SLAVERY AND THE UNION.

LETTER FROM

HON. NATHAN APPLETON,

OF BOSTON, TO

HON. WM. C. RIVES, OF VIRGINIA.

"A CONSTITUTIONAL UNION PARTY,"

AND

"THE PHILOSOPHY OF STRIKES,"

TWO EDITORIALS FROM THE BOSTON COURIER.

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Letter from Hon. Nathan Appleton of Boston, Mass., to the Hon. Wm. C. Rives of Virginia.

My Dear Sir: I have read with great satisfaction your letter published in the Richmond *Whig*, on "The Present Crisis and the Value of the Union." Agreeing with you that it is the duty of every good citizen, so far as may lay in his power, to allay the existing excitement, and to endeavor to bring us back to that state of fraternal feeling under which the North and the South mutually shed their blood to bring this nation into existence, and which for so many years harmonized in its unparalleled prosperity, I address this letter to you, and through you, to the public.

I have, for many years, been retired from an active participation in public affairs, but have not been unobservant of the course of events; and, drawing to the close of a long life, can have no motive but to leave to my children the blessings of a free and stable government which I have myself so long enjoyed. The present is a period of alarm and excitement greater than we have heretofore witnessed. The North and the South appear in all but hostile array against each other, and all growing out of the subject of slavery.

A short review of the causes which have led to this state of things will not be out of place, and will, I think, show that there have been faults on both sides.

The first aggression was made by the North, or rather by a few individuals residing in the North. About the year 1831, a very few persons, under the lead of William Lloyd Garrison and Wendell Phillips formed themselves into an Abolition Society, denouncing and repudiating the Constitution of the United States, in as much as it recognized the existence of Slavery. At home this movement excited little attention: the few individuals comprised in it were considered unfortunate fanatical monomaniacs—rather the objects of pity, than of any other feeling. But they published inflammatory pamphlets, which were sent into the South evidently with the intention of acting upon the slaves. This naturally excited the indignation of the South, but it was difficult to point out any remedy. So absolutely free are we in speech and in the press, that we leave false opinions to be refuted by true ones. But this did not meet the evils of the present case. The South had no course but to take the remedy into their own hands; they took measures to prevent the circulation of their tracts, but not without much irritation.

In 1840, the slaves in the British West Indies were made free, with a compensation to the planters, of twenty millions sterling. This event excited a strong desire amongst a certain class of philanthropists, that we should do the same thing; except, indeed, in the compensation, which I believe was never mentioned. In this movement a number of the clergy took an active part, especially stimulated to do this by a portion of the clergy in England, mostly amongst the dissenters, who proclaimed slavery to be a sin against God. The more sober part of the community were of the opinion that slavery is a political institution, and not within the province of the clergy in their character of teachers of religion. As it does not exist amongst us, it was regretted that instead of reforming our own lives, they should be discussing the sins of distant communities.

Sin is a matter which rests between the individual and his Maker, and in doubtful cases like this had better be left there. Who constituted weak fallible man the judge and avenger of wrongs done to the infinite Creator? We of the North consider slavery a social evil; but I think the regret has been general, that the subject has been so mingled with religion. Slavery has been denounced as an evil which must be abated at all events, but no one has undertaken to show how it can be done. Nor can he. Omnipotence alone can do it. Man cannot. The example of England, in the emancipation of her colonies, has no bearing on the question with us. There is no resemblance in the two cases which makes it practicable or even possible, in most of our slave States.

The next important movement took place on the part of the South, in 1818. Up to this period it was held that slavery was an institution of the individual States, with which Congress has nothing to do. But it was now discovered that the Constitution gives to the slave a character as property which was never before dreamed of. The first practical demonstration took place on the meeting of Congress in December, 1849, when six of the Southern Whigs defeated the election of Mr. Winthrop, as Speaker. I cannot put my own view of the matter in a stronger light than is contained in the following extracts from a letter which I wrote on the 22d December, 1849, to my friend Hon. Mr. H., of Alabama, one of the six, in reply to one from him explanatory of his course:

"I regretted Mr. Toombs introducing his resolutions into the Whig Caucus, as ill-timed, and to a certain extent, improper. * * * * I am under deep apprehension about this Southern excitement, and I am as much surprised as alarmed at its existence. I read Mr. Berrien's speech in the Senate in 1818, advocating the right to hold slaves in the new territories, under the Constitution of the United States, with attention and regret. He argued the matter with great ingenuity and ability, but I could not possibly adopt his conclusions. The whole argu-

ment appeared to me a rare example of legal subtlety opposed to plain common sense. This claim of legal right is now further enforced by the additional discovery, that Southern honor is involved in the right to establish slavery as a personal matter, affecting personal rights and personal honor in regard to every individual residing in the slave States. Such an appeal excites the most powerful feelings and passions of our nature, and under their influence, in an individual or a community, the most unhappy consequences may be apprehended.

As a practical question, there seems to be nothing of any importance to quarrel about. There seems to be no part of the new territory suited to the productions on which alone slaves can be profitably employed. In their present condition, there is no law by which the master can hold his slave. It would seem too hazardous an adventure to carry slaves into a region where they could walk off without remedy, except by lynch law, which would probably take their side. No one can suppose that Congress will ever pass a law establishing slavery where it does not exist; and yet, I do not see but what the claim of the South to the right to enjoy the new conquests with their slaves, would make it as imperative on Congress to protect them in this right, as it is objectionable for Congress to prohibit slavery in them With every disposition to protect the rights of the South as secured by the Constitution, I cannot bring my mind to the Southern view of the right or the honor involved in the case. Suppose slavery prohibited in all the new territories,—the prohibition extends to all citizens of the United States. Northern men go into the South and hold slaves Southern men move into the free States. There seems nothing in the fact of a man being born or living in a certain latitude, which makes a slave a natural or necessary appendage to him, or which gives him rights not belonging to one born further north, any further than the local law extends. The South claims the right to carry slaves into the territories, under the general right of every citizen to carry his property.

