

ally and permanently wrought throughout the United States without afflicting society with clashing interests—you are called upon by the fourth resolution to organize, unite, and open correspondence with us, preliminary to holding a National Convention to consider and determine this important subject. A just consideration for the relative interests involved, as well as a proper appreciation of the subject, renders this course necessary and proper, and requires a prompt and cordial response.

We feel assured of the hearty co-operation of all who labor for a daily stipend in joining hands with us to expel a system so grievous, and in demanding reform whereby the laborer—

"sweating over his bread

Before he eats it—the primal curse;
But softened into mercy, made the pledge
Of cheerful days and nights without a groan,"

may enjoy the blessings of Liberty, the blessings of Christianity, and the blessings of Civilization, all of which are now spread before his longing gaze, but are withheld by the despoiling arm of Avarice sustained by arbitrary usage.

But, in coming to this great task, we must not be precipitate or careless. Calm deliberation and consideration for all the interests involved should characterize our councils. Moderation, firmness of purpose, and union of feeling, will not only secure the respect and approval of our fellow-citizens who are not directly interested, but they are essential elements of success against the machinations of Lucre's mercenaries.

The right of the people to abolish any custom or law that impedes the pursuit and enjoyment of happiness, is the cornerstone of our political system. On this great principle rests the right to place the question of this proposed reform before the people as a political measure, the adoption of which, we believe, will promote every element of national prosperity.

In doing this, we disclaim a desire for "class" legislation. We ask no exemption from our duties as citizens, nor seek privileges above any other class of society. But we do require protection from an oppressive usage, which, in the absence of law, is tacitly sustained and upheld by National and State authorities. We claim that State Legislatures and City Corporations, as well as Congress, are all, directly or indirectly, employers, and have the right to fix the terms of their own contracts, and that they should hereafter prescribe by law that eight hours shall constitute a day's work on all public works, instead of following the present usage, which is better adapted to the felon of Siberia than to the freeman of America. And also, that the same principle should be applied by them to all incorporated companies, and to all cases of implied contracts for day labor. If legislators will act up to this, it is all that will be asked of them; but if they refuse to answer the appeal, then they must give way for others who will respond to the voice of the people.

The present prosperous and growing condition of the country not only admits of but actually demands, this reform for the safe balance of society; for when we consider the vast and increasing amount of machinery in use, the constant flowing tide of immigration, principally of the working class, and the discharge of nearly 500,000 men from the army, who are to seek employment in productive pursuits, there is sufficient reason to apprehend that "this real wealth of society," as Adam Smith terms the laboring class, will become "stationary," and wages fall to "what is barely enough to enable the laborer to bring up a family, or continue the race of laborers," and that society here, as in England, will have to support by public and private alms thousands of the unemployed. Is it not the duty of legislatures to prevent such a condition of society? and is not the reform proposed conducive to that end? and is not every member of society interested therein? Then why cry "class" legislation, or question the powers of the Legislature to act?

In a moral point of view, the subject recommends itself to the statesman and philanthropist. There is accumulated evidence, well put together by Mr. George Combe, that the moral, physical and mental condition of man is injured by too much labor. And a comparison of the laborer's present condition with what it was when he was required to labor longer, fully verifies the correctness of the principle. Increased morality, intelligence, and longevity, with all their concomitant benefits to society, are the indisputable results exhibited by such comparison.

Under our present system of labor, the workingman's time is so completely absorbed that but little of his atten-

tion can be devoted to his family. That holy institution, the Sabbath, is the only time permitted him to instruct his children, warm their affections, and participate in their pleasures.

Surely the "pursuit of happiness" means something more than continued toil, eating and sleeping. If so, why boast the glories of this great republic—its immense productive capacity, its railroads, its schools and its churches—symbols, all, of civilization and humanity—while millions of its citizens, its very vitality, are restricted to this simple routine day after day, month after month, year after year, until death relieves them and entails upon their hapless children the same toilsome drudgery for life!

