On Picket Duty.

The New York "World" would have Congress punish Carnegie by cutting down the tariff on iron and steel at least one-half. The "Sun" rightly condemns such a measure as ruinous to the operatives in the iron and steel industry, comparing it to "the Oriental method of punishing a man against whom you have a grudge by committing suicide on his doorstep." But the "Sun" fails to point out that Congress might deal Carnegie as severely as a blow and at the same time confer a great blessing on the operatives by abolishing the tax on private banks which prevents business men from competing with Carnegie in the purchase of labor and the sale of steel. Yet the "Sun" knows this to be a fact. It could not say so, however, without endangering the standing of its editor as a member of the brotherhood of thieves.

The editor of the New York "Sun" drew an interesting parallel the other day between Andrew Carnegie and a hypothetical farmer. This farmer was supposed to have ten farm laborers in his employ, who, objecting to a reduction of their wages, resisted such reduction by arming themselves and taking forcible possession of the farm and buildings. The duty of the farmer under these circumstances, the "Sun" explained, "would be to call upon the authorities of the State to put him in possession of his own; and the State ought to do it, if it required every constable, sheriff, and regiment." There is not the slightest doubt that the "Sun" selected the case of a farmer for this parallel because the employing farmer is nearly always a hard-working manual laborer himself; the "Sun's" chief anxiety just now being to delude its readers with the idea that, in standing up for Carnegie, it is standing up for principle and the right of property, and that it would stand up as stiffly for principle and the right of property if the property in question were that of a manual laborer. Now, a day or two after the appearance of this article General Snowdon's troops marched through Pennsylvania. They spent one night at Radebaugh, where lives a farmer named John Smith. During the night they tramped down John Smith's wheat and rye fields, robbed his potato patch, his onion bed, his hen-coop, and his pigpen, and tore down his fences to use for fire-wood in roasting the product of his farm. The next day I searched the columns of the "Sun" to find its demand on Governor Pattison to call out somebody (not the troops, for they were already out and were themselves the offenders) to protect John Smith's property from ravage by the State soldiers. I found no such demand. Instead I found a hunchman account of the affair occupying nearly a column, written in a style which indicated that the editor of the "Sun" regarded this wanton assault on Farmer John Smith's property as one of the best jokes ever perpetrated. He seemed especially delighted with the fact that, when John Smith sought redress, one of the regimental surgeons had been introduced to him as the General and had gravely assured him that the State would pay the bill. Evidently, in professing anxiety a day or two before about the property of the farmers, the editor of the "Sun" had been giving the laborers "guff." He is not interested in the property of laborers. He cares nothing for any form of honest labor. The only labor that he wants protected is that of the capitalists and editors who spend all their efforts in devising and defending means whereby to rob the people. The editor of the "Sun" belongs to the brotherhood of thieves.

When, shortly after the "Twentieth Century" changed hands, I predicted that it would become an organ of State Socialism, some of my friends thought my prophecy a baseless one. I wonder if they have read the "Twentieth Century" of July 14, containing an editorial declaration of adhesion to the People's Party and its platform. The paper which has always avoided and denounced politics and political methods now goes into politics and adopts political methods; the paper which has always opposed majority-rule proposes to decide the most momentous questions by majority-rule; the paper which has always decried compulsory taxation to be robbery now demands a graduated income tax; the paper which has always favored private ownership and enterprise now calls for government ownership of railways; the paper which has always insisted that land belongs to its occupant and user now declares that land is the property of all the people; the paper which has always maintained that the issue of money should be left to free competition now denies the right of anyone but the government to issue money; in short, the paper which has always seen the only hope of progress in the diminution and elimination of government now desires that "the powers of the government should be extended to the end that oppression, injustice, and poverty shall eventually cease in the land." Was I right or wrong, my friend? Has or has not the "Twentieth Century" become an organ of State Socialism? In one respect, however, I must admit my error. I had thought that the opposing force to this retrogressive movement would be found in J. W. Sullivan, Mr. Pentecost's old associate editor. But it turns out that he is the active force in it, the publishers, on the contrary, giving every evidence of pursuing a broad and liberal policy. Of the publishers there is no reason to complain; one can at most regret. Having bought the paper, it is proper that they should conduct it in harmony with their views of social problems. But what is the price at which Mr. Sullivan has been induced to burn what he once worshipped and worship what he once burned? This,—the insertion in the People's Party platform of a recommendation of the plan, and the press to favorably consider Mr. Sullivan's two-cent nostrum, the Referendum. It's a pauly mess of potage for which to sell a birthright. Such ease in the turning of one's coat is the policy which Mr. Sullivan tries to dignify under the name of Opportunism. I think I could describe it more plainly, if less politely, in simpler language. These euphemisms ill become a man who has chided Proudhon for using misleading terms.

