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LABOR PARTIES
AND LABOR REFORM.

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LABOR PARTIES AND LABOR REFORM.

THE Council of the "Workingmen's International Association," in their Defense of the Paris Communists, define what they call "the true secret" of the world-wide movement which they represent. It signifies, we learn, essentially "a working-class government, the product of the struggle of the producing against the appropriating class,"—the function of which shall be "to transform the means of production, land and capital, into the mere instruments of free, associated labor." And its authorized organs, while disclaiming for the present any intention of appealing to violence, yet already announce the purpose, in Europe and America alike, to "transform all land, forests, railroads, canals, telegraphs, quarries, and all great properties, such as manufactories, in favor of the State," which is to "work them for the benefit of every person engaged in producing;" in other words, "for such as earn by the sweat of the brow."*

However startling for America, the substance of this "true secret" is familiar enough to French experience; being but a new phase of the "coercive communism" of Babeuf, St. Simon, and Louis Blanc. It is to make short work with private liberties and responsibilities, and apply the forces of modern materialism in constructing such an autocracy as the world has never seen. It would in fact substitute the State

* The Statement of Dr. Marx, its Secretary, is given in The New-York Herald, of Aug. 3, 1871. For a fuller account, see Mr. Hinton's valuable article in The Atlantic Monthly, for May, 1871, or Eichhoff's pamphlet, Die Internationale Arbeiterassociation, Berlin, 1868.

for the Person, and forcibly "transform" man,—not the poorest men only, as monied and titled monopoly must, but even worse,—man as such, every living soul, into a creature of legislation, a mere functionary and machine. Such a result would be none the less destructive, whatever the kind of legislation that had led to it. Here, however, we have the *absolutist legislation of a class*.

Let us do this Society justice. It denounces war; demands education for all; adopts a noble motto,—“No rights without duties, no duties without rights.” It did good service to our Union in the war with slavery. It is, moreover, the natural recoil of their own enginery on the oppressing classes in Europe. The victim of “regulation” has but grasped the weapon which has proved so effective against him; he will see now what it can do to make him in his turn the master.

We fully recognize also the miseries of low-paid labor, that disgrace the most enlightened sections of our own country. We hear its cry of endless dependence and hopeless competition; its demands that can no longer be suppressed or ignored. And therefore we mean to enter our protest against a method of dealing with it that would, we believe, not only aggravate every industrial evil, but strike at the very substance of manhood.

As its career is just opening in this country, this great organizing force will doubtless be hailed as promise of relief from their bitter burdens by thousands who can have but slight conception of its tendencies. Many programmes of labor reform, too, are drifting in the same direction, which have not yet reached its principle of absolute coercion. They contain elements already which forbid them to represent the real interests and rights of labor much better than feudalism or caste. They play into the very hands of monopoly, by following its example, in putting oppressive burdens for free opportunity and empty formulas for the laws of social science and the forces of civilization. The era of social justice will not be ushered in by those who have nothing better to urge

than the old strife of classes for supremacy, and who make arrogant assumption of exclusive right to the honorable title of "working-men." It is in these points of view, which most deeply concern the liberties of labor itself, that I propose to criticise these methods of reform.

We cannot, to use an expressive phrase, "go back on" civilization and reject the results of ages. The wrongs of the worst-paid workman are not to be righted by ignoring that breadth of meaning, which the terms of the question have now fairly attained. To discuss rights and interests of "the laboring class," on the understanding that we are to exclude from the category of labor every form of industry but manual toil, is to ignore the whole sense of American civilization. Is it credible that a humane and intelligent people should assume that the work of men's hands has an industrial value as such, beyond that which belongs to their intellectual and sympathetic activities? Will it define productive labor as work by the job, or by the day, and refuse the name to processes of invention that cost the mental wear of lifetimes, and even supply the motive forces of material civilization? Will it consent to narrow its "laboring class," so that the term shall not include the professions whose toils minister, however imperfectly, to constant demands of soul, body, and estate; so that educators of the young and counselors of the old shall be set off as drones in the industrial hive? Are we to throw out of the list of "working-men" the philosopher, who explores moral and spiritual problems, and states the laws of intelligence, the economies that cannot be foregone? Or the poet, who cheers the day with insight that brings health and sweetness to all thought and work? Or the artist, whether musician, painter, sculptor, or dramatist, whose embodiments of nature and feeling refine taste, and broaden sympathy, and concentrate the undefined aspirations of the age into living form and purpose? Does labor exclude the scholar's function, — to present man under different phases of religion and culture. and enforce universality by tracing the movement of

ideas and laws through the ages of his development? Are we to reckon out the cares of maternity, the mutual offices of domestic life, social efficiencies, the subtle forces of character, the friend, the lover, the "fanatic," whose lonely dream prospects the track for coming generations? Are we to count as outside of labor contribution all work that reforms the vicious, relieves the helpless, or sets the poor in the way to self-help?

