LABOR AGITATOR

The Story of ALBERT R. PARSONS

by

ALAN CALMER

International Publishers .. 35c

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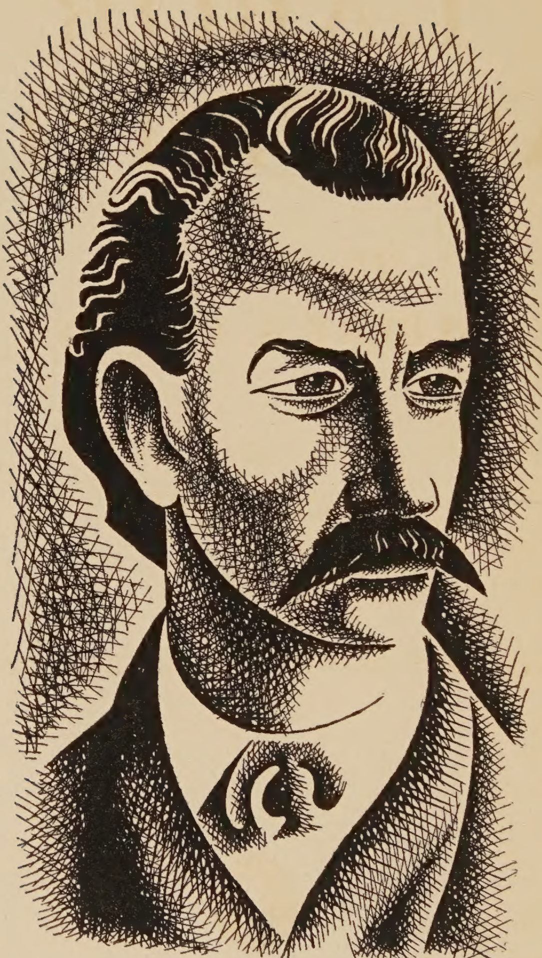

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BY

ALAN CALMER

HAYMARKET DRAWINGS BY MITCHELL SIPORIN

INTERNATIONAL PUBLISHERS

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FOREWORD

A Letter from Mrs. Parsons

I have read the manuscript of your forthcoming book on Albert R. Parsons and the early labor movement in Chicago. The manuscript shows painstaking care, and elucidation so much needed for the enlightenment of this generation.

Of course the part that interested me most was your description of the Haymarket meeting, the trial so-called, and the death of the martyrs, November 11, 1887.

You have dug beneath the mountain of lies that has been heaped upon my husband and his comrades these fifty fleeting years, and without any attempt at "over" writing, have given the bare, cold facts, taken from the record, and proving that they were innocent of any bomb-throwing, and were simply lynched!—to satisfy a howling mob of greedy capitalists, who would not be satisfied with less than their lives, who somehow thought by hanging those labor leaders they could crush the labor movement. "What fools these mortals be."

They have always tried to crush the labor movement in this way, but in vain. Eugene Victor Debs was imprisoned because he dared to raise his voice against the war craze of the capitalists in 1914. There was Big Bill Haywood, who had to flee the country of his birth and die in the land of promise—Soviet Russia. Then there is Tom Mooney, pining away his valuable life behind prison bars because the rich utility barons demand it. On "Memorial Day" of this year the bosses and police repeated what they had done fifty years ago—they killed

four workers, and wounded many others, at the Republic Steel Corporation plant in south Chicago. . . .

I hope and believe your book will have a wide circulation; appearing as it will on the eve of the fiftieth anniversary of the martyrdom of the Chicago labor leaders will lend great interest, besides there is so much fine labor history in it that this generation should know.

LUCY E. PARSONS.

September 24, 1937.

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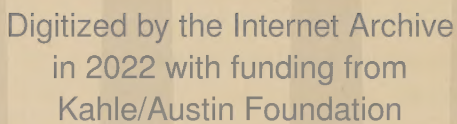
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I. TEXAN BOYHOOD

Albert Parsons' ancestors fought for religious liberty in England and were among the pilgrim fathers of Massachusetts. Early in the seventeenth century, five brothers bearing the family name landed on the shores of Narragansett Bay. In the centuries that followed, their descendants helped to establish and build the American nation.

The first Parsons to attain renown was "Uncle Jonathan," as he was reverently, and affectionately, called. He was an old Puritan, strong-minded and passionate, second only to his friend, George Whitefield, among the revivalist ministers of the day. Like Albert Parsons of Haymarket fame, old Jonathan was something of a traveling agitator: his preaching tour, on which he delivered open-air sermons to eager audiences, horrified the conservative-minded clergymen of New England.

Liberty-loving Jonathan could not endure British tyranny. According to one story, he denounced the English oppressors from his pulpit and, in the very aisles of his church, mustered a company which marched to Bunker Hill—where another Parsons lost his arm in the famous battle of the Revolution.

Jonathan's son was Major-General Samuel Parsons, one of the first members of the Patriot party and the revolutionary Committee of Correspondence in Connecticut. As early as 1773 the General despatched a letter to Agitator Sam Adams, urging that a continental congress be held. "The idea of inalienable allegiance to any prince or state," he wrote, "is an idea to me inadmissible; and I cannot but see that our ancestors, when

they first landed in America, were as independent of crown or king of Great Britain, as if they never had been its subjects."

General Parsons fought in a number of Revolutionary battles. He helped plan the expedition which led to the capture of Fort Ticonderoga by Ethan Allen and the Green Mountain boys. He saw heavy fighting at Long Island, and then at Harlem Heights and White Plains. He served under General Washington in New Jersey. Later the commander-in-chief placed him in charge of the entire Connecticut front, depending upon him for the defense of the state. He gave battle to the British at Norwalk, forcing them to retire in confusion.

After the war, General Parsons was appointed first judge of the Northwest Territory. Although he was past fifty, he became a frontiersman, traveling back and forth. One day his canoe overturned in the rapids of the Big Beaver river and he was drowned.

Samuel Parsons, a namesake of the Revolutionary general, left New England early in 1830. He married Elizabeth Tompkins, and together they trekked down the coast to Alabama. They set up a shoe and leather factory in Montgomery. Here Albert R. Parsons was born June 20, 1848, just after the Mexican war. His father was one of the outstanding figures in the community and was highly respected as a public-spirited citizen; he led the temperance movement in the state.

Albert's mother also came of pioneer stock. One of her ancestors had been a trooper in General Washington's bodyguard, serving under him at Trenton and Brandywine, weathering the privations of Valley Forge, and helping to drive the Hessians out of New Jersey. Like her husband, she was a devoutly religious person, loved by her neighbors as well as by her ten children.

At least this was the picture which Albert's eldest brother, William, gave him of his parents. He retained

only the flicker of an impression of his mother, who died when he was still a baby. And before Albert was five his father followed.

Albert went to live with his brother's family, whose home was on the Texan frontier. In later years he treasured the remembrances of his boyhood, spent near the border. Life on the Texas range during the eighteen-fifties was an adventurous affair. Indian raids and outlaw attacks were things of the present. Buffalo and antelope ran over the plains. While still a boy, Albert became an expert rifle-shot; he always remembered the praise he had won for his marksmanship and hunting luck, as well as his skill in riding the fiery Mexican mustangs. He thought often, too, of days spent on his brother's farm in the valley of the Brazos river, so far away from the next house that he couldn't hear the barking of their neighbor's dog or the crowing of the cock.

When he was eleven, Albert was sent to Waco city, to live with his sister's family and to get some schooling. He was soon apprenticed to the Galveston *Daily News*. It was an honor to be employed by the biggest and most influential paper in the state, his brother wrote to him; especially, he added, when it was edited by Mr. Willard Richardson. His brother, who had run a small paper of his own in Tyler city, always spoke with reverence of Richardson, the leading Texan editor of the time.

Albert worked on the paper as a printer's devil and as a news carrier. Running through the streets of the town, making new friends and acquaintances every day, he soon changed from a frontier boy into a city youngster.

II. WITH THE CONFEDERATE ARMY

A FEW years later the Civil War broke out. Albert and the people he knew were greatly agitated. The city whirled with excitement. Meetings were held, speeches were made. Civic spokesmen called for action.

Albert's employer, old "Whitey" Richardson—who looked like a conventional portrait of the Southern gentleman—was a leader of the secession movement. He carried on a vigorous campaign against his political enemy, Sam Houston—conqueror of Santa Anna and father of the Texan Republic. Houston hoped the civil conflict could be averted and the Union preserved; but when Texas joined the Rebels, he was deposed as governor of the state.

All of Albert's friends were rabid Confederates. They got together to make plans—they wanted to get into the fighting before it would all be over. Carried away by the war fever, the young Texans immediately organized a local volunteer company, which they named the Lone Star Grays. Albert was only thirteen, and was very short compared to the rangy natives, but he wiggled his way into the infantry squad.

Of course the whole thing was nothing more than an exciting adventure to him. He was too young to wonder about the real reasons behind secession and, besides, if he did have any ideas about it they were merely carbon copies of "Whitey" Richardson's opinions. Everybody Albert knew was a hot partisan of the Confederacy; his circle of acquaintances did not include any of the followers of Sam Houston, nor did he know any of the numerous German abolitionists who populated the state and who valiantly opposed the slaveowners.

When the war started, Federal garrisons withdrew from the Texas forts and fled toward the sea coast at Indianola, intending to embark for Washington. They were immediately pursued by the local Confederates.

Albert's company, the Lone Star Grays, converted the *Morgan,* a passenger ship, into a cotton-clad and joined in the chase. Protected by the breastworks of cotton piled on the deck of their improvised gunboat, they steamed into the Gulf and cut off the escape of some Union troops.

Texas, however, was far removed from the center of hostilities. Many of the young men thought they would never get into the fight if they stayed at home; so they formed independent companies and proceeded eastward to the battle zone.

Albert decided he would join the Rebel army, too; he made up his mind to leave for Virginia and serve under Lee. But when he asked his guardian's permission, old "Whitey" took hold of his ear and ordered him to remain at home.

Looming over young Albert, Richardson lectured his apprentice. "It's all bluster, anyway," he told him. "The war will be ended in the next sixty days, and I will be able to hold in my hat every drop of blood that's shed."

That settled it. Albert just had to get into action before it was all over. He had no way of traveling to Virginia, but he took "French" leave and joined his brother, Richard, who captained an infantry company at Sabine Pass, on the Texan coast. Albert drilled with the soldiers and served as a powder monkey for the artillery.

One day he learned that the Federals were sending a transport army to invade Texas by way of the Pass. The Federal fleet, led by two gunboats, came up the channel, bombarding the Rebel fort. Holding their fire until the enemy was about twelve hundred yards away, the Texans opened a counter-attack. The third round of shot penetrated the steamdrum of the leading gunboat and she hoisted the white flag. The guns of the fort were then trained on the other: a shot carried away the tiller rope; the vessel grounded. The transports turned around

and went back to New Orleans. Not a man had been lost on the Confederate side.

When the Union army invaded once more, it was under the command of General Banks, who made for the mouth of the Rio Grande. He landed on the coast and hoisted the Union flag on Texan soil. Meanwhile, Albert had joined a cavalry detachment stationed on the west bank of the Mississippi. It was led by his eldest brother, known to his soldiers as "Wild Bill" Parsons.

They fought a number of battles with the Federal troops along the Mississippi. Albert became a member of the renowned McInoly cavalry scouts. He was with his brother's brigade when General Banks' forces, retreating down the Red river, were attacked by Parsons' dismounted cavalrymen who, armed only with rifles, charged the ironclad gunboats of the Union fleet at Lane's Landing.

By the time he was seventeen, after serving four years in the military, Albert took part in the last skirmish of the Civil War, occurring just before news reached the state of Lee's surrender at Appomattox.

III. SCALAWAG

At the close of the war, Albert returned to his home in Waco. All the property he owned was a good mule—but it proved to be quite a valuable possession. He ran into a man who had to get out of the state in a hurry; the man had forty acres of corn in his field standing ready for harvest; Parsons traded the mule for the corn.

Then he rounded up a number of Negro slaves and offered them regular farmhands' wages if they would help him reap the harvest. They jumped at the opportunity, for it was the first salary they had ever received.

He made enough out of the sale of the corn to pay for half a year's tuition at the local university, which he

had long dreamed of attending. There he studied moral philosophy and political economy.

His instructors, and everybody else who knew him, liked Albert. He was wild as a buck when he returned from the front—but so were all the young Texans. He moved in the best society and was welcome wherever he went. To his neighbors he was a clean-cut, gritty, pleasant and—considering everything—a well-mannered young man.

By the time he was twenty, however, something happened which was to suddenly end his popularity. He had begun to think for himself, and he found it impossible to accept many Southern conventions that he had formerly taken for granted. Working as a typesetter didn't give him much of a chance to tell people about his new convictions—but it did increase his desire to do so. Since these new beliefs were decidedly unorthodox, there was no place where he could put them into print; so he started a small weekly paper of his own, calling it the *Spectator*. In it he advocated the support of the Reconstruction measures granting civil rights to the Negroes.

Part of the reason for arriving at this conclusion was very personal. "I was strongly influenced in taking this step," he later wrote, "out of respect and love for the memory of dear old 'Aunt Easter,' then dead, and formerly a slave and house-servant of my brother's family, she having been my constant associate and having personally raised me, with great kindness and a mother's love."

