

WHO ARE THE LAWLESS?

There are two specials to the Chicago Tribune of December 23 and one to the Kansas City Times of the same date which it would seem are sufficient in themselves to awaken the people to consciousness of the dangers that threaten our liberties. The plutocratic press talks sagely of the sanctity of law, and is loud in its denunciation of law-breakers when they happen to be poor people; but when law is trampled under foot and human rights are outraged by national, state or municipal authorities, such outrages are passed over in silence. It is about time for the people to begin to inquire whether laws are made for all, or only for the poor.

The first of the specials to which we refer is from Oakaloosa, Iowa; and, after making all due allowance for the coloring which is always given to these events, the statements as they appear in the Tribune are alarming in the character of their disclosures. The special reads as follows:

A general herding of tramps was made this morning and all given ten minutes to move out. Two are laying in jail full of slop. Both are ex-convicts. Citizens here are now organized, and a rough road awaits tramps here all winter. This is the result of a battle which took place last night when the city was patrolled by the local company of national guards and by deputy sheriffs, the result of a raid by a gang of tramps.

For some time past numerous outrages have been committed in the city. These have been charged to the numerous vagabonds that have infested the locality. Men were held up. Houses were pillaged of food and clothing.

It could not be doubted that the tramps were hungry, and allowance was made for the hard times.

A band of fifteen were reported to be gathered on the outskirts of the city last night, and soon they invaded the town. The sheriff and his deputies found that the fifteen tramps were armed, and the national guard was called on and citizens armed themselves.

The tramps resisted. Bullets flew; heads were cracked by officers' clubs; the officers and the soldiers were knocked down, but, overpowered by numbers, the tramps were driven back. Many were arrested and others fled.

Now the question that arises here is not alone concerning the character of the men who thus invaded the city of Oakaloosa, but we are led to inquire also if civil war exists in Iowa. Are men entitled to the rights guaranteed to all citizens by the constitution—are they entitled to trial in a court of justice before being treated as criminals, or are they to be shot down indiscriminately like dogs whether guilty of any transgression of law or not? These men may have been desperate men. They may have been bent on pillage. The dispatch shows that the first attack was made on them and not by them, and that it was a raid of the national guard armed with deadly weapons, and not of the civil authorities with warrants for the arrest of criminals. There are two dangers in such proceedings. (1) The usurpation of civil by military authority, and (2) the indiscriminate punishment of the innocent with the guilty. Are our people ready for such an innovation? If so, how are its limitations to be defined? How far shall it extend? It has

been the theory of our criminal jurisprudence that a man shall be presumed innocent of crime until proven guilty. Is this rule to be reversed, and men be held guilty of crime until proven innocent? How many of our people are ready for such a change?

But here is another of the specials referred to, dated at Anderson, Indiana:

At police roll call this morning Mayor Tarhune read an order to the police which means the whipping out of the city of every professional tramp. The city has provided every night policeman with a good stout blacksnake whip, and Chief Welker has instructed his men to use their whips with vigor on all tramps. It has been the custom for the last seven years in this city to make tramps who insult women run a gauntlet of swatches. Fully fifty have been whipped out of the city."

We have known women to be insulted by others than tramps, and it is not our wish to enter a plea of defense for tramps or those who are not tramps who are guilty of such things. From the number of instances that have occurred at Anderson, one might be led to suspect the women of standing upon the street corners and soliciting insult. We have heard of that kind of women also. But this is not the point. The danger lies in the usurpation of judicial power by the police, and the indiscriminate infliction of punishment without investigation. The special to the Kansas City Times is from Mexico, Mo., and is as follows:

Last night James Quinlan, section boss on the Chicago & Alton railroad at Cairabee a small station in this county, shot and killed an unknown tramp and wounded another. They had been put off a train with several others. The tramps wanted to build a fire and Quinlan objected. The tramp killed was not over 30 years of age, was well dressed and of handsome appearance.

Quinlan was not assaulted by these men. He was not acting in self defense. He simply took the law in his own hands just as the policemen do. He constituted himself court, jury and executioner, and made summary disposition of the culprits who wanted to build a fire to keep themselves from freezing. These items are narrated in the great daily papers simply as news of passing events, and entirely without comment, while if one of these same tramps should happen to transgress one of the statutory provisions of either of the states named, whole columns would be filled with denunciations of the outrage.

Whither are we tending, anyway? We hear a great deal in these latter days about anarchy, but we hear very little about the unwarranted and lawless invasion of human liberty which is every day practiced under the garb of respectability by national, state and municipal governments. Let the reader remember that tramps are men, and that they are a natural product of our social system. There must be discovered some way to deal with them consistently with these facts. Can it be done without a revolution of our system? We think not.

This may not be a very cheerful New Year edition with its columns of "left-handed" prosperity, but the time has come when the truth must be told though the heavens fall.

THE VILLAINOUS LIBEL REPEATED.

