

Delos Pams

P419

23

100

VOL. I Twentieth Century Library. No. 16

Published by TWENTIETH CENTURY PUB'G CO., 4 Warren street, N. Y.
[Entered at the New York post-office as second class matter.]

Fortnightly.] NEW YORK, JUNE 30, 1890. [51 a Year.

A Case of Starvation.

BY HUGH O. PENTECOST.

I am going to bring to your attention a case in which certain employers of labor actually starved their workmen into the acceptance of unjust wages, and in which the workmen are now held in a state of real slavery. I refer to the action of the Spring Valley Coal Company, whose mines are in Illinois, and to the relations at present existing between that Company and its workmen.

Last winter, it will be remembered, for weeks there was a great deal of matter in the newspapers about what was called a strike among the Spring Valley miners, and contributions of food, clothing, and money from various parts of the country were sent to provide actual necessities for the unfortunate working people of that town. But within a few weeks a book has appeared, entitled "A Strike of Millionaires Against Miners, or the Story of Spring Valley," written by Henry D. Lloyd, in which the whole history of that affair is told, as well as such a story of wrong and suffering can be told in

print. It is a mind-agitating and heart-rending tale, and unless I am much mistaken the publication of it will create an epoch in economic thinking and social regeneration. To this book I am indebted for the facts that I shall now present to you.

Where the town of Spring Valley now is, less than five years ago there was nothing but field and forest. The agents of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, the Spring Valley Coal Company, the Spring Valley Town Site Company, corporations composed of substantially the same persons, bought many thousand acres of land from the farmers of that region at prices ranging from \$30 to \$80 and in some cases a little more per acre, from fifteen to forty thousand acres being valuable coal land, and began to build up a town by the process known as "booming." That is, when everything was in readiness they began to advertise the advantages of Spring Valley as a place of residence arising from the opening up of immense coal mines and the consequent opportunities offered to miners to obtain steady employment at big wages. In July, 1885, lots began to be sold and by the next November, about one thousand lots had been disposed of at prices ranging from \$150 to \$300 per lot. During the first six months the total sales amounted to about \$200,000 for land that cost the Companies about \$20,000. The booming went on, miners were furnished with steady work, and everything was done to draw inhabitants to the town, until the population in about three years reached the number of five thousand.

Lots and lumber were sold to the miners on the installment plan. I wish to call especial attention to the conditions under which these sales were effected. Mr. Lloyd says :

The miners had to buy their lots under arrangements which forfeited all they had paid, and the lot, too, if at any time they dis-

continued their monthly payments, no matter how near the end of their indebtedness they might have got. This forfeiture could be declared by the Company without notice to the poor miner, and without any legal proceedings in which he might defend his rights.

He furthermore declares that no titles to these lots were given to the miners by the Company, so that they had nothing to show for their purchase except a receipt and an entry on the Company's books.

When everything was at the top notch of prosperity, when as much land had been sold as could be sold and enormous sums of money had been paid in for it and for lumber with which to build houses, when all kinds of business was flourishing and the interests of five thousand people bound them to Spring Valley as a place of residence, the process of destroying the town began. A few days before Christmas, 1888, seven hundred miners "were told to take away their tools at the close of the day and not return," as the part of the mine in which they were working "would be closed until further notice." Thus at the beginning of winter, one-third of the working population of the town was thrown out of employment for an indefinite time, and with little or nothing saved up, because, in spite of the brave promises of the Company that miners would earn in Spring Valley from \$2.50 to \$4 a day, they actually received only about \$1 a day, out of which they had been supporting their families and paying their installments on property to the Company. This was done without a word of warning. "There was no strike, no whisper of a strike. The men had been working faithfully, digging the coal according to orders, and taking the pay as agreed."

This was the beginning. About the first of May, 1889, all the miners in the town were discharged in a precisely similar manner. There was no strike. The men were simply told to take their tools and go. No

explanation whatever was given. They were ruthlessly locked out of the mines for no reason except that the Company wanted to starve them into the acceptance of still lower wages and compel them to forfeit the property they had not yet entirely paid for. The Company not only intended to force them to work for less than it cost them to live, but they wanted to steal back what the miners had already bought and paid for, with the intention of selling it over again to another set of men and perhaps steal it back again in the same way.

