

# THEMES OF LABOR DAY

## What the Industrial Holiday Suggests to Thinkers.

### PRESENT AND FUTURE PLANS

**Eminent Advocates of the Cause of the Workingman Write Briefly Their Ideas of the Significance of the Occasion—Samuel Gompers Apostrophizes Toil and Mgr. Ducey Explains the Pope's Attitude on the Labor Question—Financial Outlook**

The unusually great scale on which Labor Day is to be celebrated this year gives special interest to the following opinions. This is the first year of the national industrial holiday, it having heretofore been observed under State laws, according to which the first day of September, the first Saturday of that month, and the first Monday, have been variously set apart. It is highly desirable that unanimity be attained.

It will be observed that Henry W. Cannon, from a great financier's standpoint, deems the immediate future of labor very encouraging. Samuel Gompers presents the industrial view in his usual able way. Mgr. Thomas J. Ducey, the ardent friend of the working classes, has some forcible words on the hardships of labor under existing industrial conditions. Various labor leaders throughout the country who have had a word to say, are likewise quoted.

#### Gompers Gives His Views.



LABOR Day comes this year with various changes in the industrial situation brought about by causes, however, that are special rather than general. That is, the labor cause has not altered its character, however events may have modified its aspect. The needs

of the country's wage-earners are as urgent now as they have been heretofore. The evils attendant upon the injustice to labor embodied in our social system have been in no way mitigated. Rather, they have in many cases been increased.

But it is the prospects before labor on the approach of its great holiday that are of chief concern now. The passage of the tariff bill, like the enactment of nearly all measures ostensibly for the general good, will have inured to the advantage of special classes long before it becomes the turn of the wage-earner to share in such advantages (if advantages there be) as may be left.

This is indeed a time in which we hear much of the wrongs and of the rights of labor. The workingman, nevertheless, seems to remain pretty much where his non-tolling friends first found him, except where he has himself set to work to carve out his own destiny. It is to a perception of this fact on the part of the wage-earner that we owe that unwillingness on his part to intrust his destiny to friends who, however well disposed they may be, can hardly know his needs as well as he himself knows them. It is surprising that this circumstance is not more understood than it is. The workingman is not a child who must have his way pointed out to him. Labor is independent, self-reliant, and able to take care of itself when there is a fair field and no favor. Unfortunately, a fair field and no favor is the great lack just now.

Labor Day, then, witnesses a great resolve of the wage earner to act for himself. He will take independent political action, and this fall and winter endeavor to send workmen to represent him in the halls of legislation. It is not by affiliation with any political party that industrial emancipation is to be won. The workingman must have his own class movement. The great evolution that is to transform our social system and finally abolish wage slavery must be accomplished by the workingman. And he will never accomplish these things by asking others to begin. "If you want a thing done, do it yourself," is as true in the cause of industrial democracy as in any other concern of life.

For the rest, Labor Day will this year be celebrated with unwonted vim and enthusiasm. All over the land organized workmen are making ready to celebrate their holiday. There will be open-air demonstrations, speech-making, and a display of interest never equaled, probably, since Labor Day was instituted.

And the future? I deem it encouraging. Labor has, it is true, met reverses at the hands of capital, but the conflict has not been one-sided, and above all we have the future. Every day sees a more general perception of the truth in our country that if we would remain free at all we must once for all put down that form of slavery which is more insidious than that abolished by Lincoln—industrial servitude.

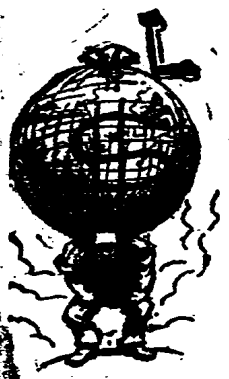
And that labor will do this there cannot be the shadow of a doubt.

The industrial situation, while serious enough to warrant the apprehensions of all who have any interest in the welfare of their country, is by no means complicated, as too many affect to think, by the attitude of labor. Not the attitude of labor, but that of capital, is precipitating the conflicts which culminate periodically in scenes such as so recently drew the world's attention to Chicago. Those scenes were, indeed, foretold. As far back as 1838 I took occasion to say in a report to the American Federation of Labor that no man who has given the question of strikes and the labor movement any thought can look upon strikes with favor, but to be continually condemning them is entirely another thing. To know when to strike, and particularly when not to strike, is a science not yet fully understood. To strike upon a falling market, or being insufficiently organized, or, if organized, not properly equipped with the ammunition so necessary to a successful strike—funds—is unquestionably the height of ignorance. The story of the strikes that may have failed of their immediate objects, yet have prevented reductions in wages and worse conditions, will probably never be entirely told. Mousing condemnation of strikes, we find by experience, does not abolish or even reduce their number. As a consistent opponent of strikes, though, I do find that those organizations of labor which have best provided themselves with the means to strike have continually less occasion to indulge in them. The most potent factor to prevent or reduce the number of strikes is a well-organized trade union, with a full treasury, ready to strike should the necessity arise.

