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# Despotism vs. Anarchy In Colorado.

By Samuel Hopkins Adams.

(Courtesy of "Collier's Weekly.")

After two months of comparative peace, the strike-troubled Colorado mining region has again been thrown into a state of war, by a dynamite outrage. Early in the morning of June 6 the platform of the railway station at Independence, in the Cripple Creek district, where a crowd of non-union miners were awaiting a train, was blown up by an ingeniously devised infernal machine, twelve men being killed outright and several others fatally injured. Later in the day C. C. Hamlin, of the Mine Owners' Association, an organization of capital formed to fight the unions, was interrupted in an intemperate speech at an open-air meeting in Victor by a revolver shot. Indiscriminate firing followed; two men were killed and a number of others wounded. Two companies of the National Guard being called out were fired upon in the streets, presumably by union miners or their friends. They retaliated by besieging a miners' meeting, driving the crowd to the front of the hall, firing a volley into the mass, and then dragging the men off as prisoners. In another part of the district there was a man-hunt on the mountains with general gun-play and further casualties.

There followed the processes so dismally familiar to the Colorado mining regions; the declaration of martial law, the assumption of the powers of government by the Mine Owners' Association and the Citizens' Alliance, backed by the militia; the seizure of private property, the establishment of "bull pens" for the incarceration of suspects, the wholesale arrests of citizens without warrant, without charges, merely on suspicion; the censorship of the press, the removal of regularly constituted officials under threat, radical subversion of law, and in its place a complete and irresponsible tyranny; what Mr. Ray Stannard Baker, in a recent article in "McClure's Magazine," justly sums up as "a break-down of democracy and, through anarchy, a reversion to military despotism."

Anarchy in its present aspect in Colorado is represented by two opposed elements. On the one side is the Western Federation of Miners, a socialistic body so much more radical in principle and practice than any other labor organization that it seems scarcely fair to class it with the labor unions. This Federation has sought to enforce its will by methods varying from intimidation to organized murder. On the other side is the Mine Owners' Association, formed for self-protection, and not only employing methods hardly less reprehensible than those of which the Federation has set the example, but also using its immense powers and financial resources to corrupt legislation. It has been called "the vicarious government of Colorado," and the phrase has not always been far from the truth. Sometimes the Citizens' Alliance, a sort of vigilance committee, has aided in the work of lawlessness by delegating its assumed powers to the Mine Owners' Association; at other times it has pursued its true vocation of protecting the common interests when legal processes have obviously failed.

Up to the spring of 1903 the Cripple Creek and Telluride districts, which are the storm centers of Colorado's labor difficulties, promised a solution of the mining troubles and an example to other communities of how labor and capital can get together. Through hard-fought strikes they had won to a basis of operations which bade fair to be permanent. But the Western Federation of Miners was not content to leave well enough alone. In the Cripple Creek district were a few non-union mines, running along quietly and peaceably enough. These mines the Federation determined to unionize, and undertook the task by indirect means. If the workers in the

reduction mills and smelters could be brought into the organization, they would then refuse to handle the "scab" product from the non-union mines, which would thus be forced out of business. Attempts to unionize the smelter and mill plants failed. Thereupon the Western Federation of miners forbade its members to work in any mine which shipped ore to the "unfair" smelters or mills. As a result the district was tied up, thousands of men who had been working at good wages, under satisfactory conditions, on a basis which they had won from their employers by a former strike, quit, and hard times began. In one mining camp the union men broke their contract by going out. In none of the camps, it appears, did a majority of the men wish to quit work; but they had no choice and no vote on the matter, for they had delegated their powers to their executive committee, headed by President Moyer and Secretary Haywood, and these men gave them their orders. Here we see the sympathetic strike at its worst. Is it strange that public sentiment was against the faith-breaking miners; that the mine operators were roused to a high pitch of wrath?

