THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR.

ADDRESS OF GRAND MASTER WORKMAN POWDERLY.

Reviewing the Events of the Most Eventful Year in the History of the Organization.

RICHMOND, VA., October 5.—General Worthy Foreman Griffith called the second session, Knights of Labor Convention, to order at 9 o'clock this morning, in the absence of Mr. Powderly, who was detained at his hotel by business. It was announced that the Committee on Credentials was not ready to report and nothing could be done until their report was received. While waiting, several speeches were made by delegates to aid in killing time away. Shortly after 10 o'clock Mr. Powderly arrived and was presented by Brother O'Donnell with a gavel made from the wood of an orange tree that grew on the spot where Gen. Packenham was killed at the battle of New Orleans. The presentation was made on behalf of New Orleans knights.

It was learned that the Committee on Credentials would not be ready to report until 2 o'clock this afternoon. The convention then adjourned until that hour. Before the delegates left the hall Mr. Powderly strongly urged them to avoid the use of strong drink while in Richmond. As individuals, he said he had no right to dictate as to what they should do, but they were not here as individuals but as representatives of a vast constituency. The eyes of the world were upon them while here and that constituency would be judged by their conduct.

It is expected that the afternoon session will be occupied by the consideration of the report of the Committee on Credentials, and that actual work will not begin until tomorrow.

The convention went into session again this afternoon at 2 o'clock. The report of the Committee on Credentials was then ready. It was very long and Secretary Turner said it would take four hours to read it. It was doubtful whether consideration of the report could be completed and action on it taken this afternoon.

The Committee of Arrangements of local Knights appointed to determine the details of the entertainment to be given visiting Knights next Monday, have decided to let the question of commingling white and colored people at the ball that evening to settle itself. It has been arranged to have two dancing pavilions at the State fair grounds.

Chairman Lynch said this afternoon that it was not the intention to assign one to white Knights and the other to colored Knights. This order recognized no such distinctions, but at the same time the feeling here in regard to social intercourse of the races was so well understood they anticipated no trouble on that score. It was expected, of couse, that the colored people would prefer to associate with their own people. If, however, a colored Knight and lady should choose to dance with the white people in the other pavilion, he knew of no intention to prevent them.

When asked if colored guests should present themselves at the tables where whites were seated at the banquet what would be done, he replied that he expected no trouble in that way, but did not suppose they would be prohibited from doing so. He intended speaking to Mr. Powderly on the subject in a day or so. He repeated that he expected no trouble. The funds for the entertainment of guests were raised by the local assemblies of Richmond, colored and white. The Knights here have separate assemblies, and the colored Knights have contributed something more than the whites to the entertainment fund. The arrangements for Monday next include a parade of the local assemblies and visiting Knights, Mr. Powderly, the Executive Committee and invited guests in carriages. Speeches will be made by Senator Elect Daniel, Gov. Lee, Mr. Powderly and others.

GRAND MASTER WORKMAN POWDERLY'S ADDRESS.

RICHMOND, VA., October 5.—Grand Master Workman Powderly's annual address will be presented to the convention, it is expected, tomorrow afternoon. It has already been made public, and is as follows:

To the Members of the General Assembly:

The most eventful and trying year of our existence as an order has ended and we assemble for the purpose of reviewing what has been done, correcting those things that are wrong and of legislating for the future.

It is required by law that the General Master Workman shall make out and submit a report of his official acts during the year. To report all of my official acts performed during the past year would take more of your time than is at all necessary; and to properly place them before you I would require at least four weeks' time in which to prepare them for presentation.

I have all of my correspondence and letter books within reach, and can, on short notice, refer to them in matters of detail. When the law which requires of the General Master Workman to make out a report was passed that officer was not a member of the General Executive Board. Now that he is a member of that body the report of the board must naturally constitute a report of the important part of the duties of the General Master Workman, for my time during the year was mainly occupied with General Executive Board business. I refer you to the reports of the General Executive Board and other officers and agents of the General Assembly, and will address you briefly upon some few matters of importance and make such suggestions as I consider necessary.

