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EDITORIAL

LIGHTNING-RODS.

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THE official report of the late miners' convention, held in Scranton, Pa., is positively pictorial.

The convention was largely attended, 640 delegates being present. Three anthracite districts were represented. They had gathered as a result of the complete collapse of the expectations, which they had entertained last October, when the Arbitration Commission was established, and which, despite misgivings, they still continued to entertain after the award had been published. They found themselves, on the whole, in a worse condition. In some instances, under the guise of "shorter hours", they found their wages were reduced relatively and absolutely; in others, they found that, under the guise of higher wages, they had to work under greater disadvantages—uncertain hours and more oppressive conditions. And these were the ashen "laurels" of their "victory", which to obtain—"laurels" and "victory"—they had been tricked into "returning to work pending arbitration";—letting slip their capitalist oppressor when they had him by the throat, with the nation behind them, and the revolutionary pulse mounting by leaps and bounds toward the point of returning to the people what belonged to the people, and giving to Caesar what was due to Caesar—THE GRAND BOUNCE. It was under the smart of these feelings that the Scranton convention met, and met to rectify the wrong. Such was the setting to the scene. Now to the scene itself.

There were three star actors. Delegate George Hartlein, Delegate William Tarr, and President John Mitchell in the chair.

Delegate George Hartlein, in addressing the convention, summarized the situation quite graphically; and he summarized his summary with these words:

"I can see a six months' strike in every one of your faces to get what we are entitled to."

The response that this speech met proved that Delegate Hartlein was not a “lone kicker”, a lone “electric spark.” Resounding cheers punctuated his every sentence: it was like heavy claps of rolling thunder, following thick and close upon the electric discharges of the lightning in a storm. That atmosphere was surcharged with electricity—the true electric thrill of the class-conscious instinct of the working class.

The second actor, Delegate William Tarr, contributed in the emphasizing of the situation. In the course of his speech he said, answering Delegate Hartlein:

“We’ve had enough of strike. We’ve had our belly full of it! What we’re here for is to avoid strike. We’re not looking for bother.”

It was a providential test. Weak blows blow over and are scattered into greater weakness by resistance. Strong storms acquire from resistance redoubled strength. The tree, that may absorb and dispel a slight electric discharge, is riven by the thunderbolt. The miners’ convention rose as a man, and smothered the Tarr resistance with the thunderbolt of its protest. “Put him out!” was the mildest term that the correct instinct of the delegates hurled at this speaker, and he sank, undone, in his seat.

The third and last actor was President Mitchell. Tho’ the strongest tree be smitten by an electric storm, few can escape the fatal effect of the silent, placid lightning-rod. President Mitchell played the role. Last October he played it, and he played it now again to perfection—HE RAN THE ELECTRIC SPARK INTO THE GROUND. A committee was appointed to “conciliate”, and the convention adjourned. The storm was over and rolled off. Its potential powers of annihilation for the capitalist usurper were “turned off and under.” As people come out of their houses, where they had lain low and trembling during the raging of a storm outside, and now sniff the air in gladness and safety, so now: The anthracite mine owning scourges of Labor, together with their kin of all trades, breathe in safety. The lightning-rod saved them again.

And yet not for ever. The instinct that guided this Scranton convention in detecting a Tarr, was manifestly stronger than that that they proved themselves guided by last October. They will learn—aye, they will! The Working Class—electric

concentrators—will absorb the teachings, the warnings, aye, even the “scoldings” and the manifestations of “ill temper and impatience” that are proceeding from their Socialist brothers, and that only gather effectiveness with time. That CONVENTION OF LABOR will meet—you may hear its approaching tramp on the air—when the instinct of the Working Class will be so thoroughly awake and full-grown, that the Tarrs will not even be noticed, and the lightning-rods of the Capitalist Class, the labor fakirs, will be broken and melted by the intensity of the electric storm.

Civilization—the dignity of man and woman; the happiness of children; Virtue, Justice and Morality—is breathlessly awaiting that day.

Transcribed and edited by Robert Bills for the official Web site of the Socialist Labor Party of America.
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