A Complete File of Liberty For Sale.

Readers of Liberty desirous of possessing the early volumes, now so rare, should remember that bids for them must reach me not later than August 13. The highest bidder will be given his choice of the following three sets, the second bidder to have second choice and the third bidder to take the remaining set:
1. A complete file of the first eight volumes of Liberty, bound.
2. A set of the first three volumes of Liberty, bound in half morocco, red; first and second volumes bound together, the third separately.
3. Some as No. 2.

The Bandit.

Dedicated to Andrew Jackson.
The bandit on his prancing steed Is fine for men to see; His gay attire and striking deed Both ticket you and me.
He passes, and we go our way; The murdered in the mud Are buried and concealed every day We look upon their blood.
The bandit lets us share his spoil, A pleasant fellow he, The plundered with their loud turmoil Chanting the waves at sea.
And the dead men, labor worn and old, Are ug'ly in our road; We will not think the hands we hold Are red with human blood.
So to the bandit on his steed, Three cheers and three times three! The dead and wounded roll indeed, But drink, and let them be.

Miroslav Bounèl.
Truly, every word! Golden truth! Anarchistic truth! But the bearing of this truth, as Capu's Cattle could say, lies in the application of it. Applied to the conduct of the Homestead strikers, this principle of equal liberty, of which the "Sun's" words are an expression, instead of condemning it as the "Sun" pretends, palliates and even excuses it: for, before these strikers violated the equal liberty of others, their own right to equality of liberty had been wantonly and continuously violated. But applied to the conduct of capitalists generally, it condemns it utterly, for the original violation of liberty in this matter is traceable directly to them.

This is no wild assertion, but a sober statement of fact, as I will explain. It is not enough, however true, to say that, "if a man has labor to sell, he must find some one with money to buy it"; it is necessary to add the much more important truth that, if a man has labor to sell, he has a right to a free market in which to sell it, a market in which no one shall be prevented by restrictive laws from honestly obtaining the money to buy it. If the man with labor to sell has not this free market, then his liberty is violated and his property virtually taken from him. Now, no market has been denied to the Homestead workers by the Homestead, but to the members of the entire civilized world. And the men who have denied it are the Andrew Carnegies. Capitalists of whom this Pittsburg forge-master is a typical representative have placed and keep upon the statute-books all sorts of prohibitions and taxes (of which the customs tariff is among the least harmful) designed to limit and effective in limiting the number of bidders for the labor of those who have labor to sell. If there were no tariffs on imported goods, if titles to unoccupied land were not recognized by the State; above all, if the right to issue money were not vested in a monopoly,—bidders for the labor of Carnegie's employees would become so numerous that the offer would soon equal the laborer's product. Now, to solemnly tell these men who are thus prevented by law from getting the wages which their labor would command in a free market that they have a right to reject any price that may be offered for their labor is undoubtedly to speak a formal truth, but it is also to utter a rotten commonplace and a cruel impertinence. Rather tell the capitalists that the laborer is entitled to a free market, and that, in denying it to him, are guilty of criminal invasion. This would be not only a formal truth, but an opportune application of a vital principle.

Perhaps it will be claimed in answer to this that the laborers, being voters, are responsible for any legal monopolies that exist, and are thereby debarred from pleading them as an excuse for violating the liberty of their employers. This is only true to the extent to which we may consider these laborers as the "foul's" punishers by the capitalists who are the "scoundrels" that "violence (in the form of enforced monopoly) is a friend of the workmen," which does not make it less unbecoming in the scoundrels to rebuke and punish the fools for any disastrous consequences that may arise out of this appalling combination of scoundrelism and folly.