If we are guided by the experience of the past, and act accordingly, we can place the order upon a footing so safe and sure that no assaults from its enemies can injure it. If we are not guided by that experience, if we fail to read aright the signs of the times, and we come this General Assembly without having improved on the past, we will fail to properly represent those who sent us here.

The rapid increase in organization since the Hamilton session of the General Assembly was most marvelous. An examination of the reports of the general secretary treasurer for the year ending July 1, 1886, will show that in one year 1068 assemblies have been organized. The new members so suddenly brought together could not be properly assimilated. Thousands have been attracted toward the order through mere curiosity; others have come for purely selfish motives, while the great bulk of our new recruits have joined us for the good that they could do.

Quite a few have entered our order for the purpose of redressing existing wrongs, and, before waiting to learn anything concerning the duty of the Knight to the order, have plunged into rash and ill considered strikes. The troubles coming from this direction began while the last General Assembly was in session. The car drivers of St. Louis were organized under promise from the organizer that they would receive aid, unstinted, in case of a strike. Even before the receipt of their charter they were on strike. Their proceedings were characterized by utter disregard for our laws and teachings, so that the paid and known agents of their employers, the detectives, had no difficulty in securing the passage of motions of a violent character. It is an established fact that men who were employed by detective agencies stood up on the floor of that assembly, made inflammatory speeches urging the men to deeds of violence, and urged that the property of the street car companies be destroyed. It was only the good sense of the men that prevented such outrages from being perpetrated, although these agents of a nefarious spy system induced some desperate men to blow up the cars upon the streets. For these outrages the order was in no way responsible. The St. Louis car troubles were but the beginning of the tidal wave of strikes and boycotts which swept over the country, and which strained the strength and resources of your general officers almost beyond their powers of endurance.

THE SOUTHWEST STRIKE

began when the time and attention of the general officers were taken up with other matters of vital importance. No notice of the contemplated action was given to us, and we knew nothing whatever concerning it or the causes leading to it until it had been in progress several days.

It has been asserted that I condemned the men while they were on strike. No such statement ever escaped my lips. The only statement of mine that could be made to appear in the light of a condemnation was that contained in my secret circular of the 13th of March, a copy of which is herewith submitted. I did not approve of that strike. I could not do so, since confidence enough was not reposed in the General Executive Board to give them a chance to examine into the grievances which the members of District Assembly 101 complained of. It was only when the threat was made to stop every wheel in the United States and engage the whole order in the difficulty that I raised my voice in denial. I did that in defense of the order and the country. I am quite willing to assume all the responsibilities attached to the act, and would do the same thing again under similar circumstances.

That the men of the Southwest suffered wrongs is true; they were many and grievous; and it is my firm belief that the railway companies, with a full knowledge of what these grievances were, precipitated the fight themselves at a time when it would appear to the world that the strike was for an insignificant cause. I can do no better than to submit the reports of Brothers Litchman and McGuire. These two members were by me, personally, detailed to go with the Congressional Committee, and with that committee examine into the strike and its causes, so that an early report might be made to the order by its own representatives. If the position which I took during the strike was wrong, then the entire order sustained me in it, for when I issued the appeal for aid to support those whom the companies refused to treat with, I was most generously sustained, as a reference to the report of the general secretary treasurer will show. The documents and correspondence relating to that strike are at your disposal.

