IS THERE A JUSTIFICATION FOR STRIKES?

TO THE EDITOR OF THE SUN—*Sir:* Your paper circulates largely among the classes usually denominated workingmen. In the broad sense of the term "labor," the only difference between such persons and I am, and the man who works with his hands, is that I work with my head. His function is to apply the little muscles to matter; mine is to apply the little intellectual faculty that I possess to ideas. Both of us are workingmen. Moreover, in another aspect also, we stand upon a perfect equality; that is to say, while I have no interest whatever in railroad or in other corporate or individual property that can be affected by a strike, the man to whom I compare myself has, I assume, just as little. If he happens to be a workman on a railroad, or in any other business in which capital is invested, his interest in the safety and productiveness of that capital is far more direct and immediate than mine, for mine is at most only the remote and indirect interest of the whole community in the general prosperity. I have thought, therefore, that I may possess an impartial discussion of the legal and moral aspects of the combinations called "strikes," by one who has neither sympathies with capital, might be read by those who are usually called "the laboring classes," as the suggestions of a friend. I have noticed, not only among the "strikers" of late disturbances, but in a portion of some other classes, and in a part of the press, a disposition to draw a distinction between a "strike," as a means of coercing employers into a compliance with certain demands of their employees, and the violence of a mob which proceeds to the destruction of property and the overthrow of all law and public order. Many of the "strikers" sincerely believe in this distinction; and as a large proportion of them are men of sufficient intelligence to be reasoned with, when the excitement has subsided it may be worth while to examine this supposed distinction. It is of infinite importance to their future welfare that they should distinctly understand what is the duty that society owes to the preservation of the rights of property; and in order that they should understand this, they must learn what are the true extent and the necessary limitations of their own rights as laboring men.

In order to test the shape of right of striking, it is necessary to state what a "strike" is, according to the view of the sincere and well-disposed part of those who believe in such a right. In their view a "strike" is a combination among men in a certain employment, whereby they agree that simultaneously they will cease to work, unless the employer complies with the demands which they make upon him. Generally, if not universally, the dispute relates to a question of wages, and may be proposed sympathetic