Stated thus, these questions may seem to answer themselves. Yet it is easy for parties to break away from principles that few of their members would theoretically deny. This will become at once evident if we bring our test closer to what is now technically called the labor question, and ask further, if labor is definable as that kind of service for which wages are paid, in distinction from that kind of service which consists in providing the fund *out of which* they are to be paid; from that kind of service which plans and directs the operation, and bears the risk and responsibility? In other words, is *labor as such* so clearly distinguishable from *capital* in this sense, that the toils of mind as well as body involved in the application of the latter do not deserve to enter into our estimate of "the rights of labor"? We must be very far from the track of science or freedom, if our definitions threaten to fall into such arbitrariness as this.

Yet I cannot but note that the ordinary tone of labor-reform programmes and appeals, so far, involves the assumption that production consists in the direct creation of material values only. Values that cannot be measured, tabulated, invoiced, and made the basis of governmental direction, are excluded at the very threshold. Yet every admission that purely intellectual or moral forces need not enter into estimates of productive industry is an admission that these forces have no claim to share in the wealth that *results* from production. To teach, as most philosophers of the new "positive" schools do, in one or another form, teach, that arithmetical and mechanical values are the mainsprings of civilization, is simply

to sow the seeds of barbarism in the fields of political economy.

The sweat of honest thought and just self-discipline is, to say the least, quite as essential to the preservation of that social order by which all industry is maintained as that which falls from the brow in earning the daily bread: and for a citizen, whether rich or poor, to be ignorant or reckless of this truth proves him to be, so far, socially and politically a destructive. It is, therefore, but the dictate of common prudence that every sign of a tendency to depreciate *invisible* production should be met at once by all trades and professions as a source of demoralization to the whole body politic. Peace, order, credit, mutual help, are as truly the contribution of spiritual labor as the Order of Nature is a temple not made with hands. The spur that industry feels from the family and the home,—economy and thrift, all honest and handsome work, waste avoided, the bitterness of competition tempered, the conflict of interests counteracted by conscience and good-will,—these are all products of moral and spiritual ideas subtly circulating in the atmosphere of the time. And these immeasurable sources of public good can only be guarded by a jealous loyalty, sensitive to every slur cast upon the value of non-material productive forces, whether in the name of capital or labor, of the rich or of the poor.

And in this spirit we must demand of those who rally for a "producing class," as against the rest of the community, where or how they will draw the line which justifies their use of this anti-republican name of "class." Every one is a producer in those respects in which he is a contributor to the public wealth, *in the broadest sense of wealth*, in whatever other respects he may fail to render service. How many men, women, children, are there in a country like ours who are not producers in this sense? Whose work is of a kind so inconspicuous that you can afford to count it out? Even the child in a kindergarten school is a producer, in combining pretty colors, or constructing rude forms and figures that em-

body the first essays of that æsthetic sense which shall hereafter make our artisans artists and all labor an education of the higher faculties. Every great thought and every good thought is a source of public wealth: helping to make true men or women, it helps to create and to save even material values, steadying the hands that move machinery, and fostering real co-operation. For one, I recognize no "laboring class" as distinct from the great body of producers in this largest sense, and hold it a pure delusion to suppose that our civilization affords any basis for forming one. There are rich laborers and poor laborers; there are laborers whose wages do not supply their daily needs, and laborers who lay by something from their wages; and from this all the way on to those who put large capital to productive service there is a continuous line of laboring men. No movement can really represent the interests of labor which does not recognize the common interests of all these different human conditions. It is radically mischievous to make this a question between classes of persons. Labor is the grand creative energy of society, the wisdom whose voice is to all the sons and daughters of men, calling them to that steady application of all powers to right and helpful uses, which shall stamp each person's doing with productive value, and make it a common good. This universality alone can define the word, and the lofty claims must all pay allegiance to this.

Amidst the confused battle-cries of labor parties organizing to put down "the appropriating class," the vital point of the problem secures, it is to be feared, but an imperfect hearing. There is surely nothing in mere labor, or production either, as such, that can claim our allegiance: since labor may be for mischief, as that of overspeculation, which ruins a community by the most wearing and frenzied personal toil; and production may be of things destructive, as the distiller's product, when it swells into tide-waves of delirium and crime. Productive labor is not that which makes one man rich by making another poor; robbing Peter to pay Paul adds noth-

ing to the sum of wealth. But on the other hand, all labor which increases the means of well-being in the community, whether in the material, social, intellectual, moral, æsthetic, or religious sphere, is productive labor, and deserves respect. The capitalist, who contributes such increase, whatever the form of his capital may be, is a productive laborer, in every respectable sense; and the laborer for wages who does the same thing is a productive capitalist in just the same sense with the other; at once through the strength and skill which he applies, and through that which he may lay up to invest productively in the creation of a home, or a business, or in the education of his children, or in any other honest way of benefit to society, or of culture to himself. So that the first step towards justifying our American "honor to labor" is to recognize that God hath joined labor and capital, and that no man or party has authority to put them asunder, or to declare them foes. And the next is to recognize that what entitles labor to honor and authority is not to be limited by any *arbitrary definition* of labor, since it is for all forms thereof essentially one and the same thing. So that the workman who helps produce an article of manufacture does not respect that which really deserves respect in his own productive work, unless he recognizes the similar claims on behalf not only of the capitalist in business, but of the teacher, the artist, the scientist, the poet, the moral reformer, the producer of any non-material value whatever.

And the sum is that public or private movements are to be regarded as in the interest of labor in proportion to the breadth of their estimate of the elements of individual and social well-being, and in that proportion only.