In the main, however, his new, humanitarian convictions had grown out of his reading and independent thinking, based on what he saw and heard during the years after his return from the war. He had found that in spite of the defeat of the Confederacy, the old slave-owners—thanks to President Johnson's proclamation of amnesty and pardon—were back in power. Things hadn't changed very much. Many of the Negroes continued to

work for their former masters; most of the landowners even believed that slavery would be perpetuated. During this period, Negro suffrage was shelved. At first Parsons had more or less accepted the situation, but he was shocked by several incidents in which Negroes, demanding their freedom, were hounded by his neighbors.

When the Radical Republicans were victorious in the Congressional elections of '66, drastic changes took place. As in other rebel states, the conservative government of Texas was swept away. General Sheridan, appointed commander of the "Fifth Military District" which included Texas and Louisiana, set up Radical-Military rule. Carpetbaggers as well as native loyalists organized the Negroes into Union Leagues. Radical Republican papers, usually edited by Southerners who were sneeringly called scalawags, sprang up in the state and clamored for Negro rights.

This was the wave which caught Parsons; his paper was started in Waco for this purpose. The *Spectator* appeared in 1868, during the tensest moment of the Reconstruction struggle in Texas, after Sheridan had been forced out by President Johnson and succeeded by General Hancock, a Democrat whose sympathies were with the Southern planters. The latter organized guerrilla gangs terrorizing the new freedmen and intimidating the Republicans. Out of these early groups rose the spectre of the Ku Klux. Bands of giant horsemen, shrouded in white, raided Negro settlements, whipped and even murdered their victims.

It was during this critical time that Parsons first tried his talents as an editor. He became a Republican, went into politics. He took to the stump, upholding the right of Negro suffrage. The Reconstruction acts had been passed and the Negroes had their first chance to vote in Texas. The enfranchised slaves came to know and idolize Parsons as their friend and champion.

Naturally these new activities cut Parsons off from

most of his former friends. His army comrades cursed and threatened him. He was branded a heretic, a traitor, a renegade. His life was endangered. Since his arch enemies made up most of the reading audience in Waco, there was no chance of continuing with the *Spectator*, and it soon expired.

Nevertheless, he continued his newspaper work. He became a traveling correspondent for the Houston *Daily Telegraph*, which had been a conservative paper before the Republicans carried the state. This new job took him on a long trip through northwestern Texas, on horseback.

While he was in Johnson county, where he had once lived with his brother's family, he met an attractive young girl of Spanish-Aztec descent. She lived in a beautiful section of the country near Buffalo creek with her uncle, a Mexican ranchero. Parsons lingered in the neighborhood as long as he could; three years later he returned to marry Lucy Eldine Gonzalez.

Shortly before his marriage he became a minor office holder under Grant's administration. He served as reading secretary of the Texas State Senate, of which his brother William was a member, and later as chief deputy collector of the U. S. Internal Revenue at Austin. In 1873, when the Republicans were defeated in the state elections, he resigned and joined a group of Texan editors in a tour which took him as far east as Pennsylvania. In the course of the trip he decided to settle in Chicago. He wrote to his wife, who joined him at Philadelphia, and together they reached the Windy City late in the summer of 1873.

IV. CONVERSION

Just as Parsons and his wife reached Chicago, the crisis of '73 struck the nation.

Ever since the war, huge factories had been changing

the urban skyline. Industrial capital was on the make. Armies of workers streamed into manufacturing centers. Mass production became the order of the day. Trade unions expanded. Profits skyrocketed. Prosperity soared.

Then came the crash. Early in the fall of '73—financial panic! The price of securities, which had risen to new highs during the boom years, suddenly collapsed. The wave of feverish speculating and inflation was over.

Old houses folded up. In September the firm of Jay Cooke, monetary pillar of the states, shut its doors. There was consternation in Wall Street. After several wild days the Stock Exchange closed down. Meeting with financiers, the President urged a moratorium to stem widespread disaster. There was a run on the Union Trust. Banks were besieged by frenzied depositors. In Chicago, on a "black Friday," five big banking institutions—beginning with the Union National, largest financial concern outside of New York—were suspended. Life savings were swept away.

Economic distress spread through the land. Bewildered workers straggled out of factory gates. They hung disconsolately around public squares. The spectre of unemployment drifted along the streets of American cities.

Layoffs. Wagecuts. Strikes. Evictions. Breadlines. Starvation. Street demonstrations against poverty—met with clubs and bullets.

Parsons, however, was lucky enough to land a job as soon as he got to Chicago. After subbing for a while on the *Inter-Ocean,* he became a regular typesetter for the *Times.* He joined Typographical Union No. 16.

It was a hard winter. In Chicago, tens of thousands who had helped rebuild the city after the great fire, were thrown out of work. Along the wide avenues, swept by the freezing winds of the lake, children cried for bread, for shelter. Meetings of unemployed workers formed spontaneously. They paraded through the streets holding

ragged banners, with BREAD OR BLOOD scrawled in big black letters. Public attention was directed toward the needs of the poor.

A procession marched on the Relief and Aid Society to appeal for help, but a committee elected by the demonstrators was refused an audience. Several years before, over a million dollars had been contributed to the Society for the victims of the fire. Labor organizations now began to agitate for an accounting of the large sums collected. They charged the Society with speculation and misuse of funds.

Parsons followed the case in the newspapers. He was puzzled by the campaign of abuse directed against the protesting labor groups: they were denounced in the daily press as "Communists," "Loafers," "Thieves," "Cutthroats."

He wondered what was behind the whole thing. He decided to look into the matter; what he found convinced him that the complaints were justified. Then why did the press and pulpit vilify the labor bodies that made the charge of corruption? He was quick to see the parallel between the Chicago situation and the way his Texan neighbors had treated the Negroes. It was the rulers against the slaves, whether wage or chattel. In his own way, through his own experience, he was beginning to glimpse the shape of the modern class struggle.

Parsons stopped at street corners to listen to the "agitators." He went to labor meetings. He wanted to understand the new problems which the crisis was pushing forward. He found that the small band of Socialists in the city were the only ones who seemed to know the answers to the problems he wanted to solve. They seemed to know exactly why and how poverty could root itself in the middle of great wealth and plenty.

But he found it hard to understand the Socialists. Most of them were Germans. He couldn't read their paper, couldn't get hold of more than a pamphlet or two

in English. These were hardly enough to solve the new problems cascading through his mind.

For several years, as the depression slid downward, he became more and more concerned over the "labor question." One of the new products of the crisis was the emergence of "tramps" as they were called, not hoboes but educated men, skilled workers looking for jobs. He encountered legions of them in the streets of the city. And police squads guarded the depots, turning away new "vagrants" who migrated from other centers in search of work.

One spring evening, near Market street, Parsons was given a handbill. It announced a mass meeting at the Turner Hall on West Twelfth street. P. J. McGuire, of New Haven, it said, who was making a lecture tour under the auspices of the Social-Democratic party of North America, would be the leading speaker and would discourse on the crisis, its cause and remedy.

When Parsons reached the hall, it was packed. Someone was talking, but Parsons recognized him as a local agitator.

Just before eight o'clock, a group of men walked briskly through the hall. People in the audience clapped. The main speaker had arrived. Tired and dusty, he stepped to the platform.

Parsons listened to a moving address, delivered with the warm, lyrical eloquence of the Irish.

"We have come together without bands of music or waving banners," McGuire began, dusting his sleeves as he got under way. "We have no money to hire polished speakers or to prepare great demonstrations. But we have come with something more than these—we have come with the truth in our hearts, and the truth must surely prevail. . . .

"Shall I recount all the wrongs against the workingman? I could as well describe the separate stones which

compose the Alleghanies or the number of sands on the ocean beach. . . .

"The workingman labors with all his strength, not for himself and those rightly dependent upon him, but for every mean despot who has money in his pocket and no principle in his heart.

"I am a stranger to many of you, but one cause has made us brothers. Together we must lift the burden of poverty and oppression from the shoulders of the working class. . . ."

His earnestness stirred the crowd. Parsons listened intently.

At the end of the meeting McGuire got up and urged them to join the party. As Parsons passed out of the hall he turned in his name.

The affair was so successful that McGuire spoke again the following day, in the old Globe Hall on Desplaines street. He talked for only a short while, so there was time for questions and discussion. This was Parsons' chance. Perhaps he would now get an authoritative answer to some of the problems consuming his thoughts.

He jumped up. His clear, ringing voice cut through the hall. Everybody turned toward him. He was well-dressed, distinguished. His long, black hair brushed back, his waistcoat buttoned high, his body slim and wiry, the eyes alert and smiling, the long curve of his moustache neatly trimmed—Parsons commanded attention.

"Do I understand, sir," he said, with a certain dignity, "that in the cooperative state, so ably outlined by the speaker, all persons will share and share alike regardless of what they produce?"

A ripple of voices spread through the hall. It was an important question. Others must have been wondering about it.

"Do I understand," he continued, his tone sharpening, "that your party is for a whack-up-all-around institu-

tion, in which the parasite will find a loafers' paradise at the expense of the industrious worker?"

He sat down. Spots of applause broke through the audience. People talked to each other excitedly. They waited with impatience for the answer.

It was a stock question for McGuire. It had been asked of him so many times, he had explored the issue so often, that his reply by now was nearly flawless. Attracted by Parsons' striking voice and confident bearing, he phrased his remarks with particular care, directing his answer straight to Parsons, speaking as if they were alone in a room together.

The Social-Democratic party, he pointed out skilfully, wished only to nationalize the land and the instruments of production and exchange. Such a reorganization of society was in the interests of the workingman, who would be rewarded with the just value of his labor. As for the idler, and that included the capitalist, he would have to pitch in and do his share—or starve.

McGuire handled the whole thing adroitly. Parsons was fully convinced. And it won the approval of others in the audience. From that time on, the English section of the Social-Democratic party in Chicago thrived.

V. SOCIALISM IN THE 'SEVENTIES

PARSONS joined the Social-Democratic party during a period when unity was the central issue of the labor movement. In the spring of '76 the party sent delegates to a congress which was called for the purpose of consolidating all the labor forces in the country. The conference was also attended by other socialist groups and by members of the Knights of Labor. However, the gathering was split largely between socialists on the one side and greenbackers, with their money-reform schemes, on

the other. They couldn't agree on a program and, when the sessions were over, unity had not been accomplished.

Nevertheless, the get-together did a lot of good: it paved the way for uniting the various socialist factions, including the Social-Democratic party to which Parsons belonged, into a single organization. During the summer, this fusion was effected. Radicals of various brands—made up chiefly of followers of Lassalle (political reformists who were indifferent to trade union action) and members of the old First International (who stressed the importance and need of trade union organization which, they pointed out, was the way in which the proletariat as a class carried on its daily struggle against capital)—met in Philadelphia and organized the Workingmen's party of the United States.

"Political liberty without economical independence being but an empty phrase," the constitution adopted at the congress read, "we shall in the first place direct our efforts to the economical question." Participating in politics was not to be thought of until the movement was "strong enough to exercise a perceptible influence, and then in the first place locally in the towns or cities, when demands of a purely local character may be presented."

This stand was largely a victory for a small group of First Internationalists, headed by Marx's friend, Sorge. However, McGuire, who led the Social-Democratic party delegates, won a concession for his adherents: he moved that the executive committee be given the power to permit local election campaigns wherever advisable.

It was decided that the executive committee should be located in Chicago; and Philip Van Patten, who lived in the city and whom Parsons knew, was later elected national secretary. Candidates who belonged "to no political party of the propertied class" were admitted into the Workingmen's party, although it was decreed that "at least three-fourths of the members of a section must be wages-laborers."

Parsons followed the news of the convention in the pages of the *Socialist,* edited from New York; by decision of the "Union" congress, held at Philadelphia, this newspaper was now changed to the *Labor Standard,* and became the English organ of the new Workingmen's party. One of the treats in the paper was the poetic efforts contributed regularly by John McIntosh. Parsons, who was very fond of verse and could recite reams of it from memory, soon added McIntosh's long "socialistic ballad" on "The Tramp" to his repertoire:

> *We canvassed the city through and through,*
> *Nothing to work at—nothing to do;*
> *The wheels of the engines go no more,*
> *Bolted and barred is the old shop door;*
> *Grocers look blue over unpaid bills,*
> *Paupers increase and the poorhouse fills.*

He was overjoyed to find an English paper which saw things through the eyes of the workers, especially since the Chicago sheets continued to castigate the Socialists, dubbing them "Robbers," "Loafers," "Tramps," "Bandits."

The capitalist press angered Parsons beyond endurance. As he walked home from work, he felt an overwhelming desire to shout to the workers on the street, to tell them the truth about the class struggle, to carry to them the message of the Workingmen's party. Outside of John McAuliffe, there was no decent English mass speaker in the Chicago section and, while Parsons admired his impetuous rhetoric, McAuliffe was inclined to be a bit wild and incoherent.

Soon Parsons was making use of the experience he had gained on the stump in Texas. His resonant voice and his good presence quickly made him one of the very best agitators in the city. He spoke whenever and wherever he could: in parks, in vacant lots, on street corners, in halls and private houses. But the crowds were rather

small. Often, after putting up posters and handing out leaflets, and speaking, he had to give his last nickel to pay for the hall rent and, late at night, walk all the way home—and to work early the next morning.

