Former Labor Leader Says Strikes Do Not Pay

Terence V. Powderly Talks With Frank G. Carpenter on Subject of Employer and Employe.

WASHINGTON, March 8.—(Special Correspondence of The Sunday Oregonian.)—"I don't believe in strikes for the laboring man."

These were the words of Terence V. Powderly, as we chatted together in his house facing the Soldiers' Home Park, this afternoon. They are significant words, because they come from the mouth of a labor leader, a man who has worked with his hands and who has gone through every gradation of labor, organized and unorganized. Mr. Powderly was the son of a workingman. At 13 he earned his daily bread; at 15 he was a switchtender; at 17 he was an apprentice in the Delaware & Hudson carshops; at 21 a machinist, and for years thereafter he worked at his trade. A man of ability and an orator, he soon became a leader of his fellows, and after a time was made general master workman of the Knights of Labor, and as such the head of the organized labor of the United States. He held that position ffor 14 years, during which time the Knights of Labor grew until it embraced unions in every part of the country and had more than a million members. They became a business and a political force, and Mr. Powderly, as their head, was the first of the labor leaders to inspire a respect for organized labor. He was cool and conservative, and was, in fact, the advance representative of the practical diplomatic, businesslike men who form the best type of the labor leaders of today.

After leaving the leadership of the Knights of Labor, Mr. Powderly studied law in Pennsylvania and was admitted to the bar there, and also to practice before the Supreme Court here at Washington. He was, during President McKinley's administration, the Commissioner-General of Immigration, but he has now gone back to his practice, although he has by no means dropped his interest in labor and labor questions.

Strikes Don't Pay.

"No, I don't believe in strikes," said he. "I have never believed in them and have done all I could to keep my men out of them. They don't pay. They are not necessary, and they bring great suffering. Nine-tenths of the trouble between employers and employes are based on misunderstandings and precipitate action. Both parties are afraid of each other, and they stand off when they should come together. Sometimes the men have a grievance and one of the indiscreet among them complains of the situation to a newspaper reporter and a sensational article is published, saying the men are going to strike. This makes the employer angry. He asks why the men did not come to him with their troubles, instead of going to the papers. The report hurts his business, and he is in a fit mood for a fight. All this is wrong. The employers and employes should come closer together and each should try to know and understand the other. They should not wait for trouble, but should affiliate in the interest of industrial peace."

How Men Should Help Employers.

"What do you mean by that?" I asked.

"I mean that when the business is going on all right and the men are satisfied the employer should show an interest in them, and, if possible, get closer to them. I mean that the men at such a time should go to their employer and say, We are doing well, we like our job and we are satisfied with our wages. Now, we want to know if there is any way in which we can help your business. It is to our interest to have you make money and anything that we can do to make the business pay better, we will do. Such an action would bring the two together, and the average employer, if his success was greater through such action, would be glad to reward it by higher wages."

"Then the interest of the employer is the interest of the man?" I asked.

"Yes, it is," replied Mr. Powderly. "The men are dependent for their work on the success of the capitalist, and he is dependent on them."

"Then why should not the two go into partnership?"

"They are in a partnership whether the men will acknowledge it or not," was the reply; "but the partnership differs from the ordinary partnership in that each party has an individual interest antagonistic to the other. Each wants the biggest share of the profits; the laboring man his increased wages, the capitalist his in cutting wages down to increase the profits. The two are working together, but at the same time always pulling apart. It is one of the most delicate relations on earth."

"Do you think the laboring man is benefited by being a partner in the shop or factory for which he works?"

"Yes, I do. Such a partnership, if the men have a place on the directorate, shows them how the business is really running. They learn the difficulties, losses and troubles of the management and get a look at the other side of the ledger. If business is bad they are less ready to strike and if good they get a share of the profits."

Plants Run by Workmen.

"How about the laboring men joining and starting independent places of their own?"

"Such enterprises seldom succeed," said Mr. Powderly. "They have been tried, and they are likely to be tried again now that so much money is accumulating in the treasuries of the trades unions. I see in the papers that some of the unions of Chicago have so much money they talk of starting a bank. The United Mine Workers, for instance, have over $1,000,000 in their treasury.

"But, as I have said," continued Mr. Powderly, "such things fail. Why? I will tell you why. Managing a great business is as much of a profession as the proper handling of certain tools in a trade. It is only to be acquired by natural skill and long training. If you should put a banker to building a steam engine he would fail, and so will the machinist fail who tried to manage a bank or a factory. There are exceptions, I grant you, but 99 times out of a hundred either will fail. This is more so every year as businesses and trades are specialized. In the big undertakings of today the capacity required is greater than ever before."

"What do the laboring men think of their chances of eventually becoming their own managers?"

