when a man must work hard, earn money, win respect, prove himself capable, persuade people to rely upon him and exhibit all the qualities of a respectable and solid citizen. . . . The Church is not altogether blameless for this mistake of the average young fellow. Half a generation ago Christians got in a fret about how the fathers had misrepresented the joyful spirit of the Lord's religion. Sermons and speeches galore lamented the way in which our ancestors insisted that pious young folks must never smile. So with mighty vociferations the young people have been told and told and retold that religion doesn't require them to wear long faces. It has all been true enough, but in view of some tendencies of the times it really does look as if we ought to hasten to attach to our anti-long-face addresses an epilogue just to state that neither religion nor sense advise anybody to trifle away the first twenty-five years of life in happy go-lucky frivolity.