Just before the Philadelphia "Union" congress was held, and the Social-Democratic party merged into the Workingmen's party, Parsons helped to work out an excellent idea for their local July Fourth picnic. Parsons was unable to be there himself—he had to speak at a meeting sponsored by Knights of Labor in Indianapolis —but the idea worked out very well.

After parading through the Chicago streets, the Socialists gathered around the platform at Ogden Grove, their picnic grounds. Later in the day Van Patten arose and, on the hundredth anniversary of the American Revolution, read the Chicago Workingmen's Declaration of Independence, paraphrased after the original:

"... We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal, that they are endowed with certain inalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty and the full benefit of their labor...."

It was a good stunt. After the new Declaration was read, in both English and German, the three thousand listeners, with cheers and loud applause, adopted it unanimously.

As Parsons became more active, he was perplexed by the squabbling which took place among the Socialists, who had all joined the Workingmen's party. There seemed to be two groups of extremists. Merging into one party had evidently not dissolved the differences between the warring factions. One still demanded immediate participation in politics, while the other, which had come out on top at the "Union" congress, was against such activity. However, the former refused to give up its aims and soon took its first political steps.

In New Haven, the political activists won Van Pat-

ten's permission to nominate local candidates. Their example was followed in other cities. Early in 1877, a Chicago group decided to enter the city spring elections. Without consulting anybody, they held a mass meeting and passed a resolution to that effect. Although angered by this highhanded move, their opponents decided not to oppose it, because they wanted to avoid a split in the party. Only one candidate was nominated—Parsons, for alderman of the fifteenth ward. The party ticket stressed chiefly demands of an immediate local character, such as abolition of the contract system on city works, better hours and wages for city employees, etc.

Concentrating upon the fifteenth ward, which was in a working-class section, the party "imported" canvassers from other parts of the city, worked day and night and, when the count was taken, polled four hundred votes—one-sixth of the total cast in that ward. It was something of a moral if not a political victory.

VI. THE RAILROAD UPRISING

July, 1877. The great depression nosed downward, hit rock bottom. Even employed workers got barely enough for food. They grew sullen, desperate.

The railroads posted a notice of another wagecut. Accumulated resentment rose, brimmed over. Spontaneous protests broke out; a "striking mania" sped along the railway lines of the nation.

A running battle took place in Baltimore. With fixed bayonets, troops marched to the depot. Beleaguered by an indignant crowd, the soldiers fired volleys into the throng, shooting workers straight through the heart.

In Pittsburgh, factory hands turned out to help the railroad men. They took over the switches; the trains couldn't move. Almost the entire city supported the strikers. "Butcher" Hartranft, governor of the state, sent

"hussars" from Philadelphia. They attacked the people: scores were killed and wounded. The enraged citizens drove the troops into a roundhouse, seized arms and ammunition and counter-attacked. The besieged soldiers had to shoot their way out of the city.

A regiment in Reading, made up almost wholly of Irishmen, fraternized with the strikers. "The only one we'd like to pour our bullets into is that damned Bloodhound Gowen," they said, referring to the notorious coal and rail magnate, who had smashed the miners' union.

U. S. regulars swept through strike-ridden Pennsylvania. Marines were landed. Troop trains with gatling guns—mounted on gondola cars in front of locomotives—pushed through the state. "Give the strikers a rifle diet for a few days and see how they like that kind of bread," were the instructions of "King" Scott, railroad president. The press howled, raved, ranted; the pulpit ran a close second with its abuse. Only after weeks was the strike smashed, the state blockade broken.

The strike wave rolled westward. Huge demonstrations moved through the streets. Men marched at night with torchlight flares to show the rags on their backs and the hunger in their faces. BREAD OR BULLETS read their banners.

"It is impossible to predict how or when this struggle will end," said the *Labor Standard* editorially. "End as it may it will accomplish more for the cause of labor than years of mere oratory." "It is life or death with us," said one of the rank-and-file leaders, "and we'll fight it to the end."

Traffic was almost wholly paralyzed from the Atlantic to the Mississippi, from the Canadian border to the Virginia line and the Ohio river. In St. Louis the situation developed into a general strike. It was led by the Workingmen's party. Committees marched into mill and factory: laborers downed tools. Mass meetings raised the demand for the eight-hour day. Steamers on the Missis-

sippi were halted until the captains agreed to increase wages. Business houses closed down. The city was in the hands of the workers for almost a week. Finally the rich St. Louis merchants, recovering from their panic, raised an army, equipped it with muskets and raided labor centers, putting down the strike by force. The Socialist leaders were seized and charged with conspiracy against the government. "Order" was restored.

Chicago was ignited too. On Sunday morning, July 22, Parsons learned that Pittsburgh was in the hands of the strikers. An emergency conference of the party was called and a mass meeting arranged for the following day. They issued a leaflet which began: "Workingmen of Chicago! . . . Will you still remain disunited, while your masters rob you of all your rights as well as all the fruits of your labor? A movement is now inaugurated by the Money Lords of America to allow only property-holders to vote! This is the first step toward Monarchy! Was it in vain that our forefathers fought and died for Liberty? . . ."

About twenty thousand spectators gathered at the Workingmen's party demonstration, held on Market square near Madison street. Workers marched from various sections of the city, converging at the meeting place with torchlight processions, carrying slogans reading WE WANT WORK NOT CHARITY, WHY DOES OVER-PRODUCTION CAUSE STARVATION? and LIFE BY WORK OR DEATH BY FIGHT.

George Schilling introduced Parsons, the main speaker of the evening. Parsons was developing into a remarkable agitator, was learning how to speak to the masses, to hold the attention of multitudes.

He looked over the seething square. It was the largest assembly he had ever addressed. The listeners seemed tense, rigid, straining toward him. He mounted to new peaks of oratory; his gestures and his inflexions were

flawless. At last the tension snapped, waves of approbation crashing through the crowd.

"Fellow workers, let us remember that in this great republic that has been handed down to us by our forefathers from 1776—that while we have the republic, we still have hope. A mighty spirit is animating the hearts of the American people today.... When I say the American people I mean the backbone of the country (*loud cheers*), the men who till the soil, who guide the machine, who weave the fabrics and cover the backs of civilized men. We are part of that people (*from the crowd —"We are!"*), and we demand that we be permitted to live, that we shall not be turned upon the earth as vagrants and tramps.

"While we are sad indeed that our distressed and suffering brothers in other states have had to resort to such extreme measures, fellow workers, we recognize the fact that they were driven to do what they have done (*"They were!"*).... We are assembled here tonight to find means by which the great gloom that now hangs over our republic can be lifted, and once more the rays of happiness can be shed on the face of this broad land."

He turned next to an attack upon the press, which he said filled its columns "with cases of bastardy, horse-racing and accounts of pools on the Board of Trade." It never saw fit, he said, "to go to the factories and workshops and see how the toiling millions give away their lives to the rich bosses of the country."

At last he wound up: "It rests with you to say whether we shall allow the capitalists to go on or whether we shall organize ourselves. Will *you?*" he shouted to the crowd, and many answered. "Then enroll your names in the grand army of labor—and if the capitalists engage in warfare against our rights, we shall resist them with all the means that God has given us."

McAuliffe, who followed, was even more emphatic. "If

the nation must go to a monarchy," he roared, "it must go over the dead body of every workingman in the country. I am not in favor of bloodshed. But if the Fort Sumter of the workingmen is fired upon, I register a vow, by all that is high and holy, that my voice, my thought and my arm shall be raised for bloody, remorseless war....

"Let there be peace if we can, and war (*a voice in the crowd—"if necessary"*)—if necessary."

When he reached home Parsons was drenched in sweat. After a hard day's work in the composing room, mass speaking was no lark. He was sunk in exhaustion; but he couldn't get to sleep. His throat ached, and nervous, mental excitement kept him wide awake. He saw the excited faces lifted toward him, the roar of the crowd in his ears, their acclaim rushing through his body, their applause echoing through his brain.

VII. "LEADER OF THE COMMUNE"

As usual, Parsons reported for work early next morning. The story of his speech, however, had already appeared in the press, one of the papers denouncing him as the "Leader of the Commune." When he got to the composing room, the foreman told him to clear out, he was fired. And he was soon to learn that he had been blacklisted in his trade.

He shuffled out of the *Times* building in a daze. He wandered down the street, walking mechanically homeward; but he soon caught hold of himself and decided to report at the party center on Market street—he wanted to check on the progress of the strike and see what he could do to help.

The strike had started in the city the night before, when the switchmen of the Michigan Central Railroad walked out. Now it spread to the firemen and brakemen

and moved from yard to yard, and even to shop, factory, mill and lumber company.

Before the day would be over, not a train would move out of Chicago, Van Patten told Parsons exultantly.

They worked together at the office all morning, making plans for another open-air rally, and signing up strikers who wanted to join the Workingmen's party.

About noon, two hard-looking men came in, and told Parsons that the mayor wanted to see him. Puzzled, Parsons accompanied them to the City Hall, where he was ushered into a room filled with a number of well-dressed citizens and police officials. In spite of his protests, Parsons was grilled by Chief of Police Hickey, who probed into every corner of his life. Hickey insulted and browbeat him, trying to make him say that the Workingmen's party had started the strike.

Parsons had been through an excruciating twenty-four hours. He was almost entirely spent. He gripped his chair, answering quietly, straining to keep his reserve. Every time he denied responsibility for the strike, the spectators buzzed and muttered.

"What're we waiting for," he heard one say. "Let's lock him up and get it over with."

For two hours he parried questions. Finally, Hickey gave up, turned around, and consulted with several of the civilians in the room. They talked for a few minutes, arguing with each other. Then Hickey turned back.

"All right," he snapped, "you can get out of here." He pushed Parsons to the door. "I'm giving you some advice, young man," he said. "Your life is in danger. Those men in there belong to the Board of Trade and they would as leave hang you to a lamp-post as not. You'd better get out of town and get out quick."

He shoved Parsons into the corridor, slammed the door. The place was dark and empty. Somehow he got into the street.

Feeling tired and depressed, he stumbled downtown.

Later, when he passed the *Tribune* building, he decided to see if he could get a job on the night shift. As he reached the composing room, he met Manion, chairman of his union, and they talked for a while. All of a sudden somebody grabbed him from behind and swung him around.

"Come on, get the hell out of here." Two men held his arms and another began shoving him to the door.

Parsons tried to get away. "I came in here as a gentleman and I won't be dragged out like a dog," he shouted, twisting to break loose. Then he felt the barrel of a gun against his head.

"You'd better keep quiet or we'll throw you out the window." Parsons stopped struggling.

They jostled him down the five flights of stairs. "One word out of you and we'll blow your brains out." They knocked him into the street.

"Next time you put your face in this building you'll get what's coming to you."

Parsons barely caught his balance and ran down the street. He felt sure they were going to send a bullet through his back. His utter helplessness made him half-mad with rage.

As he moved down Dearborn street, his anger began to subside and he recovered his normal mood. The weather was not too warm and the night was pleasant. But the streets seemed hushed, deserted. When he turned west on Lake to Fifth avenue, he saw soldiers sitting on the curb. Muskets leaned against the walls of the huge buildings that lined the street. A regiment of National Guards idled around; they seemed to be waiting for orders to march. Lucky they didn't know him. He passed by and reached home.

Later that night he went over to Market square where the party was holding another meeting. He stood in the crowd listening to the speakers. An ex-soldier came up to the platform and showed the wounds he had received

"while fighting for this glorious country." All at once Parsons heard the clatter of hoofs, the crack of pistols, screams of pain. Mounted police charged into the gathering. They mowed a wedge through the mass of flesh. A tremendous roaring cacophony rose, swelled, ebbed. The throng broke, the listeners scattered. A tumultuous rush of feet drowned out the thud of descending clubs. . . .

Next morning, Wednesday, was misty; vapor clouds hung over Lake Michigan and the city streets. Blood splashed on the Black Road, near the McCormick Reaper Works. Everywhere the strikers gathered, leaderless; everywhere they were shot, clubbed, dispersed. On the Randolph street bridge a crowd of spectators ("Rioting Roughs" the Chicago *Tribune* called them) were brutally attacked.

Later, Parsons learned from a German comrade that the police had swooped down on the Furniture Workers' meeting at Turner Hall, breaking in the door and shooting directly into the assembly; caught in the unexpected onslaught, the cabinet makers had stampeded like cornered animals, clambering up the pillars, hiding behind the stage, jumping out of windows, or breaking out of the hall and running the gauntlet of more cops stationed on the stairs.

A pitched battle took place at the Halsted street viaduct immediately after, with charge and counter-charge, until a body of cavalry, with drawn swords, rode through the massed workers, leaving many dead and wounded on the bridge.

By this time the Board of Trade had mobilized a formidable army. Infantry regiments patrolled various districts, firing on the slightest pretext. Thousands of special deputies, "citizens' patrols" and bands of uniformed vigilantes like the Boys in Blue and Ellsworth Zouaves, smashed down upon parades of silent strikers, marching with set faces. Troops of cavalry clattered

through the streets at a sharp trot, their bridles jingling, the horses' hoofs kicking against the cobblestones.