I cannot believe that we shall make any progress towards solving the difficult problem of the relations of labor, until we start with appreciating *those aims and motives in which every one, whatever his special work, is bound to share, and which constitute the common cause.* The intelligence needed for counteracting that terrible force of natural selection, that

weeding out of the weak by the strong which holds as true of the world of trade as of the world of species, can never receive one genuine impulse, so long as this duty remains unrecognized. No body of men can be intellectually benefited by combination with a view to their isolated interests only; it is but individualism intensified, a leaven of mental as well as social dissolution. They are educated in social functions only by that spirit and by that work which adds to the sum of mutual understanding and mutual help. The industrial wisdom we want most is that which understands how much more numerous and vital are the points of common interest which unite different forms of industry than those antagonisms, actual or supposed, upon which it is now sought to array their representatives in definitely hostile classes. It will not improve either the morals or the sense of the laborer for wages, any more than it will right his wrongs, to inveigh against capital as such, while it is in fact capital which he is constantly drawing on in himself, and seeking to accumulate for himself, and applying, so far as he can obtain it, in investments which are wise or foolish, for the general good or harm, according to the character of his own private habits and tastes. It does not help his cause to be ignorant that capital injures him *only in those instances in which it injures itself*; that is, where an unfair use is made of greater capital to suppress the opportunities of less.

And on the other hand it is equally mischievous for the capitalist, whose accumulated money fund gives him every advantage in the labor market over the man who has nothing to sell but his wasting muscles and his fleeting time, to be ignorant or regardless of the fact that his own capital is a part of the great labor fund of the community, and that its development depends wholly on the free development of labor in every form. It will not add to his security to forget that he has no right to quarrel with such combinations as may be necessary for the protection of wages-labor, *except in so far as these are injurious to labor itself*: that is, where they em-

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ploy the power of combination to cripple men in the use of their own labor-capital, whether of muscles or of mind.

I have hope in those reformers only who can teach us to emphasize our common interests ; to drop the old-world slogan, "Labor and Capital are natural enemies," and start with this pass-word to an age of brotherhood, "Labor and Capital are interdependent forces in each and every personality, and constitute every one a natural guardian of their common cause." Let those meanings of the words have rule which point to culture and civilization. A problem so universal in its relations cannot dispense with ideal tests and standards, and hastens to enforce them upon all experiment. The key to every position is already found to be, not antagonism, but co-operation. No other chemistry has hitherto solved a single dilemma of the industrial world. There is a class, we are well aware, of whose utter weakness it would be pure mockery to bid them co-operate. And to make possible for these the leisure, the education, the homes, the wages, that shall permit them to do so, is the instant duty of monied capital and manual labor alike. If they neglect it, both capital and labor will reap the whirlwind. But the common sense and good feeling which the freedom of our social relations makes easy for all, can open right paths at will. This is the genius to devise all requisite forms of partnership and mutual guarantee. But so long as this is foreclosed, there is no step in legislation, and no measure of compromise, that can escape subserving the ancient greed whose record is written in social demoralization and the misery of nations.

Of all necessities involved in the problem of labor, there is none so practical, none so pressing, as this for which we plead. What shall we gain, so long as the appeals of labor-reformers are made to motives which lie in the same moral plane with those which they denounce ; so long as they cover out of sight the essential fact that the pursuit of private or class interest alone is equally mischievous in every condition and form of work ? By this spirit of rapacity all parties, how-

ever they may charge each other with the exclusive responsibility for the results of financial self-seeking, are equally liable to be tempted. The avaricious capitalist cripples the free development of capital. The hand workman who looks no further than the aggrandizement of his labor club or his aggressive policy cripples the free development of labor. The most industrious men, combining for clannish purposes, hasten to set up the very monopoly they assail as the source of their own wrongs. Is it intolerable that speculators, combining to hoard and hold back the products of nature, should stimulate the prices of food till a great multitude are threatened with famine? Where is the practical difference in motive or result when men associate for the purpose of artificially limiting the supply of labor by restricting the number of workmen; depriving the individual of his liberty to find education and employment in branches of industry wherein he might, but for such class interference, have taken his chance with his neighbors, and enforcing obedience to organized dictation, as the condition on which he shall be allowed to practice his honest calling and earn his daily bread? Can labor resist oppression without the sphere of its control by oppression within it?

What right have a body of workmen, engaged in a special branch of industry, to assume themselves to be the supreme regulators of that branch, and to vote down the equal right of any man to engage in it, upon such terms as his honest effort can command? The very pretense of such authority threatens a social slavery infinitely worse than any form of political absolutism yet known; all the worse because it exploits the machinery of free institutions themselves to annihilate personal freedom.