Then and there the Mine Owners' Association was formed. First of all, it proposed to open the shut-down mines with non-union labor. To do this it called upon the governor for troops. But the governor said the State had no money to pay the troops. "That will be all right," said the association. "We'll advance the money." And they did. A strange spectacle this, of a State hiring out its militia to the feud of private interests; for it amounted to that. Their employment was not to preserve order, but, as General Sherman Bell, one of the commanding officers, put it, "to do up this anarchistic federation." The soldiers were working for their employer, and the wage-payer was not the State, but the Mine Owners' Association. As for the fact that there had been no disorder to warrant the calling out of the militia, the governor passed that over. That there would be disorder following any attempt to open the mines without adequate military protection needed no proof other than recent history.

For instance, in the previous big strike an order was sent to Denver for 250 rifles and 50,000 rounds of ammunition, signed by the strike leader and written on the stationery of the Western Federation of Miners. I have never heard any claim that this armament was intended for hunting birds. It is, however, a fair guess that part of it may have figured in an attack shortly after on the Smuggler-Union mine. Some of the non-union miners who were working there against the orders of the Federation were shot. The entire body was captured, brutally maltreated, and run out of the county. This weapon of deportation, as the union men were to find out later, could be used by more than one party. The sheriff called for troops, and it was then that a certain State Senator, allied with the Federation, perpetrated this ingenuous telegraphic joke on the governor: "No occasion for troops. Mine in peaceful possession of miners," he wired. He neglected to specify that the miners mentioned were the armed forces of the Federation who had driven out the owners. Later, Collins, the manager, was shot and killed through the window of his house. In another mine two of the officials were blown to pieces by a powder-trap set for them in the shaft. A barrel of dynamite was rolled down upon a building in which "scab" laborers were at work. Arson, explosions and train-wrecking became the common weapons of the strikers. Assaults and mutilations upon independent workers were of daily occurrence throughout the district. As the Federation elected its own ticket, it was generally understood that attacks on non-

unionists could be made with impunity. Sheriff Robertson, of Teller county, who figures in the present outbreak, released a prisoner accused of several particularly flagrant assaults on "scabs" while the legal papers were in process of being made out because "the lawyers were too slow." Magistrates were taught to discriminate always against the "scab" and in favor of the union man. One such object lesson had as its victim Police Justice Hawkins, who at a time when an unarmed non-unionist was in constant peril of his life, discharged several independent laborers who were accused by the Federation of carrying weapons. In open day on the principal street of the town Hawkins was attacked by Federation men, knocked down, kicked, beaten and jumped on. Later he was informed that he "got off easy." By these and hundreds of other violent actions the Western Federation of Miners declared its intention of controlling the situation by whatever means were necessary to that end.

Is it to be wondered at that the Mine Owners' Association would not open its works with "scab" labor until military protection was afforded? So they got their soldiers, and through the summer the mines were operated under constant threats, violence breaking out now in one district, now in another. Always the National Guard was growing in numbers and expense; business in all departments throughout the State was suffering; the mines were running under heavy outlay; and the private citizen was paying the cost of the war. Early in December matters had reached such a pitch that martial law was proclaimed in Cripple Creek; in the beginning of the new year Telluride was also declared in a state of insurrection. Military rule is seldom a benevolent despotism; but here it showed its worst aspect, first, because of the character of the officers in command; second, because the soldiery were not exercising their proper functions of maintaining the peace, but were openly and often illegally acting as the allies of one of the embroiled factions. Men were imprisoned, deported, threatened with death, even, it is claimed, tortured, merely on suspicion. The right of habeas corpus was suspended, striking miners were arrested for lese majeste—viz., speaking ill of the National Guard. The entire staff of the Victor "Record" were arrested and hustled off to the bull pen. To what extent this sort of thing embittered the strikers may be imagined; and they had another and an older cause of complaint; as sound a one, perhaps, as any which the mine owners claimed against them.

