

## THE PROBLEM INVOLVED IN THE COAL STRIKE.

For The Public.

The situation in Pennsylvania consequent upon the miners' strike is in no way exceptional or peculiar. The strike is one more evidence of widespread and deep-seated discontent with industrial conditions, that is all.

What are the industrial conditions?

To get a clear idea we must recede from the immediate question for a moment, and consider certain facts which affect and may even determine the situation.

Who owns the earth, and what will be the effect of the ownership of the earth by some, upon the fortunes of the others?

Let the situation in Pennsylvania answer.

These six men (named by the President) own the coal fields of Pennsylvania, do they not? "An indefeasible estate in fee simple." What are the rights of the owner of such an estate? The legal rights, I mean—those conferred by society. His taxes being paid, he may do with it as he will, may he not? Sell it? Yes. Refuse to sell it? Yes. Employ labor on it? Yes. Refuse to employ labor on it? Yes. Whose business is it, and what are we going to do about it, so long as we recognize in him an indefeasible estate in fee simple?

Condemn the mines under the law of eminent domain, and buy them back from the owners? Has the state of Pennsylvania money enough, or can it get money enough to consummate such a purchase, involving as it would, the purchase of the mining machinery and all the coal roads and their equipment? Admit for a moment the practicability of what I believe a wholly impracticable measure, and what is then the situation? The state of Pennsylvania, in exchange for an enormous bonded debt, would be in possession of her coal mines. What would she do with them? Is there political wisdom enough, integrity of character enough, sagacity, fidelity and experience enough among the rulers of Pennsylvania to discharge the trust involved? Who believes it for a moment? Who would not be appalled at such an undertaking by men, whose unscrupulous character, whose cupidity and venality are the by-word and hissing of the nation.

Appoint receivers to take over the property and administer the trust? Under what pretext? What right has society to interfere with the present management? All the rights the operators have in, to and over the coal

deposits have been conferred directly or mediately by society, have they not?

What's the matter with society? It has got just what it bargained for, hasn't it? And yet society doesn't seem entirely satisfied; society has wanted coal, and couldn't get it; society does not like to see its members suffer, and yet 104,000 miners and their families were for five long months in want, and a situation of chronic unrest and dissatisfaction suddenly (as such situations are apt to do) became painfully and pressingly acute, and still the question recurred: What are we going to do about it?

There is no use in skirmishing about this matter, or paltering with it. Whether we know it or not, or like it or not, we are squarely "up against" the institution of private property in land—not private property in some land, not private property in the coal fields of Pennsylvania simply, but private property in land in its widest, fullest, most comprehensive sense. Property in land is property in man, and the question now forced upon us by the logic of events is: Shall this species of slavery continue or not?—a question for every man and woman in this country. It will not down, it is here to stay—to stay until it is settled—and it will be settled only when the natural rights of men in the earth are secured—the equal, eternal and inalienable right of every human being to the bounty of the Almighty, put forever beyond the reach of ignorant or corrupt legislation.

Without a clear conception of the cause of industrial disorder—in other words, a clear conception of the fact that the men who own the earth will control the destiny of those who live on the earth, no measure will be of any avail. We can do nothing that will not add to the difficulties of the situation. The power of land monopoly—or land ownership, if you please—must be broken, or men must make up their minds to submit to whatever terms land owners find it to their interest to impose.

So far as regards the case in point, I do not see that Congress has properly anything to do with it. No interstate question or constitutional question appears to be involved. There has been no interference with the functions of the general government. It is an instance pure and simple of the power which land ownership gives over the lives of men and the welfare of society.

This trouble has arisen in Pennsylvania. Let the legislature and execu-

tive of Pennsylvania deal with it. The commonwealth has made merchandise of the inheritance of the race, and has consequently deprived tens of thousands of her citizens of any means of livelihood except as they may extort it from the beneficiaries of the state. Let her undo the wrong.

She still possesses the power of taxation. It is enough. The power to tax is the power to destroy. She can tax land values, can appropriate ground rent, can take for the public good what belongs to the public, and can thereby compel those who would mine coal to pay labor whatever may be necessary to secure efficient and constant supply, to be satisfied with interest on capital and wages of superintendence, and to turn over the proceeds in excess thereof in taxes to the state. All this she can do and must do if she would promote good order and establish justice.

