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EDITORIAL

SHADES OF ARTHUR!

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ONE'S breath is knocked clean out—hard to tell whether with joy, or misgivings, surely with amazement—at the move of the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers landing the members into politics—and what politics!

The Brotherhood's decision to support no candidate for municipal office in the approaching city election who, from Mayor down, fails to pledge himself to the Union's demands—such a decision would be wholly lacking of novelty on the part of a craft Union. Decisions of that nature have been made common, common to the point of being the laughing stock of the Labor Movement, through the mock-heroics of the Gomperses. There is that, however, in the decision of the Brotherhood that raises it clean above the ordinary. The Gompersian resolutions on politics were putty: they could be banged into any shape: they meant anything, and everything, and nothing at all: they were fumes, closely clinging to the dead wood of the "Brotherhood of Labor and Capital," never rising above that level. Otherwise with the decision of the Brotherhood. It does not state generalities as the price of its vote: it stipulates concrete payments, and these payments are "horses" of a "color" very different from Capital-and-Labor-Brotherliness. The payments that are stipulated for are that, in the building of the new subways, the organizations of the employees shall be expressly recognized as "the proper authorities to regulate hours, wages and working conditions."

Shades of Arthur!

For nearly a generation the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers was dominated by H.M. Arthur, the Chief whom it elected, and in whose hands it placed its own and the fate of its members. Arthur had the right to call strikes, and declare them off, and settle as he thought proper. A Briton, brought up in the "good old school" of British pure and simple Unionism, Arthur ran the Brotherhood in the interests of the railroad owners—and the brotherly bonds between Arthur and the

railroad owners was vastly closer than the bonds were between him and the Brotherhood, or than he enforced between the members of the same. Proceeding upon these lines, Arthur kept the path clear for the railroad owners to do virtually as they pleased in most matters, and at all crises of importance. The railroad barons held high carnival. Laws regarding couplers, signals, head time, in short, all provisions for the safety of the railroaders, incidentally of “the public” also, were trampled under foot in the interest of dividends for stockholders; and when “the public” grew restive and threatened legislation, Arthur generally saw to it that petitions were forthcoming from the members of his Brotherhood, petitioning in the interests of their masters. The case might be summed up with the tell-tale fact that Arthur grew rich. His pockets bulged with stock from which flowed fat dividends—his share of the transmuted flesh and bone of the railroaders, among them the members of his own Brotherhood, vast numbers of whom were mutilated and even left dead upon the Nation-wide field of railroad exploitation of Labor.

Needless to say, the theory, upon which the Arthur regime proceeded, recognized, as “the proper authorities to regulate hours, wages and working conditions,” the Unions least of all. And now comes Arthur’s own Brotherhood turning the theory upside down; and what is more, it, the craftest of craft Unions, turning the theory upside down for all other employees of the subway industry; and still worse yet, launches into the political arena to enforce the new dispensation.

The Plutocracy of New York city looks as if the sky were falling over their head; and its press is growling a basso profundo. Well they may. Whether the Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers stop short; or whether it proceed along logical lines—discover the impropriety of the half way measure of allowing capitalism to remain standing at the same time that Socialist or Industrial conditions are attempted to be forced upon it, and, so discovering, adjust its organization and enlarge its program to fit the discovery,—either way the move of the Brotherhood is big with sorrows for the class that H.M. Arthur was long a prop of. It is a move fit to shock the gentleman’s shades.

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