

**BOSTON MONDAY
LECTURES. LABOR,
WITH PRELUDES
ON CURRENT EVENTS**

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Boston Monday Lectures. Labor, with Preludes on Current Events by Joseph Cook

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JOSEPH COOK

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LECTURES. LABOR,
WITH PRELUDES
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BOSTON MONDAY LECTURES.

LABOUR,

WITH

PRELUDES ON CURRENT EVENTS.

By JOSEPH COOK.

"I am perfectly convinced that the real way to elevate the character of the working classes is to give them a command over the necessaries of life."—SIR ROBERT PEEL.

AUTHOR'S EDITION.

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I

INFIDEL ATTACK ON PROPERTY.

PRELUDE ON CURRENT EVENTS.

MASSACHUSETTS is to give her opinion, before another sun goes down, concerning the hard-money political party, and a cheap-jack and burglar, greenback and greenhorn gang. The first skirmish in the presidential contest of 1880 will be fought in this not thoughtless Commonwealth to-morrow. An attempt is making to use the chair of Governor Andrew as a block to aid a political adventurer into the saddle of the wild horse of inflation. Sitting Bull, travelling in Massachusetts under the assumed name of Denis Kearney, appears in Faneuil Hall in his shirt-sleeves, and preaches a crusade of the poor against the rich. Massachusetts weighs him, and finds him first indecent, then blasphemous, then shallow, and last, and chief of all, bloodthirsty.

The doctrines of the sand-lots of San Francisco are heard on Boston Common. "Let Fall River remember that Moscow was burned to ashes." "Labour must be crowned king, even if it wades knee-deep in blood." "We stand ready on election day to take the life of any man, be he United States supervisor or other officer, who attempts to debar voters from exercising the right of suffrage." "We, the working-men, are in the majority, and shall instal our candidate though the streets run with blood." Language worse than this, I myself heard uttered by the chief of the California working-men's party, to a throng of puffing, smoking loafers

on a hill on the Common yonder; and, turning to watch the throng, I found in their faces a good deal of foreign blood. Undoubtedly there were men there who thought the whole affair a huge joke; but the question is, whether we can allow, in view of what is to come in Massachusetts, sentiments of this kind to be scattered broadcast through the operative population.

Eastern Massachusetts is a factory. It is a school also, I know; but the factory is not conscious that the sunrise side of this Commonwealth is a school, nor is the school conscious of the fact that the same side is also a factory. Draw a line north and south, and another east and west, each dividing the population of Massachusetts in halves, and the two lines cross each other not far from Mount Auburn. Fall River, Lowell, Lawrence, this city, as manufacturing centres, have grown so fast that in spite of the great increase of the population in the western part of the State, the population of Massachusetts balances about a point not five miles west of the State House. This growth of the manufacturing population has made New England, not a New Ireland indeed, but the commencement of one. In certain portions of the operative population, a hearing can be had for the devouring absurdities of sand-lot oratory, which would have no importance were there not powder near the sparks. The powder is so wet now, that there will be no explosion, but I am not sure it always will be. Only the impotence of these incendiary harangues prevents their author from being arrested. While we notice that the speeches are brainless and blasphemous and bloodthirsty, let us remember that they are made in the interest and under the general approval of an aspirant, not only for the highest political position in this State, but also for the highest in the nation. I am here as the representative of no political party, nor of any church; but I am by no means venturing too much in saying that no man ought to vote to put into public office a candidate who indirectly justifies incendiary appeals of the sort I have

described, to the prejudice of the poor against the rich. What if these appeals are but the tail of the kite? Their rustling is heard at the distance. Having lately looked on Massachusetts from Washington, from Toronto, and from the Mississippi Valley; having found only too much power in such ruffian vituperation on the Mississippi; and having heard, a little more closely at hand than we can here, what sand-lot oratory has done on the Pacific coast, I am not willing that the fact should be overlooked that our State is an operative quarter, and that these appeals, if allowed to go unrebuked by the Church, and unreprieved at the ballot-box, must ultimately work mischief with the half-educated operative population, largely of foreign origin. I am not speaking of the skilled operatives, over whom, as a class, a political quack has little power. It is our fault that any part of the manufacturing population is half-educated; it is our fault that any portion of it have complaints to make of employers; it is our fault that occasionally the faces of low-paid labourers have been ground by capital; it is our fault that there is not a good understanding between labour and capital, everywhere up and down the Atlantic coast. But let us not add to our faults by allowing these speeches, fit for a wild communist in Paris, to go utterly unrebuked. They are not as unimportant as you think, in view of our crowded and hazardous future.

While I would have the factory population of 1980 in our minds, I would have the Presidential contest of 1880 there also. Especially am I anxious that working-men should remember the financial distress of 1873.

Were I a manual labourer, and about to vote tomorrow, I should call my family together, and say: "How much did the price of our necessaries of life rise between 1860 and 1872?" If the reply were a correct one, it would be, "Sixty-one per cent."—"How much did our wages rise?"—"Thirty per cent." Less than half as much! Statistics gathered by the Massachusetts Labour Bureau, and by the officers who took the last