Let us renounce temporary expedients. Let us espouse that truth which is now struggling for expression, and which will yet—it may easily be in our own time—bring about changes so beneficent and glorious that we shall count it our highest joy to have been its advocates and champions. Make men see that this so-called contest of Capital and Labor is in reality wholly different in character; that Capital and Labor are natural allies, and that their common enemy is Land Monopoly. Challenge the justice of any law or custom by which the heritage of the race has become the possession of a few. The ownership of the Pennsylvania coal mines is just now the matter of public concern. The future of land tenure, not only in this case, but of every square foot of land in this country, is the real question at issue. On the determination of this question hangs, as I believe, the welfare of our people and the perpetuity of our institutions.

Chicago. J. B. JOHNSTON.

## LESSONS FROM THE COAL STRIKE, AND WHAT IS STILL TO BE DONE.

A lecture delivered in the Church of the Christian Union, Rockford, Ill., by the pastor, Robert C. Bryant, Sunday evening, Oct. 19, 1902.

What is the cause of the coal strike?

We are told that the companies have imported into the coal regions more men than are needed to work the mines. And this is true, but beneath this as a prior cause is the fact that the conditions of men in different parts of the world are so bad that they can be persuaded to

leave their homes and spend their lives in the coal mines, with the promise of a small advance in their wages. We are told that the miners receive very low wages and have irregular work, while the work itself is unpleasant, unhealthful and dangerous; and it is often assumed that if they receive an advance of ten per cent. in wages and have shorter hours of work, they ought to be forever satisfied, and we should never more hear of the coal miners and their grievances.

But there are causes of the strike that lie far deeper than the mere matter of a 10 or 15 cent advance in wages; causes that will not cease to agitate the world as at present, and will not be truly and permanently remedied until there is obtained for all men a condition of industrial equality of opportunity which they do not have to-day.

A few years ago human industry was very simple. Most men were farmers and raised their own food. They built their own houses and made their own clothes and many of their own implements of agriculture. By working all the time they were able to produce enough wealth to satisfy the limited needs of themselves and their families.

Within the last century we have made tremendous progress, and progress has been largely in the increased power of labor to produce wealth. Four men to-day with modern machinery can plant and cultivate and harvest and mill enough wheat to supply a thousand people with bread. One girl in a cotton factory to-day can turn out enough cotton to clothe a thousand people. One person with a spinning wheel could spin five hanks of twist in a week. To-day, with one or two small children to help, he can spin 50,000 hanks in the same time. Two weeks were required to make a plow by hand, which can be made now in three or four hours. Sawing lumber to-day, one man can do the work of 300 or 400 men sawing by hand. With a planer one man can do the work of 30 or 40 men planing by hand. With a sewing machine one woman can do the work of 20 or 30 women sewing by hand. In making small metal things, as tacks and nails, one man can do the work of 100 or more men working by hand. With a McKay machine a man can sole from 300 to 600 pairs of shoes in a day, to five or six pairs working by hand. A good compositor can set 6,000 or 8,000 ems of

type in a day; with a linotype from 50,000 to 60,000 can be set. Benjamin Franklin printed his paper on a little press with a lever, and was able to make from 60 to 100 impressions an hour. What would he think to see one of our great steam presses that print and cut and fold and paste and count and label from 70,000 to 80,000 great papers in an hour, actually doing in one hour more work than Franklin was able to do in a year? It has been calculated that the mechanical and horse power at work for us to-day are equal to about 500,000 tireless willing slaves, and this may be increased four or five fold during this century.

What does all this mean? It means that the power to produce wealth has increased perhaps fifty fold; that in a given time a man with modern machinery can produce fifty times as much wealth as he could years ago. A small portion of this must be allowed for the use of the machine, but the remainder should be a man's wage.

Whether a man works for himself or for some one else, his wage should be the sum of the wealth he actually produces, less that small portion necessary for expenses. Let us take a very moderate, conservative position and say that the increase of labor power has been in the last few years, over and above all expenses, ten fold. This means that the wages of labor, as represented in money, should be, instead of one to three dollars a day, one to three dollars an hour, with the purchasing power of the dollar the same as at present.