In great panic, the Board of Trade had despatched couriers to General Sheridan, who was campaigning in the Sioux country; and by Thursday several companies of veteran Indian fighters, bronzed and grizzled and covered with dust, rode into the city, their repeating rifles slung over their shoulders. They were quartered in the Exposition building and sent marauding groups through the murky streets to end any sign of protest. With the frenzy of a holy crusade, the Chicago strike was suppressed.

As in the other cities, the Workingmen's party, the Socialists, suffered most. Their halls were demolished, their leaders arrested, their membership shot and beaten. Ruling class violence attained its worst excesses in Chicago and created a tradition of bitter hatred which was to shape the future course of the radical movement.

VIII. POLITICAL ACTION

Long after the strike, Parsons couldn't find work. He tried every newspaper in Chicago, but it was no use, he couldn't get anywhere near a composing room. He was blacklisted. He and his wife went hungry.

Soon he was spending most of his time in party work. Before he knew it, he was drawn into the top leadership of the Workingmen's party and was made an organizer. He became a "professional revolutionist," giving all his energies to his job. It became his daily routine and his diversion, his food and lodging, his conscious existence and even part of his dreams. His life and experience merged into the history of the party.

Parsons began his new duties at the beginning of a period of extreme ferment in the labor movement. The great strike wave of '77, broken by relentless terrorism,

and coming after four years of devastating crisis, lifted thousands of workers to class consciousness. Having learned the lesson of solidarity, they banded together for mutual protection. Then they pushed slowly ahead to take the offensive.

Hard times still hung over the country. The protests of the workers against wagecuts and layoffs, their efforts to build and strengthen their trade unions, were ruthlessly crushed by local, state and national government. The lesson of this armed suppression seemed too obvious to be overlooked: strikes could not be won, living conditions could not be bettered, if the armed forces of the government stood in the way. So the workers turned toward independent political action. They wanted to nominate their own candidates, to elect their own representatives, men who would not side with the employers but would fight for the demands of their own class.

The political-minded faction in the Workingmen's party was quick to see the new trend of labor. Particularly in Chicago, where the extremity of conditions had leveled away the barrier between jobless Yankees and foreign Socialists, a large English-speaking branch of the party was being built, under the leadership of Tom Morgan, a hard-working, conscientious organizer. In the fall of '77 they nominated a county ticket, with Parsons for Clerk and one of his comrades, Frank Stauber, who ran a hardware store on Milwaukee avenue, for Treasurer. They polled about seven thousand votes. And in other cities, the elections were also very encouraging.

It was to be expected, then, that at the congress of the Workingmen's party—held in Newark during December of the same year—the political wing would come out on top. Parsons, who was the only delegate from Chicago, participated in the convention proceedings, which were designed to clear the deck for political action. The constitution, with its obstacles to immediate election campaigning, was completely revamped. The

structure of the party was overhauled—sections were divided into wards and precincts, and united into state organizations. Even the name was changed—to the Socialistic Labor party. The executive committee was removed to Cincinnati—where the Socialists had just polled nine thousand votes—while Van Patten was reelected national secretary.

In the spring city elections of '78, the Chicago Socialists, under their new name, the Socialistic Labor party, made history. By this time they had rigged up a real political machine. Concentrating upon the working-class districts, they mapped out a thorough campaign, holding one mass rally after the other. Stauber received 1416 votes, nearly as many as the combined count of his Democratic and Republican rivals, and was elected alderman of the fourteenth ward. Parsons and another comrade, running for similar positions in two adjoining wards, lost by the slimmest margin, and were undoubtedly counted out of office. "We shall contest the election in the fifteenth and sixteenth wards," wrote a Chicago correspondent to the *National Socialist*, new organ of the party, "where the most shameful tricks were resorted to, in order to count out our candidates."

One of the chief reasons for this political victory was the cooperation of the trade unions, which stood solid behind the party ticket. "On election day, hundreds of members of the newly amalgamated Trades Unions, left their work and helped us," wrote a labor reporter from Chicago.

But how did the party win the support of the trade unionists, many of whom were hostile at this time to the use of political measures? The key man in effecting this coalition was Parsons. He belonged to the English branch, which led the political movement in the Chicago section of the Socialistic Labor party; at the same time he was an active unionist. In fact, he was elected president of the Amalgamated Trade and Labor Unions of

Chicago and Vicinity, which he helped organize. He was also on the central committee of the International Labor Union, a nationwide movement to organize the unorganized, led by George E. McNeill and backed by the *Labor Standard*—which opposed the political ventures of the party and was no longer an official publication.

Many of the trade-union Socialists in Chicago were German immigrants, who were very suspicious of the native-born members of the party. Nevertheless, Parsons was able, through his organizing, his eloquence and his personal charm, to overcome this distrust and to win their complete confidence. Thus he was able to swing their support behind the party ticket.

Throughout the spring and summer of '78, the Chicagoans prepared for the coming state elections. Parsons was not so busy in this campaign as he had been in the preceding ones, for he was spending most of his time in trade union work. Among other things, he brought McNeill to Chicago to speak at a trade union picnic just before the local Fourth of July celebrations. After a morning spent in dancing and singing, at the inevitable Ogden Grove, the cornet player—as one worker-correspondent described the occasion—"called the great assembly together, and Comrade Parsons after a few appropriate remarks, introduced Mr. George E. McNeill of Boston, president of the International Labor Union," who spoke on the eight-hour day.

"Just as soon as we recover from the fatigues of the glorious Fourth," wrote another reporter, "the engineering minds of the party must go to work and break ground for the coming fall campaign."

As election day drew nearer, Parsons spoke with Morgan and McAuliffe at several large open-air gatherings. Occasionally he also covered these meetings for the *National Socialist*. Of one rally he wrote:

"The broad street, from side to side up and down for nearly a block, was filled with an immense throng of

earnest and intelligent workmen. The 'Cause and Remedy of Poverty' was discussed from the Socialistic standpoint, showing that destitution, ignorance and crime, was an unnatural condition . . . and that universal poverty among the masses was the penalty inflicted by nature for the crime of violating her laws. . . ."

In the same despatch, Parsons outlined his general point of view at this time, which favored both economic and political action. By organizing trade unions and by working through the party at the polls, the workers would "ere long," he said, "call a halt to the increasing power of aggregated wealth which is surely turning our once fair America into a land of paupers, tramps and dependent menials."

But if Parsons was so confident of the future of socialism during this period, his optimism was far surpassed by his fellow speaker, John McAuliffe. "Pass the word down the line," the rhetorical Socialist shouted at one public gathering, "Forward march! Onward, to perfect organization and the independence of Labor from class servitude! Ho! all ye oppressed, ye weary and heavy laden, come gather under the protecting shelter of the banner of *Socialism* . . . under whose folds the wage workers, the masses, shall be inspired to deeds of heroism and drive the fell monster—*poverty*—from off the earth forever."

IX. "THE BALLOT THE MISSILE"

SCIENCE THE ARSENAL, REASON THE WEAPON, THE BALLOT THE MISSILE.

Under this flamboyant slogan, which was now the guiding principle of their party, the Socialists moved from one success at the polls to another. The slogan was probably the creation of John McIntosh, labor bard, who now edited the party newspaper. Besides contributing a

topical poem to almost every issue of the *National Socialist,* he often embroidered the aims of the party in ornate prose.

"We desire to inflict upon men a Promethean agony," he declared, in an editorial note, "chaining them to a sense of misery, feeling the vulture of harrowing, harassing discontent forever preying upon their peace. We want them to be victims of a fierce, gnawing, intolerable conviction of a personal injury—a withering sense of infernal outrage, so utterly absorbing as to stop up all avenues to enjoyment—cultivating a thirsting, savage longing for relief—*but, remember, through the ballot box.* No murder, no arson, no violence of any kind; unless insisted on by combining bosses—then up and at it like a whirlwind."

Parsons' trade union work tended to draw him away from the *National Socialist.* The paper was edited from Cincinnati under the supervision of Van Patten, who now lived there and who had steered the Socialists in their present political direction. The unionists in the party favored the *Labor Standard,* and there was a feud between the two papers. Because he was immersed in trade union organization, Parsons found the *Labor Standard* more receptive to his interests; he acted as reporter for it and even became its Chicago agent. He also began to develop differences with the *National Socialist,* and was denounced in its pages.

However, the *National Socialist* was running into financial trouble; factional struggles had almost completely destroyed the Cincinnati section of the Socialistic Labor party and the newspaper could get no local support. Meanwhile, the Chicago section was proceeding with plans for an English paper of its own. In view of these circumstances, Van Patten made several trips to Chicago and, after threshing the whole matter out with Morgan, Parsons and others, he patched up the split and effected a plan whereby the new local paper, to be called

the *Socialist,* would become the national English organ of the party. Parsons was appointed assistant editor.

In preparation for the coming state elections, the new paper was launched early in the fall of '78. September and October were busy months for the Chicagoans. Their campaign apparatus had been improved a great deal. They held a convention late in September and nominated a complete state ticket.

One of the high spots of the campaign was their election rally songs, composed by their "untamed troubadour," W. B. Creech. He had a new tune for almost every occasion. At large meetings the crowd would usually listen to the pyrotechnics of John McAuliffe, who was running for Congress. "Let us yank, and thunder, and roar, and storm, and charge, at the ballot box," he would declaim, "and having thus peaceably, yet boldly, won the victory, we *will* enjoy it, *or know the reason why.* . . . Fellow workers," he would end, "be true to yourselves, desert the enemy, and the morn following election, Labor's sun will rise radiant with glory!" Then the crowd would yell for Creech; he would step sprily to the platform and in his strong, clear voice, sing:

Then raise your voices, workingmen,
Against such cowardly hirelings, O!
Go to the polls and slaughter them,
With ballots, instead of bullets, O!

Or, after a less fiery address, he would chant:

Let us rally once again;
We must work with might and main;
Bear a hand, Old Politics to throw away;
Stand for Socialistic light,
And each man demand his right—
Shorter hours to work and for us better pay.

His lyrics were printed on the front page of the *Socialist* and were sung wherever the workers assembled.

At an election rally held during a Sunday afternoon on the corner of Larrabee and Crosby streets, Parsons opened the meeting by singing Creech's "Socialist Wagon":

> *...So come, my friends, and join us,*
> *And you'll never rue the day,*
> *For we'll change this present system*
> *To the Socialistic way.*

He read the local platform and urged the spectators not to vote for the old parties because they were "simply the agencies by which the possessory class would mislead, divide and then plunder the worker of the fruits of his labor." A little later he introduced McIntosh, who had come to Chicago; and the "poet laureate" of the Socialistic Labor party helped out by reciting some new verses, which were boisterously applauded.

The last weeks before election, meetings multiplied. Torchlight parades, brass bands, calcium-lighted platforms for the speakers—were nightly events. On vacant lots, in the open street, with a wagon or beer barrels for a speaking stand—wherever a spot could be found, Parsons and his comrades electioneered.

November 5 was bright and clear. Men standing on wagons and waving the Union and the red flags, drove through the streets. VOTERS, DO NOT VOTE AS HERETOFORE FOR CORRUPTIVE POLITICIANS AND OFFICE SEEKERS—read one of their banners. Socialist voting was heavy in working-class sections, in the fifteenth and sixteenth wards, especially in the evening when the laborers came from the shops to cast their ballots. In spite of all sorts of tricks and interference, the party elected three representatives and one senator to the state legislature.

The evening after election, the Socialists celebrated at their headquarters, which was lighted up brilliantly, the entrance illuminated with Chinese lanterns. What a con-

trast it presented to the office of their rivals, the Greenbackers, for the latter had made a very poor showing. "Notwithstanding the Greenback party sought to bargain with everybody willing to sell out to the highest bidder," the *Socialist* declared gleefully, "the Socialists, who stood firm and unwavering, have by far outnumbered them in votes."

Celebrations lasted for more than a week and culminated in a large mass meeting where the elected representatives spoke. In the center of the stage stood a life-size portrait of a prominent European Socialist, guarded by pictures of Lincoln and Washington, and surrounded by a sea of emblems and red flags. From the gallery were suspended the trade union banners, and pyramids of stacked guns were in the background. Creech was ready with a stirring song, and everybody joined in the chorus:

Raise aloft the crimson banner,
Emblem of the free,
Mighty tyrants now are trembling,
Here and o'er the sea.

X. CELEBRATING TWO REVOLUTIONS

It was a time of rejoicing for the Chicago Socialists. They were speeding ahead; they felt that nothing could halt their progress. The political boom had given new life to their movement: it was serving as the best means of spreading their propaganda. Thanks to their success at the polls, Socialism was losing its alien character, was growing deep in the American grain.

For Parsons and his comrades, time was now measured by the span between elections. With each new electoral campaign, the principles of Socialism were spread over a wider area; with each rally more members were recruited into the party. In Chicago, which was now the

heart and center of the radical movement on this side of the Atlantic, the Socialists marched from one flashing success to another.

The most spectacular event of the period was a "monster rally," held on a Saturday evening during March, 1879, in commemoration of the Paris Commune. "The grand anniversary of the dawn of liberty in 1871," as it was called, took place just after the party convention had nominated Dr. Ernst Schmidt—a distinguished physician, known as an old associate of Karl Marx, and one of the most popular men in Chicago—for mayor. The Socialists secured the huge Industrial Exposition building on the Lake Front for this affair, in spite of the protests of the Stock Exchange and the Board of Trade. Weeks of preparation, closely linked with the spring city elections, brought out the largest crowd in local labor history.

