
The Pullman Strike:

All Quiet At the Model Town, All Alive: The Model People of a Slave Ranch — Friends to the Rescue — Starvation as a Weapon

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The strike of the employees of the Pullman Palace Car Company, at Pullman, Illinois — P.O. — has now been on for the past twenty days. Apparently the situation is the same as when the men walked out. there has been no attempt to open the works, every day since has been as Sunday. There is no disorder as to peace, there is no spot in the world more peaceful. At Kensington, half mile from Pullman — depot to depot — the men meet daily at Turner Hall, a room with a capacity of perhaps 1,500, donated by the society whose name it bears. Here they talk over their affairs, listen to addresses, and here meets at times the committee of mediation and the committee of relief. Both are presided over by Mr. T. Heathcote, a worker for years in Pullman's employ, a first-class mechanic and a model citizen.

Speaking for the men as a whole, the same impression may apply. Take the world over, pick your spot, then take as you find them three thousand men, and the best selection you can make will not more than equal this community of industrious skilled workmen and model citizens. This is not gush nor padding.

The writer attended a ball there, given by the girls' — our only girls' — union for their benefit. While tickets sold everywhere, poor railroad facilities kept away downtown people, and those who attended were largely the Pullman and neighborhood folk. The hall was comfortably filled, a thousand people perhaps in attendance. Looking at these people, models, well-behaved, yet self-reliant girls, as fine and well-behaved men as could be found anywhere, an intelligence universal, provoked at once pleasure, indignation, and admiration. Pleasure, because in spite of their disagreeable situation, they were enjoying themselves. A community just about penniless, they were making the most of it. Without money or work they were, after years of

bondage, at least free. Indignation, because it was a striking specimen of the power of corporate capital. Here a people who in skill, industry, morals, and intelligence stand second to no other in what we choose to dub the greatest country on earth, thrifty in expenditure, penniless because idle for a few days after working for years and piling up wealth by the millions for one man!

Perhaps that statement contradicts the assertion that these people are intelligent, the reader may say. Intelligence in this age, not connected with the accumulative faculty stands for naught. Not so. The best, the purest, the most brilliant, the talented, the sons and daughters of genius cannot worship money. They may desire it for what it brings, but to oppress and to pile up, never. The men who fashion the rolling palace that bears Pullman's name must love their art. The intellect, the artist's brain that guides the mechanic's tool, must be above the sordid. If wealth were more largely in the hands of those in whom the hog did not so largely predominate, there would be no Pullmans.

Admiration for what? In every good thing that fulsome pen has written of this man, in all that his self-sufficiency, his egotism he has said of or concerning himself, in all that the fulsome satellite knuckling like a slave, inspired by the mean instinct that doffs its bowed head to a dollar has paid him in tribute, the climax of Pullman's ability has not been touched. A man of his ordinary parts, the petty tyrant, happy only at the sight of his groveling kind, living only to gratify the lowest form of avarice, i.e., the sweating of slaves, who could hold in subjection — in some cases for twelve years — a community like which denizens Pullman, for executive ability, for a giant's power to combine the labor and skill of the many for his own benefit, stamps Pullman of itself alone as a little man truly great.

The Pullman people, immediately after the walkout, got together and appointed a relief committee, for from the niggardly pittance received hundreds had to depend on the day's work for that day's bread. They were met at the threshold by an intricate boycott worked through the company's office. The Christian duke, his partner, a millionaire sweater named Marshall Field, and mayhap the endorsement of fleshy female ornament to Great Britain's throne — said to be a stockholder — by the grace of God and the ignorance of her fellows, queen and boss parasite, entered upon a campaign with starvation of the enemy as an end. First the duke, exercising that power exerted by the mere possession of money, got the wholesale grocers to deny

credit to the neighboring retailers' contingent on their crediting strikers. Just here let tribute be paid to a number of firms who, in spite of the decree, declared that they would stand by the men to the last pound of meat.

