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AN

ORATION

DELIVERED BEFORE

THE TRADES UNION OF BOSTON

AND VICINITY,

ON FORT HILL, BOSTON,

ON THE

FIFTY-EIGHTH ANNIVERSARY OF AMERICAN INDEPENDENCE.

BY FREDERICK ROBINSON.

BOSTON:

PUBLISHED BY CHARLES DOUGLAS.

1834.

Will H. Sherman

20, 1939

Kress
Room

87406

H.
Chas. H. Taylor
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AN ORATION

Delivered on Fort Hill, Boston, July 4, 1834.

It becomes us, fellow citizens, to rejoice on the anniversary of that day, when freedom and equality was promulgated, as the natural birth-right of man. It is the peoples' day, and should ever be devoted to their service, to the keeping alive in them the knowledge of their rights, and it ought never to be appropriated to any other purpose. It should always be regarded, as the epoch of our political emancipation from a foreign power, and the commencement of a new era in the social and political condition of the people. But while we rejoice on this occasion, over the advantages acquired for the human race by the labors and sacrifices of our fathers, let us not suppose, there is nothing left for us to do but to glory in their achievements, and boast of being their descendants. It behooves us rather, on every annual return of this day, to examine what progress we have made in knowledge and virtue, and enquire what steps we have taken in the promotion of human happiness; what we have done for the general diffusion of truth, and the dissemination of a just knowledge of their own rights among the great mass of the people; in what way we have improved our social and political condition, and to devise means for a more perfect enjoyment of that liberty and equality, which our fathers purchased for us with their blood.

The condition of the people can never remain stationary. When not improving they are sinking deeper and deeper into slavery. Eternal vigilance alone can sustain them, and never ceasing exertion is necessary for their social and political improvement. For the interests of the thousands are always contrary to the interests of the millions. The prosperity of the one always consists in the adversity of the other.* As the millions become intelligent, united and independent, the thousands are divested of their power, importance and wealth. The few have always understood this, and seen the necessity of the closest union among themselves, in order to maintain their ascendancy, while the many have not only been ignorant of this fact, but have always regarded the few as their benefactors, protectors, and friends. Hence we are doomed to never ceasing exertion for the enjoyment of our rights, and the improvement of our condition, until we work out the reform of society, and by the complete enjoyment of the blessings of equality, the common good of all the people shall constitute the interest of all.

Our destiny, fellow citizens, is in our own hands, and we must rely upon ourselves alone for the improvement of our republican institutions, the reform of our laws, and the bettering of our social and political condition. And if we sink into slavery, to ourselves alone must the calamity be charged. For the governments, the constitutions, the laws, and all the institutions of the country are in our hands, and we have the power to mould them to our will. In this respect we have the advantage of all the rest of the world. Before the industrious, democratic portion of the people in other countries will be able to enjoy all the rights, and exercise all the powers guaranteed to us by our constitutions, many revolutions are to take place peaceably in the lapse of time, or in

* In saying that the interests of any two portions of the community are distinct, we speak of them in the same worldly and selfish view, in which they are usually considered among men. An enlarged and beneficent view of human happiness, would teach us that no permanent benefit could be gained to any one, by an encroachment upon the natural rights of a fellow creature.

blood-shed, and civil war. We cannot be judged therefore in comparison with the people of other nations. If we are not in every respect, far before them in knowledge, and in virtue, no less than in abundance, and all the blessings of social life, we show ourselves vastly less deserving. For every institution, every law, every action of our government emanates from ourselves; we are responsible for all the evils arising from bad laws, defective constitutions, evil administrations, or whatever in society tends to the injury of the people. But our fathers have purchased for us political rights and an equality of privileges, which we have not yet had the intelligence to appreciate, nor the courage to protect, nor the wisdom to enjoy. For although it cannot be denied, that in this country there can be no advantages, powers or privileges, which every one has not an equal right to enjoy, yet do we not see every where around us, privileges, advantages, monopolies enjoyed by the few, which are denied to the many; indeed do we not see all the same machinery in operation among us, which has crowded the great mass of the people of other countries down into the grossest ignorance, degradation and slavery. While we have been comparing our condition with the miserable slavery of other nations, and boasting of our advantages, and glorying in the achievements of our fathers, ignorantly supposing that we were already in the possession of the highest degree of liberty, and in the enjoyment of the most perfect equality, the enemy have been silently encroaching upon our rights. But this delusion has passed, — the enchantment is broken. The people are beginning to awake. Every day brings to our ears the pleasing intelligence, that the industrious classes, which always constitute the democracy of the country, are bestir themselves, and are enquiring what they shall do, not from the threatened evil of another world, but from the evils which they begin to see impending over them and their children here.

But how shall we avoid these evils, how improve our condition, and scatter the blessings of equality over the land? We must do it fellow-citizens by union among ourselves, and by act-

ing in concert with the democracy of the country. While the few can contrive means to keep the people divided among themselves, they fall an easy prey. There are but two great political divisions in the world; those who are in favor of a government of the people, and those who are in favor of a government over the people; of a government of the many, and a government of the few, — of liberty and slavery. But it has often been shown by reasons and arguments, not to be controverted, that a government over the people has not a right to exist, because there is not one man in a hundred, whose interests, to say nothing of his duty, would not lead him to oppose such a government, and as it is impossible for one man forcibly to govern a hundred, a government over the people can only exist with ignorance, corruption and fraud.