THE EIGHT HOUR STRIKE,

which took place May 1st, was not successful except in cases where employers and employes were acting in harmony, or where employers were willing to adopt the plan. In many cases the old system of working long hours has been revived. The Federation of Trades recommended the 1st of May, but adopted or suggested no definite plan by which the short-hour system could be inaugurated. I cautioned our members against rushing into this movement. I had the right to do it, and am firm in the belief had I not done so great loss would have been entailed upon vast numbers of our assemblies. What I said in my secret circular of March 13th has been severely criticised, and I have been accused of opposing the eight-hour movement. No statement ever was farther from the truth. I opposed the strike on May 1st because I knew that neither workmen nor employers were ready for it, because the education which must always precede intelligent action had not been given to those most in need of it, because no definite, business-like plan for the inauguration of the eight-hour movement had been mapped out. In fact, no preparations had been made to put the plan, if it can be called a plan, into execution. These are the reasons why I opposed the movement on May 1st, and for these same reasons do I still oppose it.

A reduction of the hours of labor is a necessity, and sooner or later must be had, but we must not forget that in many places the ten hour plan has not been adopted yet. It may do very well for an organization which looks after the interests of but one craft or calling to neglect those who stand most in need of help, but a Knight of Labor must never close his eyes to the wants of the humblest of his fellow creatures.

The very discussion of the sudden introduction of the eight hour plan injured business, so much so that in many places men were reduced to half time or thrown out of employment altogether. Millions of dollers worth of work was left undone because of the uncertainty in regard to taking contracts or in making engagements to perform work. Never was it more clearly demonstrated that "An injury to one is the concern of all" than in the movement I am speaking of. The house builder, through uncertainty as to how many hours of labor his employes would work for him, made no contracts to erect buildings, and the carpenter was thrown out of employment; the man who made the window glass, the man who made the nails—in fact, every man or woman engaged in the manufacture of articles which go to build or furnish a house—suffered through the attempt to enforce the eight hour system on May 1st. The move was in the right direction, but the time and circumstances were not suitable. Before the eight hour plan is adopted, the Knights of Labor and the trade unions of America must lay aside their jealousies and differences, come together, name a day on which to put the plan into execution, adopt the plan of action, which must be gradual and such as will not inflict injury upon either employer or workman. The plan presented by Mr. Norton, of Chicago, to the special session of the General Assembly at Cleveland, is a good one in nearly every particular, and if the workingmen's organizations and the manufacturers' associations agree upon the putting into practice such a plan, it can be done without a jar or friction. No workingman need strike, nor need business be unsettled. Why should it not be done? Either adopt a plan for the perfection of this idea, or else place it in the hands of the incoming General Executive Board, with instructions to perform the duty. If we do not do either, let us strike the twenty-first declaration from our preamble, and no longer proclaim to the world that we are in favor of eight hours for a day's labor.

THE MACHINE AND THE MAN.

Before a short hour system that will be of any benefit to mankind can be inaugurated, the relation which the workman bears to the labor saving machine must undergo a radical change. Shorten the hours of labor under our present system and the streets will not be emptied of their idle thousands. More machines will be erected and more children called into service to feed them. The assertion that the advocate of short hours desires to stop production is false. It is to make production gradual, healthy, and have it keep pace with the wants of the consumer, keeping all men employed, so that idleness will disappear and the producer remain a consumer to his fullest capacity, that we desire a shortening of the hours of labor. Visit our large and small factories and you find that the mechanic of the past is but the feeder of the machine of the present. We already hear of machines in course of perfection which will set the type and mould the cigars faster than human hands can do the work; and electricity will soon take the throttle lever from the hand of the man who runs the locomotive. The day will soon dawn when these agencies will be doing their work; and when that day does come, the mechanic, now so proud of his calling, will stand face to face with the alternative of asking for charity or the adoption of the calling of the street scavenger. When that day comes, the man who now seeks to array labor against labor in asserting that the "$3 a day man should not move in the same society circles with the man who works for $1 a day" will either seek to crowd the $1 a day man out of his place or accept the crumbs of charity to sustain life. History will repeat itself, and the fight for existence will be waged with unrelenting fury.

WHAT IS THE REMEDY?

The machine must become the slave of the man, instead of keeping the man in attendance on and subordinate to the machine. A plan of co-operation through which the workman may control the machine he operates must one day supercede the present system. To properly map out such a plan requires more time than I have had or am likely to have at my disposal. I can only co-operate with others in the work.