"I don't think their ambition runs that way at least not as a mass. Individuals do rise and will always rise as long as God gives men different capacities and talents. We shall have Carengies and Schwabs as long as brains married to brawn bring forth great fortunes. The peculiar brains will come to the top, however hard you stir the business and labor kettle to keep them down.

A Story of Abram S. Hewitt.

"But as to the masses of laboring men owning and controlling factories themselves, they are afraid of it," Mr. Powderly continued.

"I remember when I was general master workman of the Knights of Labor, Abram S. Hewitt, Peter Cooper's son-in-law, who owned some of the greatest iron works of the country, offered to let his men in the iron works at Trenton take that plant and run it. Mr. Hewitt was noted for his friendship to the laboring man. He never had any serious trouble, notwithstanding he employed thousands, and in hard times he carried on his furnaces at a loss rather than close them and put his men out. Well, he offered to let the men take the Trenton works as they stood and run them on the condition that they were to pay the expenses, manage them and have all the profits. At first thought the men were very enthusiastic and they brought their proposition to me. I advised them to think the matter over before they accepted.

"'Who among you understands the business of management?' said I. They had not thought of that.

"'What do you know of the markets, how to advertise, when to buy cheapest and where to sell best?' All this they did not know. Well, to make a long story short, they thanked Mr. Hewitt, but refused to take the mill."

"But in working for wages, Mr. Powderly, does labor get its share of the profits?"

"Who can tell?" was the reply. "Sometimes it does, sometimes not. I think the working man should be well paid and that his life should be made easier in every possible way. It is to the interest of all that he have good wages, for good wages means more money in circulation, a greater consumption of all kinds of goods and good times. Again, if the wages be too high the business cannot pay, and the reverse of all this is the case."

Wages Steadily Rising.

"But wages are steadily rising the world over, are they not?"

"Yes, especially in the United States. Take this carpet," said Mr. Powderly, as he kicked a Turkish rug at his feet.

TERENCE V. POWDERLY PHOTOGRAPH MADE ESPECIALLY FOR THIS LETTER

"There was nothing like carpet in the poor man's house when I was a boy. My father was rather well off for a laboring man. He came to this country from Ireland in 1826 and settled in Northern Pennsylvania, opening up the first coal mine in that part of the state. He had 12 children, and we had none too much. Still, we were as well off as laboring people generally. We lived in a cabin with no plaster or paper on the walls and no carpets on the floors. I slept in the loft, and the snow came through the roof in drifts upon my bed, often covering the floor. I remember now how cold it was when I stepped out on that snow. Contrast that with the working man's home of today. He has his carpets, his comfortable furniture, and often his piano. He lives better, has books, newspapers and magazines, and can educate his children."

"How about your education, Mr. Powderly?"

"I went to school until I was 13," replied Mr. Powderly, "and then stopped on account of trouble with my eyes. I needed glasses, for I was born near-sighted, but I did not know what was the matter for years afterward. I could see nothing well at a distance. Indeed, until I was 18 years of age I never saw the stars. I had heard of them, of course, but I looked upon them rather as a poetical fiction than as a visual reality. One day I took up a pair of glasses that happened to fit me, and, like Columbus, discovered a new world. I could see things I had never imagined anyone saw—the leaves on the trees in the distance, faces across the street. Indeed, I never really saw, as you see, until I was 18."

"I don't understand how you could work with your defective eyesight."

"I can see well enough at close range," was the reply. "I can take a red cent, and by nailing it with brads to a bench, can file off the nose of the Indian without cutting the edges. The Indian's nose is, you know, a little higher than the face of the cent. It takes good eyesight and good nerves to so file it off, and this we often tried to do in the shops. I am one of the few who can do it without cutting the edges of the coin. I also used to pick out with my knife the splinters of steel that flew into the eyes of my fellows. That is also a delicate job."

The Story of a Labor Leader.

"When did you become interested in organized labor?"

"I joined the Machinists' and Blacksmiths' Union in 1870, 34 years ago, and was soon elected president. Then I joined the Knights of Labor, and in 1879 was elected general master workman. I held that office until 1893."

"Was there much money in it?" I asked. "Sam Parks would have done well if he had had that place."

"There was nothing in it but the salary," replied Mr. Powderly, and when I left the office I was $7000 in debt. I was paid practically nothing for the first four years, then $800 a year, then $1500, and finally $5000, but the $5000 was not always paid. The position was not financially profitable. As to Sam Parks, it is not fair to use him as a type of the labor leader of that time or now. He is a villain. The representatives of our unions today and of the past are and have been men of the highest sense of honor. Indeed, they are philanthropic and are conscientiously doing what they can for their fellows."

About the Knights of Labor.

"The Knights of Labor was the mother of the Federation of Labor, was it not? Are not the two bodies very similar?"

"No, the Knights of Labor had, not only representatives of the trades unions, but also of the employers. At one time one-third of its members were employers."

