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LEE & SHEPARD, Publishers, Boston.
THE LABOR QUESTION

BY

WENDELL PHILLIPS

UNIFORM WITH

"DANIEL O'CONNELL" "EULOGY OF GARRISON"
"THE LOST ARTS" "THE SCHOLAR IN THE REPUBLIC"
"SIR HARRY VANE," Etc.

BOSTON
LEE AND SHEPARD, PUBLISHERS
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1884
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

EVEN before the close of his long crusade against negro-chattel slavery, and while yet the skies were filled with the smoke of the battle-field, Wendell Phillips became interested in the problem of the relations of capital to labor. "I hail the labor movement," he once remarked publicly, "for two reasons; and one is, that it is my only hope for democracy." At another time he said, "From Boston to New Orleans, from Mobile to Rochester, from Baltimore to St. Louis, we have now but one purpose; and that is, having driven all other political questions out of the arena, having abolished slavery, the only question left is labor,—the relations of capital and labor."

Mr. Phillips may be said to have first taken an active part in the movement in 1870, at the Labor-Reform Convention, held at Worcester, Mass., on the 8th of September of that year. He had previously been nominated for governor of the State by the Prohibitory party, and was now again nominated by the laboring-men. He accepted both nominations; and, although defeated at the election, he received upward of twenty thousand votes. The fact that he was a nominee for office in this instance stands clearly in contrast with the balance of his life; yet it is no exception. During the campaign of that year, he spoke frequently in different parts of the State on the subject of labor.
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

At the Labor-Reform Convention, which assembled at Worcester, on the 4th of September, 1871, Mr. Phillips presided, and presented the following resolutions, which were unanimously adopted. They are, indeed, a "full body of faith;" and they show just where Mr. Phillips stood for the last thirteen years of his life.

PLATFORM.

We affirm, as a fundamental principle, that labor, the creator of wealth, is entitled to all it creates.

Affirming this, we avow ourselves willing to accept the final results of the operation of a principle so radical, such as the overthrow of the whole profit-making system, the extinction of all monopolies, the abolition of privileged classes, universal education and fraternity, perfect freedom of exchange, and, best and grandest of all, the final obliteration of that foul stigma upon our so-called Christian civilization,—the poverty of the masses. Holding principles as radical as these, and having before our minds an ideal condition so noble, we are still aware that our goal cannot be reached at a single leap. We take into account the ignorance, selfishness, prejudice, corruption, and demoralization of the leaders of the people, and, to a large extent, of the people themselves; but still, we demand that some steps be taken in this direction: therefore,—

Resolved, That we declare war with the wages system, which demoralizes alike the hirer and the hired, cheats both, and enslaves the workingman; war with the present system of finance, which robs labor, and gorges capital, makes the rich richer, and the poor poorer, and turns a republic into an aristocracy of capital; war with these lavish grants of the public lands to speculating companies, and whenever in power, we pledge ourselves to use every just and legal means to resume all such grants heretofore made; war with the system of enriching capitalists by the creation and increase of public interest-bearing debts. We demand that every
facility, and all encouragement, shall be given by law to co-
operation in all branches of industry and trade, and that the
same aid be given to co-operative efforts that has heretofore
been given to railroads and other enterprises. We demand
a ten-hour day for factory-work as a first step, and that
eight hours be the working-day of all persons thus employed
hereafter. We demand, that, whenever women are employed
at public expense to do the same kind and amount of work
as men perform, they shall receive the same wages. We
demand that all public debts be paid at once in accordance
with the terms of the contract, and that no more debts be
created. Viewing the contract importation of coolies as only
another form of the slave-trade, we demand that all contracts
made relative thereto be void in this country; and that no
public ship, and no steamship which receives public subsidy,
shall aid in such importation.

Wendell Phillips, in presenting this platform, en-
forced its far-reaching principles in a speech from which
the following passages are taken: —

"I regard the movement with which this convention is
connected as the grandest and most comprehensive move-
ment of the age. And I choose my epithets deliberately;
for I can hardly name the idea in which humanity is inter-
ested, which I do not consider locked up in the success of
this movement of the people to take possession of their own.

"All over the world, in every civilized land, every man
can see, no matter how thoughtless, that the great movement
of the masses, in some shape or other, has begun. Humanity
goes by logical steps, and centuries ago the masses claimed
emancipation from actual chains. It was citizenship, noth-
ing else. When that was gained, they claimed the ballot;
and, when our fathers won that, then the road was opened,
the field was clear for this last movement, toward which the
age cannot be said to grope, as we used to phrase it, but
toward which the age lifts itself all over the world.