Now the men who are producing wealth are just beginning to understand these things. They see that they do not get the just product of their labor. It is not a question as to the actual improvement of the condition of the laboring man. The poor are not growing poorer. The poor man has free schools for his children, and public libraries, and receives perhaps 10 or 15 per cent. more wages than his father did for the same hours of work. The point is that a large number of men cannot be satisfied with ten per cent. of progress when the world as a whole has made 10,000 per cent. of progress. The man who works wants a comfortable house to live in, and works of art and nice furniture; he wants to be able to take a Pullman car and visit Niagara and the Yosemite valley; he wants to see Julia Marlowe and Joseph Jefferson, and Sousa's

band; he wants time for pleasure, education and religion. All these things progress has made possible to man, and he wants to enjoy them, and will not be satisfied until he is able to enjoy them.

If all this ten fold increase in wealth is produced, where does it go? A good illustration of the answer is before us.

Seventy-five years ago a car load of Pennsylvania coal could not have been sold in Rockford for less than \$100 a ton. To-day it could be sold for three or four dollars a ton with good profit to all concerned. A dollar and a half for mining it, a dollar and a dollar and a half for hauling it, and fifty cents or a dollar for handling and delivering it here, would give good profits to all. As it is, we pay eight or nine dollars for it, the miner gets a few cents for mining it, the dealer gets a small profit, and the owners of the mines and the railroad combination get the rest. It is not difficult to see where the wealth goes. This is but one of a large number of similar holdups in operation all over the land.

Now this is the cause of the coal strike; the products of labor go to monopoly. And this is the cause of the fierce competition and the intensity of all legitimate business. There are some who seem to think that the social problem concerns only the working man in his relations with his employer. But almost every man who is to-day trying to do an honest business, rendering an equivalent for profits received, meeting the competition of others in the same business, aided perhaps by an investment of more or less honestly earned capital, and employing perhaps more or less labor—almost every one is making a hard struggle and putting in all the vital strength he has, to make anything of a success at all. Monopoly is taking the products of business as well as the wages of the workingman; it appropriates wealth, no matter how or by whom produced, and the struggle of the hour is not, as so many people suppose, a struggle between the laboring man and his employer, not a struggle between labor and capital that is not monopoly, but a struggle between labor and all business or capital that is not monopoly on the one hand, and monopoly on the other.

There are three main things that enable monopoly to appropriate the products of labor and business.

The first and least important of all is the tariff and all systems of indirect taxation and licenses.

The tariff I believe to be wrong in morals and in policy. It is wrong in morals because it is an effort to make the foreigner pay my tax, and because it is intended to give certain men a privilege or an advantage over others. It is wrong in policy. If a man should start in business raising hot-house bananas we might put a tariff on bananas to protect an infant industry. But would it not be much better policy for us to make shoes and machines and raise wheat, and exchange these things that we can produce cheaper than others, for bananas, buying them as cheaply as we can? The tariff fosters trusts, enabling some manufacturers to sell their products for much more than the cost of production. And does anyone think the tariff keeps up the wages of men? If so let him ask whether the average employer pays for labor as much as he can, or as little as he can. Wages are determined by the law of supply and demand, and seldom does an employer pay more than the demand, even though protection enables him to make large profits.

But the tariff is one of the least of the evils in the social and industrial world. The Iowa idea is coming into prominence, and I am glad it is, but does anyone suppose that the taking off of the tariff will destroy or even cripple the coal monopoly, so long as the mines and the railroads are owned by the combination?

The thing of second importance that enables monopoly to appropriate the products of labor and business is railroad combination. There is scarcely any competition between the great railroads of the country to-day. They rob the producer at one end of the line and the buyer at the other. They prevent natural free trade, and are a large cause of the modern spectacle of overproduction. The toiler in the shoe factory goes hungry, and the farmer at the same time goes barefoot, when there is an overproduction of both wheat and shoes.

It may be said that the majority of railroads have not paid large dividends. This would be difficult to explain were it not for two things; first, the well-known fact that a large portion of railroad stock is water; second, a very large portion of the investment is in valuable land, which must bear interest equal to the rental value of the land, and pay taxes beside.

One thing cannot be disputed, that the railroads are a large cause of the trust evil, in the discriminating rates which, in spite of all law, they have always made to the great trusts, and al-

ways will so long as they have a monopoly of the carrying business.