The aristocracy of our country are well aware that their notions of government are unsound, and in order to prevent the true appellation of aristocracy from being attached to them, they continually contrive to change their party name. It was first Tory, then Federalist, then no party, then amalgamation, then National Republican, now Whig, and the next name they assume perhaps will be republican or democrat. But by whatever name they re-organize themselves, the true democracy of the country, the producing classes, ought to be able to distinguish the enemy. Ye may know them by their fruit. Ye may know them by their deportment towards the people. Ye may know them by their disposition to club together, and constitute societies, and incorporations, for the enjoyment of exclusive privileges, and for countenancing and protecting each other in their monopolies. They are composed in general of all those who are, or who believe themselves to be favored by some adventitious circumstances of fortune. They are those, with some honorable exceptions, who have contrived to live without labor, or who hope one day to do so, and must consequently live on the labor of others. But there is not one man in a hundred, whose interests, if he knew his own true interests, would lead him to join this party. Their numbers would be very small and

truly contemptible, were it not for the ignorance, the foolish pride and vanity of many, who are continually itching to get into 'good society,' always ready to cringe with spaniel-like sycophancy to the rich, following wherever they lead, and careless of the liberty and happiness of others, provided they are favored slaves themselves, and receive some little notice from their masters. Every individual attached to this party from interest, from vanity, or pride, should justly receive the epithet of partisan. But it is impossible for a true democrat to be a party man, or for those favorable to democracy to constitute a party. For how can he be a partisan, who looks upon all men as equal, and contends, that there is no power, no advantage, no privilege, which can be enjoyed by any one man, or class of men, which does not equally belong to all, and ought not equally to be enjoyed by every other man in the nation.

How indeed can that be called a party, which embraces and equalizes all the citizens. But we have often been deceived by those whom we have raised to power; and it is therefore difficult to know on which side the people's interests lie. This is a part of the policy of the aristocracy. They divide themselves into all parties, and by contriving to obtain the ascendancy in all, endeavor to bring all into equal contempt with the people. How often have we in this way been deceived. Some ambitious, learned and talented demagogue, finding it the cheapest way to power and wealth, courts the people, 'the rabble,' whom he at heart despises, and after making great hypocritical pretensions to democracy, is raised to office by the people. Being now raised to distinction by the many, he begins to court the favor of the political authority, he now longs for riches, titles, honors, and alliances with the proud and the wealthy. He begins to interest himself in all the exclusive policy of the aristocracy, promotes the establishment of all kinds of monied combinations, favors the chartering of all kinds of monopolies, and finally becomes identified with the exclusive policy of the few. Their opposition in the mean time gradually softens down. Their papers become less virulent, then seem half way to ap-

prove ; and in order to deceive the people, pretend to be converted to their cause, and speak in high terms of their intelligence in choosing so good a man. He is now the candidate of the aristocracy, and the people being in this way deceived continue also to support him. But experience ought to teach us, that when opposition towards any one begins to abate, it is time to watch him closely ; and when this opposition is changed into favor, it is time to desert him. For the aristocracy of our country, under all the different names which they have assumed, have never failed to receive with open arms all traitors to the cause of the people, and have always put them forward in the warfare which they have unremittingly waged against free principles. They do this from the same policy, which induce armies to push forward in battle the traitors and deserters from the opposite camp. Because they know, that traitors and deserters have already passed the Rubicon, have put every thing at stake, and must therefore fight with the most reckless and desperate fury, knowing that if the party to which they have deserted fail, they must lose all, becoming contemptible in the eyes of those to whom they have deserted, while held in abhorrence by the party they had betrayed. In all their schemes to deceive us, patriotism and love of country is forever upon their tongues. The rich merchant, whose whole soul is absorbed in profits and losses, and instead of laboring to render the condition of his species more equal, comfortable and happy, endeavors to impress his dependants with a sense of the great difference between his situation and theirs, to make his superiority discernible, and their inferiority insupportable — will, notwithstanding, boast much of patriotism. The sentimentalist, the poet, may deem the love of country to be an attachment to the hills and valleys, the mountains and cataracts, the bubbling springs and purling streams, the rivers and oceans, the far extended prospect, the luxuriant verdure ; and while absorbed in these things, and regardless of whatever affects the human race, if charged with want of patriotism would be offended ; for his local attachment, his love of mountains, vales and streams, he mistakes for patriotism. And the capitalist, if he loves the banks, the insurance companies,

and all the incorporate joint stock institutions of 'our country, our whole country,' thinks, perhaps, that this love is patriotism. But real patriotism consists not in a love of the soil, the climate, the scenery, because these may be found in other countries, equal, and in some superior to our own. Neither does it consist in an attachment to governments, constitutions, and laws; if it did, the inhabitant of Turkey would be unpatriotic if he loved not the laws which enable the Grand Turk at any time to strike off his head. But patriotism consists in nothing but a brotherly affection, an extensive love towards the whole human family, and a constant desire, a never-ceasing exertion to subserve the interests and promote the happiness of all.

The true lover of his country will consequently feel an attachment to the constitutions and laws of his country, while he believes them to be subservient to the happiness, interests, rights and liberties of the whole people; and he will have an utter abhorrence, a perfect hatred for all institutions, which have a contrary effect, which tend to raise one man above another, or in any way to keep the great mass of the people in ignorance and slavery. For whatever exalts the few, humbles the many, and luxury and splendor grow from poverty and want. Some must be poor, that others may be rich. And wherever we find the few possessed of excessive riches, we find, as a consequence, the many reduced to excessive poverty. For riches can no more exist without poverty, than mountains without valleys. If there were not a single rich man in the world, there would be no less wealth in the world than there is now; but then it would be spread equally over the whole surface of society, diffusing equal abundance, comfort, and happiness among all.

Neither can poverty exist without riches. In communities, where the whole people are in want of many conveniences, living among rocks and mountains, like the Swiss, far removed from commerce; where the soil is so hard and sterile, that all must labor to procure the necessaries of life; yet, since equality in some degree prevails, the people are contented and happy.

‘ Though poor the peasant’s hut, his feasts tho’ small,
 He sees his little lot the lot of all,
 Sees no contiguous palace rear its head,
 To shame the meanness of his humble shed,
 No haughty lord the costly banquet deal,
 To make him loath his vegetable meal.’

