

STRIKES AND SLAVES

(By IVOR BROWN, in the *New Witness*.)

The Constitution of the United States was couched in terms of Natural Rights and richly upholstered in Liberty fabrics; so well did the makers succeed that the American rich have ever since reposed upon it with perfect comfort and security. The plutocrats of the West have always laughed scornfully at the British monarchy, while espousing the daughters of British Peers, and their laughter has been particularly aimed at the idea of a slowly broadening and evolutionary democracy, which so gratified the late Lord Tennyson and other well-fed British Liberals. Just as Columbia set up an Edison record in all kinds of mechanical hustle, so she claims to have achieved a record in democracy. No "broadening down" for her, but a happy home where

"Freedom swiftly rushes down
From President to President."

True, that a few American Socialists think fit now and then to assert one of their many natural and inalienable rights (see said Constitution *passim*) and are promptly and properly gaoled for their insolence. True, that chattel-slavery lived on in the shores of Freedom, when even the conscience of monarchical England had been touched. True that an English radical, Dickens by name, in a book called *Martin Chuzzlewit*, pricked the bubble of Western Idealism and for this offence was warned to keep clear of the said shores. True, that the same bubble was re-inflated during the war and finally given the knock-out prick by President Wilson at Paris. True, that while Lord Tennyson was ignorantly prattling of "Nature red in tooth and claw," Chicago was giving nature a lesson in the ethics of the Jungle. All true, yet the American plutocrat still, we are told, keeps high the flag of Liberty.

And now, beneath the flag, American "democrats" are leading the movement to make the strike illegal; and be assured there are plenty of eyes eagerly watching for their victory in our land and all over Europe. Let us consider what the prohibition of the strike implies; the answer is as brief as it is brutal: it implies slavery. The slavery of the Southern rich was at least blatant; but the new slavery of the Northern Money-lords will be as silent as disease or death. If an employed person cannot withdraw his labor from his employer (who is a private person and theoretically his political equal) then he is plainly bound to that employer, and so bound that the master can impose what wages and conditions he thinks fit. In other words the worker becomes the employer's property. He is a living tool; and that is how the Greeks defined a slave.

His wage is worked out in terms of the cost of living: i.e., it is a subsistence wage. The implication of the subsistence wage is that if a man gets more than enough to keep him and his family alive he ought to be docked of the surplus. The wage of the medieval worker was supposed to be a "just price"; his descendant gets the just-enough price. The chattel slave was equally given subsistence, which he drew in keep and kind, not in cash. But the chattel slave had this advantage: he was a piece of capital, and capital is sacred. If he deteriorated it was so much the worse for the owner, whose interest it was to keep the slave fit for work. But when the wage-slave deteriorates the employer can get another for nothing. He also makes the wage-slave insure against sickness or unemployment, for which he is not responsible. The master of the chattel-slave has an economic interest in the welfare of the chattel, but the master of the wage-slave has no interest in anything but himself.

Thus, if the right to withhold labor is destroyed, the economic status of the worker reaches its lowest degradation. He has not even the security of a chattel. Very likely he will be told that the impartial State will see fair play, when it has taken his right to strike. A referee might as well guarantee to see fair play when he has tied the hand of one boxer behind his back and filled the gloves of the other with metal. We all know the impartial State with its impartial persons; from the workers' point of view it is the greatest diddling machine the world has ever seen.

It is quite possible to defend slavery. The modern slave-driver proclaims that all men are free and equal, whereas Aristotle had explained that some men were born for slavery, being no better than living tools. This is a ruthless assumption, but, once grant it, and Aristotle's defence of slavery is equally ruthless in its logic. The old philosopher made a false statement about the virtues of slavery and then stuck to it; the new sophist makes a true statement about the villainy of slavery and then sticks to the slaves.