The North objects to slaves, because they are persons, only held as property by a tenure unknown in respect to all other property, the law of force. All our institutions and rights, with this exception, rest on consent—mutual agreement. Slavery is either an evil or a good. Supposing it to be an evil, the natives of the South will escape it and be benefited by removing into territories where it is prohibited. Supposing slavery to be a good, the citizen of the North is injured by the prohibition, as well as the citizen of the South. Opinions on this matter may vary with the latitude, but the principle is the same. The Wilmot Proviso appears to me little but an abstraction, a bugbear, a nonentity, wholly unworthy to excite the North or the South to threats of disunion It affects to prevent what without it cannot by any possibility be done, but which may nevertheless be done whenever the new States choose, the Proviso notwithstanding.

There is one circumstance which seems to make this claim of the South, for the further extension of slave territory, very unreasonable. The white population of the slave States is less than one-half that of the free States : Whilst the territory embraced in the slave States is more than double that of the free States; that is to say, the proportion of land to each individual is four times greater in the slave than in the free States. There is no ground, therefore, for saying, on the part of the South, that they are cramped and short of room for expansion.

So far as I can look on the matter, I cannot see in the Wilmot Proviso the dishonor or oppression to the South which so much excites them. Neither can I see in it any such boon or good to the North which should make them willing for it to disturb the peace of the Union.

Is this glorious Union to be shaken by mere apprehension of evil? The excitement of the South, showing itself in concerted action, gives me great alarm. It looks to me as if there were ruling spirits who look to disunion as a good; as likely to afford more security to slave property than exists under the present government. It is, I think, a great mistake. I have little fear of an actual dismemberment of the Union. There are difficulties about a peaceable separation which will, I think, be found insuperable. But collision, and even bloodshed, are very ready to happen under such excitement, as seems now to be lashing itself up for action. What might follow such a collision, no mortal can foresee. It is, I think, the duty of every good citizen to do all in his power to prevent any such catastrophe, and to adopt for his motto, 'The Union must be preserved.' I have extended this letter further than I had any idea of doing when I began it. You will agree with me, I am sure, in attachment to the Union, and I trust in the sentiment with which I subscribe myself, very sincerely, your friend."

Whether my reasoning was right or wrong, my apprehensions were but too well founded. The excitement on the slavery question rapidly increased; when, through the exertions of Mr. Clay and Mr. Webster, in 1850, what was called the Compromise was carried through Congress, affording additional security for the return of fugitive slaves, and admitting California as a free State. This Compromise seemed to promise an end to the slavery agitation. There were discontented spirits, but the masses of Massachusetts and New England, and apparently through all the free States, were satisfied and content—in a state of perfect repose. The South also appeared content, with the exception of South Carolina.

In an evil hour this happy state of things was disturbed by the repeal of the Missouri Compromise, and the introduction of the Kansas Nebraska bill into Congress, in support of which a majority of the Southern Whigs were induced to join It was fatal measure. It roused and alarmed the whole North. It annihilated the great conservative Whig party, whilst it weakened and crippled the Democratic party of the North. The Free Soil party, under the new name of Republican, was recruited and improved by conservative men of both parties, but not in sufficient numbers to control their measures. On the contrary, it enabled the Abolitionists proper to renew their denunciations of Slavery in the abstract, and to call together listening crowds of ultra philanthropists. It is not surprising that in this state of excitement, some legislative measures were adopted which cannot be justified under the Constitution, but will yield to a sober second thought, because they are not the result of any disloyalty to the Union and the Constitution, but the natural reaction of what was considered a Southern aggression.

As the last incident, a man of some character, but of a disordered intellect, John Brown, attempts to excite a slave insurrection in Virginia. He was guilty of treason and murder, for which he justly suffered the penalty of the law. Some rabid Abolitionists and fanatical philanthropists undertook, even in Boston, to glorify him as a martyr. Sober men witnessed this exhibition of folly with silent contempt and disgust, until they found that this silence was, in the South, construed into approval. They then called the meeting in Faneuil Hall, which showed the real feeling of the community, sound, and strong for the Union and the Constitution.

In the meantime, the cry of disunion and secession is raised in certain States of the South. South Carolina sends a distinguished ambassador to your State of Virginia, in order to induce her to send delegates to a Southern Convention, probably thinking the excitement growing out of the attempt at Harper's Ferry presented an opportunity favorable to the

adoption of her favorite measure.

