

Freedom
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A HISTORY of US

"The Incident of the 6th of July":

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Nothing more dramatic in the History of Labor and Capital is recorded than the Incident of the 6th of July. The forces of the Nineteenth Century are Capital and Labor, united they transform the desert into a garden, in collision they convert the garden into a waste. On the 6th of July, 1892, at Homestead, Penn., the Forces met. The sound of the shock echoed through the labor markets of the world.

In this age we regard the French Revolution with surprise, we wonder at the growth of the power of the mob, we are amazed at the brutality of the people, and we are astonished at the spectacle afforded by the savagery of women. The Incident of the 6th of July affords a parallel in diminutive form, and is pregnant with meaning.

Let us see!

A certain man, who has risen from the ranks of labor by thrift, cleverness, and lucky transactions, has amassed riches. His name is Andrew Carnegie; his fortune is written in the millions. Much of this fortune is invested in steel rolling mills at Homestead. These works cover one hundred and fifty acres of ground; here work four thousand five hundred men. The smoke of the flumes ascend day and night to the god of commerce, and the high price of bread consumes the day wage of the toilers.

Four years ago Carnegie gave \$500,000 to the campaign fund which promised him "protection" or monopoly. Fourteen competing rolling mills have passed away and one hundred acres have been added to the Carnegie plant.

A few weeks since Carnegie's partners decided that men seeking the protection of a union or brotherhood should not be employed at the works. He who sought "protection" denied protection,

As the custom is, the time came when the Employer and Employee should fix the price of wages. The Man asked one dollar more than the Master was willing to pay. "Protection" had poured gold into his strong box, and raised the price of beef, bread, and clothing.

The Wage-giver and the Wage-taker could not agree about the one dollar.

And the works shut down!

The Advisory Committee of the locked-out workmen said: Let there be order! And there was order.

The Master of the mill said: Let there be protection! A fence, twelve feet high, of stout boards mounted on three feet of slag, four miles in length, closed in the works. This fence was bored with holes to allow the passage of a rifle barrel from the inside. It was surmounted with barbed wires, connected with powerful dynamos, so that they could be made alive with electricity. Search lights were mounted at certain points, and nozzles connected with hydrants supplied with boiling water at others. At an excellent point of vantage, a detective camera was set up in order to secure photographs of invaders, for the purpose of prosecution in the courts of law controlled by the Master of the Mill.

So much for the stockade. The Hessians were to be imported. The Master of the Mill said: Hire Pinkerton's men.

A foreign armed force was to settle the question of one dollar in wages.

"We have done our best to preserve order and have succeeded in preserving it. We cannot now, of course, be responsible for anything that may occur in consequence of your action." So said the Advisory Committee to the Sheriff.

It is the morning of July 6. The sun has not risen, the morning star shines in the inverted blue bowl over the silent factory and on the river.

Men watch the coming of the armed deputies—the paid assassins of the Master of the Mill.

It is half-past two in the morning. A scout stationed at Lock No. 1, on the Monongahela River, reports the arrival of two barges in charge of a river steamer. They contain armed men.

Now up—filling the great star-bespeckled bowl—goes the long, sad wail of the steam whistle at the electric light plant.

It is the voice of Labor shrieking to the wage-worker to rise and make haste, for armed Capital is to take possession of the workshop. Flash lights start from many points. The night is over; horsemen dash through the streets of Homestead yelling: "To the river; to the river—the Pinkertons are coming!"

They go to the river.

Half-dressed men and women, boys, girls, and children rush to the river. Each has a weapon—some of

guns, revolvers, knives, heavy irons, and sound sticks. Labor is in arms.

The river steamer Little Bill crowds on steam and speeds to the landing; the mob on the bank races to intercept the armed men. It is a mad race in the morning light. Down come fences and other impediments. When the barges are within one hundred feet of the landing, the advance guard of the mob is on the ground to contest the holding of it.

The mob warned off the armed men: "Don't land or we'll brain you."

Out from the barge came the plank. Every Pinkerton man levelled his Winchester rifle. A few of the bravest of them endeavored to land.

The sight of this infuriated the mob. They rushed forward and attempted to seize the rifles.

One Hugh O'Donnell, a man of character and heroic soul, a mill hand, with three others, hatless and coatless, with their backs to the Pinkertons, in fearful peril of their lives, besought the mob to fall back: "In God's name, " he cried, "my good fellows, keep back; don't press down and force them to do murder!"

A sharp report of a Winchester rifle from the bow of the boat answered him. In an instant there was a sheet of flame—a rain of leaden hail. The crowd fell back a few feet, then advanced, pouring deadly shots into the invading force.

The boat pulled out into the stream.

There were dead men on both sides.

And so ended the first battle of the morning.

When the armed hirelings of Andrew Carnegie poured their deadly volley in the ranks of the men who dared to demand one dollar more on their wages, there were few guns among the people. At the crack of the Pinkertons' first rifle, men rushed to their homes for firearms and prepared for battle in earnest. At half-past six a second attempt at landing was repulsed.

Out on the stream lay the barges. The hot sun beat down upon them and the heat was suffocating. Pinkerton's men needed air. Rats require that. They started to cut air holes, but the bullets of the mob on shore were too much for them. They decided that hot air was better than bullets.

An attempt was made to fire the barges by pouring burning oil on the river, but fortunately this terrible ordeal was spared the Pinkertons.

Hugh O'Donnell, cool headed and brave, constantly endeavored to hold the men in check. No one more

than he wanted the rights of the men to triumph, but he did not wish those rights to be steeped in human blood. He was talking to them when over the barge a fluttering white flag told the story that the Pinkertons sought for terms.

The spokesman of the Pinkertons announced that they would surrender if assured of protection from the mob.

They landed. Their arms were taken from them. With heads uncovered, to distinguish them from the mill hands, they passed along between two rows of guards armed with Winchesters. There were two hundred and fifty Pinkertons in line. And so those who came to hold the Carnegie mills were led trembling away to the lock-up.

Silently, sadly, and filled with fear, the disarmed Pinkertons, some bleeding, with bedraggled clothing, haggard and pale-faced, walked between their captors. Some held small bags with clothing. Alongside crowded the surging mass of hard-fisted men hurling epithets at them. For some time they walked thus, hoping for the shelter of the jail.

Now woman comes to the front!

One snatched a bag, tore from it a white shirt and waved it. This action was almost a signal to the brigade of women. They seized every bag and scattered the contents. With yells and shouts the crowd cheered the women. There was a fine humor here; to scatter the clothing of those who had come to scatter them.

Another woman threw sand into the eyes of a Pinkerton and cut him with a stone. Then, in spite of the guards, the women cast stones and missiles at the unprotected Pinkertons. The guards hurried them over the unlevel ground to the jail.

There they were a sorry lot. Cut, bruised, with eyes knocked out, with noses smashed, the invading, conquered army escaped death in the jail. So ended an expedition of two hundred and eighty men, armed with Winchesters, and supplied with provisions for three months.

And behind the high board fence, with the barbed wires charged with electricity, rest the mill hands waiting the developments of the future.