CHILD LABOR.

The thirteenth article in our declaration of principles reads, "The prohibition, by law, of the employment of children under 15 years of age in workshops, mines and factories." The end sought for in carrying this declaration into effect is not that the child may live in idleness; it is not that more adults may be employed. It is that the child of the poor man may be enabled to acquire an education to equip him for the duties which will in future fall upon him as man and citizen. We cannot afford to pass this question by and legislate on simple question of trade discipline. The question of child labor and education is the most important that can come before us now or at any other time. With an education, all things are easy of accomplishment; without it, hope itself almost dies, and liberty is a farce.

In our organizations of labor, and it has been so from the beginning, we take up the work of reform when the subject is advanced in years—the new member must be above 16 years before we admit him. We attempt to drive from his mind the false ideas gathered in from the workshop, or, possibly, the street corner. His habits are formed, and the work that should have been begun at 7 years we take up at 20 or later on in life. To attempt to settle so intricate a question as the one we are grappling with, or to successfully solve the question, is a task so difficult that I do not wonder that men drop out of the ranks of labor organizations discouraged and hopeless. To make the necessary progress, we must begin with the child and see to it that he has an education. If the principles of the Knights of Labor are right, and few men question them, we should teach them to the young. It should be a part of the duty of every assembly to ascertain the number of children who do not attend school in its vicinity, learn what the causes are, and take steps to have them attend school.

The sword may strike the shackles from the limbs of the slave, but it is education and organization that make him a free man. He is still a slave whose limbs alone have been freed.

Of what avail is it to say that we are laboring to establish a system of co-operation, when that which is more essential to the success of co-operation is lacking. A business training is necessary to successfully carry on a co-operative enterprise. If the management of the large and small concerns now in operation in this country were turned over to us today, we would but run them in the ground, for we lack the business training necessary to successfully operate them. Our vanity may prevent us from acknowledging this to be true, but we cannot deny it. It is through no fault of ours that it is true, but if it continues it will be our fault.

I ask that a special Committee on Education be appointed to prepare and recommend to this General Assembly a plan for the better education of the American youth.

TRADES UNIONS.

The trouble with trade unions in which certain of our members and assemblies have been engaged was greatly magnified and distorted. The proceedings of the Cleveland special session of the General Assembly, and the report of the General Executive Board submitted to you today, will be sufficient. I need not enter into detail further than to say that there were mistakes made on both sides. Some of our organizers have been so zealous in their way of organizing that they have encroached upon the prerogatives of other associations, and on several occasions the rights of our members have been seriously interfered with by members of trade unions. Since the special session of the General Assembly over fifty cases of dispute between parts of our order and other societies have been placed before me for adjustment. It was not necessary to place these cases before the General Executive Board. A few lines in each case was sufficient, and the trouble ended. To dig up past troubles is unnecessary, and, in consultation with prominent men of the trade unions, I was gratified to learn that they had no desire to revive the past. For the future, I recommend that all matters likely to create a breach of the peace between our order and any other be at once submitted to the executives of both organizations. If a trade union complains of any action on the part of our order, let the agrieved party submit the matter to the president of his union—he to investigate; and, failing to affect a remedy, to place the matter before the General Master Workman and Executive Board. If the agrieved party is a member of an assembly of the Knights of Labor, let the same mode of procedure be gone through with, and above all things, let a speedy and impartial investigation and an immediate settlement be made. This plan has worked well in every new case called to my attention since the Cleveland session, and it is worthy of adoption.

More trouble has been caused us by men who profess to be members of the Knights of Labor than by members of trades unions. I respect the man who, being a member of a trade union, does everything honorable in his power to defend and perpetuate his organization; but for the Knight of Labor who would even attempt to subordinate our order to any other I have nothing but contempt. In my estimation there is but one place for such a man, and that is on the outside of our order.