The first idea of secession from the Union was started by South Carolina, in 1831. The pretext was the Tariff of 1828. This was called the bill of abominations, and was in some sense rightly named, inasmuch as its opponents adopted the dangerous expedient of making it as bad as possible, in the hopes of thereby defeating it. In 1832, a new tariff was to be made in order to reduce the revenue, after the payment of the national debt. After a long and full discussion, the Tariff of 1832 was passed by an unprecedented majority—132 to 65 in the House of Representatives; about one-half of the majority consisting of the Democratic party, including the names of James K. Polk, Cave Johnson, G. C. Verplank, C. C. Cambreling, &c. This bill was framed on the principle of raising the necessary revenue, by adjusting the duties on imports, with a view to afford protection to our domestic industry. But this did not suit South Carolina. She had already put herself in the attitude of armed resistance to the revenue laws of the United States. Mr. McDuffie had persuaded her to adopt the theory of which he claimed to be the discoverer, that a duty laid nominally on imports was in fact really a tax upon the exports of a country; and inasmuch as the South furnished most of the exports of the United States, the great burden of the tax fell upon them. He was allowed to embody this theory in an elaborate report of the Committee of Ways and Means, accompanied by a bill reducing all duties to a horizontal level of 12½ per cent. He rested his claim for the South solely on the truth of his new theory, admitting expressly that if the tax fell upon the consumers of the commodities imported, the South had no ground of complaint. It was under these circumstances that South Carolina was prepared to leave the Union by force, in 1832, when General Jackson, in November, issued his famous proclamation, preparing to meet force by force. This was a staggerer. However, on the meeting of the 22d Congress, at their second session, General Jackson, in his message, took ground against the tariff of 1832 and the protective system. The ground assigned was that it would produce too much revenue, more than was proposed in a bill prepared by Mr. McLane, Secretary of the Treasury. This, in fact, was not true, as was proved in a document (47, 2d sess. 22d Congress.) But the mere dictum of General Jackson was sufficient to induce the whole of the Democratic party to eat their own words of the previous session, and sustain Mr. Verplank's anti-protective bill; but without success. After a violent struggle that bill was abandoned, and Mr. Clay's Compromise accepted and adopted. This was postponing the evil day until 1841—42. South Carolina claimed it as a victory, and justly, and also postponed her military preparations. I was a member of this 22d Congress, and came to the deliberate conclusion that whilst South Carolina put forward her view of the tariff as the ground of complaint, her real object was separation, for separation sake, and the formation of a Southern Confederacy, of which Charleston would be the metropolitan city. This opinion I still entertain, and find it has been adopted and held by those best qualified to form a correct opinion in the matter. The leading motive no doubt was the belief that slave property would be safer from aggression—not unmingled with something of personal ambition. This desire for secession and separation has evidently continued her leading object to the present day. This is the key to her various demonstrations, especially to Virginia, to which you allude. Without Virginia she can do nothing. Virginia stands as the great bulwark of the Union—the keystone of our national arch. This idea of a Southern Confederacy has evidently made some converts in Georgia, Alabama and Mississippi.

I have thus endeavored to give a fair view of the course of events which have brought about the present unhappy state of feeling. I now proceed to present some views of a practical common-sense character, which appear to me to commend themselves as standing on a basis which cannot be shaken. I say to the North, to the free States, why agitate or discuss at all the question of slavery? There are four millions of negro slaves in certain States of the Union, with about seven millions of whites. Between the two races there is an impassable gulf which makes amalgamation or absorption impossible. So strong is this antagonism of race, that many of the free States pass the most stringent laws, in order to keep free negroes out of their borders, considering them a public nuisance. No sane man can possibly believe that these eleven millions can live together with equal rights, under our institutions. As to emigration, that is equally out of the question. It is utterly inadequate, if desirable. It is not easy to point out where they would be better off. It is doubtful if it would be in any of the West India Islands, under their new system of Coolies. Certainly not in Canada, where they are not wanted, and where they are miserable. Then there is the question of property, to an amount of thousands of millions of dollars. This to be sure is nothing to a thorough going Abolitionist, who scouts the idea of making man a chattel. The political economist however, knows that all property is the creature of legislation. Any thing is property which the law makes so. Slaves are therefore property in the slave States, and we of the free States have nothing to do with the question. Can any man of common sense suppose such an amount of property can be abandoned, or annihilated? Slavery has died out when slaves cease to have value, and not before. Where there has been unity of race, they have been absorbed, but with us that is impossible. All attempts of the North, therefore, to affect the state of slavery in the South, are utterly idle and futile. Doubtless some improvement may be made in the treatment of slaves; but this had best be left to the parties interested. All pressure from without is hateful and unjustifiable.

To the South I would say, why continue this useless agitation upon mere abstractions? you have possession of all the territory in which slave labor can be profitably employed, and large enough to allow its expansion for many generations. Why trouble yourselves about slavery in the territories to which it is not suited? Why claim or expect an equality of political power sectionally, when your white population is less than half that of the free States, with the proportion constantly increasing by foreign emigration? Why threaten disunion unless you can control the presidential election? Your true palladium is the Constitution of the United States. This is your ark of safety. On full and calm consideration, the united North will feel as little inclination as they have power to trouble themselves with your Institution. Why talk of disunion? A peaceable separation is impossible. No sane man can think it otherwise. A Southern Confederacy must of necessity be confined to the territory east of the Mississippi. The great West will never consent to give up the possession of that river as their highway, nor New Orleans as their great market. Who will consent to be the border States, where a new set of abolitionists may set up the business of enticing runaways or exciting insurrection, without remedy? A civil war, or a servile war, may be easily brought about, under excited passions; but a peaceable division of this glorious Union, a voluntary disruption of a great nation, appears to me utterly impossible; as impossible as is the abolition of slavery.

If I am right in my conclusions, there is in reality nothing between the North and the South to quarrel about. The idea that there is an irrepressible conflict between the free States and the slave States, is

simply absurd and untrue. There is no antagonism between slave labor and free labor, as respects the States. If there is any such antagonism at all, it can only be in those States where the two systems prevail together. This can be no cause for ill blood in the North. If this state of things exists in the South it would furnish a good argument why they should join the North in wishing for protection to our own industry, in order to bring their white labor into action. The actual condition of the North and the South, in their natural productions, is most favorable to a trade and intercourse mutually advantageous and agreeable. The present estrangement, on the abstract question, is as unnatural as it is unchristian. That mutual interest and mutual good-will may resume their natural functions throughout the nation, is the sentiment with which I subscribe myself, with great regard,

Your friend and very ob't serv't,

NATHAN APPLETON.