The one plausible ground for arbitrarily limiting liberty of access to the practice of a craft is the importance of disciplines which shall guarantee excellence in the product. But this desirable result is not to be accomplished, under modern institutions, by antagonizing labor and capital, nor by shut-

ting out laborers for their refusal to combine in operations to secure larger profits for the whole. It demands the most cordial relations between capital and labor. It involves procuring every form of personal talent, by opening opportunities of culture and employment to all seekers. A high order of product is the bloom of a genial summer of co-operative industry. It has, moreover, its moral conditions, which no external arrangements can secure. It requires a different order of motives from those which find play in organizing labor parties or managing controversies with capital. It depends, after all that can be said and done, upon *conscience*; upon the sense of a spiritual and æsthetic value in production; upon just that thing in which, it is but commonplace to repeat, large capitalists and small capitalists generally, buyers and sellers of work, managers and operatives, are equally deficient, namely, the preference of quality to quantity, of faithful to gainful methods; upon the love of doing honest, thorough, handsome, serviceable work, in the firm conviction that *this* is what makes one a genuine laborer and producer, not the mere working a given number of hours, without regard to the character of the performance. This real respect for labor is the one great lack, amidst all our manifestoes of its rights and ovations to its name. This, when it comes, will be true labor reform, to be hailed with enthusiasm and faith. Its approach would be felt, first of all, in an awakening of shame and indignation at the base and ignorant work of all kinds which constantly wastes our resources with leakage that no man can measure, and demoralizes social relations with petty annoyances at every turn, while it slaughters life and sows disease on a portentous scale.

Most of what is now called labor reform consists, in fact, whatever the theory, in the partisan manipulation of societies devoted to isolated interests and exclusive claims. It tends to embitter the antagonism to capital with contempt for all rights of vested property, even for those returns which natu-

ral uses will command. The absence of feudal institutions might seem to secure America against socialist revolution, in Europe the natural reaction upon ages of organized wrongs. Yet this would be but a superficial view of the grounds of such revolution. America has no Vendôme Column to overturn, no palaces to fire, no priesthood to spoil and slay. But it is none the less true that there lies a perilous fascination for intensely democratic instincts in the theory that property has no rights which the majority may not abrogate at will. The authority of numbers, the worship of popular desire, is pushed to its extreme in the phase of republicanism through which we are passing. The true industrial problem for our politics is not, how shall majorities prove the extent of their power, but how shall they learn to respect the principle that rights of labor and rights of property are mutual guarantees. But there is need of something more than zeal for equality and the "vox populi, vox Dei," to render a community the true guardian of this safeguard of individual freedom. Only as the lesson of a mature self-control, such as the Celt, for example, has hitherto even failed to conceive, can it realize the primal truth, that security of ownership is labor's indispensable motive power, and reckless violation of ownership, its suicide.

Respect for all real rights and uses of property is as truly the basis of free industry as contempt for all but its spurious ones is the basis of slavery. I know the logic that would repeal all private ownership in land in the name of mankind. But I know that such shift of title would also repeal the Family and the Home, which forever rest thereon. Nor is the practical repeal of ethical relations between men to be greatly desired. Yet the International Labor Congress last year, at Basel, representing the democracy of labor reform, not only indulged in denunciation of landed property as such, but voted that society had the right, by decision of the majority, to abolish it altogether: mere rapine seriously proposed in the name of liberty. Proposals to abolish rent, interest, and

the profits of capital generally, have been heard at similar meetings in this country. The crusade against rent, of which Proudhon was the great French apostle, meant for him an assault on the very principle of ownership. And what, in fact, do all measures of this latter kind substantially mean? They would deprive property of the returns which it naturally yields its owners, when transferred for a time in the shape of opportunities to other persons, instead of being expended upon present enjoyment. Rent and interest represent legitimate profits of capital: being payment for accommodations absolutely required for the production of fresh values. If they were abolished, not only would labor lose an important stimulus, but all mutual aid would necessarily be resolved into the form of outright gift; so that the laborer would be stripped of his self-respect, having become a dependent on bounty for the supply of proper facilities in his avocation. And such demoralization would result that it would be necessary as a next step to abolish the benefaction, by denying the ownership claimed to reside in the giver. All private capital that would naturally find its uses as investment, or else as bounty, would thus have to be declared public property, and to be distributed where it is wanted, each needy applicant receiving a part of these confiscated surplus earnings of others, *as if it were his own*. How much earning there would be upon such tenures, or absence of tenure rather, and how much productive force, with this systematic spoliation in prospect or operation, it is easy to estimate.

All communistic systems have involved Proudhon's premise, "Property is theft;" some seeking to abolish it by free co-operation, others by coercive means, appealing to the State. As regards the latter class, by the way, two questions are pertinent. If property be theft, what must the State be in making itself sole proprietor? And who has ever constituted the joint body of producers, under the name of community, or whatever other name, prime owner of those laws and elements of nature which are the basis of all production?

Yet all anti-property movements are clearly associated with this belief in politico-industrial absolutism: either as tending towards it, intentionally or not, or else as flowing by natural inference from it.

With us the theoretic rejection of property is rare. But the undermining of its natural rights and uses is among the practical results of a theory which already inspires political organizations in the supposed interest of labor. I mean the theory that all personal rights flow from popular will, and that full industrial justice can be extemporized and enforced in the name of the State.

Note the radical vice of this theory. It ignores two essential facts. The first is that the public virtue which men can effect by outward regulation will not rise above the level of their own motive, and may fall far below it. And the second is that the great natural laws, which govern the complex relations of free men, cannot be made to run in predetermined grooves of policy. These laws must have the margin that becomes the vastness of their sphere, and the freedom of the individual minds and wills whose processes are their material. There are, of course, limits within which votes and laws for the regulation of the status of labor are effective and useful; but it is easy to overstep these limits, and to trench upon those organic natural methods which are larger and wiser than our plans. And when this is done, political manipulation and manœuvre have a clear track for working the widest and deepest demoralization; labor being at once the most private and the most public of spheres, feeding every spring of personal motive and universal good.

