

principle in any rational scheme of social economy.

The only right that labor can claim that does not constitute a wrong to somebody else is the right to work without obstruction; the right to go into an open and unobstructed market and bargain freely for the sale of what it offers to produce. The union laborer claims this right for himself, but denies it to the "scab," while the capitalist monopolist would avail himself of the "scab's" right to work, but would, at the same time refuse him free access to the natural media on which his work can be most profitably expended. Now the right to work is a mockery unless it means access to the free gifts and productive powers of nature. It is as wrong for the monopolist (under whatever name he may be masquerading) to lock up the coal lands or the oil lands, for example, as it is for the trades-unionist to prevent the "scab" from earning an honest living. Free labor and free land are the indispensable conditions of economic justice.

The closed shop and the closed field are both standing menaces to the commonwealth. Abolish them, and the labor problem would be solved, for the overplus of labor would be absorbed in the newly-liberated channels of production, and aggrieved labor, no longer swamped by an army of starving competitors, could meet capital on a fair footing and force it to concede fair terms. Laborers would then be as independent as in the nature of things anyone can expect to be, and their increased earnings would not come out of the pockets of the consumer (as is often the case at present), nor out of the pockets of capital as capital, but out of that increased productivity of nature which social progress develops.

Such a plan would restore elasticity to our industrial system; there would be free choice of occupation; the individual would once more assert himself; collective bargaining would cease, for individual bargaining would be preferred under free conditions; and aggressive trades-unionism, with all its irritating and tyrannical system of badges, labels, boycotts and other strife-breeding contrivances would per-

ish, along with lockouts and trusts, with the disordered conditions which give birth to them all.

Thus by stoutly asserting the right to work in all its fullness, and by renouncing the so-called right to keep others from working, can labor come by its own. The open market is the one central goal towards which the laborer, the employer and the consumer can jointly move without injury but with benefit to each other's interests. Without it, there can be no permanent relief for labor as a whole. We may, by unfair class legislation, go on relieving labor superficially, but we shall be relieving in a circle; always relieving and always coming back to the point from whence we started, like Sisyphus with the rolling stone, or like the dog that thought he was feeding himself when he bit his tail off.

The above criticisms, it is hardly necessary to explain, have to do with the methods, and not with the fundamental aims of organized labor. With those aims the writer is in full sympathy. These criticisms we meant to be candid, because candor is the only attitude becoming any well-wisher of a just cause who sees that cause languish because its energy is misdirected and running to waste.

If organized labor will only employ the same energy in securing legislation that would bring about economic justice for all alike, that it now does to secure its immediate ends through means which are fast becoming intolerable to the rest of the nation, the victory will not be far off. It might die in the arms of victory, but it would have earned an immortal epitaph which would be worth dying for.

T. SCANLON.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

LOUISIANA.

Alexandria, La., July 24.—This is one of the most progressive little cities in America. It has a population of ten thousand, most of whom live in homes that are neither offensive mansions nor offensive hovels. The town in its new growth is happily free from both extremes. The stranger who drives over it is struck at once by the number of modest cottages, which have the air of being owned by the occupants. This is especially true of the new part, known as West Alexandria. Here the paving has hardly kept pace with the growth, but

in the main parts of the town there is more good paving than the visitor will see in any other Southern town of equal size.

The new post office is a pleasing building; but the pride of the town is justly centered in the court house and high school, both of which are excellent specimens of architecture, that would do credit to a city of any size. The court house cost a hundred thousand dollars, the high school fifty thousand; and the erection of each was financed in such a way as to make the burden fall as lightly as possible upon the taxpayers. I was informed that there was no graft in either job.

Indeed, one gets the opinion that Alexandria has been singularly fortunate in her management—except in one respect, which is the striking object lesson that suggested the present communication. Surely in the main the town business has been wisely administered. She owns her light and water works, and has operated these successfully for several years. I attempted to get definite figures, but was unsuccessful because of the manner in which the accounts are kept. All, however, admit the success of the plants, and every business man I spoke to on the subject heartily approved of the theory of municipal ownership.

This makes all the more surprising the glaring contrast of the one exception. I don't say that nowhere else in the world could one find a more striking object lesson. It is so striking that all the people on both sides of the river are beginning to see the absurdity of the situation, and even stockholders wear a sickly smile when the theme comes up.

Across the Red river from Alexandria lies the village of Pineville, and a good part of the parish of Rapides, of which Alexandria is the county seat. In Pineville are the National cemetery and all the cemeteries of Alexandria. Half a mile away is the new State asylum. There is, naturally, a great deal of passage and traffic across the river. Until a few years ago there was only a ferry; now there is a handsome iron bridge. But, instead of the two towns, or the parish, building this bridge, it was given over to a private corporation. This corporation last year paid eight per cent. quarterly dividends, 32 per cent. for the year. The charges are so high that complaints are loud and constant. If you wish to take a walk across and back, it costs you a dime; if you drive, fifty cents. No wonder the people are complaining, and regretting that they did not do the work themselves. They are having a convincing object lesson, and it does not seem rash to predict that within five years they will either buy the present bridge or parallel it with another.

