

The quietude and happiness of the beautiful valley of the Monongahela have often been broken by frequent outbreaks or uprisals of the laboring classes. These disturbances are known as strikes. They are the acts or agreements, made by the laborers, of combining and quitting work in order to compel an employer to increase their wages to a certain scale, or prevent a reduction.

In the summer of 1877 occurred the great labor disturbance known as the Railroad Strike. For several years the mining districts of the country had been vexed with disputes and outbreaks having their origin in the question of wages. The manufacturing towns and cities had witnessed similar troubles, and the great corporations having control of the lines of travel and commerce were frequently brought to a standstill by the determined opposition of their

employees. In the spring of this year, 1877, the managers of the great railways leading from the Seaboard to the West declared a reduction of ten per cent in the wages of their workmen. This measure was violently resisted by the employees of the companies and the most active steps were taken to prevent its success. In less than a week the trains had been stopped on all the important roads. Travel ceased, freights perished en-route, and business was paralyzed. In the city of Pittsburg, situated at the junction of the Monongahela and Alleghany Rivers, the strikers, rioters, and dangerous classes gathering in a mob to the number of twenty thousand, obtained complete control of the city and for two days held a reign of terror unparalleled in the history of the country. The lawless violence and madness of the scene recalled the

fiery days of the French Revolution. The Union Depot and all the machine shops and other railroad buildings of the city were burned. A hundred and twenty-five locomotives, and two thousand five hundred cars laden with valuable cargoes, were destroyed amid the wildest havoc and uproar. The insurrection was finally suppressed by the regular troops and the Pennsylvania militia, but not until nearly one hundred lives had been lost and property destroyed to the value of more than three millions of dollars.

The next great strike in the "Old Monongahela Valley" occurred at Homestead, a very neat little town of 10,000 to 12,000 inhabitants, situated on the left bank of the Monongahela River seven miles southeast of Pittsburg. Its inhabitants are chiefly laborers and mechanics of various degrees of

skill, and a goodly number of merchants and tradespeople. A large part of the population are of foreign birth and represent many different nations.

The Homestead Works of Carnegie, Phipps & Co., are located about one mile above the town. The cost of the works including the grounds is about \$6,000,000. Steel armor plates for the construction of war vessels and structural materials used largely in fire-proof buildings are manufactured. The Navy Department of the United States has a contract with this company for 6,000 tons of armor plate to be used in the construction of our new war vessels. There are employed about 3,800 men including a number of boys and the payroll shows a disbursement of over \$200,000 in one month. Wages have been from 14 cents per hour to the common laborer, up to \$280

per month to the skilled workmen.

Although the Carnegie company has been exacting at times, yet on other occasions it has performed many acts of liberality to its employees. It has at times loaned money to many of them to purchase lots and build houses, for the use of which it charged a compensation of six per cent.

On July 1, 1889, the company made a contract with a number of skilled workmen to run for three years, or until June 30th 1892. The company agreed to pay a certain sum per ton, and \$25 was to be the minimum price for 4x4 Bessemer steel billets, with a sliding scale so that if the market price of steel went above that figure the laborers would get the benefit of the rise; if the market price fell below that figure, then the workmen would receive nothing below the minimum. When this con-

tract was about to expire the company, through the President, Mr. Frick, and the superintendent, Mr. Potter, made a proposition to the workmen to reduce the minimum to \$22 per ton and also change the time of year when the contract should expire, from the 30th of June to the last of December.

The workmen refused to accept the reduction, but offered to take \$24, when the company proposed to raise the minimum to \$23, but were refused. They also would not accede to the change in the expiration of the contract as its renewal would occur in midwinter, leaving them at a disadvantage. All propositions ended on the 24th of June.

The reasons which Mr. Frick, who is an intelligent business man, gave for reducing the wages of his employees were:

The price of steel had fallen to such a figure in the market that, in justice to his company, the minimum should be reduced and, that the improved machinery placed in some of the mills doubled the output with no increase in the number of laborers, which very greatly increased their tonnage compensation!

The high protection extended by Congress to manufacturers has induced the investment of capital and over-production has resulted. Thus by producing more than there is a demand for, prices are driven down and it is necessary that the expenses of the manufacturer should be lessened, and to do this the wages of the employee must be reduced. In this way the protective tariff disappoints the laboring man and becomes the parent of trusts and strikes. The manufacturer no more than the laborer

can help it, though he is largely responsible for it. He asks Congress for protection and must bear the consequences.

When the new scale had been offered the men and refused by them, Mr. Frick closed the mills. The workmen seized them and excluded the owners from their property. The officer of the law, the sheriff of Alleghany county, was called to restore order, but his means were not sufficient. Thereupon the company applied to the Pinkerton agency of New York for a body of watchmen. The men came down the Alleghany in barges and, when they had come up the Monongahela opposite Homestead, they were fired upon by the strikers. After one of the Pinkerton's had been shot they returned the fire but with little success as the strikers had made a breastwork for themselves by placing women and children in front of them and

firing from behind them.

The Pinkertons, having surrendered, were allowed to land but were not permitted to go near the mills. They were forced to promise to quit Homestead and never again to serve the mill owners. They were insulted and brutally assailed.

The county now applied to the state for a military force which was sent out and succeeded in putting down the insurrection.

In regard to this great strike these questions arise for our consideration: First, Had the owners of the mills a legal right to employ any necessary number of men to defend their property?

Secondly, Is it lawful to bring a body of armed men into the State for any purpose?

Thirdly, Were the acts of the Pinkertons at Homestead lawful and had they a right to bear arms on the premises of the Carnegie

Company?

Fourthly, Should the killing of one of the Pinkertons be considered as murder and those sympathizing and encouraging the strikers as accessories to the murder?

Those who criticise the workmen of Homestead should put themselves in the place of these workmen for a few moments. Picture the skill it takes to turn out faultless work, the loss of eyesight which follows a few years of toil before a seething furnace, and the devotion to duty in order to succeed. Imagine your daily wages to be lowered and you refuse to accept the reduction and a foreigner or cheap man takes your place, who does not even buy respectable furniture for his home, and then the manufacturers of these articles elsewhere will be thrown out of employment, and other manufacturers will be driven to bankruptcy because

There is no demand for their product.

There is an unwritten law among the best workmen: "Thou shalt not take thy neighbor's job." The introduction of an armed body of men was an indication that some man would take his "neighbor's job", and at once. The will of the sword was the first thought of the Carnegie Steel Company. The laws of the State of Pennsylvania were disregarded when armed citizens of other states were brought in to go on duty at Homestead. That awful spectacle on July 6th was the final abolition of brute force in the settlement of strikes.

What the law will not do for men they must do for themselves, and by the light of the blazing guns at Homestead it was written that arbitration must take the place of Pinkertonism.