

Individual Duty.

The present age may be justly termed the age of combines. Every interest, every industry, every corporation and institution unite with every other for mutual aid and protection. Capital is combined against labor, and labor is organized to protect itself from the attacks of capital. The people organize to attack the corporations, and the corporations organize to counteract the efforts of the people. Employers combine to reduce, and employees combine to enhance the value of labor.

It is evident that under such a condition of affairs the freedom of an individual is greatly limited; the range of his choice and responsibilities is greatly narrowed, and the

force by which high character is developed is materially weakened. The effect of such a system of combinations is to cause a constant war between labor and capital, and a continual strife between employer and employee.

This perpetual antagonism furnishes a bountiful supply of applicable material for the socialistic agitators to work upon. Their practice is to deceive the masses into believing that there is a scheme to revolutionize the entire social system of the country and put the industrial world upon a higher basis. These are the worst enemies with which the workmen of this country have to contend. What they seek is power and the opportunity to use it to tear and destroy the existing order of things and then enrich themselves as best they may regardless of the cause they pretend to represent. They have

so far succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of the masses that there is a sentiment pervading a large number of the people of this country, and especially those engaged in the lower forms of labor, that there is a radically unjust distribution of the wealth of the country - a belief in the burden of the great socialistic writers that the rich are growing richer and the poor poorer. On every hand we hear of the poor and downtrodden people that inhabit our cities. And oft as we are told, in a pitiful manner, of the suffering and privation of these people, our sympathies are aroused and we are wont to criticize a government that countenances so unjust a system of distribution.

But let us investigate the cause of this aggregation of human poverty and destitution. We find that a few are poor on account

of unavoidable circumstances, but the greater mass are brought to a state of mendicancy by idleness and drunkenness. We find that the money expended for intoxicating drinks far exceeds all other expenditures. This is the recruiting ground for the socialist and the anarchist, and here preparations are made for attacking the very foundations upon which civilization itself rests. The people do not help themselves. Voluntary labor is almost unknown. The evolution of society seems to be downward rather than upward. But this should not be so. These people should be taught to help themselves and not to depend on the charity and benevolence of their more fortunate fellow citizens. And then when we look over our increasing constellation of cities we should see selfhelped and selfdirected families; men act-

ing by the weight of their own opinions and directing their own industry.

Going a step higher in life we find the ordinary American mechanic is not free to follow his own interests. His actions are controlled by some one, or perhaps many, of the almost innumerable labor organizations. His labor is practically bought and sold in a market over which he has no control. When, where, for what and for whom he shall labor is decided by an executive committee of his trades union. He may be industrious, honest, frugal, loyal to society and his government but the power to exercise these virtues is throttled in the ironclad oaths of a labor organization. I believe that there in the United States today thousands of idle men who, if they were free to act from

self-interested motives and independently of organizations, could secure satisfactory employment with a just compensation.

The aphorism "In Union there is strength" no doubt contains a deal of philosophy when applied to the unionization of states for mutual protection, but just as much folly when applied to combination of labor where the law of competition cannot be excluded. "Extension of some form is the foundation of all wealth." Accepting this as a fact it would seem to any fair minded person that the workers are responsible for the proper distribution of the wealth of a country. A man can justly claim the fruits of his own labor but not that of another. All that any intelligent person ought to ask the State to do toward promoting the distribution of wealth

is to provide for the general welfare in a manner prescribed by law; protect all classes in the exercise of their rights, and then to leave the natural laws of trade and demand, and good will and motives of humanity to effect a more equitable distribution.

No where else in the world are men combined so easily for purposes, good or bad, as in America, but I believe the advantage gained, if any, is far overbalanced by the great sacrifice of individual power and character. Men who have made fortunes, and ^{men} who have benefited the world by scientific discovery and research are not those who have shared their burdens with some one else. It is well for our socialistic friends to remember that nine-tenths of the millionaires of to-day began life as poor men.

Read the history of the rich and poor of all countries and of all ages and we find that the most successful were those who began life at the very foot of the ladder and ascended it by their individual exertion. The road to wealth and honor is not wide enough to admit of the passage of a regiment of men at a time so he who aspires to a high position in life needs to travel a greater part of the way alone and it is best that he believe with Pestalozzi, "That no man in God's earth is either willing or able to help any other man".

So far has the spirit of co-operation extended that there are thousands of persons who are always looking to the government or some reform society for aid to better their condition of life.

Laws wisely formed and

judiciously administered will secure to every man the products of his own labor, but no statute which mortal man can devise can make the idle industrious or the thriftless provident.

There is a saying that "The Lord will help those that help themselves." But if divine aid was to be dispensed at this age the far seeing power and discriminating judgment of the Almighty would be taxed to discern who were helping themselves. Is it for the best interests of the country that all classes be organized and combating each other? Is it necessary that we have universal war in the time of peace?

All men are created equal but in actual life all men are not equal mentally, morally, and physically. Better that every man be left to solve his own life problem

and the natural law of grav-
itation will soon fix his
place in society.

S. L. Van Blarcom.

June 10th 1891.