PEOPLE WE HEAR ABOUT

Monsignor Pisani, the new Apostolic Delegate for India, has arrived in Bombay. This prelate, who had been designated Nuncio in China before the trouble arose with the French Government about that appointment, is one of the most distinguished prelates of the Roman Curia, a brilliant writer and lecturer, and a zealous preacher. In this he has much in common with the new Archbishop of Bombay, as well as the fact that both were consecrated on the same day last year, the feast of St. Thomas, Apostle of India—Monsignor Pisani in Rome by Cardinal van Rossum, and Monsignor Goodier in London by Cardinal Bourne. Monsignor Pisani has travelled widely, both in America and in Asia, on business for the Holy See, and speaks French, German, and English fluently, as well as his native Italian.

Very Rev. Canon Peter O'Leary, LL.D., P.P., Castlelyon, a famous Gaelic scholar and author, died on March 22. Canon O'Leary was born in 1839 at Clnaindroichid, the most western parish of the diocese of Cloyne. There is no student of the Irish language who is not intimately acquainted with his invaluable works (says the *London Catholic Times*). As examples of modern Irish literature they were incomparable, and as an inspiration and help to the language revival their value can hardly be over-estimated. Among his works may be mentioned *Seadna*, *Niamh*, *Elsirt*, and *Sgoth Bhuualadh*. He was also the author of Irish plays, and translated the New Testament and the *Imitation of Christ*, also *Æsop's Fables*. In recognition of his services to the Irish race and the language, he received, together with the late Dr. Kuno Meyer, the freedom of Dublin on June 26, 1911, and in September of the following year, Cork Corporation conferred a similar high honor on them. The National University granted the Canon the degree of LL.D.

Art O'Brien, the leader of the London Irish and president of the Irish Self-Determination League of Great Britain, is a highly skilled electrical engineer. For more than 20 years he has been prominent in London Irish circles and his popularity has been unquestioned. One of his lieutenants tells us that whether you agree with him or not, Art O'Brien is one of those sincere, thoughtful, cultured men whose views you are compelled to respect. A fairer, straighter fighter for the Irish nation does not exist. "There is not a move in the strenuous game of propaganda work unknown to O'Brien's remarkably alert brain," says the London writer. "Art is a widely-travelled man," he goes on, "a fluent speaker of French, and quite at home, too, in Spanish. Born in London of an Irish father and a Continental mother, he speaks the faultless English of Mayfair, while his command of the national tongue of the country (Ireland) he has given so much of his time and thought to, is really splendid. It is noteworthy that the leaders of the Irish to-day, at home and abroad, are men of culture, and that almost all of them, whether Irish-born or not, have a good knowledge of the Irish language. They evidently believe in the truth of Thomas Davis's statement, "No language, no nation."

Recently there died at De la Salle Retreat, Castlelyon, Mountrath, Ireland, a prominent and respected member of the Order of the Brothers of the Christian Schools, Rev. Brother Kieran Augustine Cumiam. The deceased Brother entered the Novitiate of the Order at Castletown in the year 1886, and was afterwards sent as professor of English to Marseilles, where he spent a term of 10 years. Recalled to Ireland in 1899, he was appointed Superior of the House at Castletown, where he passed a further period of seven years, after which he was delegated to visit the Houses of the Order in the Far East and Australia as Assistant Provincial Visitor. After the death of Rev. Brother Antony Flood, Brother Kieran was recalled to take up the duties of Provincial Visitor for the District of Ireland and England, which position he occupied during 10 years. Many important foundations to-day owe their success to his initiative—In Ireland: Kilmacow, Co. Kilkenny, Wicklow, Ballyshannon, Navan, and Dublin. In England and Scotland: St. Helen's, Market Weighton, Sheffield, Edinburgh (2), and Glasgow (3). The deceased belonged to a well-known Wicklow family.

The saints are always nearest sin,
This world of wickedness within;
And though they claim to be the best,
They're just as wicked as the rest.
Though Pharisees with every breath
Declare they have no fear of death.
When colds are rife they're always sure
To rush for Woods' Great Peppermint Cure.