Organized "labor reform" in America is rapidly assuming the aspect here indicated. It is becoming an unrestrained appeal to the forces of political combination; an absolute faith in the all-sufficiency of programmes drawn up in the interest of a "laboring class," and enacted into laws, to settle every element of this most delicate and complex of problems. It seems to have no conception of the existence of any limits,

either to what political autocracy, thus exercised, *can* accomplish, or to what the community may properly ask or expect it to accomplish. Thus the National Labor Party proposes that Congress should perform the function of "so regulating the interest on bonds and the value of currency as to effect an equitable distribution of the products of labor between money or non-producing capital and productive industry"! An omnipotent Congress indeed, and omniscient too, that shall effect a just division of the profits of industry, and equitable relations in trade, by declaring from time to time, through some mysterious divination of the public mind, that a piece of paper currency shall pass for so much in the market, or that government loans shall pay so much or so little to the lender! What conception of the laws of human nature, or of its liberties, or of the sources of industrial inequalities and injustice can men have, who expect such legislation, fluctuating, imperfect, itself dependent on party interests and the strongest forces in the market, to impose these vast results upon that whole complex of competitive passions and untraceable relations which we call the business world? The same programme in which this stupendous regeneration is laid out as the work of Congress proposes that laws enacted for the purpose shall be executed through the wisdom of a "board of management," to be selected, it would seem, by the "labor party" itself, when it shall have reached the political ascendancy requisite for its aims. As a further result of these and other political measures, "all able-bodied intelligent persons" are to be caused to "contribute to the common stock, by fruitful industry, a sum equal to their own support;" and legislation in general is to be "made to tend as far as possible to equitable distribution of surplus products." To what extent the confiscation of such surplus of personal property by popular majorities shall be needed for the accomplishment of this last result is not yet in question. But the substance of the belief is this. A ready-made system of regulations, covering the whole field of industrial activity, can take up the motive forces of civili-

zation in its hands, and shape them like potter's clay into an unknown equity, whose very determination nevertheless defies all our existing social wisdom, and depends on a spirit of co-operation yet to be created and diffused!

The managers of the Eight-hour movement promise yet greater things. The enactment of their programme is not only to effect the increase of wages and intelligence, needed to undermine the whole wages system, but will "secure such distribution of wealth that poverty shall finally become impossible."* Such the miracles of legislation. It can decide the terms on which labor shall be bought and sold; abolish competition among laborers; set aside the working of demand and supply! It shall even reconstruct human nature; make it impossible for men to wrong or to be wronged, and free them from the natural penalties for indolence, thriftlessness, and vice! Can the illusions of materialism further go?

This dream of political autocracy especially busies itself with treating the *currency* as an independent element whose character is to be fixed, like everything else, by pure force of legislation. Settle by law what precise value this representative of all values shall represent, and are we not in a way to abolish at once the crime of being rich and the outrage of being poor? If only our money medium would stand for just what we legislate it to be! Not long since, labor reformers proposed what was called a "labor-currency," to be substituted for gold and silver, as well as for bank-notes supposed to represent specie, because incapable of being made like these, the material of monopoly and speculation. The circulating medium recognized in all the markets of the world was to be set aside for legal-tender "certificates of service," or "free money, based on commodities to be furnished anywhere at cost;" as if such ambiguities of phrase and arbitrary processes could suggest any guarantee for a circulating medium, or such narrow theories of its representative value answer the

* Letter of Boston Eight-hour League to the Working-men of New York.
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demands of trade. What "commodities" may mean in the dialect of our labor parties it may be possible in some degree to imagine; but how should a currency of commodity-notes, from free banks or elsewhere, help abolish monopoly and speculation? The whole basis of the expectation must lie in assuming a superior virtue in the control of the circulating medium by a commodity-making class, in comparison with all owners of surplus means under the present forms of currency. Alas! the real problem is a deeper one: how to free labor *in all forms* from the spirit of monopoly and over-speculation. It is but an aggravation of the general misery to invite us to escape these vices by assuming that the direct producer of material commodities alone is free from them, and that he has exclusive mission to expel them by political enactment from those whom he regards as outside his class.

The National Labor Programme follows up its very just demands for the prohibition of monopolies, with a call for enactments against "importing coolies or other servile labor." In the actual absence of any such importation, the meaning manifestly is that Chinese cheap labor should be excluded by law; in other words, that a monopoly should at once be secured in behalf of native workmen as against this kind of immigration. And this proceeds upon the ground that men cannot sell their labor at a cheaper rate than labor parties dictate without being slaves, and that strangers should have no share in the opportunity to learn by their own experience the American arts of raising wages and shortening times of labor. Similar measures against immigrant labor are being inaugurated by the English labor reformers, in defiance of their own long-cherished theories of free trade. When American legislation, we care not in whose interest, or at whose dictation, yields itself to this exclusive policy towards industrious immigrants, it will have proved false to the cosmopolitan faith which has hitherto distinguished us as the nation of nations, and built up our noblest traditions and hopes. Let the old world's experience of shutting out whole classes from the free

competitions of labor suffice. And let us be duly watchful against admitting as representative of the real interests of productive industry the efforts of special parties to subject its free movement to excessive governmental regulation, in their own behalf. We have had warning of what may be done even in the name of the rights of labor, in the shameful disqualifications that have been imposed upon the Chinese in California. One more illustration may suffice.