Then the firm in which Mayor Hopkins and a member came to the rescue as a starter with \$1,500 in provisions. Speaking to the mayor in a grateful vein afterward, the writer said "good boy," or words to that effect, but was immediately informed by Mr. Hopkins that he had made money of that people and they did not owe him anything. Imagine Pullman, Victoria, and Field arguing that way! Mr. Hopkins at one time was a laborer in the duke's employ, worked for him in various capacities nine years — knows him. He is even now endeavoring in the courts to wrest from the duke \$10,000 growing out of transaction between prayers wherein the mayor got it in the neck to that extent. That's one of George's peculiarities. If he gets hold of somebody else's funds and carries it for 24 hours he imagines he howns it. Genius is always eccentric, and George's fads are so built that he realizes many ducats therefrom. His "model" town game is put up that way. Landscape gardening costs less than bricks and masons' wages. Then the Pullman town is all Pullman. He owns the streets, and is down on the assessor's books as half farm and half factory. All Pullman, not a brick of public property. Whenever it suits his royal pleasure he can fence in the streets for cow pasture. The school board is keeping up public school on Pullman property and if George gets mad he can throw out the whole concern. While only a part of Chicago, Pullman had pull enough around to keep the post office, and mail to Pullman, though inside the city limits, dodges the letter carrier and everybody has to call for mail. George had some fellow in the office, at time of consolidation, that he needed.

The Pullman plan of fight on first round is to starve the people to whose work he owes all he has, money, reputation, and church builder. This humane movement is characteristic of the man. To witness the sufferings, the effects of the pangs of hunger as it weakens his victims, will give the great philanthropist occasion for innumerable torchlight processions. They will be the victories over which he will rejoice. us Christians want to convert heathens who would weep at such a spectacle. Better let 'em alone. Even Christ would be dear at the price, if men who consider starvation a legitimate weapon have standing as his followers. But the Pullman people are not yet starved, and the duke's time to laugh has not arrived.

Supplies and help have kept a coming. Nobody is allowed to go hungry. The lowest class of laborers — in pay — are living better now than when they were at work. House rent is free because Mr. P. very wisely does not kick up a row by forcing evictions. Merchants have donated flour, funds, and money. The Trades and Labor Assembly have a relief committee and doing well. Public opinion and sympathy is on the side of the men and Mr. P. gnashes his teeth as he contemplates the certain lengthening of the strike. He will get tire of this someday and make a move. He is in the position in such an event of the man who was damned if he did and was damned if he did not. His other principal shops, St. Louis [Missouri], Ludlow, Kentucky, and Wilmington, Delaware, are not paid decent wages and are in the ARU. His rolling stock, his story to the contrary notwithstanding, is running down, railroad repair shops do not want his jobs, his steel tires are cutting through, need re-turning, and yardmasters will soon order them pulled off. Still other circumstances may conspire to give his palace cars a rest.

There is a move toward arbitration. The [Chicago] Civic Federation, a political and municipal reform association, are trying to settle the affairs. The ARU will arbitrate because public opinion demands it. There is a large number interested, the majority who do not care about any arbitration. Every day the union grows stronger, more far reaching. Every day the duke is losing money and using up his rolling stock. The sentiment in the ARU is that George will make a pretty good example, and when he does tumble, that he will fall hard.

But if he does arbitrate he will run foul of some figures and be called on to explain. The men who made his millions will want to know how a man gets enormously wealthy while losing money. They will want to go into that business themselves. Excluding the wages of foreman, superintendent, etc., the average wages paid at the time of strike was 90 cents a day. These workmen would like to get to losing money to better themselves. Here is the way they figure out his loss and yet account for a 2 percent quarterly dividend.

Pullman bases the necessities for starvation wages by averring that he made a contract to build a lot of cars on which he lost. These cars he agreed to build at \$3,713 each. In good times, when paying 30 cents an hour and finding money at the price, he got \$4,100. The cars cost to build just \$3,700 at 30 cents an hour. He also took a contract for a hundred elevated cars. These and the Staten Island draft are nearly all build.

But Mr. Pullman, whose work was all on his own stock, when there wasn't of dollar of contracts on hand, cut his wages in November last [1893], and worked on the reduced scale up to February, when he made another cut. And furthermore, three-quarters of his work, with a payroll at Pullman even at low wages of \$7,000 a day, is now Pullman work, repairs, palace cars, new and rebuffed and vestibuled palace cars. He has turned his low contract into big money by cutting as well the builders of those cars as repairmen and laundry women, doing work exclusively on the company's rolling stock. It will be seen that his generous building of churches as a blackmail for consideration to be had hereafter in the "sweet bye and bye" does not interfere with his lying and building up confidence games to rob his men.