"Then it was somewhat like the Civic Federation, of which Senator Hanna was the president?"

"In a sense, yes. It tried to settle labor disputes as far as possible without recourse to strikes. It is true we had some strikes, but we settled 1100 labor disputes without strikes. Indeed, I might say we prevented over 1000 strikes."

How Mark Hanna Did Business.

"Speaking of Senator Hanna," Mr. Powderly went on, "he was thoroughly in earnest in his desire to settle labor troubles through arbitration. I know that he began it more than 20 years ago. It is now 22 years since I was asked by his men to come out to Ohio to act as their representative in a strike there. I went and, as their delegate, called on Mr. Hanna and tried to present the case. He treated me politely, but refused to talk to me. He said:

"'What is the matter with the men? Why don't they come to me and present their own case? They know me. I know them. I don't know you.'

"'Will you receive a committee?' I asked.

"'Of course I will,' said Mr. Hanna. 'Send them in.'

"I went out and brought in a committee of the miners and then started to leave. 'You need not go if you don't want to,' said Mr. Hanna. 'Sit down!' I looked at the men. They said stay, and I stayed.

"Well, the discussion then went on between Hanna and the men. The troubles were taken up item by item and threshed over. Sometimes Hanna gave in, sometimes the men, but in an hour or so it was all settled, and the men said they were satisfied and would go back to work. It was hot at times, but at the close Mr. Hanna said: 'Now, men, when you have any trouble in the future I want you to come right to me and we will talk it over. Don't ask Mr. Powderly to come clear across Pennsylvania and Ohio to talk for you. You know what you want. I know what I want. We are all sensible men and can do our own business, and we will do it.' From that time on Mr. Hanna and his men settled their labor troubles by conference and mutual conciliation. He was thoroughly honest and earnest in his advocacy of the policy and his life shows it."

How Powderly Saved a Railroad.

"In your strikes I suppose you have often had to deal with many violent men, Mr. Powderly?"

"Yes, we had," was the reply. "But we tried to hold them in check. I remember an incident of the great railroad strike of 1886, when the Gould system of railroads and other roads in the Southwest were tied up. The men had left work for some time when I got a letter proposing a plan to blow up every bridge and culvert on the Gould railroad system upon a certain signal. The letter stated that the only way to reach Jay Gould was through his pocket, and that this action would prevent the trains from running and break the strike. The writer said that he had the dynamite and he gave a full plan as to how it should be placed and exploded to wreck the system. He marked his letter confidential and asked that it be sent back to him. He signed it with the name 'Henri Lee Caron.'

"I was horrified, and at once sent a warning to all the local assemblies of the Knights of Labor, protesting against the scheme and saying it was better to lose the strike a hundred times than to resort to such villainy to win it. At the same time I filed away the letter.

A Story of Parnell and Gladstone.

"Well, about three years after that," Mr. Powderly continued, "I picked up my paper one morning and saw that a man named Henri Lee Caron was giving testimony in a damage suit brought by Charles Stewart Parnell against the London Times. Caron was on the side of the Times, and he pretended to testify as an Irish spy that Parnell had been mixed up in the assassination of Cavendish and in other fiendish outrages in Ireland. I knew that Caron had belonged to some of the Irish agitator organizations, although he did not belong to the Knights of Labor. The moment I saw his name I remembered that letter. I took it from the files, had it photographed and mailed prints to Parnell, T. P. O'Connor and Michael Davitt, and I sent the original to Mr. Gladstone, telling him to give it to Parnell."

"Why did you not send the original to Parnell?" I asked.

"Because I thought his mail might not be safe. I was sure that Gladstone's letters would not be tampered with, and that is why I sent the original to him. All the letters went through, however. As soon as they reached London I got a cable from Parnell, asking me to forward the original, but he got it the next day from Gladstone. Shortly after that Henri Lee Caron was put on the witness stand and was ready to make what I believe was a tissue of lies. He did give his testimony, but when his letter, proposing to wreck the Gould system with dynamite was read, it had such an effect that his evidence counted for nothing and Parnell came out on top. I got letters of congratulations and thanks from both Parnell and Gladstone in regard to it." (Copyright 1904.)

FRANK G. CARPENTER.

THE APRON GIRL OF 1904

Boon to Office Girl Who Values Good Appearance.

ALL hail to the Apron Girl of 1904! She does not belong to that fraternity, the members of which wear aprons as a badge of servitude. Neither does she count herself among those who are not obliged to toil or spin for their living, but who wear dainty little aprons when they embroider or do fancy work, just as they wear a glove handkerchief—for looks.

The Apron Girl of 1904 would not feel complimented to be classed with either of these. She is a type by herself, and prides herself on her individuality, for she belongs to the emancipated guild of breadwinners whose work takes her into big down-town offices.