The persistent effort of the hiring press to stay the humane impulses of the people which have been so generously stirred by the sad spectacle of distress visible in every part of the land, is most humiliating and disgraceful. Again the story has been sent out over the wires that the idle men of Chicago are dead beats who will not work. The headline of the dispatch in republican papers is:

"WILL EAT, BUT WON'T WORK."

The dispatch says:

Only about 450 men of a hungry 2,000, who have been eating free soup at the Lake Side Kitchen for the last week, accepted the invitation of the Central Relief association yesterday to work on the street long enough each day to pay for their subsistence. All the others sneaked away as soon as their soup bowls were empty.

The balance of the dispatch is of like character, going to show that the men are worthless vagabonds, unworthy of sympathy or aid. Did we possess no other means of information than that of the plutocratic Associated press service, possibly we might be deceived in these matters. Happily the better nature of men will still assert itself at times despite the influences that seek to subvert it, and Chicago people who are most nearly associated with those whose wants are being temporarily supplied at the soup house tell a different story from that which the agents of the associated press give to the world. Mr. Greer, the manager in charge of that same Lakeside free kitchen spoken of in the dispatch above referred to, in the Chicago Tribune of December 20, says:

I am convinced almost all of the men whom we feed are perfectly worthy persons, and that they are in direst need. When they receive their handful of bread and bowl of soup in many cases they cram the bread down their throats before they can pass into the dining room, as if they were famished.

The Tribune account continues:

The free dinner of Zebezer Winslow, No. 66 Pacific avenue, supplied 1,350 hungry men yesterday. Young Mr. Winslow said: "I have the utmost confidence in the character of the men whom we feed."

Manager Wilkinson, of Mrs. Ahren's refuge, No. 364 Wabash avenue, said:

We are feeding 1,500 every day and lodging 1,000 every night. Our supplies are obtained by private solicitation, and are abundant for all our present needs. I am more and more impressed with the worthy character of the men whom we assist. I have fifty shovels, hoes and picks here, and I give them a chance to show they are not afraid of work by doing a little street cleaning. We get situations for fifteen or twenty men every day.

The following is taken from the same issue of the Chicago Tribune, December 20:

PITTSBURG Pa., Dec. 19.—[Special].—A mob of 2,000 men took possession of the stairways and rotunda of the city hall today and howled for work. They were attracted by the announcement in the morning papers that all who applied would be furnished employment in the parks. At daybreak they began to gather. At 6 o'clock 700 men had taken possession of the building, and an hour later the crowd was estimated at 2,000. The police inspector, taking compassion on the shivering men, ordered the police to open the doors and let them inside, where they could keep warm.

The moment the doors were opened there was a rush for the hallway. In the scramble the big storm doors were broken from their hinges. A few who were near the doors,

fearing the glass would break and injure them in falling, tried to edge away, but the crowd in the rear pushed them into the building. The first man who got through the door ran to the broad stairway leading to the second story, and, jumping two or three steps at a time, led the pace to Superintendent Paisley's office. In a few minutes the stairway was jammed. On the fourth floor the men were packed in so closely that those nearest the iron railing were crushed against it until they cried out with pain. Two men fainted. The crowd pressed against the railing so tightly it was feared the iron guard would give way and they would be forced over it to the stone floor of the rotunda sixty feet below.

The strong-limbed men in front fought their way into Supt. Paisley's office and confronted that official. The room soon became suffocating, and many tried to get out but could not, owing to the crowd pushing in. The police inspector told the men arrangements had been made to receive their applications for work at the police stations. Then another wild rush ensued to get out. The mass of humanity in Supt. Paisley's office was so wedged in that several men were hurt reaching the doors. The police inspector and Clerk Bingham tried to quiet the men from the top of the elevator. As the men passed the two city officials they made frantic appeals for work, some presenting army discharges, some naturalization papers, others letters of introduction, indorsements from aldermen, constables, business men, etc.; in fact, everything imaginable was done to influence the officials in question to favor them. But all were told to go to the police stations for their orders.

At the meeting of the citizens' relief committee to-day the employment committee reported 800 men at work in the parks at 10 cents an hour. By to-morrow night 2,000 will be working. Six thousand families need help. To-day's contributions footed up \$4,340. Nearly \$20,000 has been contributed so far. Andrew Carnegie has secretly made himself responsible for the payment of the men in the parks if the relief fund does not cover it.

Richard Jones, machinist, and Daniel Davis, plumber, both of Chicago, were arrested last night while trying to enter Race & Porehmann's grocery at Alleghany to steal something to eat. They said they had left Chicago thinking they could get work here. Magistrate McKelvy will hear their cases to-morrow.

It would be strange indeed if, among the multitude of idle men and women, there should not be some who, by force of circumstances and in consequence of repeated disappointments and hardships, have become discouraged, desperate, desponding and utterly contemptuous of society and its so-called proprieties. It would be strange if there were not some who would not work. The conditions which have led to so much enforced idleness have not tended to the elevation of character in those who have been made to suffer. But the cold-blooded cruelty which adds daily insult to the injury already inflicted merits and should receive the contempt of humane people everywhere. That it does not, is one of the indications that point to the decadence of human liberty in this country.

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