Conspicuous among the scoundrels who have upheld these monopolies is the editor of the New York "Sun." If he tells truth today, he tells it as the devil quotes scripture,—to suit his purpose. He will never consent to an application of equal liberty in the interest of labor, for he belongs to the brotherhood of thieves who defraud the laboring class. It is only when they, the Anarchists, would meet him with cheerful acquiescence in its fullest application in the interest of capital. Let Carnegie, Dana & Co., first see to it that every law in violation of equal liberty is removed from the statute-books, if, after that, any laborers shall interfere with the rights of their employers, or shall use force upon inoffensive "seals," or shall attack their employers' watchmen, whether these be Pinkerton detectives, sheriff's deputies, or the State militia, I pledge myself that, as an Anarchist and in consequence of my Anarchist faith, I will be among the first to volunteer as a member of a force to repress these disturbers of order and, if necessary, sweep them from the earth. But while these invasive laws remain, I must view every forcible conflict that arises as the consequence of an original violation of liberty on the part of the employing classes, and, if any swelling is done, may the laborers hold the broom! Still, while my sympathies thus go with the under dog, I shall never cease to proclaim my conviction that the annihilation of neither party can secure justice, and that the only effective and certain way to bring about this result is to clear the State from the statute-book every restriction of the freedom of the market.

Political Duty: A Confession of Skepticism.

[Continued from No. 265.]

Having now found a sense in which the word "State" may be used without confusion and untruth, what have we? Simply a corporation like any other, having, of course, no objective reality,—not being real in the sense in which a tree or a man is said to be real, but existing in men's imaginings as an entity because it is convenient to group under one term objects which are similar, or which are together,—in short, as real as the New York Central Railroad Company or the Republican party, no more so and no less; composed of a limited number of people who recognize the combination as including them for certain purposes specified by agreement. Having thus defined the State, however, we are, apparently, as far as ever from assigning any source for the sweeping authority which its officers exercise; and in truth, unless the State can be shown to be something greater and higher than any portion however large of the inhabitants of its territory (which is highly improbable), it seems better wholly to eliminate the word from this discussion. For, if it be retained, they who defend its broad authority have still before them the task of accounting for it, as it is clearly impossible that an entity which exists only by courtesy of the imagination should be recognized, after its real nature has become known, as an original source of authority. With a view, therefore, to the pruning of useless matter from this article, I leave this convenient intermediary word to that quasi-metaphorical use for which alone it is fit, and proceed to seek directly for reasons why some men should be indolent in the habit of ruling over the rest.

Here is one of them: "Public officers should be obeyed in their lawful commands because their authority rests on the consent of the governed."
The consent of the governed! To whom does that refer? Obviously neither the United States nor any State, city, or town government has at any time the consent of all the governed within its borders to the things done under cover of its authority, — not always, even, to its general scheme. The kind of consent, then, which forms the actual basis of our government is the consent of those who are governed. With what fairness can a government thus based demand the obedience of those who do not consent?

Then, too, consider the multitude of people who are opposed to various details of government. Think of the numbers of people who hate all summarily laws, of those who believe in free trade, of those who think themselves unjustly taxed, — is not their name Legion? Remember the host of young people who come, every year, in this country, to the age when they are expected to stand as men and women among their fellows; suppose it were the custom (and a very good custom it would be to) to ask each, at such a time, after setting out the facts fully and fairly, if he or she were willing to abide by the existing scheme of government, to pay such taxes and endure such restrictions as should be fixed upon by the conventionally chosen officials. Would all consent? Would there not inevitably be some dissenting voices? And would not many who did consent be sorry for it, at times, afterwards?

