SOCIAL POLITICS.

The Movement of the California Workingmen.

KEARNEY, THE AGITATOR

Communistic Principles and Sanguinary Threats.

REVOLUTION INVOKED.

Rapid Growth of a Terrible Popular Power.

A BUDDING ROBESPIERRE.

Vigilance Committees Organizing for a Struggle.

SAN FRANCISCO, April 29, 1878.

I have deferred sending any communication relative to the agitation here among the workingmen till I could glean from the leaders themselves a clear understanding of what they really aimed to accomplish, what means they purposed to employ, the whole field of their operations and what was the probability of their success. I have listened to them in the courts, in prison cells, in their halls, mass meetings, on the streets, within the family circle, and I aim to give them a fair and impartial representation.

A NEW POLITICAL PARTY.

Whatever ideas may be formed in the East of the character of the present leaders in this agitation and of their intemperate language, boastful and threatening as it may be and frequently is, an investigation into the elements that are disturbed and the forces at work here leads the mind to the conclusion that a new political party has assuredly been founded on the Pacific coast, which will spread throughout the United States as Chartism did over England and Scotland thirty years ago, and unless some terrible blundering fatality should follow the footsteps of its leaders it may one day become the dominant and governing power of the nation. With such a fact possible, and by many considered probable, I here present to the readers of the HERALD an intelligible statement, or *résumé*, of what are assumed to be facts and which the near future must, in a measure, soon confirm or as emphatically controvert.

THE LEADERS.

When the riots in Pennsylvania last summer were at their worst, and the "strikers" were apparently "masters of the situation," the "hoodlum" element of this city, aided by some unemployed men, thought that their opportunity had come to attack the Chinese, those who employed them, and the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, as the great carriers between the Asiatic and Pacific coasts, who had brought them to the country, but, through the ready aid of a "Committee of Safety," composed of all classes of citizens, the uprising was soon effectively squelched, and but little property was destroyed.

The feeling of uneasiness then experienced by the general public could not, however, be so easily got rid of, for the cause of irritation—the presence of the Chinese—remained, and it was clear to every thinking person that, so long as there was a large number of citizens, male and female unemployed, and being reduced to beggary and actual starvation—as has occurred in some cases—there could be no permanent peace in the city; and ever since the riot of last July it may truthfully be said San Francisco has never been wholly free from excitement.

NO AFFILIATION WITH HOODLUMS.

In consequence of this seemingly uninterrupted agitation it is generally believed that "the workingmen's party" is but the continuation and enlargement of the riotous hoodlum crowd that tried to fire Chinatown and the Pacific Mail Company's property; but there is no truth in the allegation, and it is very silly for politicians to continue to make such statements, for they only aggravate the working classes, array them against the upper class and blind the public as to the true nature of the issue that has begun here between capital and labor.

The now notorious Dennis Kearney, the "President of the Workingmen's Party," was actually in the ranks of the Committee of Safety last July and did his part in the suppression of the rioters; he had no affiliation with the hoodlums whatever. Those riots did, however, in one sense give rise to this new political party, for it awakened in Kearney and others of his acquaintance a train of thought on the labor question which soon afterward found voice on the corners of the streets, and from that grew into an organization which numbers to-day—only six months from the date of its birth—hundreds of thousands of active working members and sympathizing friends.

DENNIS KEARNEY.

As his name would indicate Dennis Kearney is an Irishman, from the county of Cork, and is now thirty-one years of age. He came to New York when eleven years old and from that time onward, for ten years, he sailed between Boston, New York and Baltimore in the Connecticut, Bounding Billow, Joseph Cheston and other vessels. He arrived in this city in 1868, as first officer of the Shooting Star, from Alexandria, Va. He followed the seafaring business for about five years on this coast, then found work on the wharf as a foreman of laborers and soon after he became a boss drayman on a small scale. His personal appearance, from an intellectual standpoint, is anything but attractive. His hair comes low down on his forehead and is thick and towsy, of the buffalo style. His face is not repulsive, but it is not winning or enchanting by any means, and he has managed to get it well browned or takes pride in keeping it dirty. In his habiliments he is indifferent to the allurements of the artist tailor. He is slouchy in his makeup and in his gait. Of course, he has honestly earned his costume and has a right to wear what he pleases; but there is a suspicion that he might be less popular if he dressed better. A Diogenes is more to the liking of the multitude than is a Beau Brummell, and Kearney shows his appreciation of that predilection in sticking to the drayman's well worn toggery and eschewing new broadcloth.

His training for public speaking was attained at Sunday debates on the social and political questions of the day in a small reformers' hall in this city. He is neither slow of speech nor delicate in utterance. His language is of the ordinary street stamp, largely interspersed with strong adjectives and cursing epithets. He seems perfectly indifferent about the judgment of others and evidently regards Dennis Kearney as the best judge of what he should say and how he should say it. He is a splendid specimen of an earnest, uneducated, ambitious man of the multitude, who is willing to risk his liberty for leadership in a movement which he no doubt believes ought to succeed, and he has most effectually impressed the working classes that he is pre-eminently qualified for the work he has undertaken, though there are in his "party" already some who are not afraid to severely criticise him for both his uncouth language and unbridled temper.