Improvised paper cuffs, or black sateen ones to match the apron, have been the regalia of the office girl ever since she first became one. No wonder the gallantry of men waned, when, day after day, they were obliged to dictate to such untidy specimens of femininity.

All this is changing under the new dispensation of aprons, thanks to the girl who originated the idea, and was courageous enough to start the new fashion. She, too, had worn the stereotyped black apron, which covered the front of her skirt, but failed to protect her sleeves or her waist. More than one shirtwaist was sent to the laundry after wearing once, because of soiled sleeves, which were in contrast to its otherwise immaculate appearance.

One day she thought of her apron scheme, something that would differ from the apron of the waitress or nursemaid, or artist, and yet protect her gown and be picturesque. She was not quite sure whether her employer would approve of her new regalia, but her fears were dispelled the morning of its initiation, when he expressed admiration for the new garment. After that it was smooth sailing, and she insists that the men in the office have been more polite to her ever since.

In days of yore the black silk apron was the acme of elegance and propriety if it had a few rows of black velvet ribbon upon it. The defects of any nondescript gown could be covered and dignified by such a garment. That was under the old regime, however. The Apron Girl of 1904 believes in being well gowned for business, and she does not save her best dresses for home wear. She knows it is to her advantage to appear smart, but not overdressed.

Unfortunately, desk work is hard on sleeves, not only soiling, but wearing them out quickly. For this reason the big apron is welcomed as a protector of the [illegible] gown underneath, which will wear twice as long for the precaution.

Then, too, many young women are obliged to dress in the morning for some evening recreation, as the distance is too great for them to return home after office hours. The new apron helps out in this direction also, and thus saves time and the gown as well.

One of the prettiest of these aprons is worn by a girl in an office building which is well kept, and therefore admits of the extravagance of wearing white. It is of sheer white India linen, and is trimmed with embroidery, embroidered beading and white wash silk ribbon. The girl who wears it is petite, so she chose the baby waist effect, which is most becoming to her. It has long bishop sleeves, finished in a band of the embroidered beading, and with baby ribbon run through it. This she calls her "dress-up" apron. She also wears pale blue, pink and lavender dimity, or lawn aprons for a change.

A more practical young woman selects for her office aprons materials of a quality that will lend themselves to the washtub. She knows that some materials take on a darker color when washed, and that they starch in a papery fashion. Her choice, therefore, is for India linens, percales, and even prints.

A pretty print apron, commonly called calico, is not to be despised, if well made and ruffled. Such a one is especially desirable for the typewriter girl and the girl who copies, and thereby comes in contact with ink. A simple way to make one of these is to gore the front breadth, inserting the gores to give width at the bottom. Instead of armholes, the apron is not sewed up all the way, space being left for them in the seam. Or it can be made sleeveless, if desired. A navy blue one, with white polka dot, is ruffled with the same, and is trimmed with a white finishing braid on the pocket, ruffles and bands.

Another dark one, which is both serviceable and pretty, is made of a good quality of percaline, which is as light in weight and resembles moire silk. It has lengthwise tucks in the waist to fit it to the form. The ties are inserted at the waist line on each side, which brings the apron well in at the back. The ruffles, pocket and ties are briar stitched, as are also the tucks in front. This method is an improvement over the old one of featherstitching.

The Song of the Drum.

Pall Mall Gazette.

Do you hear my summons hammer thro' the
crackle and the clamor,
Do you feel my throb and thrill?
When I meet the smell of powder, oh, my
merry note grows louder,
And my song shall not be still.
Follow, each beside his fellow, 'neath the vapors gray and yellow,
Wildly cheering, sternly dumb,
And rumble, rumble, rumble, when the
smoke wreaths toss and tumble,
You shall hear the rolling drum. Follow
the drum!

Men forget their fears and follies as they
face the blinding volleys,
And the young recruits they come,
With their simple sunburnt faces, from the
quiet, country places,
To the call of me, the drum.
Come, plowboy, lad and carter, and your
lifeblood freely barter
For the bullet sure for some,
And rattle, rattle, rattle, through the din
and roar of battle,
You shall hear the rolling drum. Follow
the drum!

When the boys that follow fast there, drop
aside and fall at last there,
From the surging lines of red,
Then no more of pomp and ruffle; my notes
awhile I muffle,
And I moan and mourn the dead.
But the losing battle needs me, and the
whistling bullet speeds me;
Through the reeling ranks I come,
And clatter, clatter, clatter, where the
broken regiments scatter,
You shall hear the rolling drum. Follow
the drum!

AN OFFICE APRON OF SHEER WHITE INDIA LAWN, TRIMMED WITH EMBROIDERY AND EMBROIDERY BEADING.

SUCH AN APRON PERMITS THE OFFICE-WORKER TO DRESS IN THE MORNING FOR AN EVENING ENTERTAINMENT.