As early as six o'clock, the streets neighboring on the auditorium were crowded with men and women. By eight, the building was jammed; every inch of space on the main floor, galleries, platforms and stage was taken. At least forty thousand people packed into the building, while perhaps sixty thousand more waited for hours trying to get in. The building was decorated with flags of all nations and banners of all trades. Running the entire length of the south wall were numerous legends—ALL FOR ONE AND ONE FOR ALL and NO RIGHTS WITHOUT DUTIES AND NO DUTIES WITHOUT RIGHTS. An elaborate program had been carefully arranged, but there was no room for the acrobatic feats and dancing, and too many people to hear the speeches.

Meanwhile the *Lehr und Wehr Verein,* and other defense corps, including the Bohemian Sharpshooters and the Irish Labor Guards, formed on the Milwaukee avenue viaduct and, in columns of four, with guns on shoulders, bayonets glittering, marched to the hall to the tune of the "Marseillaise." They were supposed to give a

drilling exhibition, but this part of the program had to be abandoned also; so they stacked their guns and went on police duty, ejecting troublemakers, to the beating of drums, as fast as they entered.

The meeting was carried over to Sunday. Morgan, who now captained the entire Chicago section of the Socialistic Labor party, made a brief address. "We are celebrating the anniversary of the Commune," he said, "because our brethren fought for the same principles that we are fighting for today. There is no reason, however, why we shall not succeed in our present contest. Our forefathers, in 1776, fought for the same end as the Socialists now, but they were not denounced as thieves, murderers and scoundrels by a capitalist press."

He was putting it mildly. The "Hessian press," as the Socialists called the Chicago *Tribune* and other papers, reached new lows in the write-ups of the meeting, which was headlined as the "Grand Carousal of the Communists." It called the thousands of people who attended the festival "Prowling Wantons," "Unsavory Humanity," "Offscouring of the Slums," "Lowbrowed Villains," "Prostitutes," "Steaming Mobocrats."

Parsons also spoke on Sunday. "All the French and German Communists wanted during the dark days of '48 and '71," he said, "was to establish a self-governing Republic, wherein the working classes—the masses—would partake of the civilization which their industry and skill had created. And for this they received the abuse of the capitalist press of the whole world. The Socialistic Labor party has the same object in view now that the Paris Commune had then. . . . The vital question is, shall Capital continue to rule Labor or shall Labor govern Capital? We mean to place Labor in power."

The excitable McAuliffe then did some eagle-orating for about an hour—and over four thousand dollars was raised to convert the *Arbeiter-Zeitung*, a party paper, into a daily.

Grand Anniversary!

In commemoration of the

DAWN OF LIBERTY

in 1848 and 1871,

—to be held at the—

Exposition Building, Lake Front,

on Saturday Eve., March 22d, 1879

The Festival will be given under the auspices of the

SOCIALISTIC LABOR PARTY,

—and participated in by the—

Trades Unions, the Lehr- & Wehr-Verein,

AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS.

Speeches will be made in different languages.

SEVERAL EXCELLANT ORCHESTRAS.

The LEHR- AND WEHR-VEREIN OF CHICAGO (Instructive and Protective Club) will give a grand

DRILLING EXHIBITION.

Proper arrangements has been made for all kinds of refreshments and seats. Order will be properly maintained.

TICKETS, bought in Advance, 25 Cts., for Gent and Ladies. At the building, 50 Cts.

[The proceeds of the Festival will be used to defray election expenses of the spring campaign and for publishing the "**Arbeiter-Zeitung**" as a daily paper.]

PARIS COMMUNE ANNIVERSARY MEETING

What a spectacle the meeting was to the old-timers, the pioneers who had brought Socialism to Chicago. They were beside themselves with happiness. They wanted to jump up and roar, to wave their hands wildly, to hug each other, to communicate their great joy. Surges of applause from the vast audience swept through their bodies, the blood rising to their brains. The atmosphere of the place was feverish, buoyant, the excited faces of the comrades flushed with an embracing warmth and exhilaration.

As the city elections approached, the *Socialist* came out weekly with punching editorials. "Tuesday next, April 1, is the day on which the line is to be drawn between Labor and Capital," it agitated. "Tuesday next is the day on which each citizen of Chicago is called upon to record his vote, either in favor of *Liberty, Justice and Equality* or in favor of *Infantry, Cavalry and Artillery*."

All sorts of election outrages, including the throwing-out of votes and ballot stuffing, were perpetrated, but Dr. Schmidt polled almost twelve thousand votes, nearly half the total secured by the winning Democratic mayor. And the Socialistic Labor party elected three more aldermen to the city government.

Immediately after, Parsons turned with added determination to the economic side of his activities. At this time the Eight-Hour League was established in Chicago and he was elected recording secretary. The party, however, was not very sympathetic to this new organization and, just before the July Fourth festival, Parsons and Morgan debated the question of whether it was correct for Socialists to agitate for the eight-hour day. Morgan argued that such a demand was not fundamental enough, that only a revolutionary change in the method of production could better the economic status of the workers. Parsons maintained that winning the eight-hour day

would give the workers more leisure in which to train for the greater task of emancipating themselves from capitalism. Moreover, he tried to show by statistics—he was fascinated by such data and quoted figures in almost every address he made—that in the past a reduction of the workday had always been followed by an increase in wages and a rising of the cultural level of the masses.

Parsons continued his agitation for eight hours by bringing Ira Steward—father of the shorter-day movement and known as the "eight-hour monomaniac"—to Chicago for their July Fourth picnic, which was the second greatest event of the year, lasting three entire days.

It began on Friday the Fourth with a lavish parade, which assembled at the Randolph street market place. Early that morning the sky was gloomy and leaden, but before the procession was ready to move the threatening clouds rolled back and the sun broke through. The grand marshal and his aides, mounted on spirited horses, assigned the organizations with their floats to places in the line, and by ten o'clock they started off, each division led by a blaring band. One of the features was the large number of old, worn American flags displayed by the marchers.

First came a brigade of Socialist Amazons, in bright costumes, splashed with vermilion bonnets, arm bands, sashes, scarfs. Then followed a *tableau vivant,* made up of a group of men around a leather cannon and gun-carriage heaped with leather cannon balls. It was a neat burlesque on the press, which had spread rumors of a Communist uprising, and was also directed against the proposed military law forbidding the display of arms by unlicensed companies. The gunners who marched with the battery were arrayed in mock military uniforms of blue blouses, red scarves and tall, conical red hats. They were armed to the teeth with enormous revolvers and long daggers of painted wood, and the captain of the

battery carried aloft a banner reading WHO'S AFRAID FOR WE'RE NOT AFRAID?

Next came the Eight-Hour Car of the Furniture Union. Drawn by six white horses, the wagon contained a hidden bell which pealed out in deep tones 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8. Above the wagon rolled a large transparency wreathed in evergreens—EIGHT HOURS ARE COMING. And on the sides and back of the wagon were inscribed: IT WILL STOP OVERPRODUCTION—IT WILL TAKE AWAY TRAMPS—IT WILL GIVE THE IDLE BROTHERS WORK.

The Workingwomen's Union also had a float of their own. It was decked in pink and white fabrics and ribbons and its leading banner read, IN A UNION OF STRENGTH WE SEEK THE STRENGTH OF UNION. And on the side: WHEN WOMAN IS ADMITTED INTO THE COUNCIL OF NATIONS WAR WILL COME TO AN END, FOR WOMAN, MORE THAN MAN, KNOWS THE VALUE OF HUMAN LIFE.

Later came the Printers' Union float, with a press in full operation, producing copies of the *Eight-Hour Agitator,* which were distributed along the route.

Thousands paraded to Ogden Grove; and on Saturday, after the bugler had assembled the crowd, Schilling as master of ceremonies introduced Ira Steward, orator of the day—a short, pleasant-looking person with bald forehead and long gray locks and beard. The weekend was made up chiefly of wheelbarrow and sack races, vaulting and feats of strength; and, in spite of a rainstorm, the three-day festival came to an inspiriting conclusion on Sunday, when Parsons, Schilling and others listened once more to a speech by Peter McGuire, who had won them to Socialism years ago, and who told them now that the "eight-hour movement was but the Lexington of the coming revolution in labor."

XI. THE SPLIT

The Chicago Socialists mounted from one victory to another. Nothing could stop them. The sky was the limit.

But all of a sudden everything changed. The Socialists started falling much faster than they had climbed.

What had happened? What turned success into defeat?

By '79 prosperity had come back. A new era of industrial growth revived confidence in the American dream. Bad times were quickly forgotten.

The protest of the 'seventies had been created largely by the depression. Now, as the economic basis for this protest was dissolved, the chances of the Socialists dwindled. Even the most casual observer could have noticed the change. In the '79 fall elections, for example, the Chicago Socialist vote was seven thousand less than it had been in the spring.

This discouraging loss was also due to the desertion of political opportunists from the ranks of the party. As Van Patten pointed out—at the S.L.P. convention held in Allegheny City during the end of that year—"unexpected treachery was manifested on the part of men who aspired to be leaders and who, failing to at once reach the pinnacle of their ambition, went back to the old parties."

Van Patten and the political group still controlled the Socialistic Labor party, and he was reelected national secretary—at an increased salary of twelve dollars a week. In his main report to the convention, he spoke bitterly of desertions from the party. "The temporary revival of business prosperity," he said, "is rapidly drawing the plundered toilers back into their old paths. ... They are selling their birthright for a mess of pot-

tage, by rejecting the prospect of future emancipation, in their greed for the trifling gains of the present."

At the same time, he sharply attacked the caution of the Socialists in refusing to endorse popular candidates. "We must expect the labor movement to meet with dangers," he said, "for only by actual experience can our members obtain a knowledge of political management. ... In endeavoring to avoid the extreme of pushing forward candidates regardless of consequences, we have fallen into the other extreme, that of electing nobody. We have vainly attempted to convert all those upon whose votes we depend into philosophers and political economists ... and we regret that our efforts made to this end have only reduced the quantity, without materially improving the quality of these voters."

The major problem before the S.L.P. congress was what to do in the national elections. Van Patten stressed the necessity of their participating in the presidential campaign of 1880. One suggestion from the floor was that they endorse the Greenback Labor party candidates. Parsons—who represented a minority group opposed to the reelection of Van Patten—argued that they should first send delegates to the Greenback convention; there they could try to form a united front of workers and liberals for a socialist program; if this failed, they could then nominate a ticket of their own.

His proposal was voted down. It was decided to select an independent ticket right away. Parsons' name was among the nominations for President; but since he was under thirty-five, the constitutional age, he was ineligible. Three others were proposed, and one of them, Caleb Pink, was selected as Presidential candidate. However, Parsons moved that the vote be reconsidered, and that the three nominees be submitted to the whole party membership for approval. His motion was carried.

A week after the convention, Parsons attended a preliminary meeting of the Greenback Labor party. He

came as a delegate from the Chicago Eight-Hour League and, as the S.L.P. press reported, their "well-known agitator . . . delivered a vigorous speech in favor of practical labor measures." At this conference a call was issued inviting other groups to participate in a future congress where the Greenback Labor candidates would be nominated.

Reversing its decision to run an independent ticket, the Socialistic Labor party sent forty-four delegates to this gathering. They expected to play a big role there, but were in so small a minority that they were pushed into a back seat. Even a mild plank which they proposed was sidetracked by a smart parliamentary trick.

During an intermission the S.L.P. caucus got together to decide their next step. Parsons said they ought to drop out of the Greenback meeting: what was the use, they were only the tail-end of the whole thing. But he was voted down. The dominant political faction, headed by Van Patten, decided that their only chance to save themselves from complete isolation was to endorse the Greenback Labor party nominees for President and Vice-President.

This decision was the final act which started open warfare within the ranks of the Socialistic Labor party. At once a group of left-wingers in the party raised a protest: they charged that Van Patten was selling them out to the bourgeoisie.

Only success at the polls had kept them in line since '77. They had always been wary of political campaigning, because they believed it led to opportunism and diluted the theoretical purity of their doctrine. Now they pressed forward in rebellion against what they termed the Greenback "compromise."

Other events further discredited political action. In Chicago, only Stauber—whose record as alderman was without a blemish, and who had initiated many practical benefits, such as public baths, for the workers in his

ward—was reelected in the spring campaign of 1880. And even he was cheated out of office by open fraud. In the seventh precinct, after the results were publicly announced, two judges took the ballot-box and tally-sheet home with them. When they learned that Stauber had carried the ward by only thirty-one votes, they stuffed the box in favor of the Democratic candidate, giving him the aldermancy.

This episode was a knockout punch for the political activists in Chicago. What was the use of electing your own men, they began to grumble, if you could be cheated out of office so easily. They were losing faith in the ballot fast.

Parsons was carried along by the disillusionment. He found himself more and more in sympathy with the oppositionists in the Chicago section of the Socialistic Labor party. And when, in protest against the Greenback deal, they seceded from the party, he went with them.

But the bolters had not yet abandoned political measures. They nominated Parsons for assemblyman in the sixth district, and he ran against the regular Socialist ticket, which was backed by Tom Morgan. The net result was an utter fiasco—a few hundred votes for Parsons and a few thousand for his opponent. And in the national elections, the two Greenback Labor candidates as well as the S.L.P. nominees for other offices got an awful licking.