All mankind are one great family, and the Almighty Father of us all, has made our common mother earth to produce bountifully, and more than enough, to feed, and clothe, and shelter all. He spreads his great table before us, and loads it with abundance. He gives all an equal right to partake; and yet a few gormandizers devour the whole, and leave the rest to want. Equality comprises every thing that is good; inequality every thing that is evil. Equality is liberty. Liberty without equality is dead. It is a word without meaning, mere ‘sounding brass, and a tinkling cymbal.’ Equality is democracy. Every one, who truly loves the human race, will favor such governments, constitutions, laws and administrations, as he believes to be productive of equality. Equality will be the test, the measure of every question, on which he is to act. In all his intercourse with his fellow men, in all his dealings, it will be his governing principle, to do unto others, as he would that others should do unto him. This is the rock on which democracy is founded. The man that indulges himself in ostentation,—that feels the pride of wealth or of birth, that plumes himself on his talents, learning, or professional skill, and looks down with contempt, on what he calls the ignorant and the vulgar, that feels himself better than the laborer, the mechanic, or the fisherman and is not free to take him by the hand, and treat him as an equal, may call himself, he is not a democracy, which is equality, teaches us, that the laborer, the producer, and not the talented, the rich and the learned, are the benefactors of mankind. It is the laborer, that provides us with food and clothing, that builds our houses, ships and factories, digs the canals, levels the rail-roads, and procures for us all the necessaries, conveniences and luxuries of life. How foolish then is pride and haughtiness, how childish, how thoughtless it is for

men to presume, that because they can live at ease on hereditary wealth, because they can issue a writ, plead a cause, make a speech, administer a dose, or expound the mysteries of religion, that they are better than their neighbors. For which is of the most importance to society, to be able to make a speech, or a hob nail, to issue a writ or manufacture a shoe, to provide food and clothing and shelter for the healthy, or drugs for the sick. But the law of nature, in what is called civilized society, is reversed. This law declares, that industry is honorable and idleness disgraceful, that the laboring man shall have abundance, and the idle shall be in want. But experience shows us every where, the idle living in palaces, caressed, honored, surrounded with all the beauties and luxuries of life, and the laborer continually reduced to wretchedness and starvation. Nearly all the evils of life, treachery, fraud and crime, may be traced to the perversion of this law of nature. For when honest labor is looked upon as so disgraceful, that men often know and feel, that to bend themselves to operative industry would injure their subsequent prospects in the world, is it strange that so many contrive to live without labor. And when we see the idle living in luxury, and the laborer in want and disgrace, ought we to wonder, that so many prefer to live by fraud, theft, robbery, or by any means rather than by honest industry? But let every one know and feel, that in exact proportion as he labors industriously in some useful employment, will he improve his condition and increase his respectability; and that no one can enjoy the fruits of labor, which are wealth and respectability, without industry; and most of the fraud, hypocrisy, cunning, crime and villany of the world would come to an end; for misery, degradation and want, the cause of all crime, would be removed. But the thousands live upon the millions, and these things will continue until the millions see the evil, and contrive to enjoy the fruit of their own industry.

In the savage state each individual produces for himself whatever he consumes, and of course no union with others is required to protect his labor. But in a state of society where no one

labors for his own consumption alone, but each receives the labor of others in exchange for his own, the price of labor in each division of labor, to prevent fraud, ought to be fixed by agreement among the laborers themselves. The right of the producer to fix the price of his own labor is unquestionable; for its denial admits the right of slavery. But every effort which the producing classes have ever made for the enjoyment of this most obvious right, has always met with the most determined opposition of the aristocracy. Wherever they have held all political power, laws have been enacted inflicting fines, imprisonment, and transportation, on those that attempt by unions among themselves to fix the price of their labor. Where they have not all political power, they have recourse to every thing within their reach, to every argument, to every quibble, every sophistry, in order to flatter the people to relinquish, or drive them to renounce this right. Those that have not the unblushing confidence to deny this right altogether, contend that it is an individual and not a social right. For although each individual may fix the price of his own labor, yet no two or more individuals have a right to agree among themselves to fix the price. But when men enter into a state of society, all those rights which it is impossible to enjoy without the aid of others, become social rights, and must be enjoyed if at all, by concert with others. It is unreasonable to suppose, that we are possessed of rights, which we have not the power to enjoy. But if we have not the social right to fix the price of our own labor, it is perfectly useless to allow us the right at all. For how can an unaided individual without wealth, without education, ignorant of the world, and even of the value of his own labor, who must have immediate employment or starve, enjoy this right? If he enjoy it at all, the interests of other employments must secure it to him. No law has ever been enacted in this country in relation to this subject. But the aristocracy have notwithstanding attempted to frighten the people with the semblance of law. The judiciary in this State, and in every State where judges hold their office during life, is the head-quarters of the aristocracy. And every plan to humble

and subdue the people originates there. One of the most enormous usurpations of the judiciary, is the claim and possession of common law jurisdiction. Common law, although contained in ten thousand different books, is said to be unwritten law, deposited only in the head of the Judge, so that whatever he says is common law, *must be* common law, and it is impossible to know, before the Judge decides, what the law is. But still in order to justify the Judge in all iniquitous decisions, they have recourse to precedents, or previous decisions. And however unjust and wicked any decision may be, if a previous decision of the same kind can be found, either in ancient or modern times, in Great Britain or in any of the States in this Union, the Judge justifies himself before the public, and escapes with impunity.

Now, common law is said to consist of all the precedents, or practices of the courts of Great Britain, and of all acts of parliament up to the time of the formation of our government. Previously to the revolution, acts of parliament had been passed to prevent unions of the people to fix the price of labor. Although these laws have since been repealed in Great Britain, and since the year 1824 there has been no law in England in relation to this subject, the aristocracy contend, that because these laws, which we have never enacted, have not been repealed by our Legislature, although the power that made them, has since destroyed them, are, notwithstanding, in full force among us. We ought not therefore to be surprised, if we soon hear of indictments on these old and repealed English laws, if juries can be found ignorant and servile enough to follow the dictation of the law.

Indeed attempts have already been made by the grand jury to indict the working men, who attempt by unions to fix the price, or regulate the hours of labor; although this Judge, and indeed all the Judges are members of a secret Trades Union of lawyers, called the bar, that has always regulated the price of their own labor, and by the strictest concert contrived to limit competition by denying to every one the right

of working in their trade, who will not in every respect comply with the rules of the bar.

All prices fixed by bar rules are in the *minimum*, allowing no one to take less than a fixed sum for each service; but every one may take as much more as he can. What then ought we to think of the man, who, being a member of the secret Trades Union of the bar, calls upon the jury to indict the members of the open Trades Union of the people, who join not for the purpose of injuring others, but for the enjoyment of their most inestimable right; to be deprived of which, must always keep them in want, ignorance, and slavery. Does it not become us, fellow citizens, when we see the enemies of the equal rights of man every where combined to maintain their ascendancy, to unite, and employ our power of numbers against the power of their wealth and learning, for the recovery and protection of our rights?