The gradual and continual melioration of the human race is a part of the gracious purpose of the Omnipotent disposer of this world's destiny. Every great event in history is but a manifestation of this purpose. The Christian era was a new dispensation, through which man was to recover, not at once, but by atonement and repentance, what had been lost to him by Adam's transgression. Through it the world has been regenerated. Christianity and Civilization have superseded Paganism and Idolatry, moderated the passions of man toward his fellow-man, and established his right to think, judge and act for himself in the pursuit of happiness. It is in obedience to this certain law of progress and melioration that we now move, or, rather, are moved, to demand one more step towards happiness.

Duty to country, under our beneficent form of government—which devolves on every citizen above twenty-one years of age, great and peculiar responsibilities—requires an intelligence incompatible with ten hours toil.

Can you who drudge through the heat of summer, exhausting the physical and depressing the mental powers, qualify yourselves to render to that country who intrusts to you her welfare and perpetuity a fair return of intelligent judgment? No, you cannot; There is no relish for the dry figures of trade, the research of science, nor historical chronicles.

That eminent philosopher, Dick, says: "In order that the laborer may be stimulated to the cultivation of his mental powers, he must be furnished with those domestic conveniences requisite for attaining that object. He must be paid such wages as will enable him to procure such and the means of instruction, otherwise it is the next thing to an insult to exhort him to prosecute the path of science. The long hours of labor and the paltry remuneration which the laborer receives in many of our spinning mills and other manufacturing, so long as such domestic slavery and avaricious practices continue, form an insurmountable barrier to the general diffusion of knowledge." Although much has been accomplished since the above was written to improve the condition of the laboring classes, still there remains much to be done before they can obtain and enjoy a fair proportion of the fruits of those improvements which their industry has supplied to the world.

We do not claim this time for idleness. We claim that we require it to look after our individual interests and happiness. We do not wish for luxury and indolence; but we are ambitious to turn our time and talents to greater account in the productive industry, in the social relation, and in the political system of the country of which we are citizens; in a word, our aim is to make ourselves better friends, better citizens, and better Christians.

Then why defer so just a cause as that now presented for consideration? Is it easier or better to bear than to change this evil? Surely it is not. Under present circumstances, you have the power to accomplish this great purpose, even against the most inveterate opposition.

But why anticipate opposition? True, human prejudice and attachment to established forms are such, that in reviewing the history of the past, and observing through what seas of blood and bitter duance most of the great reforms (the fruits of which now bless mankind) have had to pass before they were established, we may well anticipate that ours will not afford an exception; but more recent events indicate a relaxation of this propensity to blindly adhere to old forms. Reason now has better sway—the general mind is more accessible, and reform more easy of establishment.

And now, is it not as much to the interest of the employer as to that of the employee that this proposed system should become the rule? Has not every advance of civilization, in throwing down the false distinctions which divi-

ded society into castes, which made and recognized plebeians and patricians, which made employments hereditary, and which confined knowledge to the aristocracy and church—has not every step of this progress increased the wants of men and enhanced the capital invested in their supply? Then whose interest is it to oppose this reform? His alone whose blind covetousness craves the last "pound of flesh!"

FELLOW-CITIZENS:—Now is the time to acquire for yourselves and transmit to your children the greatest of blessings. But a little delay, and you may lose what you now possess, and be degraded to the most abject dependence. Unite, then, at once, in a National Convention, and claim the right to ENJOY the fruits of your own labors.

C. B. HOUGH, JOHN L. HAYGHE.
DANIEL DAVIS, J. R. WALTERMEYER,
H. MCINTIRE, J. C. C. WHALEY,
J. A. LANDVOIGT, Committee.

N. B.—Address all communications to "JOSEPH R. WALTERMEYER, southwest corner of G. and Eleventh sts., Navy Yard, Washington, D. C."

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