XII. WORKERS IN ARMS

Up to this time Parsons took it for granted that socialism could be won by the ballot. Now he lost his faith in voting as the weapon for achieving a socialist society. He arrived at this conclusion on the basis of his own practical experience in Chicago. His convictions were

now reinforced by talks with some of his German comrades, who were acquainted with various doctrines of the European radical movement and who taught him something about the repressive nature of bourgeois government and the class character of the bourgeois state.

At this time he was groping his way toward a theoretical position with regard to the class struggle, capitalism and socialism. Unfortunately, he was still little more than a novice at revolutionary theory. He had read a great deal, but rather superficially; besides he seemed to lack the intellectual training and insight which might have enabled him—through a critical reading of socialist literature and by drawing serviceable conclusions from his invaluable experiences and activities—to work out a sound theoretical point of view.

His beliefs were therefore primitive, unformed, vague. They were shaped partly by his knowledge of eighteenth-century French thought and his acquaintance with the one-sided ideas of French utopian schools: a concept which recurs throughout his writings and speeches is that of the "natural rights" of man; the slogan which he always repeated was that of the French Revolution—"liberty, equality, fraternity." Furthermore, there was anything but ideological clarity among the German refugees from whom he got his revolutionary ideas. And so, in addition to the flimsy notions which he got out of his unsystematic reading, his conceptions were further confused by the mixed theories which he imbibed from his comrades. His ideas were now a medley of anarchist, "naturalist" and various socialist beliefs, with the first becoming more and more dominant.

If, then, Parsons lacked a firm theoretical understanding of the class struggle, and of revolutionary strategy and tactics, how could he have been so successful up to this time? How did it happen that his outlook had been more rounded than that of the ideologues in the Socialis-

tic Labor party who had been for *either* political *or* economic action, while he had seen the advantages of both?

Up to this time, Parsons—first in the Social-Democratic faction, and then in the Workingmen's (Socialistic Labor) party—had been guided by nothing except his daily experiences. He had been a trade union man; thus he saw the necessity for trade union work. He had become an organizer and had seen how election campaigns won new members, spread the propaganda of his party and actually put workers into office.

As long as the Socialist movement was on the upgrade and Parsons was deep in daily routine, there was little chance of his going wrong. As long as campaigning worked, and Socialist propaganda reached more and more people, Parsons was never confronted with the question of whether the workers could vote themselves into power and thereby put an end to capitalism. When, however, the Socialistic Labor party met with defeat at the polls, and the problem of whether socialism could be won by the ballot popped up in Parsons' mind, his pragmatic approach was useless: it could not give him the correct answer to this dilemma with which he was now confronted.

Nor could it give him the proper solution to another fundamental issue which was vexing American labor at this period. And so, lacking the ideological equipment which might have enabled him to solve this new problem, he did nothing more than to follow the lead of some of the German émigrés, succumbing to their viewpoint. This major question of dispute had already been argued pro and con in the European radical movement; but it became important to American Socialists at this time because it was related to events on the native scene and to certain immediate needs of the advanced labor movement in this country.

It was the question of *violence*.

The bloody suppression of '77 had pushed this new issue to the front. Workers had been shot down wherever they assembled. The German comrades, remembering what they had done in their native land to fight reaction, had been the first to urge the formation of armed clubs (which were legal at this time) for self-defense. Where treatment by the police and militia had been most vicious, as in Chicago, these groups arose. The press and the courts seemed to offer no shield against military assault, so arms seemed the only sure protection. These corps trained and drilled, and even held sham battles during the numerous picnics and outings of the radical movement in Chicago.

Naturally, most of the members of these armed groups were Socialists. But the executive committee of the Socialistic Labor party, headed by Van Patten, opposed the organization of these clubs and ordered its members to keep away from them. The issue came to a head in the summer of 1878, when the S.L.P. in Chicago arranged a "grand demonstration" and picnic, with the armed corps marching through the streets of the city.

At this time the press was running scare stories, hinting that the Socialists were going to seize the country by force and take office by bullets instead of ballots. Just before the Chicago procession took place, it was rumored that a general strike, beginning in the city, was to be called, and that the *Lehr und Wehr Verein* had just ordered thousands of rounds of ammunition. Public statements by the armed corps, protesting their peaceable intentions and announcing that their guns were only for self-defense and the protection of republican rights, were ignored.

Learning of the Chicago parade just before it was to take place, and fearing it would provoke a massacre, a warning note was printed in the *National Socialist*, urging the *Lehr und Wehr Verein* not to march with their rifles. The warning was unheeded and the armed work-

ers took part in the procession. Moreover, the German Socialist paper in Chicago, the *Vorbote,* printed an *Extra,* full of denunciations of the national committee, and distributed the paper along the route of the parade.

In subsequent editorials, the central office of the party in Cincinnati tried to explain its position, declaring that it was "quite unnecessary for the Socialistic Labor party to arm its members for aggressive efforts to reach what can be gained by the easier methods of the ballot-box," although pointing out that it did not "repudiate all mention of armed resistance under all and any circumstances," because it had "no confidence in the fell spirit of modern capitalism, knowing its instincts to be rapacious and heartless enough to secure its ends by means as bloody in the future as they have been nefarious in the past." The *Vorbote,* however, continued its attack and was repudiated by the executive committee. Later, however, a temporary reconciliation was effected and the paper was again recognized as a party organ.

Nevertheless, the struggle continued and became one of the chief issues confronting the Labor party as it prepared for its Allegheny City convention, at the end of '79. "Should the S.L.P. officially recommend to workmen that they organize into military associations independent of their civil liberties?" Van Patten wrote in the *Bulletin of the Social Labor Movement,* new organ of the party. "This question will have to be answered by the approaching congress of our party, since the German branch of the Chicago section has decided to ask settlement of the matter."

In his main report to the Allegheny City convention, Van Patten reviewed the whole matter and concluded by calling upon the congress "for final vindication of our course" and for the avoidance of "future misunderstandings over our attitude to military organizations." Parsons led the attack against him; but since Van Patten still had the support of the majority, the national com-

mittee was endorsed for its stand in denying any official connection between the party and the armed corps; yet Parsons managed to put through a vote of censure against the executive committee for demanding that individual party members withdraw from these groups.

Together with the dispute over the Greenback "compromise," the difference over this basic question was the major reason for the split of the Socialistic Labor party in 1880—an event which marked the end of the first period in Parsons' career as a labor leader.

XIII. "SOCIAL REVOLUTIONARIES"

Late in the same year, a group that had seceded from the S.L.P. in New York, formed an organization known as the Social Revolutionary club. Similar groups sprang up in other cities.

Parsons was a charter member of the Chicago club. With him came another outstanding labor leader, August Spies. Migrating from Germany while still a youngster, Spies had discovered socialism in Chicago at almost the same time as Parsons. He joined the Socialist movement during the '77 upheaval and developed into one of its leading orators and journalists, speaking and writing fluently in both English and German. A trade unionist by conviction, he had run on the party ticket but, like Parsons, lost faith in political action at this time.

Spies was rather short but well-built, handsome and athletic—a blue-eyed Saxon, with a fine forehead, and thick blond moustache in the conventional style of the period. High-strung, but affable and sincere, well-mannered and neatly dressed—he had poise and assurance and always commanded respect. He seemed to have had a better intellectual training than Parsons, and a firmer understanding of the position which they now shared. Like his co-worker, he was considerably influ-

enced by three major classics of the century—Buckle's *History of Civilization in England,* Marx's *Capital* and Morgan's *Ancient Society.*

The two of them attended a national conference of Social Revolutionary clubs held in Chicago during 1881. The meeting was called by the New York group, which had taken part in a London congress, where efforts were made to revive the Black International—the organization of anarchists, headed by Bakunin who had brought disruption to the European labor movement and split the First International. Returning from the London meeting, the New York delegates brought back with them the doctrine of "propaganda by deed": they advocated conspiratorial action, individual terror against the ruling class, as the only way to arouse the masses to revolt.

At the Chicago meeting, however, the Social Revolutionaries soon found that, although they had bolted the S.L.P. for approximately the same reasons, they could agree among themselves on hardly anything.

After a reception for the delegates—with songs by the German Socialist male chorus, a zither performance, a poetic recitation by a leading delegate from New York, and the singing of the "Marseillaise"—they got down to business.

To begin with, there was the question of the ballot. Parsons and Spies no longer believed that legal, parliamentary action could overthrow capitalism, but they still regarded it as a good means of agitation and propaganda.

Parsons' background, including his experience as an office holder under Grant, had taught him that the ballot was a solid American institution and, at the very least, a good device for appealing to native-born workers. It was the most practical way of getting the attention of people who couldn't be reached otherwise. The way to destroy the American workers' faith in voting, he argued, was not to abandon politics, but to go into it

and show the masses that even when they elected their own candidate he could be cheated out of office.

Spies backed up the argument. "I am not a politician," he said, "but I regard participation in elections as the most practical means of agitating and bringing our ideas to the masses." But they were in a minority. They also fought the New York crowd who advocated terror as the only tactic; in this matter, while the clubs endorsed the London congress as a whole, they did not directly accept its theory of insurrectionary deeds.

As a matter of fact, the whole conference was largely a waste of time. No program was mapped out. Although they adopted the name of the Revolutionary Socialistic party, no organization was built. Unity was not achieved. Each club went on in its own way.

The *Labor Review,* new organ of the S.L.P. (it was published under the slogan, "To Each According to His Deeds"!) poked fun at the new organization. "As we predicted in our last issue," wrote Van Patten, "the gathering . . . numbered a baker's dozen of Chicago malcontents and six delegates from outside cities. Even with so small a number, harmony was out of the question."

In Chicago the Social Revolutionaries were still not through with politics. In the spring elections of 1882, when the Trades Assembly—later to become the Chicago Federation of Labor—entered the political arena, Parsons and his comrades joined the movement. At the same time, the Anti-Monopoly party—which was the old Greenback party in modern dress—nominated candidates for the legislature and won the support of S.L.P. members. The two parties, of course, fought each other; and, as the end of the campaign neared, even internal dissensions occurred. Just before election day, prominent candidates on both sides withdrew their names—Parsons from the Trades Assembly ticket and Schilling from the Anti-Monopoly party. The result was a complete farce. It pretty well finished the S.L.P. in Chicago and wiped

out the last hope of the local revolutionists in politics, even as a means of agitation.

The following year, a second attempt was made to unite the Social Revolutionary clubs. Johann Most, a European radical, had been invited to the states by the New York group. He toured the country and helped to prepare the way for a congress which gathered at Pittsburgh late in '83.

Both Parsons and Spies were present, and were the first speakers at a mass meeting held at Turner Hall in the city. But the conference was dominated by Most. Short, full-bearded, with a large head and bushy hair, he looked something like the conventional caricature of a "Red"—a type very popular among the cartoonists of the day. He was temperamental and self-centered, tolerating no opposition, quarreling with everybody who disagreed with him. But he was the intellectual superior of all the delegates.

He had been a member of the German Social-Democratic party and had served in the Reichstag. After the Anti-Socialist laws of 1878 had driven him out of the country, he went to London, where he met Marx. There he came into contact also with anarchist doctrine and was soon expelled from the Social-Democratic party. In a letter to a friend then living in the United States, Karl Marx had written of Most: "A man of the most childish vanity ... not without talent ... he has no intellectual stability. Every change of wind blows him first in one direction and then in another like a weathercock."

Yet, compared to the delegates at the Pittsburgh meeting, Most was a powerful orator: his striking voice and histrionic ability—his ambition to become a great actor had been frustrated by a facial disfigurement acquired early in youth—transfixed his audiences; and his biting, stabbing penmanship, displayed in his sheet, the *Frei-*

heit, made him easily the leading journalist among the Social Revolutionaries.

During the spring preceding the Pittsburgh congress, Van Patten—still national secretary of the dwindling S.L.P. and now working in New York city—had felt the sting of Most's journalistic marksmanship. Upon the death of Marx at this time, Van Patten sent a letter to Engels inquiring about Most. "We have a very high opinion of the capacities and the activity of Karl Marx," he wrote, "but we cannot believe that he was in sympathy with the anarchistic and disorganizing methods of Most." Engels replied at once: "If anybody asserts that Most, since he became an anarchist, has had any relations with Marx whatever or has received any kind of assistance from Marx, he has either been deceived or is deliberately lying. . . ."

But before the reply reached Van Patten, he had given up the fight. He could no longer endure the position in which he found himself: the party which he had headed for years was falling apart. Leaving behind a suicide note, Van Patten disappeared. Later, however, it was discovered to be only a ruse to escape from his burdensome duties; actually, he had taken a soft job with the government. His desertion was a good deal of a moral blow to the party; for—although he had never been a forceful or popular leader—as a native-born Socialist of good family and a veteran of almost a decade, he had been highly respected and had always been a devoted, conscientious functionary.

Under Most's direction, the Social Revolutionary clubs, gathered at the Pittsburgh congress, were swung on the road toward anarchism. Most, who at this time was an ardent advocate of insurrectionary methods, was against any form of compromise and opposed the struggle for immediate demands—for shorter hours, higher wages, better working conditions. Such petty reforms, he thundered, were sops thrown to the proletariat; they only

kept the masses from revolting. As for political action—well, no one even dared mention it at the Pittsburgh meeting.