"If there is any one feature which we can distinguish in
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

all Christendom, under different names, trades-unions, cooperation, Crispins and Internationals, under all flags, there is one great movement. It is for the people peaceably to take possession of their own. No more riots in the streets; no more disorder and revolution; no more arming of different bands; no cannon loaded to the lips. To-day the people have chosen a wiser method: they have got the ballot in their right hands, and they say, 'We come to take possession of the governments of the earth.' In the interests of peace, I welcome this movement,—the peaceable marshalling of all voters toward remodelling the industrial and political civilization of the day. I have not a word to utter—far be it from me!—against the grandest declaration of popular indignation which Paris wrote on the pages of history in fire and blood. I honor Paris as the vanguard of the Internationals of the world. When kings wake at night, startled and aghast, they do not dream of Germany and its orderly array of forces. Aristocracy wakes up aghast at the memory of France; and, when I want to find the vanguard of the people, I look to the uneasy dreams of an aristocracy, and find what they dread most. And to-day the conspiracy of emperors is to put down—what? Not the Czar, not the Emperor William, not the armies of United Germany. But, when the emperors come together in the centre of Europe, what plot do they lay? To annihilate the Internationals, and France is the soul of the Internationals. I, for one, honor Paris: but in the name of Heaven, and with the ballot in our right hands, we shall not need to write our record in fire and blood; we write it in the orderly majorities at the ballot-box.

"If any man asks me, therefore, what value I place first upon this movement, I should say it was the movement of humanity to protect itself; and secondly, it is the insurance of peace; and thirdly, it is a guaranty against the destruction of capital. We all know that there is no war between labor and capital; that they are partners, not enemies, and their true interests on any just basis are identical. And this
movement of ballot-bearing millions is to avoid the unnecessary waste of capital.

"Well, gentlemen, I say so much to justify myself in styling this the grandest and most comprehensive movement of the age.

"You do not kill a hundred millions of corporate capital, you do not destroy the virus of incorporate wealth, by any one election. The capitalists of Massachusetts are neither fools nor cowards; and you will have to whip them three times, and bury them under a monument weightier than Bunker Hill, before they will believe they are whipped. Now, gentlemen, the inference from that statement is this: The first duty resting on this convention, which rises above all candidates and all platforms, is, that it should keep the labor-party religiously together."

Gen. Benjamin F. Butler was a candidate for governor of Massachusetts in 1871, "on a joint Republican and Labor Platform." Mr. Phillips was one of his stanchest supporters, and was often heard in public in his behalf. On the 13th of September he made a most remarkable address on "The People coming to Power," before a popular gathering at Salisbury Beach, in which he rated the general's name as among "the highest, the most illustrious, the most honored, and as the most historical, representing as much ability and as much will to work" as any that stood in the annals of the Commonwealth.¹

On the 31st of October, 1871, he delivered a stirring address on "The Foundation of the Labor Movement," before a large audience at the Music Hall in Boston. It was a terrific arraignment of capitalists, and a comprehensive display of the demands of the workers.

On the 7th of December Mr. Phillips again took up

¹ Published by Lee & Shepard, in pamphlet form, price 25 cents.
the subject in Steinway Hall, New-York City; and still again in January, 1872, in Boston.

In April, 1872, he delivered the speech, printed entire in this volume, before the International Grand Lodge of the Knights of St. Crispin,—by all odds, the most noteworthy which he ever uttered on the "Labor Problem." These utterances will be read, and re-read, long after the revilers of the great orator are forgotten.

It was the crowning glory of the career of Mr. Phillips, that he was faithful to the end. After the close of his twenty-five years' crusade for abolition, he entered upon a new work as the champion of universal labor, ready for any service or sacrifice in behalf of justice and mankind. Though his natural strength was abated, he rallied again to the sound of the trumpet, advanced with unflagging step, full of power, courage, cheer, and hope, and fell at the front. His championship of the workingmen's movement was the inspiration of a lofty soul illuminated by truth, and energized by the passion for right. He saw the perils of freedom and the American people from the money power, and he raised the voice of warning; he saw the wrongs of the toilers, and he ranged himself on their side; he saw the accumulating ills of our distorted social system, and he withstood them; he saw the growing corruption of politics, and he proclaimed the primitive truths of democracy. He rendered service to his country, in the new struggle of the times, such as can now be given by but few living men.

Mr. Phillips's passion for freedom and right swept over the world. His were splendid discourses in behalf of justice for Ireland; he made Faneuil Hall ring, two years before his death, with his eloquent appeal for the persecuted socialists of Germany; and, at a later period, he startled the scholars of Harvard with his immortal
INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

defence of the Russian Nihilists. Show him a wrong to be assailed, or a right to be defended, and his soul was in arms. His mind was logical, his quality was heroic.

He was the representative of the new political forces. When his countrymen required his presence, he was always ready: now, when his name is called, the answer comes back, alike to his supporters and to his opponents, — "Dead on the field of battle."

Though his work is over, the example of his life still lingers. By his courage, others will be strengthened; by his eloquence, others will be inspired; by the memory of his self-sacrifice, others will be chastened. Down the vista of the ages, the name of Wendell Phillips will resound, —

"Faithful to the end."

G. L. A.
THE FOUNDATION

OF

THE LABOR MOVEMENT.\(^1\)

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN:

We are sometimes so near an object that we can't see it. I could place you so near the City Hall to-night that you would not know whether you were looking at a ton of granite or a wall of a large building. So it is with a fact. The men who stand the nearest to it are often the last to recognize either its breadth or its meaning. Perhaps the last men to appreciate a fact are the men nearest to whose eyes it passes. And it is just so in government. We are hardly aware of the changes that are taking place about us: our children will understand them distinctly.