When the mines were closed the Company's stores were closed. The Company did not propose to sell any goods to miners from whom they could not collect their money in advance.

Before long the people of Spring Valley began to starve. On page 63 of his book, Mr. Lloyd tells us of two babies who starved to death because the mother's breasts were barren through insufficient food. On page 75 he tells of a child in school who was suspected of being in a starving condition and when the teacher gave her something to eat, her stomach, from lack of food, was in such a condition that it actually rejected what she ate. On page 56 he tells of a woman to whom the doctor refused to go when she was confined, and her child came into the world while she was entirely alone. It was only after the child was born that a kindly neighbor came in to help her. So inhuman were the managers of the Spring Valley Coal Company that it was part of their tactics not to alleviate such suffering as this, in order the sooner to force their miners to absolute submission to their tyranny.

During the five months that followed the lockout sickness increased to five times the average amount and one of the garden spots of the world became a scene of hunger, despair, and death. Mr. Lloyd's story of these months of misery, during which honest laboring men

were compelled to go from house to house among the farmers begging for food and mothers with their babes at their breasts went from town to town seeking assistance for the unfortunate people, is a recital of the most pitiable suffering. Some relief was obtained, amounting in the aggregate to a great deal, though it was entirely inadequate to the demand, but not a dollar nor a pound of food came from the Company. Not only did the Company not give anything or do anything for the suffering people, but it deliberately tried to poison the minds of the public by a campaign of slander against the miners, and to a great extent it succeeded in cutting off supplies from the outside world. It represented the miners as being on strike, when they had not struck at all, but were locked out of the mines without cause. It represented them as being more willing to beg than to work, when the fact was that even the children concealed their starving condition, and food was almost forced upon hungry people before they would accept it.

When the Company was satisfied that the miners were sufficiently starved, when they had succeeded by their campaign of slander in cutting off supplies from a generous public, they posted an offer of work in the window of their office. The offer was that the men should break up their union and apply to the Company as individuals for work at thirty-five cents a ton for the mining of coal, which would have yielded about ten dollars a month in wages—the lowest wages ever offered to miners in this country. It was manifestly impossible for the men to work for such wages, and the Company very well knew that the offer would not be accepted. It was made to frighten the men by a ghost of more starvation. Yet the Company declared that it was all it could afford to pay, notwithstanding that mines all about were paying more than double those wages.

By and by, the offer was raised to seventy-two and a half cents a ton, although that offer convicted the Company of deliberately lying when it made the first offer. Under this second offer, the men were to apply for work as individuals, were to cut all connection with their union in dealing with the Company, and on entering the mines for work were to sign what the Company called a "free contract." This contract was drawn up by the Company with the help of shrewd lawyers. It bound the miners to many things but the Company to nothing, except to pay wages that net the miner about twenty dollars a month.

The men fell over each other to sign this contract. It covers two pages of foolscap paper printed in fine type. Many of the foreign miners could not read it, and few of all who signed it could understand it if they did read it, and they all knew if they did not like it they could not get it changed, and any hesitation on their part to sign it would only result in putting them on the black list, thus throwing them out of work in all the mines in the country. When the men went to sign the contract and go to work, all the leaders in the union, and all who had busied themselves on the relief committee that distributed food to the starving people, were told that there was no place for them, and they had to leave Spring Valley or die in the streets.

The men at work in the Spring Valley mines are now actual slaves, working for less than is required on which to live, and as completely under the lash of their bosses as ever were the Southern slaves. This is not a figure of speech. It is literally true. Some of the men offered to work for the Company if the Company would give them food and clothes, and send their children to school, but the Company refused, for the reason that they now get them to work for less than

subsistence, the miners' wives and children helping them to eke out a living.

I have given you the bare bones of the story, which could be paralleled by many another that might be written of other mines, a story so merciless, so inhuman, so infamous, that many of you will find it hard to believe, and yet Mr. Lloyd has completely proved its truth in every particular.