Even Parsons and Spies were through with the ballot. But they still believed firmly in trade union work. The latter offered a resolution endorsing such activity, and it was adopted; but the controlling New York faction, led by Most, had little connection with or interest in the unions. Most thought it was all right for the revolutionists to join labor bodies, but only in order to win the union membership to their program, and not in order to fight for wage increases and similar concessions. He couldn't see the elementary fact that only by working for such immediate demands could they hope to gain mass backing for their program. Most's attitude on the trade union question cost him the full support of the Chicago group. The latter also opposed using the name of the anarchist Black International—the International Working People's Association (not to be confused with the earlier International Workingmen's Association or First International which Marx founded)—as the new name of their clubs; but they were voted down.

A Manifesto was adopted at the congress. It was a curious document, the first version of which was written by Most, but to which was grafted new material, introduced partly by Spies and Parsons. Opening with a quotation from the Declaration of Independence, the Manifesto was based largely upon Marx's critique of capitalist economy and Bakunin's denunciation of the state and church, and ended with an appeal to one remedy—*force*.

The Pittsburgh Manifesto shows that Most's ideology—which became the official gospel of the I.W.P.A. even in the Windy City—was vague and inconsistent, but was moving more and more toward clearcut anarchist principles.

XIV. ON THE SOAPBOX

After the Pittsburgh congress, Most returned to New York as local dictator of the International Working People's Association. Fortunately, the I.W.P.A. remained a loose federation, maintaining local autonomy. While the Manhattan group was only a small, inverted, "leftist" clique, the Chicagoans were saved from sinking completely in the mire of sectarianism by their contact with organized labor. In the middle of '84, through the efforts of Spies and others, a number of left-wing unions withdrew from the Trades and Labor Assembly and formed the Central Labor Union; and in two years the C.L.U. —which generally accepted the leadership of the local I.W.P.A.—was larger than its conservative rival in the city.

In spite of their sectarian convictions and foggy thinking, the local revolutionists (who, since their split from the S.L.P. had changed their name from the Social Revolutionary club to the Revolutionary Socialistic party to the Chicago section of the International Working People's Association) began to make some headway. This was due not only to their influence in the trade unions but also to their exceptional skill on the soapbox.

They knew how to get a crowd and hold it. They were dramatic, forceful orators. Parsons especially was a practiced spell-binder in the traditional style of Patrick Henry. He had an unusually clear and penetrating tenor voice; he was a picturesque speaker; his candid manner, obvious sincerity and good nature were irresistible.

Spies was also a fluent soapboxer, in English as well as German. Like Parsons, he was at home before any kind of audience—a street-corner gathering of unemployed, a trade union meeting or a respectable debating and discussion society. They knew how to make a favorable impression—or an unfavorable one if they wanted. They could skyrocket to hortatory or vituperative

peaks; they could glide gracefully down to the gentlest plea or the mildest supplication. Pleasant, witty and straightforward—they inspired confidence and respect.

All along the Lake Front, the Social Revolutionaries held mass meetings. At various spots on this grassless strip of land—ugly and desolate, stuck against the expanse of water—they would group a pile of salt barrels, which they used as a platform, and lift their voices through the neighborhood. On Sundays they drew large crowds. Sometimes they would attract as many as a thousand people to a single meeting. And they kept it up steadily, untiring, indefatigable—without a letdown.

In addition to Parsons and Spies, there was a whole squad of topnotch agitators. Among them was "Red" Sam Fielden, a hardworking stone teamster who came from Lancashire. With his long, flowing beard, streaked with gray, he looked like a character out of the Old Testament—and he talked like one. Mild-mannered, but stolid and determined, his rough, homely eloquence appealed to the Chicago workmen. In contrast was the dry and ponderous but earnest remarks of Michael Schwab, a thin, angular, bespectacled and bearded émigré who looked like a typical German professor. They were the ablest of Parsons' and Spies' lieutenants.

Not content with regular Lake Front affairs, the I.W.P.A. soon tried to launch city-wide demonstrations. The first important event of this nature was staged on Thanksgiving day, 1884. Hard times had come back; another inflationary bubble, expanding since the beginning of the decade, suddenly burst: early in April of that year the price of wheat had fallen disastrously, creating a panic in Chicago. Besides, Chicago faced the bitterest winter of years. Icy gales from the frozen lake swept through the city. Hungry, shivering "tramps" besieged the avenues. The I.W.P.A. rallied the poor to

offer ironic thanks for their poverty on a day when the local four hundred held lavish feasts and orgies.

Parsons composed the leaflet for the meeting. "You must give thanks that you face the blizzards without an overcoat," he wrote; "without fit shoes and clothes, while abundant clothing made by you spoils in the storehouses; that you suffer hunger while millions of bushels of grain rot in the elevators."

In the afternoon, about three thousand people gathered at Market square, standing in the mud and slush, shielding each other from the cutting rain and sleet. Parsons mounted a platform of wooden crates. At the top waved a red flag. He roused the crowd to cheers and applause. "Men of the disinherited class of America," he said, "we are assembled on this day of national thanksgiving to curse the capitalistic robbers who are feasting on the blood of our wives and children." He compared the day to the feast of Belshazzar and, as his text, read chapter and verse from *James:* "Go to now, *ye* rich men, weep and howl, for your miseries that shall come upon *you.*"

When the speech-making was over, they formed in line and paraded through the fashionable sections of the city. The procession was headed by women comrades acting as standard-bearers; they waved red and black flags at the passersby. They shook long placards and rudely-constructed shields with slogans strange and menacing at the wealthy onlookers: SHALL WE THANK OUR "LORDS" FOR OUR MISERY, DESTITUTION AND POVERTY?—PRIVATE CAPITAL IS THE REWARD OF ROBBERY—OUR CAPITALISTIC ROBBERS MAY WELL THANK THEIR LORD, THAT WE THEIR VICTIMS HAVE NOT YET STRANGLED THEM—THE TURKEYS AND CHAMPAGNE UPON THE TABLES OF OUR "LORDS" WAS PURCHASED BY US.

As they passed the home of Washburne—who as

American minister to France during the Paris Commune had not only maligned but conspired against the Communards—they pulled the doorbell, greeting the occupants with groans and cat-calls.

Parsons followed municipal affairs closely and was always ready to capitalize on local holidays and other events. On such occasions the I.W.P.A. would organize street marches and counter-demonstrations, rallying the left-wingers and the unemployed in mass protests against the Chicago plutocracy.

In the spring of '85, on the night when the new palatial Board of Trade building, at the foot of LaSalle street, was to be opened, the Social Revolutionaries gathered their forces of denunciation. "After the ceremonies and sermons," their leaflet read, "the participants will move in a body to the Grand Temple of Usury, Gambling and Cut-Throatism, where they will serenade the priests and officers of King Mammon and pay honor and respect to the benevolent institute. All friends of the bourse are invited."

About a thousand strong, they gathered at Market street, and Parsons called the meeting to order. He announced that after a few speeches they would march around the "Board of Thieves" building and sing the "Marseillaise," so the rulers of Chicago could hear the notes that inspired the lovers of liberty in every land. He was interrupted by cries of *"Vive la Commune."*

Fielden followed on the platform. As he was excoriating the Board of Trade, the north-side contingent of the I.W.P.A. came down the street, their flags waving. Pointing to the banners, Fielden said: "The red one is for the common blood of humanity, and the other is the black flag of starvation. It is unfurled at this time, because the Board of Trade means starvation for the masses.

"The profit-mongers toil not, neither do they spin," he continued, "yet they have the best of everything.

They will banquet at the Board of Trade tonight, but we who have made the building have not been invited."

"We are going anyway. . . . We will invite ourselves!" workers in the crowd shouted, and everybody laughed.

Parsons climbed once more to the barrel platform. "A temple is being dedicated to the God of Mammon," he cried, "and it is to be devoted exclusively to the robbery, the plunder and the destruction of the people. When the cornerstone of the Board of Trade was laid, Bishop Cheney was there to baptize it. What a truthful follower the man must be of the tramp Nazarene, Jesus, who scourged the thieves from the Board of Trade of Jerusalem!" The crowd applauded.

When he finished, they marched forward, six abreast, in the middle of the street; when they reached LaSalle street, the band struck up the "Marseillaise," and the marchers sang in French and German as well as English. Turning the corner, Mrs. Parsons, who as one of the standard bearers was at the head of the procession, saw the illuminated building.

"Halt!" A cordon of police blocked the way. The music and the singing stopped.

Spies hurried to the front of the line. "Why do you stop us?" he demanded indignantly.

"The street is too crowded," snapped the police inspector. "Turn around—march your men away!"

"Break through!" someone hollered from the sidewalk.

Spies put up his hand and motioned. The band struck up again and they about-faced, continuing on their way until they had circled the neighborhood. Then they moved on to their newspaper office on Fifth avenue (now Wells street), where Parsons spoke again, this time from one of the windows.

XV. THE QUESTION OF VIOLENCE

Parsons was now convinced that the ruling class would not permit the workers to vote themselves into power; that capitalism could be overthrown, and the oppression of the working class finally ended, only by *force*. But his understanding of this basic question was confused, indefinite and contradictory.

Moreover, there was anything but clarity or uniformity of opinion on this issue among the members of the International Working People's Association—not only from city to city but among the members in a single place like Chicago. Parsons and Spies, as a matter of fact, were looked upon as moderates, even reformists, by the left-wing of the local I.W.P.A.

Generally, within the Social Revolutionary movement, there didn't seem to be any full realization of the basic difference between the anarchist advocacy of individual terror (which serves only as a boomerang, furnishing the enemy with a legal excuse for suppressing working-class groups) and the Marxists' repudiation of such acts (which are usually committed by hired provocateurs who are sent into militant labor organizations in order to destroy them). Nor did they seem to realize the vast difference between the anarchist desire to arouse the masses to a spontaneous revolt, and the Marxist policy of patiently organizing on all fronts—building a strong political party and a powerful labor movement, organizing the poor farmers, winning or at least neutralizing large sections of the middle class, supporting all progressive movements, etc.—using every possible legal opportunity afforded by bourgeois democracy to fight reaction and to strengthen the forces of the working class and its allies for the inevitable "coming struggle for power." They even failed to make a genuine distinction between defending themselves against provocatory actions by the

Pinkertons and using dynamite to assassinate public enemies of the working class.

Remember—this was the era of great triumph for industrial capital, for the new rulers of America who, sweeping indomitably onward, would tolerate no opposition, ruthlessly and violently crushing all obstacles in their way. It was, too, a period when the youthful labor movement, flexing its muscles, tried to push ahead —and collided with the relentless force of a rising capitalism. It is easy to understand how, under these circumstances, the question of force became one of the central issues of the time and how—considering the devastating attack of the factory-owners, and the untrained and immature state of organized labor, as well as the democratic frontier spirit which at this period still tended to express itself in terms of *direct action*—some of the most militant workers were driven, in desperation, to arm themselves against assault, and were attracted by what Lenin called "leftist" philosophies.

Particularly in Chicago—which was a storm-center of conflict between the newly-triumphant ruling class and the industrial proletariat—the modern class struggle assumed its most overt form. Ever since the 1877 strike, the local workers had been savagely persecuted by their arch class enemies. Pinkerton thugs shot workers in the back, and won nothing but praise for their murderous deeds. The municipal courts offered no protection against unwarranted attacks upon street or indoor meetings; on the contrary, the law served only to protect the unlawful actions of the bosses and their legal and military cohorts. Pinkertons were also sent into labor organizations and strikes and protest gatherings, acting as provocateurs; they tried to incite the workers to violence, or committed acts of terror themselves in the attempt to crush organized labor. The press, too, endeavored to provoke riot, demanding that strikers be shot down, printing scare

stories of insurrectionary plots, or spreading rumors that the militia was getting ready to butcher the unemployed.

Considering this situation, it is possible that there were a few individuals among the Chicago workingmen who, through bitter hatred or personal desire for revenge upon the assassins who shot their brothers, may have contemplated physical acts of vengeance and retribution. But the overwhelming majority of the Social Revolutionaries in the city were men of the type of Parsons—class-war veterans who understood at first hand just how the masses were exploited, who felt very deeply the oppression of the people; men of humanitarian sentiments, who desired to lessen the misery of humanity; who may, during moments of extreme stress, have made some rash statements, but who did nothing more violent than to denounce the violence of the bankers and industrialists against labor.

Parsons himself, on numerous occasions, repudiated the anarchist championing of individual terror. His theoretical understanding of the question of force, however, was never clear. As a matter of fact, it would be unfair to entirely identify his ideological position with any fixed doctrine: principles of anarchism, socialism and equalitarianism were hopelessly entangled in his mind. Indeed, he used such concepts interchangeably. "We are called Communists, or Socialists, or Anarchists," he declared. "We accept all three of the terms."

This was true even though he had read the *Communist Manifesto* and parts of *Capital,* which influenced his writings. "The march of events is toward a social revolution," he wrote in an editorial published during this period. "By this expression we mean the time when the wage-laborers of this and other countries will assert their rights—natural rights—and maintain them by force of arms. . . . This outcome is a necessity which cannot be avoided. We would prefer a peaceful solution rather than war, but we do not bring about the revolution. On the

contrary, the social condition creates the revolutionists. It will not come because we wish it, but because it must come. We simply foretell its approach and prepare for it."

