

TALKS ON THE LABOR TROUBLES

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Talks on the Labor Troubles by C. O. Brown

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LABOR * TROUBLES.

BY

REV. C. O. BROWN.

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PREFACE.

The following TALKS were delivered to an audience composed largely of workingmen, one each week, last Spring, prior to the Anarchist outbreak in Chicago. The series had been sometime in contemplation, and preparation had been partly made before the recent industrial disturbances began. Those disturbances therefore were not the cause, though they hastened somewhat the delivery of the TALKS. They were printed week by week in the *Dubuque Times* as they were delivered. The public interest which they aroused, indicated by editorial comment, newspaper extracts and communications addressed to the author; the present great importance of the theme, and the request of prominent persons who heard the TALKS, constitute my apology for consenting to the publication.

CHAS. O. BROWN.

DUBUQUE, July, 1886.

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CONTENTS,

- I. THE DANGER.
- II. THE LABORER'S GRIEVANCE.
- III. THE LABORER'S FOE.
- IV. THE LABORER'S FALLACY.
- V. THE LABORER'S HOPE.
- VI. MIND AND MUSCLE—CO-LABORERS.

CHAPTER I.

THE DANGER.

"INDUSTRIAL commotions and other signs of the times all point to some social reformation. If we are wise in meeting the question it need not be along the track of fire and destruction to a goal where all rights shall be overthrown as the wild fanatics of communism desire. The result may be reached through pain and disaster, even as the overthrow of slavery was accomplished, only by a bloody war. But the results when reached will not be a pandemonium, where murderers and cut throats shall rule, and where they who have succeeded in life shall be the only criminals. The new adjustment, if one is to be made, will be toward greater righteousness, not toward lawlessness; toward peace, not toward anarchy; toward brotherhood, not toward hatred. It will bring the world to a new understanding of the heart ache and scrimping want of millions who are willingly bearing its burdens, and it will find some way of applying the world's surplus

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wealth to feeding the hungry and clothing the naked. It will bring the laboring man to a better understanding of the fact that all great affairs require leadership, and authority; and it will inspire a new sense of respect and sympathy on both sides. The employer has his burdens as well as the employe. Any just reform will recognize the fact that these two classes must always exist, and it will not seek to embitter one against the other; but it will seek for some common ground where each may have a better understanding with the other.

The time has fully come when such questions must be discussed. We shall only injure ourselves by seeking to avoid them. They who would avoid the trouble and annoyance of such matters, are only imitating the wisdom of the ostrich who sticks her head in the sand and fancies that she is hidden from danger.

Numerous indications tell us that whatever may be our personal opinions, the time has come when discussion can no longer be delayed. Our legislators see it and are making haste to introduce bills in state and national legislatures to remedy the evils of which the laboring classes complain. Some of these bills are extremely crude and imperfect, but they

show the tendency of the times none the less. They show that the need of reform is felt and conceded by our legislators. They show, too, that the demand of laboring men for some change is a just demand. It is not for me to point out how far these demands are just and where they are not. But that something is required becomes evident when the demand is so universal and the attempt to satisfy it is so general.

Another sign is significant. The great capitalists of the country, men who control a network of railroads, which affect the commerce of the entire nation, are already acknowledging the power of the laboring man, in a way which would have astonished himself ten years ago. It is not so long since Wm. H. Vanderbilt dismissed a reference to the will of the people with a profane sneer which showed his utter contempt of the peoples' rights. One whose power in the railroad world is only second to that of Vanderbilt finds to-day that the demands of his laborers cannot be dismissed in that way.

The laborer has awakened to the fact that he has power also. Let him be just in using it, if he would have his cause command respect. If any number of Mr. Gould's employés do