BOSTON, 12th March, 1860.

Hon. Wm. C. Rives.

CONSTITUTIONAL UNION PARTY.

It is now just about a year since this paper, carrying out with more deliberate expression, according to the supposed requirements of the time, those principles which have always formed the basis of its action, announced certain views in an editorial article upon the subject of National politics, which are just as appropriate now as then. The New York *Journal of Commerce* of April 2, 1859, extracted the main body of our article, accompanying it with editorial comments; and we quote its opening observations as preliminary to what we now have further to say. The *Journal* remarked—

THE BOSTON COURIER ON A "UNION OF THE OPPOSITION."—If there is, any where in the Union, a "Whig party," it ought to be, and no doubt it is to be found in Massachusetts. And if there is a Whig party in Massachusetts, the Boston COURIER must be acknowledged and recognized as its organ and representative. The views of the COURIER, therefore, on questions touching the existence and policy of the Whig party are to be regarded as authentic and entitled to respectful consideration.

It was with such appreciation of the position of our Boston cotemporary that we took up its article on the speech of ex-Governor Hunt, at Hope Chapel, in this city, and the topics suggested by that gentleman's views, of the duty of "old line Whigs," in connection with national politics. In order to present so authoritative an opinion as that advanced by the COURIER, we copy a considerable portion of its article.

Our object then was to show, that there could be, and ought to be, a party organized throughout the United States, with the express purpose in view of putting an end to anti-slavery agitation—that acknowledged source of vast political, economical and social evils, and absolute bane of our national welfare. In the South, where no republicanism existed, though it was obvious that the opposition must be arranged, in some local respects, in antagonism to Democracy, yet it was thought that this need not prevent substantial amalgamation with the multitudes of the North, whose contest was chiefly with republicanism, and where conservative men might much prefer the temporary success of Democracy to the fatal triumph of the anti-slavery agitators, under whatever plausible name they appealed to morbid or excited popular sentiment.

Indeed, it is only by a misconception of the great question which has so fiercely agitated the country, that the South has done its own part in promoting sectional divisions. The South in fact stands perfectly secure—exposed to a border inroad, perhaps, though not likely to be repeated in this generation, and to the occasional enticement away of a slave. But this no more necessarily puts the North and the South in a position of general hostility to each other, than forays on the marches between England and Scotland involved those two countries in general war, in times much more martial, and, as we should hope, more inclined to take mortal offence from partial causes, than our own. The contest is not, and never has been practically between the North and the South. The fierceness of the political warfare, with all its immediate and most trying consequences, has been strictly on the soil of the North,—and there, as we have long ago had occasion to allege, if this matter, which Heaven forbid! should ever come to the direful arbitrament of arms, would every conflict take place,—while the South would rest at home, if it pleased, perfectly safe, with not a hostile foot planted upon its territory. No aggressive force, openly assembled under the banners of Black Republicanism, could by any possibility reach even the borders of a Southern State. No—the South is united on this great question, while the North is divided. It would be for the former, therefore, to render honorable and grateful aid to the national strength of the latter, upon their own proper soil, should such a terrible calamity as civil war ever befal the country, upon a point in which the South alone has any special and direct interest.

Precisely the same mode of reasoning applies to our pending political controversy, resulting from exactly the same specific causes. The only difference between our condition now, and that of

a year ago, consists in the well-known transactions occurring during the intervening space of time—which, if they have in some quarters intensified feelings of alienation, have served also to clear away some of the clouds which then enveloped us, and in our opinion are tending every day to the gradual promotion of a better understanding between the several parts of the Union. We do not believe that the slavery question is to be a source of perpetual bickering, to any serious extent, in this country. If it has not already come to its ultimate issue by reason of recent events, which are to have important bearings on the next general election, this must soon be the case—and though our passage to peace and safety may be through times of still severer trial and trouble than any we have yet seen, we still know of no reason why they may not be all passed through without fatal convulsion, and the period of comparative rest gradually return to the condition in which it was manifested thirty years ago.

The great point is, how to avoid any such convulsion, by the rational exercise of those constitutional methods, which wise men ought to know how to apply to every public exigency, and especially to one certainly of no sudden growth. That the politics of this country are at present in a state of singular confusion and uncertainty, there can be no doubt. Neither of the two great existing parties has at this moment any fixed line of policy, or any certain preference as to candidates. On the one hand, Republicanism presents the strange spectacle of a party doubtful whether to nominate its ablest leader and the most express representative of its creed, upon the not very honorable ground—for there can be no other—that they are afraid of failure of success in attempting to carry out the very principles on which they profess to stand. Action correspondent to such an idea involves, of course, an entire abandonment of principle. It implies the mere base desire to win, by whatever means and at whatever sacrifice of manly motive; but happily, as it takes away the true springs of generous action, it also insures deserved defeat. Nor can anything be more certain than that, if the Republicans make their nomination on any such doctrine, they are at once broken and irretrievably divided. The Democrats, on their part, are in quite as much embarrassment, in regard to the selection of a candidate, upon different grounds, and with a wider field of choice. They have now, in our opinion, the golden opportunity, such as never occurred before, of bringing forward those whose names would inspire confidence, general throughout the country, which nothing would be able to withstand. It would be the settlement of our great national controversy. It might prove the salvation of the country. Whether they will really act on principles likely to promote these glorious results, or weakly yield to inferior motives, reducing the grand stake for a nation's welfare down to the standard of a mere partizan and doubtful conflict, remains yet to be seen.