HIS ELOQUENCE.

Kearney's style of speech is of the sledgehammer order, and he is never particular about who gets the blow. He seems not to aim at presenting a logical and coherent statement of his grievances which the masses complain of, nor does he stop for argument or indulge in elaboration. He deals in sharp, cutting sentences, contenting himself with strong, direct and indirect attacks on the policy of the governing classes and assertions of what constitute the rights of the masses and their determination to vindicate those rights at all hazards.

An excellent view of his extraordinary language is taken from one of his speeches, and for which he was arrested, tried for using incendiary language and acquitted:—

"I am glad to see the cooks of San Francisco preparing to make fishballs. At the outset we had a great deal to say about powder and bullets, but this was so disagreeable to our rulers that we changed it to fishballs and coffee. We want you to make those fishballs, and when they are ready we will fire them for you. Some one said to me this morning, 'You are going to cut our throats.' I told him, 'I don't care a damn whose throat is cut so long as it is not mine.' We are going to drive these Chinamen out. That is the object of this movement. How we are going to do it is the grand secret, which will not be revealed just yet. Last night I went to the City Hall, where the Legislative delegation was in session. I told them I was a reporter on the *Open Letter*, and they said I could not come in. Other reporters went in and ward politicians were admitted, but the workingmen were not allowed a representation. We have nothing more to do with the members of the Legislature except to protest against their passing laws to oppress us. If they don't heed our protest our watchword shall be 'hemp,' and when we meet them with the coiled rope it will be time enough for them to have me up before the Grand Jury, as they propose to do next Monday. I don't care a damn for their Grand Jury. To hell with their Grand Jury. I defy them. What do I care if they put me in jail? I can make my head work my way out, and when I am once free again I will annihilate every one of these hell hounds."

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"Now we are ready. We are ready to come right to the scratch and expel every one of the moon-eyed lepers. We are ready to do it. If the ballot fails, the bullet. That 'if' must come in. If the ballot fails we are ready to use the bullet."

Alluding to the millionnaires of the Central Pacific Railroad, whose palatial residences are high on a hill overlooking the city, he used the following language:—

"I tell you the thieves that infest Nob Hill will find themselves bound hand and foot with ball and chain. They know it, and they are going to use every means to get you to break the law and turn our quiet meetings into riots, but they can't do it. You don't propose to break into houses, do you? (No.) They say I have disgusted the Nob Hill millionnaires. I plead guilty, and shall continue to disgust them until I make it as hot as a seething hell for them."

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"We are going to use force now to carry out our plans. Is that your wish? (All hands up.) Let the Vigilantes, if they dare, go outside the law. How many of you have muskets? (Twenty or thirty hands up.) That's good. Form yourselves into a military organization, and when the next steamer comes are you ready to march down to the wharf and stop the leprous Chinamen from landing? (Cries of 'Yes, yes.') I will make all the necessary preparations and buy up all the second hand guns we can get. We will call upon the Mayor and the general government to help us in our hour of peril, and prevent the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, the ocean pirates, from landing them."

The confusion of ideas in the last paragraph, wherein he threatens the Committee of Safety, or "Vigilantes," proposes riot at the wharf, and, in the same breath, says he will call upon the Mayor and the general government to aid him, may well induce the reader to question his sanity. Were he as reckless in action as he is in language the authorities would soon take care of him, but he is not naturally cruel or reckless in act. No one accuses him of being a turbulent brawler. He has for years been an advocate of temperance among his countrymen, and as he has amassed a fair amount of money for a laborer he is evidently, to some extent, a man of character and self-control.

A TOUCH OF ROBESPIERRE.

Did he give evidence of being a reader it might well be supposed that he had taken Robespierre, at his *début* in the French Revolution, as his model. I was struck with the resemblance between the men and their first sentiments. Of course there is a wide difference between the intellectual Frenchman and the uneducated Irishman. They lived under totally different circumstances, and there are, besides, many dissimilarities of personal character; but Kearney has running all through his ways the evidence that he is thinking of the rights of man more than the rights of things, and the paramount of all his efforts seems to be "the equal rights of human souls." Whether he has committed to memory the sententious sentiments of the world's noted revolutionists is of little consequence; but he leaves no doubt on a listener's mind that he is thoroughly imbued with them, and had he lived in an era of bloody revolution he would have been as ready as the wildest fanatic for liberty to have joined in the cry and the work of "*a bas l'aristocratie.*"

KEARNEY'S ASSOCIATES.

In all revolutionary or reformatory movements the first actors usually pass away, and to this experience the workingmen's party has not been a stranger. Several agitators preceded Kearney, some of whom have gone clean out of sight and others reappear on the great occasions only. The present chief executives are Dennis Kearney, president; William Wellock, vice president, and H. L. Knight, secretary. Co-operating with these is an executive committee of eleven of the energetic men who have come conspicuously on to the surface, and as far as possible the selection has had in view the solidarity of the foreign elements with the English speaking revolutionists.