Meanwhile, all is not said to be lovely at the Pullman offices. Big stockholders, notably Marshall Field, are kicking. They see which way the wind drives and do not particularly desire any Great Northern in theirs.¹

One matter must not be omitted, that is, passing mention of the bosses — the little fellow strutting around like a turkey cock, with an air of importance a yard wide, the nobody who rushes into print with his opinions and identifies himself with the big fish by a title spelled out in full, and who announces in an awful voice that the rebbles must settle through him. These gentlemen are simply dying for fame. It is the insolence of these fellows that is partly responsible for the present. Their arrangement of piecework in such a way that the men lose time, while the company makes nothing, the fellows who, being slow with supplies, can gratify their little malice by keeping whole gangs of men idle for hours.

These fellows must walk the plank. That is the only point on which striker and management are agreed.

George F. Brown, head driver, title General Manager, is the Pullman Legree.² Everybody must cease breathing when he is around. He is a valuable brute, the company appreciates this. He doesn't shine in company, his educational attainments are more than limited, but early in life he got hold of the line, "The noblest study of mankind is man," and setting himself up as a specimen of the race, never got any

¹ Reference is to the Great Northern Railroad Strike, recently won by the ARU.

² Reference is to Simon Legree, vicious slave-owner in Harriet Beecher Stowe's best-selling 1852 novel, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

farther. His ideas thus boxed up grew only in one direction: he knows but two people, "Me and Pullman."

Under this fellow is a sort of Uriah Heep,³ named Middleton. He is very humble, sir, when he doesn't happen to have you by the neck. While a mere figurehead, he sails around as though he owned the shop, and is yet withal so mean-spirited, has so accurately sized himself up, that one might spin in his face and receive his acknowledgment in one of Uriah's smiles. Just now the detectives, the sneaks, are showing up, keeping quiet and making no ostentatious display of badges. These cattle are from one Theil's herd, and their employment, it is said, has offended Pinkerton, who, as a relative of Pullman, naturally wants any man-hunting work that that magnate may have on hand.

Everything looks right at Pullman. Vice-President [George W.] Howard [of the ARU] addressed an enormous audience there last night. They are all in line to stay.

The ARU men and union labor everywhere can give us a life, add a mite to what the good people of Chicago have done, are doing, and are going to do; line up with the labor assemblies here. Anything you can spare will be receipted for by Sylvester Keliher, the general secretary.

Pullman besides his car works, owns a big brickyard, and though not members of the ARU, the workmen walked out last Wednesday. Everybody is for the ARU Pullmanite.

It is truly said that he who reads of the climax of events may lay down the volume ignorant of what the whole really is. The dirty Tory press bears only on the strike itself. If it were advised of the process of evolution under and through which men in whose veins run the blood of the bravest nations of the earth had submitted to plucking by men of the Pullman stripe, and borne for years without resenting the insolence of his groundlings, had eaten without protest at the table with their overworked and prematurely aged children, the strike would read but as an incident; the culminating circumstance, where driven to bay, the freeman of the hour rose superior to the slave of yesterday. It is not a matter of now, a mere pout, but in its coming the conservative drudge of yesterday is backed in a resistance more desperate than the brain of a Pullman can comprehend. It is do or die. If Pullman is to be in the future a rosy-surfaced slave pen, the men who

³ Reference is to the cloying and duplicitous yes-man from Charles Dickens's 1850 novel *David Copperfield*.

stand out today will not fill it. For whatever they may have been, however abject and servile in the past under the lash of monopoly's whip, something has stiffened the backbone, something has struck off the shackles. Many of these men may by inheritance draw from ancestors the spirit — dormant though in their past it may have been — that nerved the forefather to march toward a foe when every step of his naked foot left its impression in blood on the crusted snow, that led him hungry and half naked as though through a bower of roses as to the bridal, to dare the torrent's rage and drive away the obstructing ice floes that hampered the progress of his frail boat as it bore to the land where the throat of the enemy could be found.

Edited with footnotes by Tim Davenport

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