In the whole scheme for enfranchising the working class proposed by the National Labor Congress there is not one syllable that breathes of encouraging woman in the free choice of occupation, or of securing equal pay to both sexes for equal service. This great social duty may well have been left out of the political programme on account of its manifestly lying beyond the sphere of law,—though an amendment giving suffrage to women might deserve to have been mentioned as likely to facilitate the performance of it. Its absence from the Declaration of Principles also is good evidence how entirely the movement, as now pursued, is absorbed in the ambition for purely *political* management of the industrial interests of the country.*

Is absolutism organized by the State any better for Labor than it is for Religion? Yet even a republic may be drifting towards it. It is a grave error to forget the natural limits to

* Resolutions passed by a State Convention of the Labor Party, held at Framingham, Mass., while this article was in press, deserve notice as a local movement in behalf of the political and industrial rights of woman. The demand for these rights has reached a degree of recognition in this State, which enables it to command more or less respect from all political parties. But the facts relating to the *National* Labor Movement remain as above stated. There are many good elements in these Framingham resolutions: but we are far from endorsing their extreme statement that labor, in their sense of the word, is "the creator of all wealth;" or their inter-necine war on wages, involving as it would, not only the overthrow of certain unjust or degrading conditions of labor service merely, but actual prohibition by law of that free determination in what form one shall sell his labor to others, which is the proper meaning of a contract for wages.

the power of laws in determining the relations of industry. But it is a much graver error to give over the cause of labor to that kind of personal management by which political organizations secure victory and spoils; to get up a new political party to supplant existing ones, upon every issue that arises between the industrial elements; to expend the force that should be employed in co-operative movements upon the broadest basis of sympathy, in feeding political ambitions, substituting personalities for principles, and heaping the fuel of party bitterness upon every smouldering ember of discord in factory and shop. It is of course easy to demand indignantly, if labor is to be denied the common right of political combination to make laws for its own protection. The answer is that the question is absurd. Labor is no abstract, distinct interest of this kind. It is the universal life—the people themselves in their productive energy—and every time the people go to the ballot-box they express their will, more or less wisely, concerning its interests. This is the constant fact, this the whole meaning of American politics, and no believer in our institutions would think of disparaging it: though they certainly come near to doing so, whose notions of “a laboring class” contract their definition of labor within arbitrary limits. But this is what we do believe. The genuine appeal of labor to political action in a free community will be known by the people’s speaking in some consentient and normal way, as having common interests, of which it must not be supposed as a whole to be either ignorant or regardless. In other words, its great political bodies will include the great mass of producers; are, indeed, mainly made up of such; and, in the main, will naturally represent the people’s instinctive good sense, as to what can and what cannot be accomplished for the right organization of labor by political methods. So that a party which has to be worked up outside and against them, yet on issues that cannot but have been familiar already to these free voting masses, gives but slight promise of reporting the real demands of labor.

An utterly impoverished and neglected class must indeed get its claims stated in whatever way is possible for it. But our labor-reform parties do not represent this advocacy of some distinctive stratum which politics has forgotten; they are not pleading for a dumb, disfranchised race, for slaves, shut out from all political hearing by national constitution and local law,—and certainly all labor claims *but* such as these can more readily get political recognition and power by inspiring the best among the great lines of public movement than by acting as the foe of all.—But it must be said further of such parties as have been described, that their conditions fit them much less for real service to labor, as a whole, than for adding complications of intrigue and strife. Believe as we may that the sway of capital over industrial machinery is grinding the workman into dust: your labor party must prove to us that its own passion for managing *political* machinery is serving him any better. It must tell us what good fruit is to be reaped by transforming the whole labor question into an open path for the reckless personalities and flatteries of the demagogue on his foray: a vantage ground for working upon blind suspicions and desires; whether by crusading against the public creditor and the owner of capital as public enemies, or by promising to make “poverty impossible” by laws enforcing high pay and short hours.

The theory, for instance, of a gigantic combination of capital as such to oppress and enslave labor, becomes in the hands of political management quite as gigantic a power for working up personal detraction and the misery of social distrust. Yet all the reckless suppression of the weak by the strong inherent in business methods, and all the rapacity of incorporated money power, when fully recognized, fails to warrant the theory itself. As commonly put, it cannot be shown to be other than pure delusion. It would seem difficult to ignore more thoroughly the position which labor actually holds in our civilization than they do who are continually exploiting this theory. That there are indeed whole