It was a Detroit labor convention that afforded me an opportunity of impressing upon the minds of working people the absolute necessity that they should keep in view that it is not bluster nor ostentation that will win victories for them. Such organizations of labor may at times win victories from employers, but they are generally of a transitory character. We must not only be right, but have the power to enforce that right. There is no argument so potent with unwilling or unfair employers to grant reasonable demands as a well organized trades union with a well filled treasury to stand them in need should a strike be necessary to enforce the demand.

In fine, Labor Day this year finds its celebrators united, confident, and hopeful. "Thrice is he armed that hath his quarrel just." SAMUEL GOMPERS.

#### Monsieur Ducey Explains.



LABOR is a theme so full of sentiment that did I refuse to say a few words to you I feel that honest labor would have a right to excommunicate me, and they would justly claim this right by virtue of a famous document "given at St. Peter's, in Rome, the 15th day of May, 1891, the fourteenth year of our pontificate. LEO XIII, Pope.

In this famous encyclical on labor Leo XIII proclaims that the elements of conflict are unmistakable. The "momentous seriousness of the present state of things," viz., the conflict between capital and labor, fills every mind with painful apprehension. Wise men, however, practical men propose schemes, popular meetings, legislatures, and sovereign princes—all are occupied with it, and there

is nothing which has a deeper hold on public attention. Of course, there is nothing which has a deeper hold on public attention. Proper understanding of the rights of class and mass, of the obligations of capital and the just rights of honest labor means the peace, order, and perpetuity of governments, be they the government of empires, kingdoms, or republics. Wisely, then, has Leo XIII thought it useful to speak on the conditions of labor. He sees clearly that it is not easy to define the relative rights and mutual duties of wealth and labor, but he recognizes that we are face to face with the condition all over the world, and he insists that all good, just, and wise men agree that there can be no question whatever that some remedy must be found for the misery and wretchedness which press so heavily at this moment on the large majority of the poor.

The Sovereign Pontiff further sees that the contract system of labor is radically defective and that the concentration of so many branches of trade in the hands of a few individuals is radically wrong, for such systems create corrupting monopolies and trusts by concentrating with the small number of the very rich great powers of oppression that enable them to practice injustice, and may, through the agency of corrupt legislation, lay upon the masses of the poor a yoke little better than slavery itself—I would say, with all due respect to the holy father's words, a yoke worse than slavery which was known in this country before the famous emancipation proclamation of Abraham Lincoln. The industrial slavery of to-day is in many respects a more heinous crime against the law of God than was the chattel slavery of the South. The master in slave days looked after his chattel servant very much in the same way that the rich, dishonest, legal robber of the trust and monopoly looks after his valuable horse. It cost him so much money, it must be cared for, fed, and housed, that it may give pleasure and create other beings to add to the pleasure and luxury of the master. The trust and monopoly robber of to-day who will give \$20,000 and more for a fast horse, would not dream of giving \$10,000 for a human being endowed with intelligence, willing and able to labor, possessed of an immortal soul, that bears the image and likeness of God. On the contrary, he believes in the few hiring brain and muscle at the lowest possible figure and using the creature's life blood for his own security and luxurious indulgence. It is this system and acts like these that make the holy father, Leo XIII, say: "Therefore those whom fortune favors are warned that freedom from sorrow, and abundance of earthly riches are no guarantee of the beatitude that shall never end, but rather the contrary; that the rich should tremble at the threatening of Jesus Christ, threatening so strange in the mouth of Our Lord; and that a most strict account should be given to the Supreme Judge of all we possess."

