

# The Commoner.

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## The Nation Mourns.

The nation bows in sorrow and in humiliation—in sorrow because its chief executive, its official head, is passing through the valley of the shadow of death—in humiliation because the president of our republic has fallen a victim to the cruel and cowardly methods employed in monarchies where helpless and hopeless subjects sometimes meet arbitrary power with violence.

In morals and in the contemplation of law all lives are of equal value—all are priceless—but when seventy-five millions of people select one of their number and invest him with the authority which attaches to the presidency he becomes their representative and a blow aimed at him is resented as an attack upon all.

Beneath the partisanship of the individual lies the patriotism of the citizen, sometimes dormant, it is true, but always active in hours of peril or misfortune. While the president's life hangs in the balance there are no party lines. The grief of personal friends and close political associates may be more poignant but their sympathy is not more sincere than that extended by political opponents. Although none but his family and his physicians are admitted to his room, all his countrymen are at his bedside in thought and sentiment and their prayers ascend for his recovery. It was characteristic of his thoughtfulness that, even amid the excitement following the assault, he cautioned his companions not to exaggerate his condition to his invalid wife.

The latest dispatches give gratifying news of his improvement, but there is still deep solicitude lest unfavorable symptoms may yet appear.

And the humiliation! Are our public servants—those who are chosen by the people and who exercise for a limited time the authority bestowed by the people—are these to live in constant fear of assassination? Is there to be no difference between our constitutional government and those despotic governments which rest, not upon the consent of the governed, but upon brute force?

There is no place for anarchy in the United States; there is no room here for those who commit, counsel or condone murder, no matter what political excuse may be urged in its defense. The line between peaceful agitation and violence is clear and distinct. We have freedom of speech and freedom of the press in this country, and they are essential to the maintenance of our liberties. If any one desires to criticize the methods of government or the conduct of an official, he has a perfect right to do so, but his appeal must be to the intelligence and patriotism of his fellow citizens, not to force. Let no one imagine that he can im-

prove social or political conditions by the shedding of blood.

Free governments may be overthrown, but they cannot be reformed, by those who violate the commandment, "Thou shalt not kill."

Under a government like ours every wrong can be remedied by law and the laws are in the hands of the people themselves. Anarchy can be neither excused nor tolerated here. The man who proposes to right a public wrong by taking the life of a human being makes himself an outlaw and cannot consistently appeal to the protection of the government which he repudiates. He invites a return to a state of barbarism in which each one must, at his own risk, defend his own rights and avenge his own wrongs.

The punishment administered to the would-be assassin and to his co-conspirators, if he has any, should be such as to warn all inclined to anarchy that while this is an asylum for those who love liberty it is an inhospitable place for those who raise their hands against all forms of government.

## Labor Day.

Labor Day was quite generally observed this year. This is, in itself, a gratifying sign. A review of the speeches made in the various cities shows that the two subjects considered were, first, the dignity of labor and, second, labor's share of the rewards of toil.

It ought to be unnecessary to emphasize the fact that all honest labor is honorable, but there is such haste to be rich and such fawning before inherited and suddenly acquired wealth that it requires all the influence that Labor Day can exert to relieve manual labor of the odium into which it seems to be falling. There is a Bible text which is especially appropriate for consideration on Labor Day. It is a part of the old Mosaic law, but it is twice quoted with approval in the New Testament. It reads: "Muzzle not the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." If the dumb beasts whose physical strength we utilize must not be neglected, with how much greater force does the injunction apply to our brethren of flesh and blood whose brawn and muscle furnish society with food and fuel, with clothing, shelter and all the comforts of life. And yet every decade sees a less per cent of the wealth produced remaining in the hands of the wealth producers. This condition is neither just nor satisfactory. The toilers on the farm and in the factory have cause to believe that they are being cheated out of a part of their earnings.

One of the things that labor has reason to fear is the effect of private monopoly. The trusts have been growing rapidly during the

last few years and all wage-earners are menaced by them. Some have suggested that the employes should join with the employers in controlling the industries and then divide the advantages of higher prices. Such a proposition is immoral as well as impolitic. The employes could no more justify aiding the trusts to extort from the consumers, even if they could share in the results, than an honest citizen could justify giving aid to a highwayman on promise of part of the plunder.

But such an agreement would be as unwise as wrong. If trust made articles are sold at high prices, compared with other products, the demand will be reduced and labor thrown out of employment.

In a test of endurance the farmer can stand it longer than the man in the factory, but why should the laboring man in the city array himself against his best friend—the farmer?

The trust hurts the consumer first, and then the producer of raw material, and last—and possibly most—the laborer. All three should combine to destroy the private monopolies now in existence and to prevent the creation of any new monopolies.

Next to the trust in its evil effect upon labor is what is known as government by injunction. According to our theory of government, the executive, legislative and judicial branches should be kept separate and distinct, but it is coming to be the custom for the judge to issue an order declaring an act to be unlawful which before was lawful and then to assume the prerogatives of the executive and enforce the law, while as judge he sits without jury to condemn the person whom he is prosecuting. The main purpose of this judicial process is to deprive the accused of trial by jury, and while every citizen should resist this attack on the jury system the employes of great corporations are just now its special victim.

The wage-earners as a part, and as an important part, too, of society, are interested in all questions which effect our civilization, but they are at present experiencing the necessity of reform along the lines above suggested.

It was noticeable everywhere that those who addressed the people at labor day meetings pointed out the fact that wrongs could only be remedied at the ballot box. Mayor Reed of Kansas City stated the case aptly when he said that the laboring men were not law-breakers but should be law-makers.

Jackson, in his celebrated message vetoing the extension of the bank charter, said that the humbler members of society were the victims of injustice whenever the government, by granting legislative favors and privileges, made the rich richer and the potent more power-