But the greatest cause of the appropriation by monopoly of the products of labor and business is the private ownership of the sources of natural wealth.

Here are these great coal mines. Who put them there? Not the owners, but the Creator of the earth. Who were they intended for? Not a few owners, but for all the people. We must have coal. But if a few men own the mines they have a right to charge what they please for the coal; they have a right to close the mines if they wish.

But all this is true of not mines alone. Here is a valuable city lot. It was part of a farm. It is as much nature as a mine is. The owner did not put it here, and has done nothing to make it valuable. We must use that lot to take advantage of the opportunities of the city. The owner knows our necessity and charges \$100 or \$1,000 a year for rent for that which cost nothing to produce. It is just as great an injustice as charging an exorbitant price for coal that cost nothing to produce.

The people who, in this country, by labor produce wealth, pay to the owners of land a sum approximating \$1,000,000,000 a year, for the mere opportunity to live and labor. The land values of this country according to the last census are approximately \$20,000,000,000. Estimating the rental of the land at five per cent., it amounts to \$1,000,000,000 a year. This is only the beginning of the evils of land ownership. It is the basis of all great monopoly. It closes up the opportunity for independent labor and business. It takes the profits of improvements. It even appropriates the benefits of religion and charity. If \$1,000 a year should be used in this city for charity, it would make the city more attractive and desirable to the poor; an increased demand for places to live would raise the rent of the land, and the \$1,000 would go eventually to the owners of land.

These three things, Tariff, Railroad Combination and Private Ownership of Sources of Wealth, are the main causes of the appropriation of wealth by monopoly, the causes of the trust evils, the causes of all strikes, the causes of anarchy and all social discontent.

All the trusts are based on one or more of these things. Many of the small trusts that have no land monopoly or tariff to bolster them up, are based almost entirely upon discrimi-

nating railroad rates. The great trusts—the coal trust, the oil trust, the steel trust—have all three to stand on—land monopoly, railroad combination and tariff.

Well, what is to be done about it?

I pass the tariff. The signs of the times are that there will soon be "something doing" with that.

As to the railroads, there are two propositions I think worth considering. The first is that the people, through the government, simply take the railroads and operate them for the public good. The second is that the people own the road beds and make them public thoroughfares under necessary regulations, as wagon roads are.

For myself I favor the latter proposition.

With the mines there are also two things that may be done. First, we may take and operate them for the public good. Second, we may own them and grant short franchises for the use of them with definite regulations.

In this case also I favor the latter view. And I believe that before we can have social justice and anything like industrial equality of opportunity we must do the same with all valuable land—recognize the popular ownership of it all, and grant franchises for its use, determining at short intervals the value of the franchise, but making it permanent so long as the value is paid.

This is the course, the method proposed by Henry George for solving the entire question of taxation.

I believe these to be the only permanent remedies for the conditions in the coal regions, and for all similar conditions wherever they may exist. The coal strike itself is doubtless ended for the present, but so long as social injustice continues at the root of the social order there will be no end to the outbreaks of social discontent.

Now follows the important question: Have we a right to take the coal mines or other sources of wealth?

This brings up the whole question of the rights of property.

There are some things that may be private property and some that may not. A few years ago men held private property in men. Slaves were recognized as property; the owners had paid for them; they had done much to make them valuable, and many slaves, it was argued, had forfeited all rights to liberty. But we decided, as we believe for all time, that it is the natural right of all

men to be free, and they cannot under any circumstances be the property of their fellow men. Now we have no more right to private property in the sources of natural wealth than in slaves. There is little difference between the two. To own that which is necessary to life is to have the power to dictate to men the very terms of existence.

What may be private property? I answer, Anything or any value that is produced by the labor of man.

If by labor and skill I create a value, that which I have created is mine by sacred right. The ability to produce wealth, to create value, is the mark of man's likeness to God; it is the sign of his exaltation above the brute. But this alone can give true title to any material thing. All that has value as nature alone—the air, the sunshine, the water and the land, with all that man needs for life, that lives or grows or exists thereon or therein in its natural state—all belong to the race.

Let us take a brief excursion into the field of political economy.