There is a large class among our German fellow-citizens who advocate the abolition of the Presidency. The thoughtful in that class perceive, what the ordinary passer-by does not recognize, that we are daily abolishing the Presidency, and the movement of the country for fifty years has been toward the abolition of the Presidency. You see this tendency in a variety of circumstances. When we were first a nation, the greatest men among us were chosen President, and named for

\(^1\) Delivered in Boston Music Hall, Oct. 31, 1871.
President; but now we don’t think of putting up a first-rate man.

There is another feature we don’t see,—that the government is fast being monopolized by the House of Representatives. If we go on as we have done for half a century, there will be no government in this country except the House. Whatever defies the power of the great House will go down. Whether harmonious and beneficent results will follow our adoption of the system, depends upon whether the great mass of men and women, with universal suffrage as their sheet-anchor, can work them out through one single tool like the House.

I have only gone into this statement to approach a second point; and that is, we stand on the moment when the people actually put their hands forth for power. We stand at an epoch when the nature of the government is undergoing a fundamental change. I have been speaking of machines,—whether we should operate through a Senate and President, or solely through a House. I have been speaking of the spindles and wheels. Below that lies the water-power. The water-power of Great Britain has been the wealth of thirty thousand land-holders—thirty thousand land-holding families, perhaps seven hundred thousand or a million voters. With us, the water-power is to be the ballots of ten millions of adult men and women, scattered through all classes,—rich and poor, educated and ignorant, prompt and conservative, radical and timid, all modes and kinds and qualities of mind. Well, that brings me to the form which this great advance of the people takes. It is the working masses that are really about to put their hands to the work of governing.

It is no accident, no caprice of an individual, no mere shout of the political arena, that heralds to-day the great labor movement of the United States.
But in the mean time, over the horizon, looming at first and now almost touching its meridian, comes up another power: I mean the power of wealth, the inordinate power of capital. Our fathers, when they prevented entail, when they provided for the distribution of estates, thought they had erected a bulwark against the money power that had killed Great Britain. They forgot that money could combine; that a moneyed corporation was like the papacy, a succession of persons with a unity of purpose, that it never died, that it never by natural proclivity became imbecile. The grandson of a king is necessarily one-third an idiot; but the third generation of a money corporation is wiser for the experience of predecessors, and preserves the same unity of purpose.

This great money power looms over the horizon at the very moment when, to every thoughtful man, the power of the masses concentrating in the House of Representatives is to become the sole omnipotence of the State. Naturally so ominous a conjecture provokes resistance. Naturally a peril so immediate prompts the wealthy class of the community to combine for defence.

The land of England has ruled it for six hundred years. The corporations of America mean to rule it in the same way, and, unless some power more radical than that of ordinary politics is found, will rule it inevitably. I confess that the only fear I have in regard to republican institutions is whether, in our day, any adequate remedy will be found for this incoming flood of the power of incorporated wealth. No statesman, no public man yet, has dared to defy it. Every man that has met it has been crushed to powder; and the only hope of any effectual grapple with it is by rousing the actual masses, whose interests permanently lie in an opposite direction, to grapple with this great force; for
you know very well that our great cities are the radiating points from which go forth the great journalism, the culture, the education, the commercial influences, that make and shape the nation. The great cities are the arsenals of great wealth, where wealth manages everything its own way.

Now, gentlemen, to me the labor movement means just this: It is the last noble protest of the American people against the power of incorporated wealth, seeking to do over again what the whig aristocracy of Great Britain has successfully done for two hundred years. Thirty thousand families own Great Britain today; and if you multiply John Bright by a hundred, and double his eloquence, it seems impossible that he should save England from a violent convulsion in the great grapple between such a power and the people who have determined to have their way.

Men blame us, the representatives of the working-men of the nation, that we come into politics. The other day it was my good fortune to meet that distinguished Frenchman, Monsieur Coquerel; and he asked me what was the motto of the workingmen of the United States. I said to him, "Short hours, better education, co-operation in the end, and in the mean time a political movement that will concentrate the thought of the country upon this thing."

Now, here I take issue with the best critic which the labor movement has met: I refer to Rev. Samuel Johnson of Salem, one of the thinkers who has spread out before the people his objections to the labor movement of this country. His first objection is, that we will hurry into politics. Well, now, our answer is to him, and to the score of other scholars who have been criticising us: Gentlemen, we see the benefit of going into politics. If we had not rushed into politics, had
not taken Massachusetts by the four corners and shaken her, you never would have written your criticisms. We rush into politics because politics is the safety-valve. We could discuss as well as you if you would only give us bread and houses, fair pay and leisure, and opportunities to travel: we could sit and discuss the question for the next fifty years. It's a very easy thing to discuss, for a gentleman in his study, with no anxiety about to-morrow. Why, the ladies and gentlemen of the reign of Louis XV. and Louis XVI., in France, seated in gilded saloons and on Persian carpets, surrounded with luxury, with the products of India and the curious manufactures of ingenious Lyons and Rheims, discussed the rights of man, and balanced them in dainty phrases, and expressed them in such quaint generalizations that Jefferson borrowed the Declaration of Independence from their hands. There they sat, balancing and discussing sweetly, making out new theories, and daily erecting a splendid architecture of debate, till the angry crowd broke open the doors, and ended the discussion in blood. They waited too long, discussed about half a century too long. You see, discussion is very good when a man has bread to eat, and his children all portioned off, and his daughters married, and his house furnished and paid for, and his will made; but discussion is very bad when

. . . "Ye hear the children weeping, O my brothers!  
Ere the sorrow comes with years;"

discussion is bad when a class bends under actual oppression. We want immediate action.