You have here facts and sentiments coming from the mind and heart of the head of the Catholic Church, appealing to the clergy and laity throughout the world to take a deep interest in the greatest question of the hour for the safety of society—the labor question. Leo XIII says: "Every minister of the holy religion must throw into this conflict of capital and labor all the energy of his mind, all the strength of his endurance," and he warns the bishops throughout the church that they should be the leaders in this movement; that the priests, supported by the authority of the bishops and encouraged by their example, should never cease to urge upon men of all classes, upon the high as well as the lowly, the Gospel doctrines of Christian life, and by every means in their power strive to bring about the kingdom of God's justice upon earth, and seek to have God's will done in justice in the midst of men. Now there are, I think, over 10,000 priests in the United States. If all these men, led by the bishops, sounded this war cry of the holy father all along the line, do you not think they would make the sugar trusts and the whisky trusts and all the other trusts utterly unworthy of being trusted? And no matter how much money the sugar mongers might have, when they acknowledge, as did Mr. F. O. Mathlessen, one of the principal promoters of the sugar trust—"For a number of years I have made 200 per cent. at least upon the amount of my investments." Seven per cent is an illegal rate of interest in the State of New York, usurious and dishonest. What can the country think of a man who has the effrontery to boast that he has made 200 per cent.—of this same trust of which Mr. Wilson said a few days ago, "The sugar trust has the country by the throat." In a Sunday edition of a New York paper of February 16, 1890, we read these words: "When the inside history of the sugar trust (which refuses to publish any report) is brought to light—as it surely will be one of these days—a most surprising chapter will be added to the annals of speculation." Might it not be added to legal highway robbery? The Messrs. Havemeyer received about \$16,000,000 of the \$50,000,000 of certificates issued by the trust, and, moreover, held the highest position in the board of trustees; it may be now asserted that the whole of the Havemeyer \$16,000,000 of certificates were sold out last summer for from \$100 to \$125 per share, and that they did not begin buying them back until a few days ago. By this act of the Havemeyers one of the most gigantic turns of speculation on record is presented to us, a turn which shows them a profit of something like \$5,000,000, which they regained upon their entire \$16,000,000.

To quote from Mr. Cleveland's letter to Mr. Wilson, of West Virginia, on the Senate's tariff bill, "how can these men with their millions and their agents in the Senate and Congress face an honest and indignant people after indulging in such outrageous discriminations and violations of principle." I thank God that I have no trust corruptors and monopoly outlaws in this congregation. I would much prefer being the pastor of the much condemned and censured rum shop keepers. I rejoice at the approach of Labor Day. The laboring men who assemble and march directed by law and order, are a grand protest against the combinations of corrupt capital, corrupt trusts, and the dishonest legislation of Senate and House for the past twenty years. It certainly is now high time for the 10,000 priests of this country to follow the direction of the Holy Father and protest from their pulpit Sunday after Sunday against the corrupting use of dishonest riches. It does seem such a farce to hear ministers of religion preaching to the poor and oppressed about the dangers of riches of which dangers they know nothing while very frequently we kiss the hand of corrupt power and bend the pregnant hinges of the knee and kiss the hand that smites humanity—the hand of such men of whom Jesus Christ has said "the rich man died and was buried in hell." I wonder if this was a prophecy about the sugar trust angels. I welcome Labor Day.

THOMAS J. DUCEY.

#### Cannon Expects Better Times.



HE financial and trade disturbances which culminated in the panic of 1893 have paralyzed and benumbed the energies of our people, and the capitalists of our country have suffered severely. Prices for all commodities have fallen and the sales of manufactured goods have decreased to an enormous extent. It is difficult for men who labor with their hands to fully appreciate the losses sustained by the great railway and industrial corporations in this country, and also by individuals. The price of a day's labor at the present time will purchase more comforts and conveniences than ever in the history of this country, and while the interests of those who furnish capital for corporations, and those who are employed by such corporations, are in a measure identical, it is difficult for the employees to realize the extent of stagnation in trade.

There is, undoubtedly, a better appreciation of the true situation of affairs on both sides than either in the year, and I have no doubt that strenuous efforts will be made by our railway and industrial corporations and individuals to furnish employment for as many persons as possible, even if the returns are not large. There is a growing sentiment in favor of an earnest endeavor to resuscitate business throughout the country, and I believe that both capital and labor will unite in this endeavor, and that capital will realize reasonable returns, and labor receive remunerative compensation in the near future. H. W. CANNON.

#### From Other Labor Leaders.

P. M. Arthur: Labor is vindicating its claim to the confidence and respect of the fair-minded everywhere. The wage-earner is the hope of the Republic.

James R. Sovereign: Labor's position was never more trying in our history. But every good cause has its trials, and labor's cause will triumph as every good cause does in the end.

Eugene V. Debs: Some defeats are worth many victories, and labor, even in adversity, is not robbed of hope. Labor is the foundation of society, and its holiday should be the most festive in the calendar.

Terence V. Powderly: It is very hard to say anything on the subject of labor that has not been said. Actions, not words, are the essentials.