What is wealth itself? It is not gold and silver, except as these are in themselves useful and beautiful. Money is but the medium of exchange, and the measure of value for wealth. Wealth in the economic sense is food and clothing and all the material things we use to gratify our desires; or, to be more exact, wealth is the value attached to material things because of the labor of man put upon them. All wealth comes originally from the earth. There is not a thing which we use in life that has not come from the earth—the land, the water or the air. All wealth is brought out of the earth and made valuable by the labor of man. It has been dug or cut or cultivated or hunted or caught or changed in its form by the labor of man. Man from the beginning has had capital to help him in his labor. At first the rudest implements of the chase or of agriculture; in later years the most wonderful machines. Capital is that part of wealth which is used to help man produce more wealth.

Now because the earth is the source of all, it is very plain that if men are to have equal opportunity in the production of wealth, they must have equal opportunity in the use of the earth. And because the earth has not been produced by man, but has always been here, we say that the rights and opportunities of man

in the use of the earth are intended by the Creator to be common or equal. The right to absolute ownership of valuable portions of the earth cannot be given away or granted by the state. The owners of the coal mines may say that the state has granted them the right to own the mines. But who is the state? Our fathers were the state yesterday. We are the state to-day, our children will be the state to-morrow. Thousands of new lives become part of the state every day. Their rights are just as good as the rights of those who were here before. The fathers must not give away or sell the rights and opportunities of the children.

It has often been shown that no title to nature is good. If followed back far enough it is always found to be the grant of some king or someone who did not own it, or was obtained by conquest. The story of the tramp and the landlord is familiar. The landlord ordered the tramp off his fields.

"How did you get this land?" asked the tramp.

"I inherited it from my father," was the answer.

"Where did he get it?"

"He inherited it from his father."

"And where did he get it?"

"He inherited it from his father."

"And where did he get it?"

"He fought for it," said the landlord.

"Well, I will fight you for it now," said the tramp.

For these reasons I say we have a perfect right to take the coal mines.

I do not believe that any other remedy will permanently settle the problem in the coal fields and the problem of social injustice elsewhere. The owners believe the mines are their property, and that they have a right to do with them as they please; and if we recognize their property their rights must of necessity follow. They say they are standing for a principle, and, while I believe the principle is wrong, they cannot be blamed for so standing if the world at large acknowledges the principle to be correct. The world says the rights of private property are sacred. What a man owns he may use in any way that does not injure his fellow man, or may refrain from using altogether. Therefore I say the natural sources of wealth must not be owned by individuals.

Now there are many who will say that this is simply socialism. I have

great sympathy with the socialist spirit and the socialist movement. We are all socialists to a degree. Our schools and post office and courts and all public institutions are pure socialism, and if I believed in full the principles of socialism I would not hesitate to declare myself a socialist.

But there is a clear distinction between the socialist position and my own. The consistent socialist recognizes no inviolable right of private property. All that a man produces, and the man himself, are a part of the state and may be taken by the state for the public good, the socialist believes. I believe that what I have created, what I have produced, is mine, and the state has no right to interfere with any use I wish to make of it that does not injure others. I believe that all independent business, not based on privilege or monopoly, is good, not evil, and helps rather than exploits labor, and cannot rightfully be interfered with. I believe that all monopoly and evil trusts, all ability to appropriate unjustly the products of labor and business, rest, not upon the ownership of true property or of capital, but upon the private ownership of nature and upon special legislative privilege.

This case of the coal miners is prominent only because it touches the pockets of the people all over the country. There are tens of thousands of children working hard and long in the cotton mills of Carolina, and we do not hear much about it. There are hundreds of thousands in the lowest poverty and degradation in the slums of the cities, and who talks of them?

But it may be that this coal strike will set us to thinking as we have never thought before, of the needs and sufferings of the millions who toil for a pittance, in this age of progress.

#### A SUGGESTION TO THE REPUBLICAN PARTY.

For The Public.

The following poem, entitled: "The Owners of the Universe," published some years ago in *Great Thoughts*, London, England, has at present a peculiar significance. I would suggest it as a most fitting Republican campaign song. I should have made this suggestion long since, but I feared the song contained a too frank avowal of fact to permit of its adoption, but now that Mr. Hanna has dared to ask for a perpetual franchise, and Mr. Baer has founded a commercial papacy with