We would fain save this issue from an outbreak of actual violence. Therefore we go into politics.

Well, then our critic goes on to say, "What do you call yourselves labor party for? All men labor. Rufus
Choate labors. Daniel Webster labors. Why do you confine your party to the men that work?” Well, now, we confine it because thus there is no mistake. Now, suppose you should take up a book presenting the condition of the laboring classes of Great Britain. Mr. Gladstone works harder than any other man there. Lord Brougham did more work than other man there. Lord Palmerston, up to his eightieth year, worked hard as any man there. But if you were to take up a book on the workingmen of Great Britain, do you think you would find the condition of Lord Brougham there? If you took up a book on the British laboring class, or how much they eat, what kind of houses they live in, etc., do you think you would find Gladstone’s income, and the number of rooms he had in his house, and how many children, on an average, he had had the last fifty years? So if an Englishman came here, and said, “I want to know something about your workingmen: please let me hear it from some of themselves. Whom shall I go to?” would you send him to Daniel Webster or Rufus Choate? But Daniel Webster did as much work as any man of his day. Would you have him sent to Rufus Choate? But Rufus Choate was a hard-working man. John Marshall and Lemuel Shaw did as much work as any man in Massachusetts or Virginia; but if George Combe had come to this country, and said, “I want to see a specimen of the laboring class of the United States,” I doubt whether any man would have sent him to Lemuel Shaw. I ask the critics of the labor movement, whether any man ever misunderstood this? Every man who reads of the labor question knows that it means the movement of the men that earn their living with their hands; that are employed, and paid in wages; are gathered under roofs of factories, sent out on farms, sent out on ships, gath-
Foundation of the Labor Movement.

erected on the walls. In popular acceptation, the working class means the men that work with their hands, for wages, so many hours a day, employed by great capitalists; that work for everybody else. Why do we move for this class? "Why," says Mr. Johnson, "don't you move for all workingmen?" Because, while Daniel Webster gets forty thousand dollars for arguing the Mexican claims, there is no need of any body's moving for him. While Rufus Choate gets five thousand dollars for making one argument to a jury, there is no need of moving for him, or for the men that work with their brains,—that do highly disciplined and skilled labor, invent, and write books. The reason why the labor movement confines itself to a single class is because that class of work does not get paid, does not get protection. Mental labor is adequately paid, and more than adequately protected. It can shift its channels: it can vary according to the supply and demand. If a man fails as a minister, why, he becomes a railway-conductor. If that don't suit him, he turns out, and becomes the agent of an insurance-office. If that don't suit, he goes West, and becomes governor of a Territory. And if he finds himself incapable of either of these positions, he comes home, and gets to be a city editor. He varies his occupation as he pleases, and doesn't need protection. But the great mass, chained to a trade, doomed to be ground up in the mill of supply and demand, that work so many hours a day, and must run in the great ruts of business,—they are the men whose inadequate protection, whose unfair share of the general product, claims a movement in their behalf.

Well, the third charge brought by Mr. Johnson against us is, that we are cruel: we combine; we prevent this man laboring there, and we won't let that man
learn our trade; we form trades-unions. To be sure we do. We say to the Chinese, "Stay at home: don't come here by importation; come by emigration." We say to the crowding millions who try to swamp our trade, "Stand aloof: we won't teach you." We say to the mills of Lowell, who have turned us out of doors, "We'll starve you into submission." Well, "it's a narrow contest: it's an unjust, it's a cruel, it's an avaricious method." So it is. Where did we learn it? Learned it of capital,—learned it of our enemies.

I know labor is narrow; I know she is aggressive; I know she arms herself with the best weapon that a corrupt civilization furnishes,—all true. Where do we get these ideas? Borrowed them from capital, every one of them; and when you advance to us on the level of peace, unarmed, we'll meet you on the same. While you combine and plot and defend, so will we.