Wellock, the vice president, is an Englishman, and a man of rather good appearance, and owes considerable of his personal attraction to the severe training and drill of the British service. He was a soldier in the Crimean war, and subsequently he travelled through the country as a "Bible Christian" or lay exhorter, one of a class of itinerant preachers very numerous in England. He married not long since a widow with a ready made family and a dozen thousand dollars or so. He dresses well and preserves the soldierly cleanliness of his person and clothes—a contrast to Kearney. He is brimful of Scripture quotations, avoids the use of Kearney's coarse expletives, but does not seem to be a man of any particular force of character. He has, no doubt, been useful as a lieutenant to Kearney, and in that association he is a leader of the workingmen, but he is too much of a follower ever to stand long at the head of any active movement that demands bold action. He has been credited with being the brains of the agitator and the director of the concern; but that is not so. Secretary Knight is the useful man. He can give proper shape and expression to his thoughts on paper and on the platform without anybody's assistance. If there is any leaning wanted Kearney finds his support in Knight. He has been associated with the press as a news gatherer, has passed through the country's rough mining experience and has done something at law. He had some prominence in a Sunday debating society before this movement began and he readily fell in with Kearney at the beginning. He is cool, mannerly and respectful in his language. He dislikes Kearney's coarseness; but he thinks him honest and so submits to the inevitable. In Kearney's moments of enthusiasm and excitability he is dogmatic and forgetful of the rights of others, and to these manifestations of tyranny Knight is not slow to exhibit his displeasure, and unless the great agitator quickly mends his temper and manners the *entente cordiale* of the triumvirate will be of short duration.

I visited the three in their prison cell on one occasion and while there I had a pretty good opportunity of taking in their individuality of character. Kearney was wriggling on his end of the wooden bench, belching and growling out his oaths and complaints against the Board of Supervisors, who had deprived him of his liberty. The moment was propitious for a racy interview, to which he readily consented, and but for the objection of Wellock Kearney would have given to the HERALD a full statement at that time of their designs, organizations and all that he knew. Wellock was afraid of committing themselves to written words. In court they had challenged the correctness of reported speeches, and he, no doubt, saw that a personal interview would be binding. Kearney then refused till the trials were over. Knight, I noticed, was ready to bring it all out, and as I found an opportunity in the court room on the following day to speak with him Kearney shouted at Knight, "I don't want anything published." The emphasis on the "I" annoyed Knight; nevertheless, through the courtesy of the Chief of Police, his cell door was opened the next day, and for two hours he enjoyed his liberty and wrote in my presence for the NEW YORK HERALD the article I here enclose, and returned to his associates, who were left to surmise what they pleased. Before I saw the three men together and heard them speak I was disposed to belittle the movement that has made them so prominent, but there is in them all the elements necessary to do the work they propose. Kearney is unmistakably an enthusiast, and just ignorant enough to say anything that comes to his tongue's end. All the argument in the power of mortals would not change an utterance with him, and persuasion would be to him an impertinence. He has started out with the war cry, "The Chinese must go," and on that he will harp until the sentiment becomes a fact. Such a man is invaluable in any movement where masses have to be affected, and though the party already contains men infinitely his superior in higher qualities he is likely to retain his position until his peculiar usefulness ceases to be necessary. His hold upon the masses is something wonderful, and so long as he is at the head there is not the slightest danger of riot or pillage. When he appears at a meeting he is enthusiastically cheered, and they listen to him with great gratification. If the boys around his platform carry their pranks too far in an instant he stops it with his yell, "Stop that, boys!" No repetition is necessary. It matters not who the speaker may be who utters anything contrary to his notions, he attacks him at once; and, if a resolution of praise or censure has been passed by a meeting, if he takes the contrary notion he has no difficulty in reversing it. He has made the party, and though much of his talk is offensive to many of them they nevertheless stick to him, and for the moment he is their idol. He is not, however, from anything here written, to be credited with creating the sentiments of the workingmen; he has only organized them into a powerful party. The sentiments have been forced upon them long before Kearney opened his lips on their grievances, and the tie between them arises more from the fact that his tongue acts like a safety valve that lets off their pent-up steam than from any consciousness they have of his superiority. Every expletive that he hurls at a millionnaire delivers them for the moment of the burden of their heavy griefs, and they retire from "the sand lot" where he addresses them every Sunday with lighter hearts than they brought to hear him.

THE PLATFORM.