In this condition of our political affairs, if the Convention to assemble at Charleston should nominate candidates reasonably acceptable to the South, they would be sure of the united vote of the entire slave States. It becomes of the utmost consequence that they should be such as would secure the votes of conservative men at the North, if necessary, without distinction of party, —since without the aid of those not distinctly ranking themselves with the Democracy, not a single free State could be carried for that party. In this view of the case, and in consideration of the doubtful issue of the deliberations at the several coming Conventions, we presume that the project was started for a Constitutional Union party, which might, and probably would hold the balance of power. The expectation was to gather those who were neither Democrats, in a party sense, and those heretofore nominally connected with the Republican organization, but who had been led to distrust its objects, or to dread the consequences of its triumph, as it stands constituted,—together with multitudes undoubtedly to be found, who seek for the opportunity of allying themselves with some respectable organization, which should occupy a national and independent ground between the two extremes. In general terms, this object was indicated by the circular of the Constitutional Union Committee

In many of the Northern States the amplest opportunity is afforded for the formation of such a party, whatever its eventual influence might be upon national politics; and in no State, as we confidently believe, more clearly than in our own. There are distinct and forcible reasons, which urgently impel us to this course. Without it in Massachusetts, where the Democracy has no political power, a still stronger body of citizens, constituting, as we believe, a very large proportion of the most intelligent and substantial inhabitants of the State, can practically exercise no influence whatever, either in national or State affairs. If it were possible to conceive of a higher cause or a nobler opportunity for an organization, sure to lead the way to the recovery of both, we are incapable of imagining it. Without

it we are nothing. Massachusetts, on the extremest verge of the Union, throwing a Republican vote, is of no consequence whatever—but is absorbed in the general Republican mass; or, if it has any distinction, is looked upon by the party, as by the nation, as the head-quarters of fanatical opinions which put in peril the prospects of the party, by one, and the peace of the country, by the other. Massachusetts, on the other hand, as the chief State of New England, the centre of its wealth and prosperity, upon the national side, would at once resume its former honorable character at home, and by once more producing its true elements of excellence, would go far towards regaining its original preponderating and salutary influence in the councils of th country. A prize like this is one which commends itself at once, alike to our pride and to our reasonable convictions. Whatever else we may think or believe upon abstract questions of politics or morals, it is certain that our only chance of redeeming ourselves from our present deplorable condition, is by the cordial co-operation of all our well-disposed citizens, of whatever previous party affiliations, in the thorough and effective organization of a constitutional Union party in Massachusetts. And this is absolately the only mode in which national men in the State can give any effectual expression to their opinions, or render the slightest service to the public cause in the coming national contest, so full as it is of vast and incalculable consequences to us and to our posterity.

In the broil and stir of the last few years, many of the old issues are either gone by, or have fallen out of sight for the moment, to be revived, if ever, at some more convenient season. Old names, which under such circumstances only mislead, should follow the same path. The opportunity and the time have come, and imperatively demand a union of good and true men in Massachusetts, to interpose for the redemption of its mismanaged interests and its tarnished name—to build a new and necessary barrier against the rising flood of public abuse, and to purge its prevailing sentiment, so far as possible, from the effects of that extraordinary medley of religion, philanthropy, fanaticism and politics—that type of Phariseeism of old—speculatively exalting itself, practically most corrupt—which has brought this noble Commonwealth down so far, in spite of all her actual advantages and real, but unused power, from her former commanding position among the confederate States. Of what avail is it for us *here*, to call ourselves Democrats, Whigs, or Americans, when in those relations we are utterly helpless, and when our country demands our united aid as citizens and men? Or, with what reason can one rank himself with moderate Republicans, while he indirectly by his vote countenances the excesses of those who are not moderate, but over whom he has no control, and while the State, of which he is a citizen, claims his services, in another direction, to save it from evils and disasters universally felt and acknowledged? Shall we be forever deluded by names—or, taking things as they exist before our eyes as the basis of our action, intelligently and honestly perform our bounden duty to the State and to ourselves?

For our own part, nothing of which we can conceive would be more gratifying than to see the polities of both State and Nation brought down once more, from the region of sublimated, vague, and absolutely pernicious speculations, nearer to the level of the business requirements and actual, practical necessities of life. These are the real needs of the people, imposing upon them and their public agents the highest rational and moral obligations. We have been watching the drift of the clouds, while the ship beneath us has been drifting upon the rocks. That we suffer to a most injurious extent in Massachusetts, for the want of applying such intelligent and indispensable views to our own most important interests, is only too manifest to those who have seriously reflected upon the subject. It is time to reform it altogether. Ample opportunity and ample means are at hand in the coming Presidential election. We must have in this State a party like that now indicated. It is the instrument by which alone a combination can be effected between men of right feeling and sound opinions, who would be ashamed to stand idle, at a point in the progress of national events, upon which the least reflecting cannot look without some degree of apprehension. No man in such a cause, and part of such an organization, would sacrifice any principle, or forfeit his relations to the party with which he might choose to act in the future. Whatever might be the direct influence of such a party in Massachusetts upon national politics now—it would furnish a most encouraging pledge for the future—or we have no hesitation in avowing our belief, that it would triumphantly carry and thus redeem the State. Blind and perverse as many are disposed to consider political sentiment in Massachusetts, no forces of Black Republicanism could be arrayed to withstand the really effective organization and rightful cause of a true CONSTITUTIONAL UNION PARTY.