But Mr. Johnson says, "Come into the world with the white banner of peace." Ay, we will, when you disarm. How foolish it would have been for Grant to send home his Sharp's rifles to Springfield, and garner all his cannon in New York, and put all his monitors in the harbor of Norfolk, and go down to Virginia with eighty thousand unarmed men, to look her in the face! Labor comes up, and says, "They have shotted their cannon to the lips; they have rough-ground their swords as in battle; they have adopted every new method; they have invented every dangerous machine; and it is all planted like a great park of artillery against us. They have incorporated wealth; they have hidden behind banks; they have concealed themselves in currency; they have sheltered themselves in taxation; they have passed rules to govern us: and we will improve upon the lesson they have taught us. When they disarm, we will—not before."
Well, then, the fourth charge is found in the "Daily Advertiser." We had a meeting at Framingham, and passed a set of resolutions; we adopted a platform; and the next day the "Daily Advertiser" granted us the condescension of an article, criticising our action, especially mine; and they described what we had adopted. They painted its horrible tendency. They said, "If you adopt that principle, it will lead you to that (and so on to that), till the final result will be" — I held my breath. I said to myself, "What will it probably be? Perhaps the stereotyped ghost of the French Revolution: that's what's coming." "The final result will be" — Horrible! I thought probably they would paint a millionaire hanging on every lamp-post. "The final result" — Perhaps it will be Mormonism; society dissolved into its original elements. Horrible! I began to feel a faint sensation; but I concluded to read on: "The final result will be an equalization of property." Horrible! horrible, actually! Men will be almost equal! An equalization of property! Any man that does that ought to be hanged. Well, we do mean it: we do mean just that. That's the meaning of the labor movement,—an equalization of property. The "Advertiser" has found us out, actually discovered our plot. He's let the cat out of the bag. We didn't mean to have told you, but it is so. What we need is an equalization of property—nothing else. My ideal of a civilization is a very high one; but the approach to it is a New-England town of some two thousand inhabitants, with no rich man and no poor man in it, all mingling in the same society, every child at the same school, no poorhouse, no beggar, opportunities equal, nobody too proud to stand aloof, nobody too humble to be shut out. That's New England as it was fifty years ago, the horrible creature that the "Daily Advertiser"
fears. That's what Framingham proposes to bring about. But why ain't Framingham contented? Because the civilization that lingers beautifully on the hillsides of New England, nestles sweetly in the valleys of Vermont, the moment it approaches a crowd like Boston, or a million of men gathered in one place like New York, it rots. It cannot force the crowd: it cannot stand the great centres of modern civilization. Our civilization cannot stand the city. One reason is, it has got some hidden disease. Another reason is, the moment it flows out into the broad, deep activity of the nineteenth century, it betrays its weakness, and copies Europe. The moment this sweet-scented, dew-smelling Vermont flows down into the slums of New York, it becomes like London. The moment the North gathers its forces, and goes down the Mississippi Valley into New Orleans, social science stands aghast. Modern civilization shrinks back at the terrible evil which she can neither fathom nor cure, just as she does in Europe.

What is our cause? It is this: there are three hundred and fifty millions of human beings in what you call Christendom, and two hundred millions of them don't have enough to eat from January to December. I won't ask for culture, for opportunities for education, for travel, for society. But two hundred millions of men gathered under Christendom don't have even enough to eat. A hundred thousand men in the city of New York live in dwellings that a rich man wouldn't let his horse stay in a day.

But that isn't any thing. You should go up to beautiful Berkshire with me, into the factories there. It shall be the day after a Presidential election. I will go with you into a counting-room,—four hundred employees. The partners are sitting down, the day after a Presidential election. They take the list of workmen,
and sift them out; and every man that has not voted the ticket they wanted is thrown out to starve just as if he were cattle. That's Christian civilization! that's Massachusetts! I don't like that significant fact. I leap from that town into a large mill, with five hundred employees, and say to the master, "How about the dwellings of your operatives? How many hours do they have at home?"—"Well, I hope they don't have any. The best-ventilated place they are ever in is my mill. They had better stay here sixteen hours out of the twenty-four: it keeps them out of mischief better than any other place. As long as they work, they are not doing worse. I cannot attend to their houses." I say to him, "It seems to me you do the same for your ox." That's another significant fact of our civilization. I go to Lowell, and I say to a young girl, wandering in the streets, "How is this?"—"Well, I worked here seven years, and I thought I would leave that mill, and go to another; and the corporation won't give me my ticket. I have sued them in the Supreme Court, and I cannot get it; and here I am, penniless, in Eastern Massachusetts." That's Christian civilization. I am picking up, not individual facts, but significant rules, that were made for labor.

You say, "What does labor need in New England?" It needs justice. Mr. Stewart, in New York, has bought a whole town; and he is going to build model houses, and house there all the labor he can get to go. Yet the civilization which alone can look the New Testament in the face is a civilization where one man does not depend on the pity of another man's building him a model lodging-house. The civilization which alone can look the New Testament in the face is a civilization where one man could not build, and another man would not need, that sort of refuge.
No, gentlemen, what we mean is this: The labor of yesterday, your capital, is protected sacredly. Not so the labor of to-day. The labor of yesterday gets twice the protection and twice the pay that the labor of to-day gets. Capital gets twice the protection and twice the pay.

Now, we mean a radical change; and in the few minutes that are left me, I want to indicate our object.

