

LABOR AND CAPITAL.

A Nebraska Lady Discusses the Present Conditions, and the Development of a Better System.

LABOR CREATES ALL WEALTH.

How Capital Oppresses Labor—How Men Become Millionaires—The Problem Must be Solved in the United States.

The Present Wage System.

"Through labor to rest, through combat to victory."—Thos. a' Kempis.

Labor was said by the ancients to be the price which the Gods set upon every thing worth having.

The important place which industrial affairs hold in modern thought is one of the peculiarities of the age. Revolutions can be traced by indications which, to the observing, point out with tolerable clearness the character of the coming order.

Ours is the age of investigation on all subjects, which proves that new and improved conditions are coming. The present labor system is the chrysalis wherein is developed a higher order of civilization.

The modern Sphinx is propounding many questions, all of which must, and in the probably near future, shall be solved, for upon their adjustment hinges the weal of the race, and like Banquo's ghost, will not down.

We may have been born a hundred years too soon to realize the prophesied Eutopian age wherein all men shall carry with them the Philosopher's stone and every beautiful woman possess the Elixir of Life, and each wrong be righted, but a better day is surely coming.

Our more conservative people seem satisfied with the existing order of things, possibly indifferent to the investigation of the past, and plans for the future, but those who dream that the present economical order will endure, are blind to the signs of the times.

Other economical and industrial systems have preceded the present; they were probably necessary to prepare, like a John the Baptist, the coming of the present.

The very errors and abuses of the present system are a necessary discipline to prepare mankind for a more equitable order.

The condition of man was primarily barbarism; from that, strange to say, he evolved to slavery. That abhorrent system initiated a sort of division of labor.

Of course, when it came to the distribution of the products of labor, the owner deemed himself entitled to all above that necessary to maintain the slave's existence.

The ruling principle was despotism, and the utter ignorance of the slave the essential condition to the perpetuation of the system.

As a system chattel slavery has disappeared from our country, yet its traces remain.

Is it not strange that in our free land scriptures were freely quoted to prove slavery a necessary and divine institution? Provided always, that the slave differ in color from his master; yet, with all its hideous features, slavery was basic to the present wage system and commercial civilization.

The fall of the Roman Empire and sway of Northern Barbarism made a new order of things inevitable, but above all other benign influences the spread of Christianity did most to improve conditions.

Finally came the feudal system; custom was its ruling principle; serfs were

attached to the soil and claimed support from it.

Domestic and family life were protected, and to the lowest classes many privileges were accorded. The necessities of life were plentiful and cheap, and wages or profit, even in years of dearth were ample to fill the void, and to the poorest there were no insuperable bars to some progress.

Men thought of Heaven as organized on a feudal basis, yet the march of progress sweeps away that system when it has fulfilled its mission.

The invention of the steam engine and the printing press; and the discovery of America with its subsequent growth of commerce were basic to the present wage system with its feature of private enterprise and capital. Wealth of course controlled the world under the slave and feudal systems, but never in the form of capital, as it does today.

We have made wonderful advancement. In olden days, princes could not always obtain medical skill, now it is at the command of the poorest.

Squalid huts are supplanted by cottages built according to architectural plans and sanitary science, and humble laborers possess homes in which dwell well-fed, educated and happy families.

The walks of literature are accessible to the masses. They may enjoy comforts that were the former luxuries of the few wealthy and select.

Workers of today are men of liberty, free to work for whom they please, provided they can find employment.

Labor is a dignified commodity, sold in the world's marts for what wages the law of supply and demand may fix. The laborer may own land if he can pay for it.

His ballot is free, and may be cast in secret, precluding his employer from bartering on his workman's political creed.

In the consideration of the wage system we must be true philosophers; be fair, calm and charitable, and not allow our sympathies with either labor or capital, to warp our judgment.

The most glaring evils, carry the seeds of their own destruction with them.

A better order will replace the present system, as soon as society will be prepared for the change.

Both millionaire and pauper are creators and results of the present system.

At present both classes must co-exist. In the vast difference between the product of labor, and the wages paid the laborer, lies the secret of vast fortunes and widespread poverty.

The more equitable adjustment of this matter is the problem and dream of every school of economists.

Capitalists, of course, claim that their success is due to the natural productiveness of capital; but capital, left to itself, never increases more than the talent hid in the napkin.