Who are they who complain of Trades Unions? Are they not those whose combinations cover the land, and who have even contrived to invest some of their combinations with the sanctity of law? Are they not those, who are the owners of all kinds of monopolies, who pass their lives in perpetual caucuses, on 'change, in halls connected with banks, composing insurance companies, manufacturing companies, turnpike, bridge, canal, rail-road, and all other legalized combinations? Do not each of the learned professions constitute unions among themselves to control their own business? And have they not fortified their unions, by alliance with each other and with the rich, and thus established a proud, haughty, overbearing, fourfold aristocracy in our country? Well may the capitalists, monopolists, judges, lawyers, doctors, and priests complain of Trades Unions. They know that the secret of their own power and wealth consists in the strictest concert of action,—and they know that when the great mass of the people become equally wise with themselves, and unite their power of numbers for the possession and enjoyment of equal rights, they will be shorn of their consequence, be humbled of their pride, and brought to personal labor for their

own subsistence. They know from experience that unions among themselves, have always enabled the few to rule and ride the people; and that, when the people shall discover the secret of their power, and learn to use it for their own good, the sceptre will fall from their hands, and they themselves will become merged in the great 'vulgar' mass of the people.

The Judge knows this. He knows that he is a member of a combination of lawyers, better organized, and more strict and tyrannical in the enforcement of their rules, than even masonry itself. He knows that when the dispositions in the community to investigate and destroy secret societies turns itself upon the bar, abuses will be discovered so enormous as completely to eclipse those of every other combination. We shall then discover that we have been 'fishing for minnows and let slip the leviathan.' We shall discover that by means of this regularly organized combination of lawyers throughout the land, the whole government of the nation has always been in their hands, that the laws have always been moulded to suit their purposes, and what are called Courts of Justice, are only engines to promote their interests, and secure their ascendancy in the community. The Judges know, that this combination has enabled them to usurp one entire branch of our government, and to turn all the rest of the citizens out of doors. For who dares to go into our public courts, and attend to his own concerns, or to perform the business of his neighbor? We all know, that this preposterous state of things could have been brought about by union among a combination to involve the laws in an inexplicable obscurity and forfeiture of all the cumbrous learning of British

It is for the interest of this Trades Union of lawyers to have the laws as unintelligible as possible, since no one would pay them for advice concerning laws which he himself could understand. Can we believe that our laws would be the dark chaos they now are, if our legislators had been disinterested men, of

only common education and good understanding? Instead of living under British laws after we had thrown off the government which produced those laws, we should have adopted republican laws, enacted in codes, written with the greatest simplicity and conciseness, alphabetically arranged in a single book, so that every one could read and understand them for himself. 'Ignorance of the law,' it is said, 'excuseth no man.' Can we then who call ourselves freemen, any longer live under laws, which it is impossible to understand? Without a knowledge of the laws under which we live, are we not deceiving ourselves, if we suppose ourselves to be freemen. The people of Rome in the most corrupt ages, justly considered it the most intolerable tyranny, when one of their despots had the laws written in a small hand, and posted up so high, that the people could not conveniently read them. But shall we, who claim to be free and equal, voluntarily continue in a state of almost total ignorance with laws so multiplied, so obscure, and so contradictory, as to render the general knowledge of them impossible?

But we can easily conceive how this state of things is perpetuated, by means of the quarterly meetings of bar unions, in every county throughout the nation. After having consulted together on the best way of fortifying themselves in their illegal and unconstitutional monopoly, they very naturally enter into social conversations and agreements, as to what individuals among them would be most likely to succeed in any election for the principal officers of the government; for president, members of congress, governors, and state legislators. Having agreed on what course to be pursued, they dissolve, and distribute themselves in the different cities, towns, and villages, throughout the nation. Each performs his individual part; and, by acting in concert, by secret confidential communications, by speaking publicly and privately in favor of their candidates, they have generally succeeded in electing the men predestined to office by the bar. Having in this way succeeded in electing the appointing officers, where will the appointments be most likely to fall. In what way besides this can we account for the fact, that almost every office of honor and pro-

it remains in the hands of members of the bar. But the evil of the secret trades union of the bar does not stop here. When the legislature assembles, every senator, and every representative of the bar is prepared. They are all acquainted with each other; they feel, that it is for their interest to act in concert. United efforts are always made by this fraternity, to choose the president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House of Representatives from the bar. This effected, the whole business of legislation is completely in their hands. The president of the Senate, and the speaker of the House, have the appointing of all committees, and being lawyers, they are always careful to put a majority of their brethren on every committee which has any thing to do with the laws; and in this way laws are drafted, introduced, and *talked through* the legislature by members of the bar. While the people submit to these abuses, it is easy to account for the continued existence of the dark and intricate labyrinth of our laws.

Of all the reforms, which we have pledged ourselves to accomplish, the reform of the judiciary, and of the laws, is the most important. Let us then go about the work, with never ceasing efforts, until the great mass of our fellow laborers, who always constitute an overwhelming majority, shall see the necessity of thorough law reform. In the first place, judges should be made responsible to the people by periodical elections. The boast of an independent judiciary is always made to deceive you. We want no part of our government independent of the people. Those, who are responsible to nobody, ought to be entrusted by nobody. But to whom are the judges responsible? The aristocracy always centre around power placed beyond the reach of the people; and until we can fill the bench with men of learning, good sense, and sound judgment, who do not belong to the secret fraternity of the bar, all attempts to simplify the laws, and the practice of the law, will be in vain. For why need we attempt to legislate, while the judges hold legislative power, and can nullify our laws at their pleasure.

