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EDITORIAL

“DIFFERENCES”—HOW TO END 'EM.

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THE threatened railway strike in England has been averted. In the language of the dispatches, “the dispute has been settled.” The “settlement” consists in things remaining unchanged, just as they were—the grievances of the employees are unredressed, the policy of the employers is unamended. In all such cases it would hardly do for disputants simply to meet and adjourn. Some concession has to be made to appearances. The concession to appearances in this case consists in an agreement providing for the consideration of disputes by a Board of Conciliation comprised equally of employers and employees. Behind the mask of this “concession” the committees of the disputants adjourned highly elated—the committee of the employees hugging their “lemon,” as the recent slang term goes; the committee of the employers chuckling in their sleeves, as well they may. There is one more item of importance to be gleaned from the despatches. The manipulator of the “happy issue” was the President of the Board of Trade, a Mr. Lloyd-George. The hyphenated name is no immaterial fact in the transaction. It adds zest, besides point, to the position enjoyed in the ruling class by the afore-named manipulator.

It was a British thinker, writing on British soil—Adam Smith—who said: “Whenever the legislature attempts to regulate the differences between masters and their workmen, its counsellors are always the MASTERS.” This was a profound observation. As always happens with profound observations, they are the joint product of a keen mind and of a sufficiency of facts for the keen mind to take a bird’s-eye view of, and generalize upon. It can not be otherwise in the instance of Adam Smith’s observation. The rule of British capitalism must, already in the days of Adam Smith, have furnished instances and facts enough for that great thinker’s mind to digest. The digested thought illuminates the “agreement” just entered into between the railroad employers and employees. It was, all over again, the case of

differences between masters and their workmen being regulated by a counsellor of the masters, with the inevitable result that “lemons” are dealt out to the workmen, and the master remains in peaceful exercise of all his iniquities.

Adam Smith’s observation involves even more than appears on the surface. The attempt to “regulate” differences between “masters and their workmen” can result only in confirming the masters in their methods. It follows that “master” and “workman” are mutually repelling forces. It follows, furthermore, that there is no such “regulation” possible between the two. “Regulation,” in such cases, is but a blind; it is a word meant to conceal the “un-regulatable” character of the “differences.” At best, “masters” and “their workmen” are transitional entities. So long as the transition period lasts, the entities continue; and just so long there is turbulence in society, or “differences,” so-called. Not “regulation” but the “ending” of the “differences” is what society demands, and what society is ripe for.

Society demands an end, once for all, of the periodically recurring farces of “regulation.” It is high time that order be established. Nor can order come except when, not the “masters,” but “their workmen,” are the counsellors over “differences.” The “masters” cannot live without “their workmen,” no more than any other parasites can live without the body they parasite upon—hence, so long as the “masters” are “counsellors,” they are bound to preserve the status of “their workmen,” and that means the continuance of turbulence. The “workmen,” on the contrary, could live in perfect happiness without “their masters,” the same as all other bodies parasited upon can get along swimmingly without the parasites that plague them—hence, the instant the “workmen” become the “counsellors” they will be bound to put the extinguisher on “their masters,” and that would mean the discontinuance of social turbulence, yclept “differences.”

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