In the commencement of this agitation there was no thought of organizing a political party at all. The presence of the offensive Chinaman was all that was then thought of, and to get rid of him was the primary object of the agitators. He was the Alpha and Omega of all harangues. At the last election republican and democrat vied with each other in the warmth of their denunciation of the heathen, and their speeches were profuse in their promises to the working Caucasian; but it was here as everywhere else—when the elections were over the promises were forgotten, and "John" was still left in the city and likely to remain undisturbed. Dissatisfied with the politicians as a class and annoyed with deceptive promises the innocent thought popped into somebody's mind that the workingmen might as well be their own politicians and make a party of their own. The utterance of the thought led to thinking and to higher ambitious, and now nothing less will satisfy than that the government of the whole country must be in the hands of the workingmen, and the following are the chief points of the young politicians:—

"We propose to wrest the government from the hands of the rich; to rid the country of cheap Chinese labor; to destroy land monopoly in our State; to provide decently for the poor and unfortunate, the weak, the helpless, and especially the young; to elect none but competent workingmen and their friends to any office whatsoever," and by way of being clearly understood on the chief point of trouble, they add:—

"This party will exert all peaceable means of attaining its ends; but it will not be denied justice when it has power to enforce it. It will encourage no riot or outrage, but it will not volunteer to repress or put down or arrest or prosecute the hungry and impatient who manifest their hatred of the Chinamen by a crusade against John or those who employ him."

A more elaborate platform was subsequently framed and adopted at a convention of delegates from all parts of the State, but in the foregoing paragraph the essential points are all named.

HOW VIEWED BY THE PEOPLE.

It is not my purpose here to sustain or oppose the use of Chinese labor. I may, however, remark that as far as I have been able to note the discussion the Chinaman is sustained by those who can use him to their advantage, and he is opposed by all others. The argument that the heathen's presence is debasing to the young of a Christian population, or, on the other hand, the statement that it is for the good of his immortal soul that he should be brought under Christian influences, are unworthy of a moment's consideration here. The only thing to be thought of is the effect of Chinese cheap labor in competition with higher priced American labor, and the conclusion is inevitable that the two workers cannot exist together. There are Caucassians enough in the country to do all the work that is required, and if all the Chinese were banished to-morrow there would still be white men unable to find employment. With that fact particularly visible here at the present time, the agitation kept up by Kearney is welcome to the people all over the State, and it is astonishing that there has been so little of riot in the localities where the Chinamen are numerous.

Kearney's particular aversion to them, I think, is purely accidental and sprung from no deep well of philosophical thought. He stood by his drays during the day where hosts of Chinese workmen had to pass him in going to and from the manufactories where they were engaged. At stated hours they go marching along more like a regular army than like workmen. They are chiefly engaged in the manufacture of light goods, and as they are nearly all bachelors and without the expense of a family, they can afford to dress and look better and cleaner than the hard working laborer in patched up or ragged clothing. Witnessing this day after day in the busy centres of the city, and then at night seeing as he did so much squalid misery at the homes of the poor, where children were badly fed, worse clothed and dirty, it provoked in him undying hate against the heathen, and, as the Chinese have made the rich richer, as they have made the poor poorer, it was an easy step for the agitator to incude in the bitterness of his feelings the men of wealth and all who use the Asiatics in any capacity whatever. In no city in the world is there visible such extremes in adversity and prosperity as in this San Francisco, effected is so short a space of time. The city is not, properly speaking, yet thirty years old, and we have here a few men with fabulous fortunes—not the result of inheritance from a long line of ancestry, but in most cases from the special advantages of monopoly and grabbing. Those who have been the favorites of fortune and have been able to heap up wealth by the million, dug from the bowels of the earth, may be envied, but all that they have accumulated honestly creates no part of the workingmen's grievances.

SUNDAY SAND LOT MEETINGS.

It should not be supposed that because rough language is used by the agitators in their public addresses that their auditors are themselves of the rabble stripe. Kearney, Wellock and Knight are the conspicuous parties; but they are nothing more than the accidental upheavals of the convulsion between labor and capital. The workingmen in their following are generally well dressed, orderly and intelligent persons. As the outdoor meetings are held in a vacant lot about the centre of the city the sidewalks of Market street, both before the assembling and after the dismissal, are crowded with as respectable people as may be seen anywhere coming from a popular lecture hall or place of entertainment. There is no pretension to make it a Sunday service. It is well entitled to be regarded as a mass meeting of earnest persons, who have the staying quality to such a remarkable degree, that they can stand in the sand for several hours without wilting, and should a passing shower threaten to soak them they are the more resolute to stay the longer. During the speaking a rousing cheer of indorsement is frequently heard, but there is no brawling and confusion. The listening is attentive and the approval unmistakably in earnest. The platform on "the sand hill" is primitive and shaky, allowing but little space for the roaming peculiar to a certain class of orators; but what the agitators lose in this kind of liberty they make up for in sawing the air and facial gestures when they have reached a climax. Kearney's arms are in perpetual motion, and when he has a point to make he suddenly breaks out with:—"If you approve, all hands up;" and before nine-tenths of the auditors have had time to think of the thing they have indorsed, their hands have been up and the reflection on what they have done has to come afterward, and it is in this submissiveness or blind obedience that the Kearney movement has become a terror to the city. There can be no confidence in business while this state of things exists, and the worst feature of the whole is the difficulty of dealing with it. The city authorities tried to prevent the "Kearneyites" from holding large meetings by the passage of what has been styled the "Gag law," rendering "incendiary language" addressed to any assembly of over a score of persons punishable as a felony. The Legislature hastily and almost unanimously passed that law, but its unconstitutionality was immediately asserted, and the statute is practically a nullity. Kearney and those who imitate his style of language have changed in nothing since, unless it be for the worse, and so persistent are they in repeating their threats against the Chinese and denouncing conspicuously public men who are unharmonious with the agitators that there is great reason to apprehend danger in its worst form, both to the city and to individuals.