PHILOSOPHY OF STRIKES.

Strikes, or combinations among workmen to obtain a higher rate of wages, or the same rate of wages for less work, have been unhappily common among operatives and laboring men in times past; and although increasing intelligence has caused them to become less and less frequent, yet the world has not entirely outgrown them. The city of London, last summer, was the scene of an extensive strike among the builders, disastrous in its effects alike to capital and labor. At this moment, in our own State, which we claim to be at least the equal of any community on earth in intelligence and education, we are witnessing an attempt on the part of certain boot and shoe makers to obtain by combination and co-operation, a higher rate of wages than the natural laws of demand and supply, and the natural relations between labor and capital, justify. This strike among the operative boot and shoe makers is confined to a few localities, and has been rather fitful and spasmodic in its character; it has indeed already passed the full and begun to wane; but as the causes which lead to such combinations are likely to occur from time to time hereafter, and as just now the public mind is interested in the subject, we have deemed it a favorable opportunity to say a few words on what we have ventured to call the Philosophy of Strikes; not pretending by the use of that word that we are going to say anything novel or profound, but simply employing the phrase to denote a consideration of the ends which the parties to a strike propose to accomplish, and of the results which, in point of fact, do and must follow from such combinations.

The boot and shoe business is a very important department of the industrial energy of Massachusetts. We have not the statistics of the trade at hand, nor is it material to the objects we have in view to set them forth; it is enough to say that it has added very greatly to our wealth and prosperity, that it has substantially built up many flourishing places, and that it has given profitable employment to many thousands of men and women. This branch of business is, of course, subject to the general laws by which all departments of manufacturing industry are regulated; laws which it is the duty of political economy to discover and expound.

In the production of boots and shoes, as in that of all manufactured articles, the two elements of labor and capital are involved. The wholesale dealer contributes capital; operative the workman contributes labor; the former receives a return in the shape of interest, and the latter receives a return in the shape of wages. In point of fact, the wholesale dealer is usually also a laborer as well as a capitalist; that is, he contributes his time as well as his money. He works in his counting-room or warehouse, often as many hours as the operative in his shop, and he is therefore entitled to be paid for his labor, and as his labor is skilled and intelligent labor, to be well paid for it. Thus the income of the wholesale dealer is in part interest on capital, and in part wages of labor.

The prices paid by customers or consumers, for boots and shoes, constitutes the fund which is to be divided between the capitalist and the laborer, who have co-operated in the production of them. And here we have to consider two points; first, what are the laws regulating the absolute amount of the fund to be so divided; and second, what are the laws regulating the proportions in which it shall be divided. These are not the

same; and the overlooking of this fact constitutes one of the fallacies which lie at the bottom of all strikes for higher wages.

The absolute amount of the fund to be divided depends upon the universal law of demand and supply, which can no more be altered by combinations, whether of masters or workmen, than the law of gravitation. People will buy just so many boots and shoes as they want; and no human power can compel them to buy any more. And though boots and shoes are articles of primary necessity, which everybody must have, yet the amount of boots and shoes purchased and consumed is affected by the general prosperity of the country. In other words, men will accommodate their wants to their circumstances. When times are bad, when many persons are out of employment and much capital is lying idle, men will economize in shoes as in other things; they will be content with an inferior article; they will wear their shoes longer, and have them mended more frequently, than when times are good. Whenever, from want of sagacity and foresight, the rate of production goes on undiminished, while the demand is decreasing, there occurs, sooner or later, a glut. The market becomes over-stocked; the goods manufactured cannot be sold; and consequently the capitalist and the laborer alike suffer. Many capitalists fail, and many workmen are thrown out of employment.

Now so far as the present distress among the operatives in the shoe business is the result of causes by which the capitalist and the laborer are alike affected, however much it is to be regretted, nobody can be blamed for it. It is the result of an inexorable law. To complain of it is like complaining of water that it wets, or of fire that it burns. And that it is the result of such causes, there can be no doubt: the many failures that have recently taken place in the shoe trade are one of the proofs. The supply of boots and shoes is greater than the demand: they are not bought because they are not wanted; and because they are not bought, the fund to be divided between capital and labor is lessened.

The law which regulates the proportion in which capital and labor shall share in the product to which they have jointly contributed depends, in a great measure, upon the relation between the amount of work to be done, and the numbers of those who are ready to do it. The demand for boots and shoes—they being articles of necessity—is pretty steady. It is not susceptible of any marked increase; therefore if, while the demand increases very little or not at all, the number of workmen is on the increase, the tendency is to lower the rate of wages by the natural result of competition. There may be a glut of labor in the market as well as of any other commodity. In new countries the wages of labor are high; because there is a great deal to be done and but few to do it; in old countries, where employments are crowded and the struggle for subsistence is pressing, the wages of unskilled labor are but little above the point of subsistence.

There are other elements that influence the rate of wages. Skilled labor is paid for at a higher rate than unskilled. Watchmakers, working jewellers, and the makers of mathematical and optical instruments receive high wages, because their labor is in part the effect of a natural faculty not bestowed upon all. So an employment that is distasteful and disagreeable is better paid than one that is pleasant and agreeable; very laborious occupations are better paid than those which are light and easy. The making of boots and shoes is an employment in which, from natural causes, there is very likely to be an excess of supply over the demand. It is not a labor requiring a high degree of skill or faculty. Anybody can make a pair of shoes; and the power is soon acquired. The work is light and easy; it is cleanly and not disagreeable; it gratifies man's love of independence by giving him a certain command of his time: he is not compelled to obey the ringing of a bell. It also gratifies men's social nature: enabling them to live together, and in their leisure hours to talk gossip and politics. For these reasons, it has happened that more persons have engaged in boot and shoe-making, proportionally to the work to be done, than in surrounding and competitive occupations.