classes in its best centres requiring instant protection, personal, political, social, against unscrupulous systems and masters, should be plain enough to all: we advise every doubter of this to read without delay the facts and statistics brought out by the recent impressive Report of the Massachusetts Labor Bureau. But it is equally plain that laboring men as such are in this country neither discredited by custom, nor discouraged by legal disqualification. Industry is in honor such as it never had in any land or age. There is not a township in New England that does not shine with tokens of its large rewards to farmer and mechanic. A man has not less but more prestige for belonging to the people: and to have been broadly educated, or to be very wealthy, is actually, other things being equal, a disadvantage in the race for public honors in comparison with having labored with the hands for daily bread. Labor systematically oppressed in a country whither the poor of all nations are fleeing in flocks from the caste systems of the old world! Labor systematically victimized in a country where it has such perfect liberty of association and such success in self-protection as to have rendered all separation of it from capital, even in speech, a self-contradiction: where, as numerical force, it is itself public sentiment and court of appeal, and capable of prosperity in exact proportion to its own self-respect! The industry of such a land is essentially one cause with social order and progress, with morality and religion, with every instinct of humanity. And the labor movement that recognizes this breadth of function, not seeking the aggrandizement of a special body, nor imitating the exclusiveness of feudal guilds, but clothing itself in large and free co-operation for the removal of all obstacles to honest self-support, in fact appeals to sympathies that move through all paths and conditions: it will find the common atmosphere of social life itself at its command, as a freely conducting medium. How should capitalists plan or even hope to hinder the prosperous development of such a force? It is impossible that its drawbacks should lie any-

where but in motive forces that operate in the *mass of men*, without regard to class or function. They are no more referable to capital as such than to labor as such. And all agitation is blind and wasteful till it is recognized that there is not and cannot be in these old free States to-day any general systematic attempt or hope to enslave labor as such: that there is only the eager passion of *men who have much for making more, and of men who have less to have as much as they*; that this, the unbridled rage in all spheres and occupations, is what now breeds, and what *would* breed, under the best organized scheme for controlling capital any reformer can devise, whatever miseries now befall honest labor. This is the Ishmaelite, to whom capital and labor alike are free spoil, and who snaps his fingers at all laws and guarantees. He wars on no one class more than on another: he simply pillages society in the right of the stronger. It is foolish to mistake this unchartered enemy for the intentional plot of a capitalist class against labor. The master who pays his workman the lowest pittance, or tries to control his vote by driving him out of employ, has no special war against labor as such. Will he not starve out his fellow capitalists as well, or swallow them up as readily as he does his workmen, when they stand in his way? And as for those, on the other hand, who would have capital stripped of all opportunity and control, and brought under the rule of manual labor as the only productive force, and as entitled to all the fruits of production,— what would *they* too be likely to do with the rights of weaker laboring men could they thus despoil property and wield its powers? Their cry of “Down with capital” is the raving of men befooled by the very greed they charge all capital with organizing for their destruction. What but mischief comes of blind choice and blind rejection, “Down with this,” and “Up with that,” impelled by the fiercest of despots that can sway manners and wield the liberties and laws?

The interests of Labor can be advanced only by what is done in the interest of the whole of society, and with fair esti-

mation of all the elements of productive movement. It is to be presumed that with the exception of those who live by speculating in fictitious values, or who live as mere drones by the toil of others, the only unproductive classes,—everybody is more or less sensitive to the status of labor, and feels, more or less consciously, the harm that befalls every component force in the process of industry. No abuses in the supposed interest either of accumulated wealth or of manual labor can give just ground for disparaging the public uses that flow from both these elements. The broadest appreciation of uses alone can correct all abuse; a reconciling spirit whose war is only against the common foe.

Schemes, for instance, to drive large capitalists out of any fair field of employment for wealth, or artificially to bar out labor that seeks that field, do not solve the problem of false proportion between the price of food and the price of labor. Our help must come from the science and the experience that can make it clear to all reasonable persons how mischievous to the whole community are railroad monopolies and food speculations, holding back products from their natural markets, enormously raising their cost to the consumer; high tariffs that enhance the cost of production, and so diminish the market for the product; large land grants to monopolists; general overtrading, stimulated by the powers of machinery into such fluctuation of prices as to drive all profit from the channel of fair distribution into that of self-preservation in the competitive strife; dishonest trading, by stock or gold gamblers, in the hopes and fears of all classes; and the want of co-operation among laborers to hold and work capital equitably, and to educate labor to a skill which shall command, as skilled labor always will, a high reward. And these real causes of the false relations between the prices of food and labor being duly recognized, the cure comes in a common effort, wisely distinguishing what can come by legislation from what cannot, to remove them as foes to the common good; not as if a laboring class only were ordained to get the