Of all the contrivances of the aristocracy, next to the usurpation of the judiciary, and thus turning the most potent engine of the people's government against themselves, their unions in the shape of incorporate monopolies, are the most subtle, and the best calculated to promote the ends of the few, the ignorance, degradation, and slavery of the many. This Hydra of the adversary, has within a few years grown up around us, until the monster covers the whole land, branching out annually into new heads of different shape, each devouring the substance, and destroying the rights of the people. But the most potent and deadly is the bank. A monopoly which takes every thing from the people, and gives them nothing in return. The whole value of paper money consists in the consent of the people to give it currency, and all the advantages of such a currency of right should accrue to the people. A bank monopoly consists in the exclusive power of issuing notes of hand without interest and receiving the notes of hand of others bearing interest with good security. And whatever notes of hand the banks may issue, more than the gold and silver which they have to redeem them, is an absolute cheat upon society, as much so as it would be to forge the same notes. But it has been shown of late by bank returns, that there is not in the possession of all the banks, specie enough to pay more than twelve and a half per cent on the whole bank circulation, which shows that the banks taken together are recovering an annual interest of six cents on every nine-pence they possess. How completely then by the means of bank unions have the aristocracy nullified the peoples' law against usury; and yet the judges, who are sworn and salaried guards of the constitutional rights of the people, are silent on this subject! What is the difference with the law which says that a dollar is worth forty-eight cents, or split it in eight parts, and let each part go under the name of a dollar for six cents. Money was designed as a measure of value, as a medium of exchange of labor, like weights and measures; and like the fair regulation of weights and measures, the coining and regulating of the value of money is one of the most important prerogatives of sovereignty. For whatever tends to derange the currency either by increasing or diminish-

ing its quantity, has the same effect upon the community, as, without the knowledge of the people, to enlarge, or to reduce the common weights and measures. Some would find themselves growing rich they know not how, and some notwithstanding every effort would sink deeper and deeper into poverty. The people would, as they now do, regard every thing as under the control of fortune, luck, chance; and a sense of the uncertainty of the result of their efforts would paralyze their exertions. Such is the effect of banking. It enlarges and contracts the value of this medium of exchange of labor, as the interests of the few require. It now issues large quantities of paper money, and a kind of delusive prosperity succeeds. The capitalist, the merchant, the lawyer, and all who live without labor, and all who are possessed of property, find their condition improving from day to day. But what sensibly enriches the thousands, although abstracted from the millions, seems at first so small, and so indirect, as not immediately to excite alarm. The producer complains not, the money market is easy, and all allow that times are good. The husbandman finds his farm gradually increasing in value; and what was formerly valued at a thousand, is now worth two or three or four thousand dollars according to the increase of paper currency. The farmer wonders to find himself becoming rich. But pride and wants grow with riches. He pulls down his old house and barn and builds anew; and thus becomes in debt; his farm is now worth five thousand dollars, and his debts amount to three. He soon goes to the bank and mortgages his farm for three thousand dollars. And although his farm is worth nominally twice as much as before, if the currency to remain where it is, he will be ruined for life; since the annual interest will absorb the profit of his farm and labor, and when he has worn himself out in their service, his portion of our mother earth, by the addition of lawyers' fees, and court expenses, will pass into other hands. But if the banks withdraw the paper trash, his farm will fall immediately down to its original value, and he will be deprived of all, and find himself besides in debt, thrown out of employment, his family broken up, and his children obliged to

fly to the factories, 'those principalities of the destitute, and palaces of the poor,' for sustenance.

Thus banking, both by issuing, and withdrawing its paper, disturbs the equality of society, and only serves to make the rich richer, and the industrious portion of the people still more dependant and wretched. It is a two-edged sword in the hands of the enemy, whichever way it is wielded destroying the people. But the great monopoly has of late received a shock, which it is our interest, and our duty to make fatal. Now is the time to destroy the evil; and we should do it so unanimously, as completely to obliterate every hope of raising another in its place. Kill the great monster, and the whole brood, which are hatched and nourished over the land will fall an easy prey. But if we suffer it to escape with life, however wounded, maimed, and mutilated, it will soon recover its wonted strength, its whole power to injure us, and all hope of its destruction must be forever renounced. The enemy are every where coming to the rescue, and rallying to sustain it, beseeching and petitioning us to spare its life. But let us turn a deaf ear to their entreaties, and its destruction is sure.

We have pledged ourselves also to the world as opposed to all legislation and all laws relating to religion. In this we recognize the rights of the mind to be individual rights. We accord to each individual the right of thinking, understanding, judging and believing for himself, and the right of communicating his notions, opinions, or belief, and enforcing them by every argument, and with all the power and ingenuity of which he is capable. And no man should be blamed, injured or molested on account of his opinions whether right or wrong, on any subject. For we always suppose our own opinions to be right, or we should renounce them. And with respect to belief every one must be the judge for himself. A person may be blameable, for so conceited, so bigoted an attachment to his own opinions, as not to hear, and rationally weigh all the reasons, proofs, and arguments against them. Every one is justly

blameable and answerable to himself, for erroneous opinions conceived or retained for want of such impartial examination as his situation enables him to use, or from an obstinate conviction of their infallibility. And this is all the blame that can reasonably be attached to any one on account of his belief. Because the opinions of men are above their control. Every one comes to a conclusion on any given subject, when a certain weight of evidence has been received, enough to produce conviction on his mind, although perhaps to another individual, whose mind is differently constituted, the same evidence is quite insufficient. So that one man may believe and another disbelieve the same thing, having the same evidence, and both be equally sincere and guiltless. Our opinions are not subject to our will. We cannot believe and disbelieve as we please. And consequently, it is as unjust to make men accountable for their belief, as for their personal appearance; for the features of their opinions, as for the features of the face; both the one and the other are formed by circumstances not within their voluntary control. And it is as wicked, as absurd, as tyrannical, to hate, to punish, to oppose, and persecute men for the one, as for the other. The only effect, therefore, which laws, punishments, penalties, and disabilities can possibly have, is, to render it prudent for individuals, if they entertain unpopular, or unlawful belief, to conceal it, and in self-defence, and against their own will, to cover themselves in the garb of hypocrisy. For if, as formerly, we had laws to scourge, imprison, torture, burn, behead, or hang every one, who would not agree to a certain belief, every one must certainly perceive, that if he wanted to live, he must assume that belief. There is no subject too high, or too holy to be investigated. It is fraud and falsehood alone, that ever desire to be shielded from public scrutiny. Let truth and error meet each other in broad day. We have nothing to fear, but much to hope from the contest. Show them fair play, and truth will always come off victorious. And those, that would take the law, as a shield of their opinions, prove that they themselves, at least, are distrustful of their soundness and truth.

