

THE LABOR QUESTION.

STRIKES AND SOME OF THEIR CAUSES AND CURES.

A Practical and Conservative View of One of the Vital Issues of the Day.

BY D. F. E. MAI

The great question of our country to-day is the labor question. Not merely are home industries concerned, but the commerce of the world is shaken by the mighty efforts of labor to control capital and of capital to control labor.

Never were capitalists and laborers more bitterly arrayed against each other than now, and never in our history at least, were the indications more portentous.

The question must be settled for the present and that right soon. With the business interests of the country paralyzed, a panic must shortly ensue that would be exceedingly disastrous to all parties.

No thinking man will, for a moment, admit that there can be any real conflict between labor and capital. Either is useless without the other, and that which promotes the interest of one is, or should be, conducive to the interests of the other.

Strikes are movements set on foot by a body of laborers for the attainment of a definite purpose, generally to effect an advance in wages or to prevent a reduction.

These are the two causes best developed by the labor movements in our country. And the extent to which this second cause is manifesting itself is truly alarming, on account of the mob not so much as may be imminent, and violence that is no trivial matter, this frequently because it indicates a moral status of our working men, the bone and sinew of our Government.

When a body of men can form a union and, in the name of that union as a chartered organization, deliberately leave their work at a preconcerted time in violation of all contracts and agreements, their condition is bad enough.

is with other workmen who are organized, he is compelled to join their body or else undergo a species of social and business terrorism that is almost unendurable.

Nor should the other side be ignored. The skirts of the capitalist are by no means clear. Possessing greater light and better opportunities, his is the greater blame.

Two methods have been proposed and are strongly advocated as remedies for strikes. The first consists in giving the employe an interest in the profits on a copartnership basis.

The second plan is arbitration. This does not conflict with the preceding method, and indeed might well be incorporated with it as one. Arbitration is rapidly growing into favor with all classes at the present day.

One danger to be feared just now is improper legislation on this subject. Each party is jealously watching the law-making powers of our land, and is prepared to resent any signs of partiality to the other side.

This danger is increased ten-fold when we consider the unsettled condition of the country, the hot-headed politicians and the intriguing demagogues that are to be found in both parties, and who advocate measures that will hardly be sanctioned by a sober, intelligent public.

Let our politicians beware how they deal with this matter from selfish motives. It is fraught with immense interests and has so far evaded all efforts to a satisfactory solution.

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