We mean certain great radical changes. I am not quite of the opinion of Mr. Secretary Boutwell, when he said here the other night, that fifty years hence the idea that a man could own land, and leave it to his children, would be ridiculous. I have not quite come to that. But then, you know there is a reason for it: he is a radical, and I have always been a conservative. There is a curious thing underlies lands. We are not quite certain that we have got the best system. Secretary Boutwell may be right. Seventy years ago a man offered to a relative of mine all the land between Federal Street and Hawley Street, between Milk Street and Franklin, for thirty-three hundred dollars. He came to him day after day, urging him to purchase: and the answer was, "I am not rich enough to have a cow-pasture at that price, and I couldn't use it for anything else," — that tract of land which to-day, gentlemen, as you know, would sell for three million dollars. Now, labor goes about, like Socrates, asking questions. We don't assume anything. When we were little boys, and did our sums on the slate, and the answer came out wrong, we didn't break the slate. We went to the master; and he said, "Go back; there's a mistake somewhere: if you examine, you will find it." I come into a civilization in which two men out of three don't have enough to eat. I come into New York, where it is a rich man that supplies a lodging for houseless poverty. I say to myself,
"That course isn't right: there's a mistake somewhere."
Thou shalt do unto another as you would have another do unto you. The end of things is New York. That don't cohere. Where is the mistake? It's somewhere, and the labor movement is trying to find it out.

Again, gentlemen, we have another doubt to express. Are you quite certain that capital—the child of artificial laws, the product of society, the mere growth of social life—has a right to only an equal burden with labor, the living spring? We doubt it so much that we think we have invented a way to defeat Tom Scott, of the Pennsylvania Central. We think we have devised a little plan—Abraham Lincoln used to have a little story—by which we will save the Congress of the nation from the moneyed corporations of the State. When we get into power, there is one thing we mean to do. If a man owns a single house, we will tax him one hundred dollars. If he owns ten houses of like value, we won't tax him one thousand dollars, but two thousand dollars. If he owns a hundred houses, we won't tax him ten thousand dollars, but sixty thousand dollars; and the richer a man grows, the bigger his tax, so that when he is worth forty million dollars he don't have more than twenty thousand dollars a year to live on. We'll double and treble and quintuple and sextuple and increase tenfold the taxes, till Stewart out of his uncounted millions, and the Pennsylvania Central out of its measureless income, shall not have any thing more than a moderate lodging and an honest table. The corporations we would have are those of associated labor and capital,—co-operation.

We'll crumble up wealth by making it unprofitable to be rich. The poor man shall have a larger income in proportion as he is poor. The rich man shall have a lesser income in proportion as he is rich. You will say,
"Is that just?" My friends, it is safe. Man is more valuable than money. You say, "Then capital will go to Europe." Good heavens! let it go.

If other states wish to make themselves vassals to wealth, so will not we. We will save a country equal from end to end. Land, private property, all sorts of property, shall be so dearly taxed that it shall be impossible to be rich; for it is in wealth, in incorporated, combining, perpetuated wealth, that the danger of labor lies.
THE LABOR QUESTION.¹

GENTLEMEN:

I feel honored by this welcome of your organization, and especially so when I consider that the marvelously rapid success of the political strength of the labor movement, especially in New England, is due mainly to this organization. There never has been a party formed that in three years has attracted toward itself such profound attention throughout the United States. Some of you may be old enough to remember that when the anti-slavery sentiment, nearly thirty years ago, endeavored to rally a political party, it took them some seven or nine years before they had an organization that could be considered national in any real sense. The political labor movement in three years has reached a position of influence which it took that idea nine years to obtain.

I trace that rapid progress in popular recognition to the existence of these Crispin lodges and trades-unions of the State. You cannot marshal fifty thousand men at once, taken promiscuously from parties and sects: they must be trained to work together, must be disciplined in co-operation; and it is the training and the discipline which the workingmen got in these organizations that enabled the labor movement to assume its proportions so rapidly.

¹ Delivered before the International Grand Lodge of the Knights of St. Crispin, in April, 1872.
Then, again, I stand here with great interest from another consideration,—I stand in the presence of a momentous power. I do not care exactly what your idea is as to how you will work, whether you will work in this channel or in the other. I am told that you represent from seventy thousand to one hundred thousand men, here and elsewhere. Think of it! A hundred thousand men! They can dictate the fate of this nation. Give me fifty thousand men in earnest, who can agree on all vital questions, who will plant their shoulders together, and swear by all that is true and just that for the long years they will put their great idea before the country, and those fifty thousand men will govern the nation. So if I have one hundred thousand men represented before me, who are in earnest, who get hold of the great question of labor, and, having hold of it, grapple with it, and rip it and tear it open, and invest it with light, gathering the facts, piercing the brains about them and crowding those brains with the facts, then I know, sure as fate, though I may not live to see it, that they will certainly conquer this nation in twenty years. It is impossible that they should not. And that is your power, gentlemen.

I rejoice at every effort workingmen make to organize; I do not care on what basis they do it. Men sometimes say to me, "Are you an Internationalist?" I say, "I do not know what an Internationalist is;" but they tell me it is a system by which the workingmen from London to Gibraltar, from Moscow to Paris, can clasp hands. Then I say God speed, God speed, to that or any similar movement.