AN EXAMPLE OF TERRORISM.

An illustration of the aggressive character of the Kearney movement and the dread his presence inspires was furnished about a month ago at a public meeting in Platt's Hall, right in the centre of the principal business street. The hall had been engaged and a meeting called to consider the best measures to be adopted in opposing the purchasing by the City Fathers of the water works that now supply the city. About six hundred of the most substantial business men and property holders had signed the call of the meeting, and, as is usual on such occasions, had their resolutions all prepared and the names of influential citizens ready to submit as an active committee to take the proper measures to prevent what was believed to be a premeditated steal from the city of about $7,000,000. The hall was densely crowded, holding probably about two thousand persons, and of these it is said that there were not more than one hundred and twenty-five of Kearney's followers, yet in the boisterous din and clamor for Kearney he was actually chosen chairman of the meeting, the gentlemen who had called it were brushed aside, their resolutions and the names of their committee were cried down and the papers torn up before their eyes by Kearney. It was the most disgraceful public meeting ever held in this city, and its toleration can only be accounted for on the ground that the best portion of the audience saw at a glance that if violence had once commenced there would have been a fearful loss of life. Kearney of course rests his justification on the claim that it was the will of the meeting that he should do what he did; and even admitting that, it was the roughest use of sovereign will I ever witnessed, and I think cannot well be repeated with safety.

A NEW VIGILANCE COMMITTEE TALKED OF.

In the presence of disorder and threatenings of violence it is not to be wondered that the stable men of the city should entertain the thought of organizing for self-defence, and that many are so inclined at the present moment there can be no doubt. When Kearney and his associates were particularly noisy some weeks ago I had the intimation from a party fully advised of what was transpiring that a new vigilance committee was then being organized, and since Kearney's fusillade at Platt's Hall I am pretty certain that all that is wanted is the opportunity to get at him, and that he will furnish that opportunity before long is likely enough.

Soon after he effected his organization and began to look into politics he drew from his pocket in a public meeting several feet of cord, one end of which he had prepared like a hangman's noose. This he held up to the gaze of his auditors and informed them that that was one of the unwritten planks of his platform, and the man who proved a traitor to the workingman's party should be treated to a traitor's doom and receive a "dose of hemp." On all great occasions he exhibits this halter, and whenever a recalcitrant is named the cry of "Hemp!" "hemp!" is yelled vociferously. Singular enough, the very first workingman whom they named was elected and sent to the State Senate, and within a few weeks from the date of his election he has been denounced as a traitor to his party and threatened with death by "hemp," and the agitators mean what they say.

Sober minded people everywhere will be apt to regard Kearney's threats as nothing more than the ravings of a madman; but there is "method in his madness" that deprives him of that liberal construction upon his sayings and doings. There are organized clubs of workingmen in every ward of this city, numbering some fifteen thousand altogether, and in every county of the State, all bearing allegiance to the central organization here, of which Kearney is the head, and that these clubs are instructed to organize themselves into military companies, to drill and to learn the use of arms, is no secret, and they are doing as they are told.

It is seldom that a club meeting is held without some one firing off a tirade of abuse against capitalists and urging preparations for a day of trouble. Some blatherskites may mean nothing of what they say, but there are plenty of sober listeners who can argue themselves into the conclusion that capital is the enemy of the workingmen and that a struggle for bread is inevitable. The general tone and the spirit of those who do speak is unmistakably Communistic, though they might even shudder at the use of the term. It is impossible for the teachings of the leaders to be heard as earnestly by auditors without the word taking root in the heart and producing the very work that is spoken of, and that the workingmen under these agitators are ripe for bloody revolution is as certain as that Kearney is at their head, and already Kearney realizes that he must hold them back.

PROFESSING OF REVOLUTION.

It was only about two weeks ago that a lecture was delivered in a public hall on "The Labor Problem," of which the following is a choice *morceau*:—

"The conflict will begin before the people are fully prepared; but the struggle will on that account be no less desperate. It will not be a contest between armies on the open field, but a work of devastation and slaughter. The insurgents will at first be mowed down like stubble; but, acquiring caution by experience, they will expose themselves less in crowds and will retaliate with the torch. Avenging fires will light the midnight sky; property of friend and foe will fall together before the consuming flame; a frenzy of deadly hate will seize men and women alike; assassination will walk the streets at noonday and the angel of death will count his victims by thousands. The details of the struggle no one can foresee, but the result is clear. There will be a reorganization of the social system, not because one side will win the fight and the other be vanquished, but because, no matter which side wins, reorganization will be none the less a necessity. It is written in the Book of Fate."