One object of the Federation's former fight against the smelters and reduction mills had been to get an eight-hour work-day rule established. Failing this, they got the legislature to pass a law limiting a day's work to eight hours. The law was declared unconstitutional by the Colorado Supreme Court; not only unconstitutional, but "absurd," although the United States Supreme Court, which is not largely given over to absurdities, had upheld the same law in other States. The question of amending the constitution was put to the people and carried by more than 45,000 majority in a total population of 400,000. This amendment made the passage of an eight-hour day mandatory upon the legislature. But lobbyists, loaded with the money of the mining interests, got at the legislature of 1902-1903, and the will of the people was defied. That overwhelming majority of votes counted for less in the government of Colorado than the dollars of the lobbyists. The bill was never passed. This was anarchy by ballot; not as brutal as anarchy by bullet, but in the long run no less murderous. It was a dear victory for the mine owners. Through their lobby they had made their declaration to the Federation: "You need hope for nothing from legal methods; we control the law-making."

The retort was only too obvious; if the lawful process were to fail, the Federation would revert to the unlawful. Thus the situation now stands. In the matter of principle there is little to choose between the two sides; in the present

status the owners seem to have all the best of it. They are in full control in all the troubled districts, and they are using their power ruthlessly, backed by the Citizens' Alliance and employing the National Guard as their instrument. They have, up to the present writing, imprisoned more than two hundred men; exiled as many more, and arranged to drive out still further hundreds of citizens and property owners; looted union stores (for, since they have seized the government, the acts which they permit must be credited to them), captured the books of the Federation, gutted the office of a reputable newspaper whose editorials displeased them, appointed their own officials in place of the elected officers whom they have compelled to resign, threatened to lynch those who have opposed them, and, in short, assumed wholly despotic powers. In one case they even closed down a mine which was peacefully conducting its business with union workmen "to prevent union men from contributing to the lawless strikers." It is their avowed purpose to purge the district of all union laborers. One large body of union men shipped across the border into Kansas and left without food or shelter on the prairie, under threat of death as the penalty for return, has been sent back by the authorities there. It is a fair guess that sooner or later all these exiles will return, and return to fight.

I have referred above to the unfortunate character of the men who are in charge of the National Guard. General Sherman Bell is the commanding officer. He was a Rough Rider under Roosevelt, who pronounced him the "gamest man of a game regiment." A brave soldier he certainly is, but a more dangerous military executive could hardly be found for the present situation. I have quoted him once as showing his point of view of a soldier's duties. Here is another quotation and a recent one:

"One deportation after another will be made until there is no one left who is persona non grata with the alliance and mine owners."

Two other officers who were hastily sent for when the trouble broke out are Colonel Verdeckberg and Major McClelland. A quotation from each will serve to place them.

Colonel Verdeckberg (in the former Cripple Creek strike, where he invaded the courts with his soldiers)—"We are under orders only from God and Governor Peabody."

Major McClelland—"To hell with the constitution; we are not following the constitution."

The civil authorities are, of course, as thoroughly partisan as the military, since they have been put in office by the mine owners and the alliance. One instance will show the methods employed in creating a desired vacancy. Sheriff Robertson, whose former malfeasance in office in aid of the Federation has been referred to, was summoned before a meeting of the Mine Owners' Association shortly after the dynamiting. He was placed before a table on which lay two hempen ropes, coiled and noosed, the insignia of the new government, and told that he must resign. He refused. "We want your place," he was told. "We will take it, either by resignation or otherwise," and one of the coils of rope fell at his feet. He broke down and resigned. Under similar pressure the county judge, county recorder, assistant district attorney, several aldermen, justices of the peace, and other officials have been forced out and sympathizers with the mine owners sworn in in their places.

Because more lives have been sacrificed and bitterer reprisals exacted than in any former outbreak, the present trouble has been generally referred to as the culmination of Colorado's labor war. It is nothing of the sort. It is no more the culmination of the labor war than a pustule is the culmination of small-pox. It is merely a symptom of a deep-lying disease which permeates the whole body politic of the State, and which will not be eliminated until the citizens of Colorado rise and assert their rights over the two forces of lawlessness now battling for control.