For instance, a number of wealthy men agree to invest their capital in the woolen industry; they form a joint stock company, elect officers and hire a superintendent to manage the business.

A factory is bought or rented; machinery and raw materials are purchased; labor is needed, and bought.

Buildings, etc., are paid for at the time of purchase or delivery, but labor is hired by day, week or month, and always paid for after it has been used.

The cloth is sold or exchanged in the markets of the world; it has value, or it could not be sold for money, or exchanged for other goods; what gave it this value? Why, two prime factors enter into the problem, nature and labor.

Nature, *per se*, makes no charges for her materials, but human labor, under the present system, is a commodity having money value.

Labor is the unit by which all other products are measured.

The term labor includes mental as well as manual work.

I have not the space to enter statistically into the compensation of labor, and the vast profits of capital; in short, labor produces all the surplus for which, in all business, there are two claimants, viz: Labor and invested capital.

Of this surplus, wage-workers receive, on an average (in this country) 94 cents a day.

He earns that, provided he works

every day in the year, and never loses time through sickness or recreation.

Statistics show that capital reaps a harvest of 50 per cent. on money invested.

In this difference between the product of labor and the wages paid, lies the secret of vast fortunes and widespread poverty.

Capital is really created and stored up by labor; and the latter is today like the man in the Arabian Nights, who let the genie out of its little box. You remember, the genie expanded into a vast cloud, and no suasion could induce it to return to its original limits.

Capital is the genie of America. Legitimate business is, in many instances, superseded by commercial speculations that pervade almost every branch of trade.

This speculation probably causes 90 per cent. of the failures in business.

Vast monopolies like the Standard Oil trust, drive weaker firms to the wall.

The whale grows fat and large, the minnows perish. At present, ethics and morals are but slightly regarded in business life.

Capital will, of course, be a principal factor in any system that may evolve out of the present, but attempts to explain away the centralization of capital, are vain, and insults to observation.

It is amusing to hear millionaires tell how they "saved their vast fortunes by industry and frugality;" millions never accumulated that way; hundreds may.

Millions pile up when capital has control of vast natural opportunities, and can employ many laborers.

Capital, whenever invested in that way, is in position to levy a tax on the entire consuming population that uses its products.

It refreshes one to hear laborers advised to "save" their earnings, and thus become millionaires. Suppose a man is paid \$2 per day, or twice the average wages paid; he never loses a day, is never sick, lives as stingily as a Chinaman, and saves \$1 per day; putting this on interest, it would require over a thousand years to save one million dollars.

Have our millionaires acquired their millions by such a process?

Among them are thirty-five, the poorest of whom is quoted at \$30,000,000, and the wealthiest at \$150,000,000.

The number of unemployed men in this country is estimated at 600,000; much of this is involuntary idleness.

With no avenues of employment open to this vast army, what will be the result?

Farmers are struggling with mortgages, and many are becoming the tenants of money loaners.

The average income of a farmer, according to the U. S. census, is about \$310 a year. Women and children drag out a pitiable existence in factories and workshops.

These are hasty glances at both sides of the existing system, and truly, sharp are the contrasts viewed.

Of course there is much charity, but this does not solve the perplexing question of inequalities. Our Carnegie's may bestow millions to found and endow libraries and colleges, but our wage-workers still believe that such a course first fleeces them, and then, mid heralding trumpets, bestows their belongings, and baptizes them. Charity? The result is burning contempt for those who thus attempt to appease conscience, and become immortal as liberal christian spirits. Capitalists combine to gain obvious benefits, and prompted by the twin motives, self-preservation and revenge, the wage-workers also combine; the result is, sometimes, riot and murder. At present the different classes are becoming defined with startling, and possibly menacing distinctness.

The grades of capitalist, farmer, skilled mechanic and laborer, are becoming as fixed as Castes in India and Europe.

Wage-workers and farmers are combining to limit the capitalist.

The demand is shorter hours, control of products, and the mode of distributing them.

The problem of present economics is of the greater moment since the wage class is so largely in the majority.

Properly speaking, professional men, students, artists, managers, clerks, book-keepers, authors, and all self-em-

If the people of Nebraska will liberally patronize responsible home industries of all kinds, it would soon make money plenty and easy to get at low rates of interest, and an era of good times would at once dawn upon us, as it is the want of the money that is drained from our state and sent east that impoverishes the people and makes hard times.

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