If the representatives of the trades unions and of our order come together and both are sincere in their devotion to their respective organizations, an honest and satisfactory solution of every difficulty can be arrived at. No sacrifice of principle or regard for either organization need attend such a meeting. But the man who through fear, policy, indifference, or a desire to acquire popularity, neglects the interests of the order he represents is not honest, and should not be allowed to act in any capacity for any society of workingmen.

With the session of the General Assembly only three days away, it will not be possible for me to say all that I would like to upon the questions that will come before us. My time has been entirely taken up with the detail work of the order, and I was forced to neglect this duty in order to give any time or attention to a preparation for the coming of the General Assembly. It will surprise you to learn that even at this moment, when every member knows full well that we are assembled in general convention, secretaries and members are addressing me at my office in the expectation of receiving an immediate reply. Letters and telegrams by the hundred will flow in upon me, even while the General Assembly is in session.

The duties which called me away from home for the greater part of the year that has closed made it impossible to give proper attention to my correspondence. To read each letter addressed to me would occupy every moment of the twenty-four hours, leaving no time to answer or dictate an answer to any of them. I attended to all that I could, and the others will neve be reached. If this is neglect of duty, then I am guilty; but I have no apology to offer. I did all that I could do—more could not be expected of me.

I have never, during the seven years that I have served as General Master Workman, made a member of this order a subject of personal or public criticism or abuse. Such treatment has not been accorded to me. Whether the intention was to have me reply through the public press I do not know, but I have made it a rule never to speak in criticism, harsh or otherwise, of a man, except when standing face to face with him. And I have as studiously refrained from replying to or denying attacks or accusations against me, except in the presence of those who made them. When called upon to defend the order or its principles, I have attempted to do so.

I have been accused of displaying a "lack of nerve," of "want of backbone," and of being too "weak a man to lead a strong movement." I have never replied to these charges, nor will I do so now. I simply point back to a record of seven years of service and ask this question: If, while holding a position such as no man living or dead ever held before, with the full blaze of public scrutiny shining upon my every action, with public opinion as ready to condemn as to applaud, I have displayed a lack of nerve or backbone, why is it that a million men and women of nerve, backbone and common sense have gathered around the standard which was placed in my hands seven years ago by the founder of the order himself? If I have been proven a weak man, why do so many strong men support me? I dislike to speak of these matters, but I believe that, in justice to yourselves and me, you should know of them. By men who are not Knights of Labor I have been called weak because I discountenanced violence and hasty, ill-advised action. I have no excuse to offer, for if this is an offence let the General Assembly itself offer the apology. My views upon such questions were known to each General Assembly before my election as General Master Workman, and in electing me they indorsed and made themselves responsible for these sentiments.

I will now speak as I have never spoken to a session of the General Assembly before. Representatives have been instructed to vote for me for General Master Workman. I feel complimented, but release every member from his obligation to vote for me. You are free to vote for any other man you choose, and if you act in accordance with my wishes you will select another to fill my place. This I leave in your hands. I stand ready to serve this order in any capacity, either as General Master Workman or in the private ranks. In voting for General Master Workman do not be guided by sentiment or sympathy, but vote for the best interests of God's suffering poor and the cause of united labor. It is because I believe it to be my duty that I talk thus plainly, and here face to face with labor's representative men and women is the place to say it.

It has been charged that between members of the General Executive Board and myself serious disturbances have taken place; that ruptures have occurred of a serious character. Others have charged that the board constituted itself a ring to manage affairs. These statements, inventions of the enemy, have a damaging effect when told to the unwary. The first assertion is utterly false, for between the board and myself there has been no rupture or even a difference. If at first we did not agree upon a question, we discussed it until the fullest possible light shone upon it, and when we went to the world with it we went as one man. Every attempt to divide us has been a failure. That we have constituted ourselves a ring to manage affairs is true; that is what you elected us for. We are a ring, solid and unbroken, and I hope the next board will be the same. For standing together in unity we have no apologies to offer. For myself I say may it never be otherwise.

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