Wages of labor were formerly more or less regulated by legislative enactment. The world has now generally outgrown this mistake, and the subject is left to care of itself. It is now simply a matter of bargain and sale; one man wants to buy labor and another man has labor to sell, and the terms of the contract are fixed by the parties themselves. Experience has settled that this is not only the best way, but the only way, to meet and settle the question between capital and labor; and that all outside interference can only do mischief.

Now it is true that the selfish instincts of humanity operate here as in all other departments of business. The capitalist wants to buy labor as cheaply as possible: the laborer wants to sell it as dearly as possible; and yet this proposition is not more true than the fact that their real interests bring

them to the same point. In other words it is the interest of the capitalist to pay the highest wages which the profits of his business will allow him to do; and it is the interest of the laborer not to demand any higher wages than the capitalist can afford to pay. In general, under ordinary circumstances, the capitalist and laborer do meet at this point.

That it is the interest of the capitalist to pay the highest wages which he can afford to pay is a proposition very easily proved. We will suppose that a sagacious and intelligent man, with a capital of fifty thousand dollars, determines to engage in the boot and shoe trade. His business consists in purchasing leather, in employing a large number of men and women to make it up into boots and shoes, and in selling these boots and shoes, when manufactured, to consumers. His interest is to supply his customers with a good article; and in order to secure this he must first have good leather, and then good workmen and workwomen. But as he cannot have good leather without paying a good price for it, so he cannot buy good labor without paying a good price for it. Good workmen can only be had by paying good wages. He, the capitalist, supposing him to think only of his own interests, wants to have, and to rely upon, the continuous labor of an efficient body of trained and skilled workmen; and not only that, but he wants them to work for him heartily, and with a will. Even a pair of boots made with a will is better than a pair of boots made without one. The good will of the workman is in some degree a moral element; it is earned by justice and kindness on the part of the employer—by the punctual payment of liberal wages. A poor paymaster makes a poor workman, and the result is a poor article; and this is felt at last in the capitalist's pocket. This is one of the innumerable ways in which it appears that a man's best interests and highest duties are coincident.

But it may be said that the above consideration is one which addresses itself only to an enlightened and sagacious self-interest. Very well; admitting this to be true for the sake of argument, there is another motive operating upon the capitalist to give the highest wages he can afford, and addressing itself more immediately to his selfish instincts. There is a natural equilibrium between capital and labor; and whenever this is disturbed, it is restored by a law analagous to that by which air rushes in to fill a vacuum. The natural rate of wages of an operative shoemaker is equal to that which can be earned by men of similar capacity in the other and surrounding employments of industrial life. Whenever from accidental causes this rate becomes higher, workmen will leave other employments, and learn to make shoes. Suppose that in a given community the number of shoemakers was just ten thousand, and that five thousand were cut off by some sudden calamity; and suppose also that there was work enough for ten thousand to do. The increased demand and the increased wages would attract great numbers of workmen from other occupations, and the vacuum would soon be filled.

The same law applies to the capital invested in the shoe business. The natural rate of interest on such capital is equal to that earned by capital invested in the other and surrounding occupations of industrial life. Whenever it becomes higher, capital is attracted to it from other employments and the equilibrium is soon restored. In a city like Boston there are many young men coming of age every year, trained to business, with a certain amount of capital, and desirous of earning a living and accumulating property. If they see that men in the shoe trade are making money faster than men in other employments around them, they will go into that business. Now if the capitalists in the shoe business are earning a higher rate of interest upon their capital than a natural one, by reason of giving their workmen a lower rate of wages than the natural, capital will be invested in the shoe business which was before lying idle, or otherwise employed; competition will enhance the rate of wages, and the proper proportion between capital and wages will soon be restored.

A strike or combination of workmen, is an attempt to force wages above their natural level, by making capitalists suffer loss and inconvenience in case they resist such demand. Strikes are often attended with the element of coercion within themselves; that is, the workmen engaged in them sometimes compel a dissenting minority to join them by the threat, or the use, of force. This is not an invariable attendant upon strikes, and we will therefore lay it aside. We will consider them in their simplest aspect, as combinations of workmen united by a common purpose of refusing to work for capitalists unless they will pay higher wages than are actually received.

Of course, it is a mere truism to say that a strike always involves a present loss. The very object of a strike is to coerce capitalists by means of loss or the fear of loss. But the loss attendant upon strikes is mutual. The business of the capitalist is arrested in mid career: his orders are suspended; his contracts are interrupted;

and if a critical period is chosen by the operatives, as is often the case, bankruptcy and ruin may be the result. But the workman is equally a sufferer. He ceases to earn wages; begins to live upon his capital, that is, his former earnings laid up; in short, becomes an unproductive consumer. These are the inevitable elements of a strike; though, incidentally and collaterally, grave moral evils usually follow in their train. Want of occupation tempts men to drink, simply as a pastime and for want of something better to do; intemperance leads to violence, breaches of the peace, and offences against the law.

Now as strikes are in themselves evils, and attended with loss, it follows that they are inexpedient and unwise, unless some permanent good is accomplished by them, which otherwise could not be attained. But if the principles we have above laid down are sound, it takes but little reflection to show that strikes are always unnecessary, and in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred are productive only of mischief.