Again, consider the Indian tribes, called, by a courtesy bitterly ironic, "the native nation," by those accurately described as the prey of the Politicians. See them, driven from lands which are theirs both by occupation and by treaty, ostensibly for their own good, but really for the gain of the land-boomer, that rascally product of the institution of Property in Land, — harried, cheated, starved, and, if they resist, murdered sometimes by United States troops! Is it not stretching, may, rendering the truth to say that these classes are governed, in these particulars, with their consent? Is not this, too, a hounding, this theory of the consent of the governed, as applied to government in the United States? It seems to me, — and I suggest, in the interest of some knowledge, that in the text-books of the future a fact: vote be added to the old Declaration, to read somewhat like this: "Inasmuch as it is highly improbable that any government covering any considerable territory has ever had, for a single day, the consent of all the governed within its borders, it is evident that some reason other than consent must be given, if the hypothesis of just governmental powers is to be mainained."

However, some few people may have been, in the last century, to set up a government that should in truth rest upon the consent of the governed, the idea must needs have been abandoned at the first making of rules for habitual control, based as they were, by a necessity of mental limitation, on the customs of Europe. For a government really resting on the consent of the governed, which means "the people governing themselves," if I may borrow a phrase which Mr. Bellamy has so mistakenly applied to the theory of the existing government, were so unlike anything we call government today that it would be generally considered, by people like those now living in civilized countries, as no government at all. Obviously, the amount and degree of consent to official acts that actually exist among us is, when considered as a basis for a strict obligation of obedience binding upon all, wholly insufficient.

But let us look at another reason:

"The men who are, for the time, in power, rule with the consent of the majority, and that is enough. The majority have a clear right to control the minority."

Now we approach the heart of the question. Control of the people in the name of the majority is the prevailing method of government in America, from Senate Chamber to Town Hall. Majority-rule, consent or no consent, is the theory of the American politician and his supporters, and, of all political theories, this is the one most thoroughly believed in and most widely exemplified among us.*

Let us examine it.

The theory of majority-right, stated baldly and applied illustratively to individuals, for the sake of greater clearness, is this:

Brown and Jones, because they are two and their neighbor Robinson is only one, have a sacred right to enforce upon him such regulations as they may decide to be for the good of all three, and Robinson is in duty bound to obey said regulations with the rest. If, however, the unsatisfied Robinson can contrive to win either of his neighbors to his way of thinking, though the obligation to obey will be as sacred as ever, the object of obedience may be very materially changed, in accordance with the Robinsonian opinions or prejudices. No matter how tyrannical, how whimsical, how progressive, or how retrogressive a law may be, the only essential point, so far as the duty of obedience is concerned, is that its supporters shall be more numerous than those opposed to it, — that is the theory of majority-right. Of course it goes without saying that we do not have majority-rule, or even a close approximation to it, in this country. What we do have is the rule of the majority of the representatives of the majority of the adult males, varied by one-man-power and ring manipulation, — which is not the same thing.

But suppose we did have majority-rule: would a man who dissented from the judgment of the majority and disobeyed it necessarily deserve condemnation? Does any deep moral significance attach to numbers? Is there any law written in man's perceptions, or in the natural order of things, that sanctions so crude a method? Can he who makes the approval of the multitude his criterion of wisdom truthfully claim any higher sanction for his decision than if he had selected a few counsellors and adopted their decision? It is possible that a halo of any thing more sacred than mere prudence crowns a custom under which, as Carlyle says, "the vote of Judas Iscariot is as good as that of Jesus Christ."" Do thoughtful people, in non-political affairs, stigmatize a man for preferring individuality to the following of prevailing customs?

No, the thing is absurd, on the face of it and in the depths of it, and only goes to show what a wonderful variety of foolishness is proclaimed from time to time as sacred and binding upon all. When it can be soberly stated and accepted that the old man who is lugged in to break a tie vote is sure to be on the right side, and therefore ought to have the privilege of binding or losing the consciences of the rest on the question at issue, it will be time to adopt majority-right as an article of faith, — not before.

*The reprinted text here continues, discussing the implications and practicalities of majority rule in American politics, and concludes by critiquing the concept as it is applied in practice, highlighting the potential for injustice and the absence of genuine consent in the decisions made by the majority. It then shifts to a discussion of Anarchism, as exemplified by the New York "Sun," and the implications of this approach for the relationship between the governed and their government. The text concludes with reflections on the role of dissent and the pursuit of individual rights against majority rule, emphasizing the importance of critical thinking and personal autonomy in the face of collective decision-making processes.
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