

## Sermon Dedicated to Labor Unions.

The following sermon was delivered by Rev. W. Seymour Short at Grace church on Sunday last:

"I have given you an example that you should do as I have done to you.—St. John XII:15.

Many would be leaders of men today, say, let the nation or the government do the manufacturing; get rid of the capitalists; give better wages and shorter hours, and you have solved every question that is worth solving. They seem to think that these things will change ambitious persons into public-spirited ones, competitive and selfish ones into generous and self-sacrificing people. At least this is all the industrial program and its leaders offer. He insisted on holding the labor union on Sunday because he wanted to keep his followers away from the Catholic priest and the Protestant preacher. (Evidently—says Mr. Newell Dwight Hills—he did not want to be embarrassed by the 10th commandments in the minds of his followers, for there are times, the leader says, when violence, the club and the firebrand have their uses.) Another leader has made historic the words "boycott," and "go and buy a gun," by proposing to inscribe them on labor's banner.

A writer well known has this to say: "Some time ago in my own house two union men finished the limit of their work at 11:30. The head man returned at 1:30 and smoked a clay pipe until 3:30. Then the second man returned and smoked his pipe until 5. Neither man did a stroke of work from 11:30 until 5 because the union forbade him. Both men were humiliated; one was bitter. He felt that he was a beggar, and rebelled against taking a wage that he felt he had not earned. I believe that man loved his work, wanted to come early, wanted to stay late, and to skip or slight it hurt him like a blow, and (continues our author) in all that smoldering rebellion lies the nation's hope. Alas, for these political confidence men and labor agitators who are teaching their workmen to give the least possible work to get the most possible wage."

But this sort of thing has its effect on the public as well as the working man. Listen to this:

"Only the other day a countryman driving in with his product (in an eastern city, though the spirit is spreading) found that one of his horses had caught a shoe in the street-car track, and loosened a nail. The shoe had been newly put on in the country shop, and needed only five minutes' work of a smith. He drove to a blacksmith shop, but as soon as the smith looked at the shoe, he said he could not do the work. Ten smiths in succession were too busy to undertake the task, though they seemingly had little to do. At last a smith said, 'There is no use in your driving over this town, no smith will tighten the nail. These are non-union shoes, and we are union men.' 'But what am I to do?' said the countryman, not understanding the term 'union.' 'Well, I can take all four shoes off and put on four new ones,' was the answer, 'and it will cost you five dollars.' There was not over five minutes' work; the shoes were new, and were

newly put on, but the unions black-mailed the man for five dollars.

And lastly, for I could repeat instances all the day. "Recently when a musician died, leaving his widow and children, his wife secured the position. But the musicians' union put on a brave front and dared the enemy in his den. With true chivalry these heroes of toil and of down-trodden labor waited on the widow's employer, threatened a strike and boycott, finally compelled her discharge and replacement by one of their own members."

Combination unions are good. Protection is a first law of human nature, but no excuse ever justifies wanton murder, or cold-blooded stealing. Because these are accomplished indirectly and in long-drawn-out methods, by political or social or labor union influences, or by organizations of either of these instead of individuals does not make the leaders or officers any less guilty of breaking the sixth or eighth commandment. Who is responsible? It is a far-reaching question and its answer not easy. It would seem that the makers of quack medicines who create and stimulate the appetite of woman and children as well as men for dangerous drugs and strong drink; and those engaged in adulterating the foods of our tables so that ill-health and death are the consequence after long suffering, and heavy doctor's bills, it would seem that these are guilty of murder, even if they know not the individuals by name who purchase and consume their death-dealing wares. But are the parents who buy these things for their little ones or their families, picking and choosing the cheap nostrums, so that they themselves may have a good time with the balance if their children sicken and die from the effects, are these not responsible? And is a senator who deliberately delays legislation in the interests of pure foods, for any reason whatever, legal construction of the bill; interference with their views of states' rights, fear of losing favor with leaders or constituents, or ignorance, is such a senator free from blame?

We can see with scarcely half a glance how far reaching this industrial and economic question is preventing private and public life in home, business and society and politics and even the church.

One of the most hopeful signs for the bettering of these evils is the fact that they are so much talked and written about, that they are so constantly in our minds and in our conversations. The sign of the times points to a happy solution if the intense interest in the hearts of all classes lasts but a little longer.

It is evident, as Prof. Peabody of Harvard, says: "That no arrangement of industry can be devised which is beyond the possibility of being used for evil by unscrupulous, designing men." But the remark contains the key-note of the cure as I can see it, "unscrupulous and designing for evil!" Is there a way to become careful in planning for good? Jesus Christ stemmed the current of history, and like a rock dropped in mid-stream of some river; he turned the course, or channel from destruction toward preservation, from danger to safety.

The same questions, social and economic and industrial, if not in form at least in germ, agitated the teeming city of Jerusalem, and the lovely hillside village of Nazareth in His day, for human nature is about the same from generation to generation in its possibilities for good or evil it is identical.