Now, let me tell you where the great weakness of an association of workingmen is. It is that it cannot wait. It does not know where it is to get its food for next week. If it is kept idle for ten days, the funds of the
society are exhausted. Capital can fold its arms, and wait six months; it can wait a year. It will be poorer, but it does not get to the bottom of the purse. It can afford to wait; it can tire you out, and starve you out. And what is there against that immense preponderance of power on the part of capital? Simply organization. *That makes the wealth of all, the wealth of every one.* So I welcome organization. I do not care whether it calls itself trades-union, Crispin, international, or commune: any thing that masses up a unit in order that they may put in a united force to face the organization of capital, any thing that does that, I say amen to it. One hundred thousand men! It is an immense army. I do not care whether it considers chiefly the industrial or the political questions; it can control the nation if it is in earnest. The reason why the abolitionists brought the nation down to fighting their battle is that they were really in earnest, knew what they wanted, and were determined to have it. Therefore they got it. The leading statesmen and orators of the day said they would never urge abolition; but a determined man in a printing-office said that they should, and—they did it.

And so it is with this question exactly. Brains govern this country; and I hope to God the time will never come when brains won’t govern it, for they ought to. And the way in which you can compel the brains to listen and to attend to you on the question of labor, actually to concentrate the intellectual power of the nation upon it, is by gathering together by hundreds of thousands, no matter whether it be on an industrial basis or a political basis, and say to the nation, “We are the numbers, and we will be heard,” and you may be sure that you will. Now, an Englishman has but one method to pursue, to be heard. He puts his arm up among the cog-wheels of the industrial machine, and stops it. That
is a strike. "The London Times" looks down and says, "What in heaven is the matter?" That is just what the man wants: he wishes to call public attention to the facts, and the consequence is that every newspaper joins with the "Times," and asks what is the matter, and the whole brain of the English nation is turned to consider the question. That is good, but we have a quicker way than that. We do not need to put our hands up among the cog-wheels, and stop the machine. Pierpont said of the little ballot,—

"It executes the freeman's will,
As lightning does the will of God."

Now, I turn my sight that way because I am a Democrat, a Jeffersonian Democrat in the darkest hour. England can look down into Lancashire, rotting in ignorance; and if the people there rise up to claim their share of the enjoyments of life, she need not care, because she says, "I have got the laws of state in the hands of the middle classes; and if that man down there can handle a spade, or work in a mill, it is all I want of him; and, if he ever raises his hand against the state, I will put my cavalrymen into the saddle, and ride him down." The man is nothing but a tool to do certain work.

But when America looks down into her Lancashire, into the mines of Pennsylvania, she says literally, "Well, his hand holds the ballot, and I cannot afford to leave him down there in ignorance." I admire democracy because it takes bonds on wealth and power, that they shall raise the masses. If they don't do it, there is no security. Therefore, on every great question I turn instantly to politics. It is the people's normal school; it is the way to make the brains of the nation approach the subject. Why, in 1861 or 1862,
when I first approached this question, you could not get an article on the labor movement in any newspaper or magazine, unless, indeed, there was a strike, or something of that sort. Now you cannot take up any of the leading newspapers or magazines without finding them full of it: editors eat, drink, and sleep on it. The question is so broad, it has so many different channels, that it puzzles them. Even John Stuart Mill has not attempted to cover its whole breadth. It takes in every thing.

Let me tell you why I am interested in the labor-question. Not simply because of the long hours of labor; not simply because of a specific oppression of a class. I sympathize with the sufferers there: I am ready to fight on their side. But I look out upon Christendom, with its three hundred millions of people; and I see, that, out of this number of people, one hundred millions never had enough to eat. Physiologists tell us that this body of ours, unless it is properly fed, properly developed, fed with rich blood and carefully nourished, does no justice to the brain. You cannot make a bright or a good man in a starved body; and so this one-third of the inhabitants of Christendom, who have never had food enough, can never be what they should be. Now, I say that the social civilization which condemns every third man in it to be below the average in the nourishment God prepared for him, did not come from above: it came from below; and, the sooner it goes down, the better. Come on this side of the ocean. You will find forty millions of people, and I suppose they are in the highest state of civilization; and yet it is not too much to say, that, out of that forty millions, ten millions, at least, who get up in the morning and go to bed at night, spend all the day in the mere effort to get bread enough to live. They have not elasticity
enough, mind or body, left, to do any thing in the way of intellectual or moral progress.

I take a man, for instance, in one of the manufacturing valleys of Connecticut. If you get into the cars there at 6.30 o'clock in the morning, as I have done, you will find, getting in at every little station, a score or more of laboring men and women, with their dinner in a pail; and they get out at some factory that is already lighted up. Go down the same valley about 7.30 in the evening, and you will again see them going home. They must have got up about 5.30; they are at their work until nigh upon eight o'clock. There is a good, solid fourteen hours. Now, there will be a strong, substantial man, like Cobbett, for instance, who will sit up nights studying, and who will be a scholar at last among them, perhaps; but he is an expert. The average man, nine out of ten, when he gets home at night, does not care to read an article from the "North American," nor a long speech from Charles Sumner. No: if he can't have a good story, and a warm supper, and a glass of grog perhaps, he goes off to bed. Now, I say that the civilization that has produced this state of things in nearly the hundredth year of the American Republic did not come from above.