At a mass meeting held on the same evening a body of Germans asked permission to form a club of their own in that ward, where they could speak to each other in German, and their representative innocently stated, as an argument in favor of the request, that if this was granted every one of his associates and countrymen "would furnish himself with a musket." Kearney on the same occasion made a long and earnest speech denouncing the press, the bank smashers and public officials in general. He bade defiance to any vigilance committee. He invited all who were willing to risk their lives in defence of the movement to raise their hands, and all hands went up. He again compared San Francisco with Moscow and declared that the same would be the city's fate if ever a conflict with the workingmen arose. The vicious element would seize the opportunity to burn San Francisco down.

THE EFFECT ON COMMERCE AND CAPITAL.

I am no alarmist and would rather write pleasant facts of San Francisco than anything to the contrary; yet, intrusted as I am, with the confidence of a portion of the reading public, I can do no less than affirm that timid people have apparently good foundation for their uneasiness. Men of more than ordinary nerve, and others with nothing at stake, may be perfectly indifferent to the threats of the agitators, but it is a solemn fact that every branch of business is injured by this agitation. Money, the best barometer of public feeling, is very emphatic and clear in its appreciation of the present state of things, and everybody in business knows that there is no confidence anywhere. Real estate, that has always been the best collateral security in the money market, is not estimated at half its former value to-day. Savings banks are slow to accumulate even good names, and as a rule they are closing accounts with old customers. An auction sale of property to-day here is little better than a farce; but across the bay," in Oakland, which serves San Francisco as Brooklyn does New York, there is every confidence, and property maintains its best value. The best banks are exceedingly careful and accommodations are very limited, seldom extending beyond their best customers, who must be assisted.

This city has been visited by the scourge of fire very disastrously on several occasions, and when the threat of exterminating the Chinese is spoken of there is no doubt in any mind that the burning of Chinatown would be the first work attempted. How much that could be controlled of course beyond human ken; but if ever the torch is applied the pent-up vengeance that now finds expression against the wealthy only in words would then do its terrible work. The extent of this, if once begun, no one can tell, and it is this fearful looking forward to the possibilities of evil which ties up the purse-strings and withers up every subject of enterprise. San Francisco is in that precise position to-day.

AN INTERVIEW WITH KEARNEY.

Early one morning not long ago your correspondent was sauntering leisurely along into the business centre of the city and very unexpectedly the great agitator approached with extended hand. He has a proper appreciation of the pen and meets the profession with kindly greetings. I had before tried unsuccessfully to interview him, and so I improved the opportunity of having a quiet talk on the street. He spoke freely and before separating promised to write a statement for the HERALD of his programme and expectations. Our street conversation opened with a kindly suggestion in favor of Senator Bones. There was no bombast about Kearney; he was very docile; his conversation was in a quiet tone, yet there was in it all the breathing of a determined purpose. The following is substantially the interview:—

CORRESPONDENT—Take my advice, Mr. Kearney, and don't hang Senator Bones. A great many persons in this city are hostile to you and I have the idea that if your party hang Bones they will retaliate.

KEARNEY—I am not concerned about their threats against me. Bones is a traitor. Before his election he bared his neck and passed the rope around it in the presence of thousands and declared that if he betrayed his party he wanted them to hang him.

CORRESPONDENT—Bones, I presume, did not mean that literally?

KEARNEY—He said so, at all events, and he meant it; and any man who is a traitor deserves to be hung.

CORRESPONDENT—What is the length of that rope you carry about with you—six or eight feet?

KEARNEY—Oh, its long enough to do the business for any traitor.

CORRESPONDENT—Now, how could you carry that into execution? Let us suppose that you were going to do it now. Bones is living in Oakland.

KEARNEY—Go for him. He would call for protection; the police would defend him and the revolution would begin.

CORRESPONDENT—You look for revolution?

KEARNEY—It is certain to come, and sooner than it is expected. I have to hold them back. The whole country is ripe for revolution.

CORRESPONDENT—But you have no arms?

KEARNEY—There is no trouble about that. The people are with us and we can get arms.

CORRESPONDENT—Do you think the revolution will begin here?

KEARNEY—No; I think it is more likely to commence in the East. I am in correspondence with a great many societies and they urge me to visit them; but I can't get away just yet.

CORRESPONDENT—You will, however, go some time?

KEARNEY—I think I will go to Chicago and New York, if I can't go anywhere else, after the State Constitutional Convention is over.

CORRESPONDENT—In the meantime you will do nothing with Bones?

KEARNEY—We want him to resign. He has betrayed us and he should resign. If he does that will end that.

CORRESPONDENT—Suppose he should not?

KEARNEY—Well, we will call a convention of honest men from every part of the State, and if that convention decides that he is to be hung he shall hang.