We have also pledged ourselves to the world, in favor of the repeal of the militia laws, and the abolition of imprisonment for debt. And we have reason to believe, that the unequal and odious militia service, which had been thrown from the aristocracy upon the shoulders of the producers, has already been meliorated by our exertions. And the pledge which we gave the world for the abolition of imprisonment for debt, we have the satisfaction of knowing, IS THIS DAY REDEEMED.*

Our success in these measures should encourage us to persevere, until all the reforms which we have proposed are accomplished. United, continued efforts, will carry them all; for in all these great reforms, the democracy of the country is with us. We have the satisfaction of knowing, that we are pioneers in the great cause; and we must be willing to expose ourselves to the shot of the enemy, while clearing the way for the whole army to come up and carry the works.

The cause of the people, I trust and believe, is now progressing. And it only needs for us to carry the first, the great reform, which we have proposed, the equal, mental and physical education of all, at the expense of all, and our emancipation from the power of aristocracy will be effectual and eternal.

We are as yet but a half educated and half civilized people. The few are educated in one half of their faculties, and the people in the other half. The few have been educated mentally, at an expense sufficient for the entire education of all; and the many have been obliged to devote their whole time to the cultivation of the body, while the powers of the mind have been neglected. But the human race can never arrive to that state of knowledge, equality and happiness, of which they are capable, until all are educated both mentally and physically alike, at the common expense of all. This great idea of equal, universal educa-

[* The law for the abolition of imprisonment for debt, which was drafted by Mr Robinson, and most ably sustained by him in its passage through the legislature, took effect this day, July 4, 1834. — PUBLISHER.]

tion has gone abroad. Its practicability has been proved, and the enemies of the equal rights of man cannot refute it. It has been shown, that there is time enough between the ages of five years and twenty years, for every child to acquire as much intellectual knowledge, as can now be obtained in the colleges of the rich ; and at the same time to learn a mechanical trade, or skill in some productive employment, by which to maintain himself independently in after life, and nearly or quite support himself during the time. When the great mass of the laboring people become wise enough to establish institutions for the equal education and maintenance of their children in every neighborhood, throughout our country, and furnish them with instructors in every branch of knowledge, with all the books, apparatus, land, machinery, and labor-saving power, best calculated for the development of the mind, and their own support, the reign of equality will then commence. For when the intellectual faculties of all shall be enlarged by education, and the productive powers of all shall be brought into action, a state of independency, comfort, wealth, happiness, and benevolent feeling will ensue, of which we have not now the power to conceive.

But it is said we have not the right to tax the property of the rich for such purposes. That we have the natural and moral right, is most certain. Do not all the people produce all the wealth, and have they not a right consequently to tax that wealth proportionately wherever found, for the equal benefit of all ? And if the laws will not now permit us to do so, do we not know, that the constitution the laws are in our hands, and that we have them to our will ?

To mean to carry these reforms, we must be wise, united and prudent ; for wise, united and prudent, are those whose interests oppose them. We must see the folly of suffering the rich, and those whose interest or education prompt them to act with the rich, to be our legislators. For all history and experience show, that man, always true to self, will in legislation, as well as in every thing else, prefer his own interest to that of his

neighbors. No people therefore can ever be safe in confiding legislative power to those whose interests are different from their own. For the motives of duty are inferior to those of interest. There may be exceptions to this rule, but they are only exceptions. When duty and interest agree in our public servants, we can rest assured of their fidelity ; but when the performance of their duty to us runs counter to their own interests, we ought not to be astonished to find ourselves betrayed.

The millions are now just beginning to think. And the next most important thing is, to think correctly. To this end are required honest and capable teachers. But in order to have such teachers, we must learn to protect them from the power of our enemies. There are thousands of men, who in their hearts love the human race, and would delight to do them service, did they not clearly see the many evils to which they would expose themselves by taking up their cause ; for who has ever yet endeavored to instruct the great mass of the people in the knowledge of their own best interests, without bringing down upon his head the united hatred and persecution of the reigning, ruling and governing part of the community.

Even Christ himself was hated, reviled and persecuted, and at last doomed to the ignominious death of the cross, for teaching the doctrine of equality to the poor ; for attempting to expose the hypocrisy of priests, the craft of lawyers, the haughtiness, pride and avarice of the rich, and the wickedness of all those who ‘bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men’s shoulders, while they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.’ Indeed all the advantages which the people have gained from the dark, superstitious, corrupt and barbarous ages, have been acquired through exertions made at the risk of self-devotion, by men, who loved the human species, who loved man, because he is man, and not because he is king, lord, or judge ; not because his head is filled with latin and logic ; not because his pockets are stuffed with paper and gold ; not because he is clothed in fine linen and fares sumptuously every day ; but

because he has 'the human form and human face divine,' because he has the feelings, wants, passions, and sympathies of man. And all the liberties we now enjoy have been gained for us by men, who have labored and wrote for our good upon religious, moral, and political subjects, as it were with the halter about their necks. The only recompense, which they have ever received, has been the consciousness of laboring for the good of the human race; and for this purpose, they were willing to live in poverty and want, bearing the sneers, threats, persecutions and punishments of the influential, the rich, and the powerful part of the community; often receiving at the same time, the curses and reproaches of the deluded and slavish beings for whom they were laboring.

But though there have been those, who were willing to try to instruct us, in contempt of all the motives which actuate the generality of mankind, yet the great mass of the people can never be sufficiently enlightened by such disinterested efforts. The visits of such men on this planet, are like angels' visits, few and far between. Let us learn to protect our friends from the power of our enemies, and thousands will rise up in our cause.

It is certain, that the productive power of man even in his rudest state is equal to his comfortable subsistence, by the devotion of something less than his whole time and strength to personal labor. To suppose, that he could only live by constant exertion, and that no time could be afforded to relaxation, contemplation and study, is to charge creative power with injustice. From the analogy of nature we learn, that such active labor is conducive to his happiness and health, has sufficient power to supply the wants of man. But the productive power of man is continually increasing. His ingenuity has taught the brute creation, and even the elements to labor for him. Yet every contrivance to increase the amount of his production, instead of easing the burthen of his labor, bettering his condition, or affording him more leisure, for relaxation, amusement, and the acquirement of knowledge, has only enabled a few more to live without labor: and instead of benefiting

the people at large, still farther disturbs the equality of society. We have reason to believe from late investigations, on this subject, that the productive power of man is now increased by steam, and other kinds of labour-saving machinery at least twenty fold, so that what the unaided power of man could only accomplish in twelve hours, is now produced in thirty-eight minutes.