Now, the interesting question arises: Who is to blame for this case of wholesale starvation in a land of plenty? Certainly not the miners themselves. The priest, the minister, and the newspapers of Spring Valley, witnesses, who for motives of self-interest, would be inclined toward the Company, all agree that the men were unjustly treated. Father Huntington, who went to the place and investigated for himself, concurs in their testimony. The superintendent of the mines, who was a part owner of them, resigned his position, sold out his stock, and, with horror at the brutality of his superiors in the Company, abandoned the place. When the soldiers were ordered to Spring Valley to be ready to shoot the miners when the Company wanted them shot, they saw the true state of affairs and went away, sending back provisions for the starving people when they reached their homes. We thus have the best of witnesses to the worthiness of the miners as a sober, industrious, and peaceful set of persons. The miners were certainly not to blame.

Who was to blame? I will tell you:

The social system is to blame. All the laws on our statute books favor the man-starvers who own the coal mines. Everything that was done at Spring Valley was done according to law. The Governor of Illinois, when appealed to, sided with the Company. Our legislatures are owned by railroads and coal companies. Our whole social system is so constructed that men

may do what was done at Spring Valley, and for what they do be all the more respected. And when I say the social system is to blame, I also mean that every one who upholds that social system is to blame. Every business man, lawyer, doctor, workingman, preacher, or other, who does not raise his voice against the infamous arrangement by which laboring people can be legally sent into mines in a state of slavery, is to blame for the starvation at Spring Valley. You may decide for yourselves whether this arraignment includes you or not.

But it will not do to place the whole blame on so mythical a thing as a social system. The stockholders and officers of the Chicago and Northwestern Railroad, the Spring Valley Mining Company, and the Town Site Company are directly to blame. They deliberately used their \$500,000,000, with its incalculable power, to rob five thousand industrious persons by starvation. The whole thing was carefully planned and brutally carried out, and these stockholders and officers reaped in dollars and cents their price of blood, more hateful, because obtained by darker villainy, than that which Judas earned and afterward had the decency to fling from him, before he had the further decency to hang himself.

And who are the persons who planned or profited by this conspiracy of starvation? On page 16 of his book Mr. Lloyd gives some of their names. Among those names you will find D. O. Mills, William K. Vanderbilt, F. W. Vanderbilt, and Chauncey M. Depew. These men worked through their agent, the Hon. William L. Scott, whose conduct was so outrageous that at the time he was pilloried even by some of the daily papers. No excuse can possibly be framed for these men. They cannot plead ignorance of what was going on, for we know that they are not persons who do not

know what is being done by their agents in their behalf. And if Mr. Lloyd's story is true, their days and nights should be haunted by more ghosts than troubled the dreams of Macbeth or Richard the Third.

What is the remedy for such crimes as Mr. Lloyd has exposed? The crudest mind should be able to see that if wicked and mean men perpetrate crimes by means of infamous laws, the laws which give them their power must be abrogated. But as all laws are rooted and grounded in public sentiment, they can only be got rid of by public sentiment. The remedy will be found if open-minded persons will read such books as Mr. Lloyd's, and keep themselves informed as to what is being done to reduce a people to servitude. This single book ought to produce such a revulsion of feeling against the monstrous millionaires who perpetrated this awful crime that they would be looked upon by all decent people with abhorrence.

If you will read Mr. Lloyd's book I think you will agree with me, that if before long, as many persons believe, this country is to be deluged in the blood of revolution, the catastrophe will be brought on by condoning such crimes as that at Spring Valley; it will be brought on because you and I read such stories as this, and, knowing they are true, straightway forget all about them; it will be brought on because editors and preachers, and others who have the public ear, keep silent through negligence or fear of the rich who misrule the land. If people will not think, if they will not care, you may depend upon it that the price of their indifference will be slavery or war.

TWENTIETH CENTURY.

A 24-PAGE WEEKLY MAGAZINE.

H. O. PENTECOST, Editor. T. L. M'CREADY, Editorial Contributor.

4 Warren street, - - - New York.

A Strike of Millionaires

AGAINST MINERS;

— OR —

THE STORY OF SPRING VALLEY.

By HENRY D. LLOYD.

This book tells how the Spring Valley miners were starved into actual slavery. It is the story of a monstrous and inhuman crime. It deals not with theories but with facts, figures and names.

IT IS A POWERFUL AND PATHETIC BOOK.

264 Pages. Paper, 50 cents; cloth, \$1. Sent post-paid to any address on receipt of price, by

Twentieth Century Publishing Co., New York.