I believe in the temperance movement. I am a temperance man of nearly forty years' standing; and I think it one of the grandest things in the world, because it holds the basis of self-control. Intemperance is the cause of poverty, I know; but there is another side to that: poverty is the cause of intemperance. Crowd a man with fourteen hours' work a day, and you crowd him down to a mere animal life. You have eclipsed his aspirations, dulled his tastes, stunted his intellect, and made him a mere tool, to work fourteen hours, and catch a thought in the interval; and, while a man in a hun-
dred will rise to be a genius, ninety-nine will cower down under the circumstances. Now, I can tell you a fact. In London, the other day, it was found that one club of gentlemen, a thousand strong, spent twenty thousand dollars at the club-house during the year for drink. Well, I would allow them twenty thousand dollars more at home for liquor, making in all forty thousand dollars a year. These men were all men of education and leisure: they had books and paintings, opera, race-course, and regatta. A thousand men down in Portsmouth in a ship-yard, working under a boss, spent at the grog-shops of the place, in that year, eighty thousand dollars, — double that of their rich brethren. What is the explanation of such a fact as that? Why, the club-man had a circle of pleasures and of company: the operative, after he had worked fourteen hours, had nothing to look forward to but his grog.

That is why I say, lift a man, give him life, let him work eight hours a day, give him the school, develop his taste for music, give him a garden, give him beautiful things to see, and good books to read, and you will starve out those lower appetites. Give a man a chance to earn a good living, and you may save his life. So it is with women in prostitution. Poverty is the road to it: it is this that makes them the prey of the wealth and the leisure of another class. Give a hundred men in this country good wages and eight hours' work, and ninety-nine will disdain to steal. Give a hundred women a good chance to get a good living, and ninety-nine of them will disdain to barter their virtue for gold. You will find in our criminal institutions to-day a great many men with big brains, who ought to have risen in the world, — perhaps gone to Congress. You may laugh, but I tell you the biggest brains don't go to Congress. Now, take a hundred criminals: ten of them
will be smart men; but take the remainder, and eighty of them are below the average, body and mind: they were, as Charles Lamb said, "never brought up; they were dragged up." They never had any fair chance: they were starved in body and mind. It is like a chain weak in one link: the moment temptation came, it went over. Now, just so long as you hold two-thirds of this nation on a narrow, superficial line, you feed the criminal classes.

Any man that wants to grapple the labor question must know how you will secure a fair division of production. No man answers that question.

I hail the labor movement for two reasons; and one is, that it is my only hope for democracy. At the time of the anti-slavery agitation, I was not sure whether we should come out of the struggle with one republic, or two; but republics I knew we should still be. I am not so confident, indeed, that we shall come out of this storm as a republic, unless the labor movement succeeds. Take a power like the Pennsylvania Central Railroad and the New-York Central road, and there is no legislative independence that can exist in its sight. As well expect a green vine to flourish in a dark cellar as to expect honesty to exist under the shadow of those upas-trees. Unless there is a power in your movement, industrially and politically, the last knell of democratic liberty in this Union is struck; for, as I said, there is no power in one State to resist such a giant as the Pennsylvania road. We have thirty-eight one-horse legislatures in this country: and we have got a man like Tom Scott, with three hundred and fifty million dollars in his hands; and, if he walks through the States, they have no power. Why, he need not move at all. If he smokes, as Grant does, a puff of the waste smoke out of his mouth upsets the Legislature.
Now, there is nothing but the rallying of men against money that can contest with that power. Rally industrially if you will; rally for eight hours, for a little division of profits, for co-operation; rally for such a banking-power in the Government as would give us money at three per cent.

Only organize, and stand together. Claim something together, and at once: let the nation hear a united demand from the laboring voice, and then, when you have got that, go for another; but get something.

I say, let the debts of the country be paid, abolish the banks, and let the Government lend every Illinois farmer (if he wants it), who is now borrowing money at ten per cent, money on the half-value of his land at three per cent. The same policy that gave a million acres to the Pacific Railroad, because it was a great national effort, will allow of our lending Chicago twenty millions of money, at three per cent, to rebuild it.

From Boston to New Orleans, from Mobile to Rochester, from Baltimore to St. Louis, we have now but one purpose; and that is, having driven all other political questions out of the arena, having abolished slavery, the only question left is labor,—the relations of capital and labor. The night before Charles Sumner left Boston for Washington the last time, he said to me, "I have just one thing more to do for the negro,—to carry the Civil-Rights Bill; and, after that is passed, I shall be at liberty to take up the question of labor."

Now, one word in conclusion. If you do your duty,—and by that I mean standing together and being true to each other,—the presidential election you will decide, every State election you may decide if you please.

If you want power in this country; if you want to make yourselves felt; if you do not want your children to wait long years before they have the bread on the
table they ought to have, the leisure in their lives they ought to have, the opportunities in life they ought to have; if you don’t want to wait yourselves,—write on your banner, so that every political trimmer can read it, so that every politician, no matter how short-sighted he may be, can read it, “We never forget! If you launch the arrow of sarcasm at labor, we never forget; if there is a division in Congress, and you throw your vote in the wrong scale, we never forget. You may go down on your knees, and say, ‘I am sorry I did the act;’ and we will say, ‘It will avail you in heaven, but on this side of the grave never.’” So that a man, in taking up the labor question, will know he is dealing with a hair-trigger pistol, and will say, “I am to be true to justice and to man: otherwise I am a dead duck.”
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