These startling facts ought to lead us to enquire, how it is, that in the midst of such wonderful improvements, the condition of the producer continues the same; and to search out the law, or the principle, that divides to the producer and the non-producer, their respective shares of the fruit of labor.

For every thing in this world is governed by laws, or principles, which no unions can alter, or even no legislation affect. Wherever any thing is produced in greater abundance than is wanted for immediate consumption, its value will depreciate below the costs of its production. The least surplus injures the producer, and excessive abundance is his destruction. But when the market is but scantily supplied, the producer receives a more adequate return for his labor, and the nonproducer is obliged to part with a larger portion of his funds to command the necessaries, conveniences and luxuries of life. In such times things tend to equality. But in times of great abundance, the competition of laborers reduces their produce often below the means of supporting life; and the nonproducing part of society speculate upon it, hoard the surplus in store houses, and thus control the market and become rich at the expense of the laborer. While the one is rolling in wealth, and living in luxury and splendor, the real producer of his wealth is reduced to the most deplorable poverty, wretchedness and want. It becomes us then, to learn the law that governs our productions, and to live in such accordance therewith, as to secure our own happiness, and avoid the evils which the violation of this law has inflicted upon the great majority of the human race, in all nations, and in every age. For, while the productive classes remain ignorant of this principle, the law of individual competition will prevail; and every

one supposing, that the more he produces, the more he will receive in return for his produce, is stimulated on until the market is full; prices now begin to fall; he is obliged to labor harder in order to supply his accustomed enjoyments; and thus the market is still farther overstocked, and the prices still more reduced, until his greatest exertions fail to supply him with the necessaries of life. What misery now stares him in the face. He sees his wife and little ones famishing for bread, which again stimulates him to still greater exertion. But like the man in the morass, every effort to extricate himself, sinks him deeper and deeper into the mire, until his continued and excessive productions have entirely glutted the market, and he has completely worked himself out of employment; like Tantalus up to his chin in water, perishing with thirst, — in the midst of excessive abundance, he is dying with hunger. He sees his children one after another, sicken and die around him for want of nourishment, his body is worn with labor and weakened by abstinence, and his mind distracted with his numerous troubles, until at last he sinks under the weight of his accumulated misery. In this way alone the market relieves itself, by working the destruction of the producer. In countries where all the occupations of life are full, unless the government or the people have recourse to some countervailing principle, these periods of famine from excessive production would be periodical, and as regular in their return, as the return of the seasons. In England the producer retreats to the almshouse, and by living without producing, helps the sooner to relieve the market of its repletion. In China, infanticide forever regulates the number of the producers to the produce required.

How important then are Trades Unions, not for the purpose of controlling the price of labor, while the market is glutted, for this is impossible. The nonproducer laughs at your every effort, while his store houses are bursting with the fruit of your labor. But how important for the purpose of seeing that no more is produced, than barely enough to supply the demand. It should be the first object of the members of every productive employment to ascertain the actual daily and yearly consumption of the articles of their produce, and to regulate their hours of labor

in such accordance therewith, as nearly as possible to supply the demand. When the market is not over-supplied, the producer has the power of setting any reasonable price on his own labor. But it is impossible for trades unions, or any other power to keep up prices, when the market is glutted; for, in such case, the producer loses his natural and rightful control over the price of his own labor, and the nonproducer fixes the price.

All legislative power, fellow citizens, is in our hands. And by this power, if we are wise, we can meliorate our condition. But in whatever way we labor for the protection and enjoyment of our own rights and interests, let us not forget that we are the natural guardians and protectors of the other, the weaker and the better half of our own species; of those who have borne us in the womb, have loved, protected, and nourished us in infancy, and led us through the bright and flowery, but dangerous path of childhood; who are the companions of our manhood, who rejoice with us in our prosperity and desert us not in the hour of our greatest adversity, who smooth for us the bed of sickness, and even comfort us in the hour of death. But they are the weaker portion of our species, and weakness and ignorance have always been the legitimate prey of the aristocracy. However much *we* have borne from them in every age, our mothers, our wives, our sisters, our daughters have been still more abused. Their sufferings call for our immediate interposition, and we ought never to rest until we regulate the hours of their labor in factories by direct legislation; until we make it a crime to work our daughters or our children in the mill times more than six hours a day. Who can resist the sufferings of the most innocent, the most beautiful and the most helpless part of our species, in these great work shops of monopolists, both in Europe and our own country, without bursting into tears. What must be the feelings of full grown men, who can live in idleness and splendor, at the expense of the slavery of innocent females, and even boast of fat dividends obtained from fourteen hours daily labor of young women and children. England has

already been legislating on this subject, and shall we see our sisters and daughters oppressed, without making an effort for their relief?

It becomes us also to make provision by law for the relief of fatherless children and orphans, allowing to each a weekly sum from the public purse, enough to supply them with the necessaries of life, and afford them means of instruction until they are able to support themselves. The condition of the widows and fatherless children of the producing classes in this country, I know from my own experience, is most deplorable. Left without property, often with several infant children, the very care of which seems too great a burden to many; without even a house or a room for shelter, what must the feelings of the innocent, bereaved and helpless widow be. Thrown upon the world, she must either submit to the ruin and degradation of an alms-house, or her feeble hands must provide food and clothing and shelter and fuel for herself and little ones. How can we cling to any of the superfluities of life, or even enjoy the homely meal, while we hear the widow and fatherless crying for food? By what tenure do we hold the breath of our lives? To-morrow our wives may be widows, and our children orphans without bread. We are all embarked upon the great ocean of life. Some of us must sink in every stage of the voyage. We know not who, nor when, nor where. It becomes us then to make provision ere we sink, for the rescue of our wives and children from the waves.