CORRESPONDENT—It would be accomplished by riot, I suppose?

KEARNEY—Well, the freedom gained by the United States was begun by riot.

Here the Lieutenant General took from his pocket a copy of the *Open Letter*, the official representative of the workingmen's movement, and drew my attention to what he called "well written editorials on the subject." The writer inveighs against the widespread corruption in the Republic by men holding office, and that all promises of reform had been but putting out one set of thieves to make room for another set as bad, if not worse, than those who had preceded them. The power of wealth was paramount, and the successful thief was treated with consideration so long as he could keep out of the clutches of the law. The workingmen were, therefore, justified in upsetting all political power and taking the reins of government into their own hands, and the writer continued:—"As the class who suffer are much the strongest they have the power to enforce reformation, but it is beginning to be believed that it must be enforced and cannot be brought about by reconciliation or entreaty. But there is a difficulty in enforcing reform without going outside of the law. A man may agree that in a certain event he will submit himself to be hanged, and it may be the opinion of all that he merits that punishment by his acts, and yet his hanging would be a breach of the peace and punishable under the statute. There have been times, though, when popular sentiment was strong enough to override the law. The Boston tea party, for instance. The persons who upon that occasion disguised themselves as Indians and threw tea belonging to other people into the water, clearly had no right to do so and outdoors, in the opinion of many persons at the time, should have been punished; yet they were not and were sustained in their unlawful act by popular sentiment. And law is such a queer thing. Men may bribe Bones to betray his party and vote for bad bills, and Bones may do it, and yet these same men would be the first to urge the strongest possible legal measures against those who should carry out the agreement under which Bones took his place. * * * John Brown was hanged and General Grant was made President of the United States for doing the same thing, only in the latter case the public sentiment had ripened. May it not be that the mission of our party is to so ripen public opinion that reform may become practicable?"

THE PRESS FOR AND AGAINST.

San Francisco is not yet large enough to be able to boast of a thoroughly independent press; besides there are few of our papers rich enough to despise an increased circulation. The workingmen are numerous, and there is a lively interest in catering to their prejudices, and unfortunately for the city the papers that are bold enough to attack corruption can give Dennis Kearney excellent support without going out of the way to do it. He is in that particular well backed. The *Alta* is fiercely hostile to the agitator and unsparing in its denunciation of him and his associates. The *Alta* is a high priced paper, and plumes itself on the wealth and respectability of its readers and patrons, and in this opposition to Kearney it is undoubtedly supported by the men of commerce and capital. The *Alta* has been anxious for Kearney and his followers to commit an overt act against person or property and precipitate a row.

Two weeks ago it seemed probable that Senator Bones might be the first victim. Kearney's immediate followers were very bitter toward him and did not hesitate to say that his life was in danger. One of the brightest lights (*!*) among them told me that the feeling was so intense that he looked for the assassination of the Senator. The Senator obtained a permit a few days before the interview given above to carry arms and probably has for some time been unpleasantly conscious of his danger. Should their threats ever be realized Kearney and the leaders would swing to the nearest lampposts. Since he expressed those ideas the situation has changed greatly; his command of his faction is no longer so absolute as it was and there are symptoms of its disintegration. It would seem that the workingmen who are not out-and-out Communists begin to see the tendency of their former blind enthusiasm for an irresponsible demagogue and also to realize the strength that—although less demonstrative than themselves—is arrayed on the side of order and conservatism. It is great enough to prevent anarchy, and only anarchy can give opportunity for the fulfilment of his apparent designs.

AN EXPOSITION OF DOCTRINE BY A PROMINENT LEADER.

SAN FRANCISCO, March 24, 1878.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE HERALD:—

The workingmen's party of California will now go into history. It has won its first victory at the polls, elected a State Senator, and bids fair to take charge of the State at an early day.

It will then seek affiliation with the labor parties of the Union for the purpose of restoring our general government to the people and their friends.

For the past twenty years capital has run the political machinery of the whole country. The lucky man was elected to office. He was indifferently honest for a while; but little by little he began to seek his own ends. The rights of the people were ignored. The vested rights of property were the chief care of legislators. From securing what they had they proceeded to acquire more by political indirection. Impunity encouraged them to depredate on the public money and lands. Railways, mines, commerce and navigation were brought under the control of semi-political rings. They ran the banks, the great corporations and the government. They made peculation a science. They did not scruple at fraud, perjury and forgery when they served their turn.

California has been peculiarly subject to these influences. The land of the State is in few hands. All the great interests are in few hands. All our offices, salaries and public institutions are jobs, put up to fill the pockets of the rich rather than to serve the public use.

At last comes the cheap laboring Chinaman, when the whites are pent up by land and money monopoly, and the lucky capitalist likes the docile slave better than free men and women. Fathers, mothers, sons, daughters are out of employment. The young men cannot marry. Who can support a wife and underwork a poor slave at the same time? Thus they run to drink, hoodlumism, crime and despair.