Jesus of Nazareth, far from being an agitator, pretended to cure the ills and evils of all men for all time, but His cure was not popular then, it is altogether so now. He met each individual case with a practiced and master hand (and head and heart as well.) "Who made me a judge or divider over you?" He says and proceeded to explain the roof of his arrouble—covetousness to one who asked Him to divide his father's property. "Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's." He says to others, not overturning governments in the least. Is He a socialist; is He a reformer; is He a friend of the poor, of the outcast, the overlooked, the submerged? None more so, and yet He loved the rich, the refined, the educated, the clean and pure. He is as much at home with the leader as with the led. And He also denounces the faults of the rulers, either civil or ecclesiastical as those of the people. He excuses none, and He provides and commands over and over again a cure for all, and warns all what the horrible calamity will be if his advice is not followed, and His cure not made use of. "No man cometh unto the father but by me," seems to be a pretty narrow way and a straight gate. At all events none can mistake

the words, no more than those others "come unto me and I will give you rest." All Jesus' injunctions and personal applications seem to be so far above and beyond, or deeper in than industrial and economic methods. The "aim of the latter is to make the poor rich, and the aim of the other is to make the bad good." The one is mechanical, the other moral, and here we see the two plans pitted against each other as we began by saying:

"Such extraordinary devotion is offered to a mere industrial program" by many in these days because it "seems unspiritual" and "represents to millions a religion, and provides a substitute for that teaching of the Christian church, which they have been led to respect." These are the words of the Harvard professor already quoted, and he adds with fearful and clear-cut conviction "The socialist program represents the penalty which the modern world is paying for its insufficient obedience to the social teaching of Jesus."

Jesus cleanses the man, the industrial program but cleanses the outside of the cup and platter, while the inside is full of ravening and wickedness. Jacob Riis the reformer; President Roosevelt, the statesman; Gladstone, the prime minister and many other plain, simple common-sense thinkers and workers—like Pastor Wagner—know this that these human systems which must depend for their existence and continuance upon unselfishness, magnanimity and simplicity of character, make no provision whatever for the training or acquiring those visitors.

When the rich young man would join Jesus' company, "go sell that thou hast (Gal Three Sermon) and give unto the poor, and come and follow me," said He that "had not where to lay his head." It was a text of his own character as well as a relief of the distressed. And if you study the Gospel I shall not be surprised if you find this searching and elevating desire underlying all of Jesus' works. He uplifts, He transforms, He teaches, He recreates the very souls, the lives of men and women as he helps them.

The words I have put at the head of this sermon, contain an epitome of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The whole light brought to the focus, as Lewis and Clark lit their peace pipes with

their burning glass before the Indians much to the astorishment of the latter. Jesus suited the action to the word, and though when spoken they apply only to the incident of His washing, as a servant, the feet of His disciples, yet they are true to every word or deed of His so far as they are recorded.

But taking them in the narrowest significance they contain enough to satisfy us of this. They were done and spoke to one who had already bargained to kill, who had "sold his birthright for a mess of pottage;" to other two who were too ambitious to be behind the very first and foremost, who because He loved them would be His favorites no matter where the others came in; to yet another who though strongest in his avowed behalf in Jesus', Goathead was just then on the verge of sleeping while on guard in Gethsemane; to another who doubted His ability to secure himself from the mob, in a word to a whole band who were undecided and weak in their loyalty to their master, and who doubted His Almighty power, and His personal claim on them.

Jesus finds no worse foes in modern society, and yet He says: "I have given you an example." His optimistic hope-

fulness (always expecting the very best of everybody) is divine. He believed and still believes in man more than man does in himself. This menial service is for everybody to copy. Happiness, faithfulness and success attend every person who follows that example. And misery and fraud and failure, not to say worse, are the lot of all who refuse or neglect to follow.

"The friendly visitor among the poor, bringing neither patronage, nor aims nor self consideration, nor religious propaganda but sunshine, courage, refinement, employment, patience; the social settlement set in squalor and dullness of the great city, nor for extortion or condescension, but sheer neighborliness, the beautiful union which is sometimes witnessed of official duty with loving personal care—these are the finest products of modern philanthropy—the plant of charity grows for no other purpose than that there may issue from it the flower of personal devotion." (Peabody.)

It is done, it has been done, and it will be done till the end of time—"as He has done." A foreigner solves the labor problem by the school-house and the church in twenty years! Intelligence doubles

the wage; goodness with it controls the business of the world; it is not safe an hour without it. "We do not need more gold, nor more land, nor more tools, but this country does need to commit the ten commandments to memory."

And the time has come for union men to throw away their guns and clubs and to use their noble idea of union for mutual betterment; for unity of action; for the diffusion of intelligence, let them, too fall on their knees, and ask God to fill their hearts with love for their non-union brethren," exclaims the eloquent pastor of Plymouth Church, Brooklyn. This is what this country needs, this will cure the woes of the age; this and this alone will produce loving homes and families in this community, bring souls and dollars into the treasury of the Lord sufficient for all needs. When are we going to learn it so as to believe it and practice it? What else are we here in church for?

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