It -- -- ow-citizens, to suggest to you improve-
 ve wretched, the instruction of the igno-
 .. or the vicious, the exaltation of the humble, and
 the humiliation of the proud, until the shades of night envelope
 the hemisphere. For what have we yet done in these respects,
 since our fathers wrought out for us political independence, and
 equality of privileges, and put into our hands the power of per-
 fecting our government and securing our happiness? The
 millions have been lulled into a fatal security, while the thousands
 have been active in promoting their own interests. Yet we have

still reason to rejoice, that while we have been sleeping on our post, the enemy have not yet completely subdued us ; that, although we have been inactive, while they have been busy in dividing our ranks, bribing our officers, and filling their army with the venal and profligate ; that, while we have been at ease within the walls of the citadels erected for our safety by the toil of our fathers, they have been silently sapping the foundations, preparing their engines, building their arsenals, rearing their fortifications, digesting their plans, and providing their great financial institutions for the payment of their troops, and the corrupting of our sentinels,—yet, we have reason to rejoice that our weapons are still in our hands ; that the ballot box, the wooden sceptre of the sovereignty of the people, has not yet been wrested from our possession ; that our citadels are yet in our own keeping, although the enemy have found means to send in their ass loads of gold[^] ; — and, if we gird on our armor, heal the divisions in our own ranks, expel the corrupt and the disaffected, we can easily regain the vantage ground, — and on the day of battle sally forth, destroying their engines, levelling their fortifications, breaking up their strong holds, scattering their forces, demolishing their monopolies, and triumphantly restore the liberties of the people into their own hands,

[^] Philip of Macedon, said he would take any city whose gates could admit an ass loaded with gold.

APPENDIX.

SOME account of the formation of the GENERAL TRADES UNION of BOSTON and VICINITY may be interesting to many of our friends.

The subject was first entered upon at a meeting of the working men of Boston, held at the Old Common Council Room, Court Square, School Street, January 21, 1834, and a committee appointed to take such measures as they should deem expedient, to effect the formation of a General Trades Union of the mechanics of Boston and vicinity. The Committee thus appointed assembled at Bascom's Hotel, School Street, on the evening of January 28. The several trades were generally represented in the Committee.

This Committee in pursuance of the duties devolving upon them, issued a circular to their fellow mechanics, in which they remark — 'that the formation of General Trades Unions has been attended with the most beneficial and happy results, on the interests of *employers* and *employed*, in the cities of New York, Philadelphia, and Baltimore, where they have adopted this method of *concentrated action*. Since the formation of Trades Unions in those cities, we hear but little of difficulties and dissensions between employers and employed, which in all cases produce dissatisfaction, discontent and distress; but employers and employed, seem to be harmoniously united for the *mutual benefit* of both, which should always be the case.

'The mode of forming a General Trades Union is as follows: — Let each branch of Mechanics assemble together; let each of these primary assemblies choose two or more delegates to represent them in a General Convention of the Trades, for the General Government of the Union; after which the different Societies will form a Constitution and By Laws, in accordance with the Constitution that may be adopted by the Convention. The Convention to meet once in three months, and special intermediate meetings to be called by the proper officers of the Union. It is contemplated that each member of the several societies belonging to the Union, will pay into the general fund, such sum as may be deemed necessary by the Union in Convention assembled, and at such times as the delegates shall determine. The fund thus raised, to be devoted to the relief and assistance of those out of employ by *accidents*, *sickness*, or by any other *cause*, which will justify the Convention to render such relief.'

In pursuance of a call made by this Committee, the Trades in the city of Boston and vicinity, to the number of sixteen distinct branches, held meetings respectively, and appointed delegates to a General Convention. This Convention met on the first Tuesday of March last at the Old Common Council Room, Court Square, at 7 o'clock in the evening, and immediately proceeded to the formation and adoption of a Constitution, which was subsequently ratified by the different Trades.

The Constitution of the General Convention of the Trades Union is layed upon a liberal foundation, and is intended to embrace every portion

of operatives who choose to associate, and send their delegates. The farming interest is particularly invited to co-operate in this grand association for the general improvement and benefit of the laboring portion of the community. The constitution makes provision also for the reception of male delegates from any regularly organised association of female operatives, to be admitted on conditions, prescribed by the Convention.

So far, the success of the undertaking has exceeded the hopes of its most sanguine supporters. The plan of the organization is a perfect one. The general objects of the union meet the approbation of a large proportion of our respectable mechanics; and it bids fair to prove a benefit not only to those immediately interested, but to society at large.

We embrace this occasion to remark, that the recent celebration of the 4th of July by our Trades Union, a society now scarcely four months in existence, was unexpectedly grand and imposing. The respective trades appeared in procession with splendid and appropriate banners and emblems, to a number exceeding two thousand, and a finer body of men we can venture to say, never moved together through the streets of our city. A beautiful printing press in full operation, and a superb frigate, completely rigged and manned, drawn by twenty-four white horses, gave increased interest to the show. The whole escorted by the Mechanic Riflemen, a beautiful light corps under the command of Capt. Snelling. The procession moved through some of the principal streets to Fort Hill, where the Declaration of Independence, and Declaration of Rights of the Trades Union of Boston and vicinity, were read by CHARLES DOUGLAS — and an oration delivered by FREDERICK ROBINSON.* An appropriate hymn, written for the occasion by a member of the Trades Union, was sung by the assembled thousands, to the tune of Old Hundred, accompanied by the band. The procession then re-formed under a salute from the frigate, and proceeded to Faneuil Hall, where a dinner was provided for the occasion.

The Trades Union have reason to be proud of this celebration. It surpassed in splendor, in strength of numbers, in beauty, in good order, and perfection of arrangement, any similar exhibition ever made in this city. And it was got up, completed, and enjoyed, by the Mechanics alone. We say not this in the spirit of exclusion, — but our mechanics, and our most useful men, have been so long shut out from public festivals, or admitted only to be set down at the tail of the feast, that we lose a most praiseworthy motive of self-respect, which has induced them to attend on this occasion and celebrate the day of our national independence and coming freemen.

[* That portion of this oration which relates to a reform in jurisprudence, will be read with increased interest, when it is recollected that Mr. Robinson is now one of the Committee appointed by our Legislature to revise the laws of the State.—PUBLISHER.]