The only case in which strikes can do any good, and are at all justifiable, is the case in which the capitalist refuses to give the workmen the wages he ought to give, and can afford to give; or, in other words, retains in his own hands more than the natural interest upon the capital employed in his business. But even in this case they are unnecessary, because, as we have before said, this injustice will be remedied in time by the inevitable operation of natural laws.

But in almost all cases strikes are unqualified evils to the workmen engaged in them; and equally so whether they do, or do not, obtain a temporary success, and gain for the present the increased rate of wages for which they combine.

Assuming that the workmen in any given employment are receiving all the wages their employers can afford to give them, and consequently all they ought to ask, but that they, not understanding this, leave off work in combination, with a view of forcing their employers to pay them more, what are the results, and the only possible results? Capital and labor, the interests of which are identical, are now put into a hostile attitude towards each other. There is a contest between them. In this contest capital is most likely to prevail, and generally does prevail. The workmen are starved out, and driven by necessity to go to work again. But what are the consequences?

As we have before said, during the period of a strike capital is earning no interest, and labor is earning no wages. Thus capital is diminishing; and it diminishes in proportion to the duration of the strike. But there is a necessary connection between capital and wages. Capital is the fund from which wages are paid: the more capital the more wages, the less capital the less wages. If, therefore, by reason of a strike, the capital of an employer is diminished, his capacity to pay wages is equally diminished, and he must employ a less number of workmen than he did before; and thus, when the strikers come back to ask work again, a certain percentage of them are refused it, because by their own act they have so far forth lessened the capitalist's power to pay, and consequently to employ them. Suppose, for instance, that a wholesale shoe dealer has a hundred thousand dollars invested in his business, and employs a hundred workmen, and that, by reason of a strike, his capital is reduced to ninety thousand dollars, or, in other words, that he has lost ten thousand dollars, it follows that his capacity to pay wages is lessened in the same proportion, and that at the end of the strike he can only employ ninety workmen instead of a hundred. In a highly-civilized community, there are many elements that modify and temper this general law; but that it is the general law is indisputable.

But suppose that the strikers prevail for a time. Suppose that by the opportuneness of their combination they force the capitalist to give them a higher rate of wages than the profits of his business will allow—for the reader must take this element along with him in all our reasonings—what are the results?

These are of two kinds; the possible and the necessary, such as may happen and such as must happen. The possible result is the final removal and transfer of capital from the seat of the strike. Capital is at once migratory and sensitive. It instinctively flees from storms and violence, and seeks the tranquil air of peace. Strikes have been always prevalent in Ireland, from the ardent and excitable character of its population; and in many cases they have driven capital away and thus dried up the fountain of wages. In the city of Dublin, especially, many kinds of manufacture, once flourishing, have been ruined by strikes, and by successful strikes, too; that is, successful for the time. The master manufacturers have abandoned business in disgust, and the best Irish workmen have gone to England or Scotland.

An Irish capitalist once erected a costly manufactory at Bandon. His workmen struck for

higher wages just when he was beginning to work out a large contract, and he was compelled to accede to their demands. He worked out his contract, and then abandoned the manufactory. By this there was a dead loss to the work-people of Bandon of about twelve thousand pounds a year in wages.

But suppose the capital be too deeply rooted to be removed; the final result of a strike in which the workmen succeed in raising wages above their natural level is that whatever is gained in the excess of wages is lost in the number of workmen employed, or in the amount of work to be done.

Suppose, for instance, by way of illustration, that the fair price for making a pair of shoes is one dollar; and that, by combination, the workmen succeed in forcing their employers to pay them a dollar and ten cents. These extra ten cents must either be paid by the capitalist himself, or by the consumer. In the former case, they are taken from the capital itself, since we have assumed that after receiving his fair rate of profit on his capital, he can only afford to pay a dollar in wages. Thus his capital would be lessened; and just in proportion as it was lessened would his capacity to give wages be lessened; and as he was compelled to pay so much for each pair of shoes made, he would order fewer pairs to be made, and thus employ fewer hands. New capital would cease to be attracted to the trade, and old capital would be diverted from it; all which would tend to diminish the fund from which wages are drawn.

But suppose, what is generally the case, that these extra ten cents are paid by the consumer, what is the consequence? He is obliged to pay for every pair of shoes he buys ten cents more than a fair price. Now everything that enhances the price of articles consumed tends to lessen the consumption; everything that lowers the price tends to increase the consumption; and so the consumption of shoes, and demand for them, must diminish at the rate of ten per cent. But as the demand is, so must the supply be. If the community want only ninety per cent. of what they wanted before, only ninety per cent. will be supplied; and of course the number of workmen must be diminished ten per cent.; or if the same number of workmen be employed, the amount of work supplied to each must be diminished. The gains of the employer being lessened, his capacity to employ labor is also lessened.

If the above principles be true, it follows that an attempt by means of strikes to force wages above their natural level is analogous to an attempt to overcome the laws of nature—to force water, for instance, above the level of the source from which it flows. The more ignorant and unreflecting workmen are, the more likely they are to engage in strikes. There is no spot on earth where strikes are more unreasonable or more unnecessary than in Massachusetts. No where are education and intelligence more diffused; no where is labor more honored, or skilled labor better paid; no where are the rights of humanity more respected; no where does a man struggling to rise in life find more hands held out to help him. We should have predicted that a strike among native-born Americans in Massachusetts was an impossibility; that a strike has occurred among them, though limited in range and brief in duration, leads us to the belief that the above views may not be deemed needless or unseasonable.

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