
T.V. Powderly and the Knights of Labor

by Eugene V. Debs

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For 14 years T.V. Powderly had been the General Master Workman of the great order of Knights of Labor, up to the time that he voluntarily laid down the trust at Philadelphia, and during the entire period Mr. Powderly gave his great abilities unstintedly to the cause of labor education. He had a lofty ideal. He believed in the vast mind forces, laying practically dormant, in the great body of American workingmen. This latent, unexerted force he sought to arouse, bring into action, unify and harmonize for the good, not only of labor, but of society at large. Education was first, last, and all the time his theme, his inspiration. He was always in the van of the marching hosts. A pathfinder, he was forever blazing out new pathways to higher elevations. Never content with a slow, ambling, hesitating gait, he strode forward, for to his vision the goal was always in sight. And it should be said, without reference to the cohesiveness or the disintegration of the order of the Knights of Labor, Mr. Powderly won victories all along the line. He sent forth an army of new ideas, new forces, which are still on the warpath and are achieving ceaseless victories for the right.

Goldsmith said those who think govern those who toil, and Powderly's mission was to set toilers to thinking that they might govern themselves. There may be blear-eyed croakers who are unable to discover the fruitage of the educational nuts Powderly had planted, but that does not count. They have taken deep root in thousands of minds, and although Mr. Powderly is no longer General Master Workman, he is not less an educator and a force and a factor in the conquering ranks of labor. In saying this of Mr. Powderly we institute no parallel between him and others who are engaged in the same laudable work. All honor to the courageous men as captains, lieuten-

ants, or privates in the ranks of labor who have ideas, convictions, and the courage to express them. They are the salt of the earth. Living, they challenge the admiration of men whose good opinion is worth having, and, though dead, their great words and generous deeds are invincible.

The Magazine, without regard to organization, delights in commending men of the Powderly type. They are not infallible nor free from mistakes, because they are human, for human mistakes are within the realm of human remedies, and when made in the cause of human progress they are near of kin to truth and all manly virtues, and men are often to be beloved, if not canonized, for the enemies they have made. In the future, and in the near future, we, with thousands of others, will expect to hear Mr. Powderly's voice ringing along the lines of organized workingmen.

Edited by Tim Davenport

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