In Alexandria, as in other parts of the

State, the question of assessments has been much discussed during the past few months. For this awakening of public attention to this most important matter, Governor Blanchard deserves great credit. He was here recently, and in a group of leading citizens, who had called at the hotel, he spoke with great earnestness and intelligence, showing how much more sensible in every way is a proper assessment with lower rates than a ridiculously low assessment with high rates. During the conversation the interesting fact came out that the upper and poorer lands of the State, which are more subdivided, are assessed relatively much higher than the rich alluvial and valley lands which are held in large plantations. But this is an old story.

One is not long in Alexandria without hearing the name of General Sherman. He was, at the outbreak of the civil war, superintendent of the military academy, the ruins of which may still be seen some three miles out of Pineville. Mr. Jonas Rosenthal, an old inhabitant, and the present enthusiastic and efficient president of the school board, told me that Sherman often loafed in his store and told good stories. He says that Sherman declared he would never fight against the South, but afterwards wrote that the pressure was so great he had to go in.

J. H. DILLARD.

NEWS NARRATIVE

Week ending Thursday, July 27.

The British ministerial crisis.

The Speaker's ruling of the 18th in the British House of Commons adverse to the Ministry on its proposal regarding Irish representation (p. 248), was followed on the 21st by a defeat of the Ministry in the Commons on a question also affecting its Irish policy. Mr. Redmond, the leader of the Irish party in the House, had offered an amendment to the Irish land act (vol. vi, p. 282). It proposed a reduction of the land commission. This amendment, opposed by the Ministry and supported by the Opposition, was adopted by a vote of 199 to 196, a result which was followed by cries for the resignation of the Ministry.

After this defeat, the Prime Minister refused to declare his future action, and on the 22d only a short session was held, Mr. Bannerman, the Liberal leader, having moved an early adjournment

on the ground that it would be unseemly to proceed with business while the Ministry was considering its position. The Prime Minister insisted upon doing some business, but only enough to avoid Mr. Bannerman's implication. In the evening the Prime Minister had an audience with the King, and upon the reassembling of the Commons on the 24th he argued from the floor, in a speech citing precedents, that such defeats as that of the 21st had never been regarded as ground for resignation or dissolution, and announced that the Ministry did not purpose either to resign or to dissolve Parliament because of that day's occurrence. He declared that it would be a grave evil if the tenure of ministers was made dependent on such votes, and hoped the practice would never prevail of allowing a ministry united in itself and possessing the confidence of the majority of the House to abandon its post merely in consequence of such a vote. In all proceedings since, the Ministry has maintained a majority of about 60.

Norway and Sweden.

The special joint committee of the two houses of the Swedish Riksdag, to which had been referred the Ministerial bill for adjusting the details of separation of Norway from Sweden (p. 198) delivered its report on the 25th. The report declares it to be self-evident that the union was not dissolved by the action of the Norwegian Storting, since—

a contract cannot be broken by one party's parliament. Therefore the Storting's action can only be considered as Norway's declaration that she does not desire any longer to maintain it. It is for Sweden to decide what action is necessary. According to the laws she would be fully justified in using the necessary force to re-establish the union. This would seem to be the natural course in the first excitement, but reflection shows that it would be against the true interests of Sweden. There was great mutual advantage in the union, but its maintenance by force would make the union a source of weakness instead of strength. Sweden should not therefore employ force, but must insist that its permission is necessary to dissolution. Sweden must agree to the cancellation of the act of union on certain conditions, insisting as a preliminary on a satisfactory settlement of all af-

fairs mutually affecting the two countries.

Following are the conditions of separation outlined by the report as feasible:

1. The establishment of a zone on each side of the frontier separating the kingdoms, within which the existing fortifications shall be razed and new fortifications may not be erected.

2. The right of pasturing reindeer belonging to Swedish Laplanders in North Norway.

3. That the transit trade through both countries shall be secured against unjustifiable obstruction.

4. That the status of Sweden in respect to foreign powers as established by treaty shall be clearly defined so that Sweden shall be completely freed from responsibility for Norway to other states.

The report emphatically disapproves of any action by Sweden, either in the direction of a dissolution of the union or recognition of Norway's independence, until the Norwegians have had an opportunity through elections or a plebiscite of expressing their wishes. If the popular vote of Norway favors a dissolution, the Storting must then, in the view of the committee, legally approach Sweden to this end, and if a satisfactory agreement can be reached the committee recommends Sweden's assent. In conclusion, the committee's report refuses to recommend that the Riksdag authorize the cabinet to negotiate with Norway, as demanded by the Ministerial bill referred to it, but proposes instead that if Norway legally approaches Sweden, in accordance with the committee's proposal, negotiations be opened.

In consequence of the adverse report on their bill, the Swedish ministers resigned on the day of the delivery of the report, the 24th.

Action of the Russian Zemstvos congress.

No official force has been exerted to suppress the Zemstvos congress in session at Moscow (p. 247), and on the 20th, by a vote of 220 to 7, the congress ordered the first reading of a constitution for Russia, which had been proposed by its committee. The principal features of this draft are:

1. An elective bi-cameral parliament, representing the whole Empire regardless of creed or race, and composed of 840 members.