The young women cannot marry. They can find no places of service, because the Chinaman is there, cheaper and more superserviceable. What remains? Starvation or vice or crime. Thousands of the children of the poor are growing up to this fate. They must be without partners, without family or home, vagabonds in their native land.

The Chinaman is doing for the poor of California what the black slave of the South did for what were called the poor white trash—with this difference, that the poor of the South knew not the cause of their misery and degradation and fought to sustain it. We are better informed.

We know that Chinese cheap labor will, if persisted in, reduce us all to the condition of the Chinaman.

We have petitioned for his removal. Our political platforms promised his removal. Our representatives told us he should be removed. Under these promises we have waited long and patiently. No, not patiently. Our patience became exhausted.

Last September Dennis Kearney stood up before the workingmen and said they must take their own affairs into their own hand. He was a worker—a drayman—hardworking, with a family and full of zeal for his children and his adopted country. He has little or no learning or polish. A rough diamond, he cuts with a fiery tongue. His hearers re-echo his enthusiasm. They applaud and he fires up till the mutual flame strikes terror to timid souls and makes them apprehend riot and outrage. But no such thing is intended. Not the slightest breach of the peace, not the least actual disorder has attended one of our meetings yet, though we have been 20,000 strong.

Kearney was soon joined by H. L. Knight and others. A platform was adopted. It has but five points. It demands:—

The absence of Chinese cheap labor.

The termination of land monopoly by law.

The suppression of money monopoly by taxation.

Decent provision and education for all the children of the poor; and

Stringent laws against public plunder and corruption.

The simple principles and the stirring eloquence of workingmen soon brought out thousands. The movement spread like a fire. In one month its members were counted by the thousand. In two months it paraded 10,000 sober, orderly, but resolute men through the city of San Francisco. The authorities were alarmed. The Chinese trembled. The Six Companies addressed the President. The leaders were cast in prison on charges of incendiarism. Nothing could be more untrue. No proposition was ever made to destroy a thing or kill a man. It was simply because the language fired the hearts of the people and continued them as one man that our enemies were afraid and cast us into prison.

The bail was made excessive. Charges were multiplied to get the bail up. Kearney was the chosen president, and his bail was $40,000 for a misdemeanor. Knight was the secretary, and his bail $20,000. They were cast into unwholesome dungeons and kept there against all law and justice.

In the meantime William Wellock had joined the movement and soon came to the front for his bold utterances. This was the sum of the incendiarism. "The Chinaman must leave California. We have been patient long enough. We are in earnest now. We will organize and arm. We will carry the ballot box and that done we will see that the will of the people is obeyed and our country rid of the cheap coolie slave."

Four months have elapsed since the birth of this party and it is now a giant of gigantic stature. A State Senator dies in Alameda county and the workingmen fill his place, polling more votes than both the republicans and democrats put together. Workingmen of America, behold the dawn of better government! It is upon us. California at the next election will have men who will legislate for the people and accomplish the ends they desire. In the meanwhile the land grabbers, the money monopolists, the Chinese Six Companies and the corrupt city officials are endeavoring to stay the movement. Alas! for them; only to be crushed under its wheels. They send false despatches to Congress. They fill the country with alarming reports. They make false charges against the leaders—Kearney, Knight and Wellock. They hold them in jail for words spoken at a public meeting followed by no riot, no disorder. They hold them in a pen, not fit for hogs. They pile up the bail to $50,000, in defiance of the constitution. They pretend to be afraid of sedition and insurrection, whereas they are only afraid that the sceptre is about to be snatched from them.

The workingmen of California will make this State a model republic. No man shall have more land than a square mile. No man shall have a million of dollars while others starve. No child shall go naked, unclothed or uneducated, and there shall be no cheap slave to degrade and impoverish the children of the Republic.

Having accomplished this for ourselves we will join hands with the workingmen of the nation to set up the simple rules of our fathers, honesty, economy and exact justice to all.

We have no conception of our exact strength, but having carried one county in which we had no special power we have good reason to believe that the rest are ours also when we need them. We know of tens of thousands. We have branches over all the State.

As I say you, it will be a miracle if you accomplish your ends. Well, we have already performed a miracle. We have revolutionized a State in four months. In four years, with the help of workingmen in the East, we will take the Union, and once more honest poverty shall be respected. H. L. KNIGHT,

Secretary Workingmen's Party, California.

CHINESE ALIENS.

DECISION THAT THEY CANNOT BECOME AMERICAN CITIZENS—THE FEDERAL STATUTES IMPERFECTLY AMENDED—MONGOLIANS LESS PRIVILEGED THAN NEGROES—AN IMPORTANT TEST CASE IN CALIFORNIA.

[From the San Francisco Alta California, April 30.]

Some time ago a number of Chinese residents of this city applied for citizen papers, through their attorneys, to the United States Circuit Court. The application surprised the Clerk of the Court, and he refused to give the papers, referring the applicants to the Judge, who set a day for hearing the case. The case was heard last Monday and taken under advisement. Yesterday Judge Sawyer rendered his decision, which is