benefit of the reform, nor with the aim to put down, or to despoil, any of those elements on which all depend. By this spirit, which we believe is destined to work its way to triumph, the scope of industrial reform will be widened to match the magnitude of the evils that now threaten us. It will tell alike on laborer and money-holder, in ethical as well as in political directions. Its programmes will not stop in schemes for enforcing short hours and high wages for those who are already employed upon terms that give them vantage to demand better; they will look to the starvation wages of thousands of sewing-women, and the miserable pay of female labor generally; to the friendlessness of young immigrants into cities where labor is uncertain and fluctuating; to the threatening increase of the sum of ignorance, intemperance, and squalid living. It will pursue and punish the reckless disregard of physiological laws which packs laborers into unventilated rooms or exhausts them in unhealthy forms of toil, or exposes them to perilous surroundings without such precautions against disaster as science can afford. It will bring to bear on the murderous dens of drunkenness and infamy that flourish under the assaults of law, the infinitely stronger batteries of labor as a public sentiment and a personal force of example and of aid. It will make war upon ignorance of physical and economical laws, upon loose, unhealthy, wasteful habits; upon the unthrift that is the father of vice and the dupe of political jugglery. It will stop the shameless gains of tenement speculators by providing cheap and healthy lodging-houses for the poor; opening easy paths to the ownership of real estate. It will press everywhere the claims of home; and facilitate in every way the taste for those domestic duties and interests that lead men to steady work and steady saving; and propagate the ambition, not to break down capital as a fraud and a foe, but to possess it as the means of personal culture and public service. And in view of an unprecedented political corruption, which no mere party changes can improve, it will insist on making office the permanent reward of

worth and fitness instead of the carcass for unclean creatures to prey on, to the nation's undoing. It will understand that of all follies there can be none greater than that of entrusting the task to office-seekers who skillfully work up the public sense of official misconduct, loudly proclaiming their own all-sufficiency; and whose sweeping assaults on the representatives of the people are of course mere contumely of the people themselves. For this is but to call on Scylla to save us from Charybdis. That well-meaning reformers should vote men into office whom they do not respect, in the belief that their abilities can thus be made available, and that policy alone will bind them to prefer the public good to schemes of private ambition,—is sheer trifling with the life of the State. How can there be any more public security than there is private virtue, known and trusted with affairs? If you cannot find this, and must commit yourselves to the chances of political good behavior from the opposite quality, it is a confession that all is lost. They who teach that the question of the motives and convictions of a candidate is of small account compared with his probable uses for a particular end, because we are not to look for saints in politics, demoralize all who believe them, and deal death to those ideals on which our liberty depends. God may utilize all qualities. But is the political manager "a special providence" to save the nation, after he has taught it not to enquire what men purpose, if they will but promise to execute its will?

The ideal aim of Labor is to identify itself with every form of personal and public culture; to represent the fullness of productive life; the brain and heart and arm of civilization. It is worse than time wasted to classify the friends and foes of this work by parties or programmes: the point of moment is the quality of individual life. Justice to Labor is the finest of the fine arts; the art of justice itself, and honor and love; it is large appreciation and faithful performance; the art of loyalty to the best and of service to the whole. It is the light that sees and the love that shares. What signify political

combinations beyond the amount they contain of that true personality in men and women which alone renders the social atmosphere fit for breathing? To what end will you concentrate rapacity and multiply waters of bitterness? It is no less than crime in labor reformers to promise their followers immense gains from laws and regulations about labor, while yet never daring to tell them plainly that there shall be no more relief to the poor in demanding and making such laws than what they themselves render possible by their contribution of qualities which political management or class ascendancy cannot give. In the interest of the whole, let it be insisted that our republican watchword, "The dignity of labor," shall have rational meaning. And let us stand at the outset upon this conviction. Crass ignorance, exclusiveness in rich or poor, democratic or aristocratic; coarse and sensual habits; the arts of demagogues, and that love of flattery and worship of noisy self-assumption which gives them following; a blind antagonism to whatever commands special advantages in the competition for wealth,—all ways, in short, that unfit for appreciating a generous culture of the tastes and sympathies, and for respecting, even if one does not understand, the functions of art, science, religion, discredit one's cry for "honor to labor," and for "the rights of labor," and unfit him to stand as its champion or to advocate its cause.

The large and free recognition of uses, visible and invisible, moral, intellectual, social, and on one level for both sexes and every race, is labor's true capital, and capital's real labor. Issue this currency far and wide: it will not depreciate, like greenbacks, by increase; it will not heap like gold in gambling and monopoly. Maintain this sole guarantee of personal freedom and culture, amidst the mechanism of consolidation which, without it, would suppress them altogether. Join hands, all parties, on this, the education of a free people to the spirit that civilizes, not barbarizes; lifting the weak and blind with all the leverage of its united vision and strength,

and calling forth every brain and hand to the self-supporting work that redeems and dignifies man.

Let me say in closing that I hold Free Labor in America to be the true Emancipation of Religion. It has nobler function than to subserve the blind destructive reaction on all intuition and faith against whose leadership the great soul of Mazzini was obliged to warn the labor reformers in his young Italy. It means what America means,—not an enforced labor creed, but the integral culture of humanity. To honor constructive labor is to associate the normal exercise of every faculty with what deserves *highest* honor; in other words, with Religion. And so religion becomes natural, human, unmonopolized, secular. It teaches man no longer the old self-contempt, as a gift by supernatural grafting, or miraculous interference, or by special mediatorial book, church, sect, seasons, forms, that disparage life itself; but self-respect as the voice of his familiar instincts, insights, energies, in the constancy of universal law. What could effect such deliverance but free labor's endowment of the whole human capacity with a sacred purpose and authority? "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," says the Jesus of John. That is very grand: nothing perhaps grander in the New Testament. But this is grander still: for *man* to say, *as* man, as a people, as human faculty in the broadest application, "God worketh and I work." Make religion as broad, as practical, as natural as labor, and religion for the first time in history stands on universal principles, and humanity can become one with God.