Where Parsons and his comrades made their big, vital error was in their expectation that civil war was right around the corner. In many respects this accounts for their calls to arms which were frequently taken as demands to commit individual acts of terror but which were simply warnings to the masses to be ready for a spontaneous revolution which they mistakenly thought would soon take place. Parsons would write: "The time has now arrived when the laborers must possess the right to the free use of capital with which they work, or the capitalists will own the laborers, body and soul. No compromise is possible. We must choose between freedom and slavery. The International defiantly unfurls the banner of liberty, fraternity, equality, and beneath its scarlet folds beckons the disinherited of the earth to assemble and strike down the property beast which feasts upon the life-blood of the people."

Parsons came closest to a clearcut anarchist doctrine in his conception of the role of the state. He took the anarchist stand that all forms of authority, including government, should be abolished as soon as capitalism was overthrown. He had never read Marx's and Engels' writings on the state (most of them were, of course, completely inaccessible to him) which pointed out that the workers must use forms of organized force, including the state, for the purpose of crushing the resistance of the bourgeoisie even after the masses have won power; that, while the capitalist state must be smashed, the workers have to put in its place a "revolutionary and transitional form"—the dictatorship of the proletariat—which would pave the way for a classless society in which the proletarian state-form would no longer be necessary and would "wither away."

XVI. A NEW KIND OF PIONEERING

Besides their agitational work, Spies and Parsons shouldered most of the journalistic activities of the movement. Parsons was editor of the *Alarm,* started late in 1884 and published usually every fortnight. For his services Parsons received the munificent salary of eight dollars a week. As he later put it, "I was handsomely paid; I had saw-dust pudding as a general thing for dinner." Mrs. Parsons also wrote for the paper.

For several years before he became editor of the *Alarm,* Parsons and his wife had depended for their livelihood on a small ladies' tailor shop which they operated, with Parsons putting in most of his time soliciting business.

Ever since 1880, Spies had spent every day, including Sundays, working on the German papers. When he had joined the staff of the weekly *Vorbote* (Herald), it was facing bankruptcy; but under his guidance not only did it continue: during the boom period of the Socialistic Labor party in Chicago the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* had been converted into a daily, and a Sunday issue called the *Fackel* (Torch) had been added. Spies worked twelve to sixteen hours a day to keep them going. "There is scarcely to be found a calling more laborious, more wearing and ungrateful," he commented, "than that of the editor of a daily paper," and especially a workingmen's paper, he added, where every reader "is a critic, who considers it his most sacred duty to find fault" and who, "being of progressive turn of mind, has his individual hobbies—and woe to the editor if he fails to recognize in each one of them the long looked for panacea!"

The *Alarm* was an important factor in transforming the English-speaking division of the I.W.P.A. from a small clique to a flourishing group. The newspaper was not a personal venture but the national English organ of the party. As such it mirrored all shades of opinion

among the Social Revolutionaries. "This paper belonged to the organization," Parsons pointed out. "It was theirs. They sent in their articles—Tom, Dick and Harry; everybody wanted to have something to say. . . ."

Of course it was quite a financial problem to keep the revolutionary press going, and particularly the *Alarm*, since the native-born members were not only small in number but quite impoverished. Parsons partly solved the matter for a while by forming a publishing house and selling shares to sympathizers. Picnics and benefits were also used frequently to raise funds.

In the summer of '85, Parsons went on a long tour to get new readers for the *Alarm* and to form American branches of the I.W.P.A. He traveled west, stopping at a number of manufacturing towns in Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

One of his most successful stops was at Ottawa, Kansas, a small town which was known as a center for gatherings of a public and social nature in the state. The meeting was prepared by a local branch of the Knights of Labor, an organization which Parsons had joined on the Fourth of July, 1876, when he had addressed a meeting held in Indianapolis. Now he was the main speaker at a similar affair held exactly nine years later.

Elaborate preparations had been made, and a picturesque program for the day—including the reading of the Declaration of Independence and an address by the "celebrated labor agitator, A. R. Parsons of Chicago"—had been mapped out and distributed over the state and also through part of Missouri.

The picnic grove was decked with banners and slogans. As Parsons entered the grounds, a large motto, painted in big letters on an enormous strip of canvas hit his eye: NO SYSTEM OF RELIGION, GOVERNMENT OR SOCIETY, WHICH BUILDS UP ONE PERSON BY DESPOILING ANOTHER, IS WORTHY OF THE SUPPORT OF TRUE CHRIS-

TIANS, PATRIOTS OR PHILANTHROPISTS. Clusters of small red flags guarded the entrances, and in the middle was printed in gold letters: LIBERTY, EQUALITY, FRATERNITY. The speakers' stand was draped with an American flag, surrounded by red banners. Over the platform was another motto: "LABOR IS PRIOR TO AND INDEPENDENT OF CAPITAL. CAPITAL IS ONLY THE FRUIT OF LABOR, AND NEVER COULD HAVE EXISTED HAD NOT LABOR FIRST EXISTED. LABOR IS MUCH THE SUPERIOR AND DESERVES MUCH THE HIGHER CONSIDERATION."—ABRAHAM LINCOLN. On the left was another quotation: "THE CORRUPTION OF THE BEST AND MOST DIVINE FORMS OF GOVERNMENT MUST BE THE WORST!"—ARISTOTLE. And on the right was the familiar legend: AN INJURY TO ONE IS THE CONCERN OF ALL.

At seven-thirty, when Parsons mounted the platform, the meeting place, which was a tabernacle big enough to seat three thousand people, was packed. Everyone listened breathlessly—for where could the labor movement find a man better fitted to deliver a Fourth of July oration?

Not all the meetings on his tour were so pleasant. He found even labor groups extremely hostile when he first approached them; but usually, after they heard him speak, he managed to win most of them over, and then they helped him enthusiastically to arrange and sponsor lectures wherever he went. Often during the summer months, as he traveled from one dust-bitten town to another, he couldn't arrange open-air meetings and had to speak to small audiences in stuffy, sweltering neighborhood halls. And although he often spoke as long as three hours, his listeners gulped down everything he had to say. At times he drew big audiences and won converts and sold subscriptions to the *Alarm*.

"This trip has been productive of much good," he wrote to his paper later that summer, just before returning to Chicago. "The working people thirst for the truths of Socialism and welcome their utterance with shouts of delight. It only lacks organization and preparation, and the time for the social revolt is at hand. Their miseries have become unendurable, and their necessities will soon compel them to act, whether they are prepared or not. Let us then redouble our efforts and make ready for the inevitable. Let us strain every nerve to awaken the people to the dangers of the coming storm between the propertied and the propertyless classes of America. . . . *Vive la Revolution Sociale!*"

Soon after his return to the city, Parsons was a leading speaker at the meeting of the Central Labor Union called to celebrate the first anniversary of Labor Day in Chicago, on the first Monday in September, 1885. After other preliminaries—during which Spies delivered an oration in German, and the Socialist male chorus sang the "Red Banner"—they formed in line and, with jovial Oscar Neebe of the Brewers' Union as field marshal and Parsons as his aide, marched through the streets. First in line came half a hundred young girls of the "American Corps," and a number of women in decorated wagons. They bore slogans reading, DOWN WITH GOVERNMENT, GOD AND GOLD and OUR CIVILIZATION: THE BULLET AND POLICEMAN'S CLUB. As usual, they ended up at the Ogden Grove picnic grounds.

During the fall, the biggest meeting was on Thanksgiving day when, repeating the custom initiated the year before, Parsons and his comrades staged an indignation meeting to "return thanks" for the hard times, "the pauper wages, for the soup houses, poorhouses, woodyards and other charitable institutions," as Parsons put it.

But just as the cold season got under way, he was off

again on another pioneering trip, this time traveling eastward through the mining regions of Ohio and Pennsylvania. He trudged through the slush and mud of the coal villages, ruled by absolute monarchs, the coal czars. Often, as he wrote to the *Alarm*, "no hall could be had for love or money, and hence no meeting, as the weather was too cold for an open-air address." And even when he did rent an assembly hall, it was usually a skating rink where his listeners froze until he warmed them by his fiery exhortations.

He was greatly impressed by the situation around Pittsburgh, which he referred to as the "natural cradle of the social revolution." "Here, as nowhere else in America," he wrote to the *Alarm*, "the growth and development of the capitalistic system of mass-production has prepared the way by precept and example . . . for the rapid and stalwart growth of the revolutionary proletariat. There is but one thing lacking, viz.: leaders. . . ."

And to his wife he wrote: "Things are in a bad way in this region. . . . Oh, that I had the means! I would batter down the ramparts of wrong and oppression and plant the flag of humanity on the ruins. Truly the harvest is great, but it takes time and means, and no great means either, yet more than we have. But patience, patience!—Your loving husband, Albert R. Parsons—Pittsburgh, Pa., January 26, 1886."

XVII. MAY DAY

When Parsons returned to Chicago from his trip through the eastern coal region, he found the local labor movement primed for the coming struggle over the eight-hour day. Without a moment's rest, he jumped into the fight.

In the fall of 1884, a national trade-union body, which several years later became known as the American Fed-

eration of Labor, held a small meeting in Chicago. It turned out to be a gathering of unusual importance.

This Federation had been started at about the same time as the Social Revolutionary clubs. A group of labor men—including Peter McGuire and Strasser who had been leaders of the old Social-Democratic party (which Parsons had first joined and which had merged into the Workingmen's, Socialistic Labor, party), and Samuel Gompers who had reorganized the Cigar Makers' Union and made it the model for a new union movement—veered sharply to the right, working out an ideology of "pure" trade unionism. Unlike the Knights of Labor, which had set out to build "one big union" including the unorganized and unskilled, the new Federation set out to organize members of skilled crafts into separate trade unions.

When the Federation held its second annual session in 1882, McGuire, who was in Europe at the time, addressed what was to prove a significant communication to the conference. "We want an enactment by the workmen themselves that on a given day eight hours shall constitute a day's work," he wrote, "and that they will enforce it themselves." At the '84 convention, the Committee on Standing Orders advocated that they immediately adopt a resolution "that eight hours shall constitute a legal day's labor from and after May 1, 1886. . . ." After a lengthy discussion, it was carried by a vote of 23 to 2.

Luckily the depression was about over by the early part of 1886. The chance for success, therefore, seemed fairly good. In February, William Foster, secretary of the Federation, sent eight-hour circulars to all labor bodies urging a united front. Conditions were especially advantageous in Chicago, where wages had been reduced steadily for years.

At first the I.W.P.A. had not been favorable to the eight-hour movement. "To accede the point that capital-

ists have the right to eight hours of our labor," declared the *Alarm*, "is more than a compromise, it is a virtual concession that the wage system is right." By the time Parsons returned to the city, the attitude of the Chicago Internationalists changed. As he later put it, they gave their support, "first, because it was a class movement against domination, therefore historical, and evolutionary, and necessary; and secondly, because we did not choose to stand aloof and be misunderstood by our fellow-workers."

Once they endorsed the eight-hour struggle, the local left-wingers put life into it. Even though the Trades and Labor Assembly, which inaugurated the campaign locally, ignored them, Parsons and his comrades, including Mrs. Parsons, worked night and day and were largely responsible for the upsurge which now occurred. In Chicago the movement reached the highest peak of enthusiasm and swept along the largest mass of workers.

Labor centers hummed with excitement and activity. The opening gun was fired in Chicago during the middle of March, when a large audience gathered at the West Side Turner Hall. An immense meeting was held on a Saturday night in April, about seven thousand people crowding into the Cavalry Armory, with twice as many cluttering the streets outside. Trade unions marched to the place with drum and fife corps and with banners reading OPPOSE CHILD LABOR, BOYCOTT McCORMICK and DOWN WITH CONVICT LABOR.

A week later, on Sunday, the Central Labor Union staged a huge demonstration, beginning at the vegetable-huckster square on Randolph near Desplaines street. DOWN WITH THRONE, ALTAR AND MONEY-BAGS read one of their slogans. They paraded to the Lake Front, where the familiar oratorical quartet of Parsons and Schwab, Spies and Fielden—dividing the marchers into two crowds—gave an all-star performance.

The city was wound up to a snapping point. During the months before May Day, the police smashed into meeting after meeting, applying club and bullet liberally. Patrol wagons dashed through the streets. Armed cops charged: skull-cracking was merely a part of their routine. Sometimes the crowd scattered, sometimes they fought back with stones and anything else they could get their hands on.

Resentment mounted. Serious trouble threatened. As the deadline approached, a major clash seemed inescapable.

May First was on a Saturday. Tens and tens of thousands downed tools and marched—into the streets! One procession, headed by two giant Bohemian workers, one with an axe and the other with a mallet over the shoulder, stopped at factory after factory calling the workmen to join the demonstration. Woodworkers came out with a pine shaving in their hats as an emblem of their trade; brewers emerged still wearing their work aprons. Lumber-shovers, freight-handlers, packers, carpenters, tailors, bakers, barbers, cornice-makers, tin-roofers, even salesmen and clerks moved into the streets.

It was a grand turnout. "No smoke curled up from the tall chimneys of the factories and mills, and things had assumed a Sabbath-like appearance," reported a Chicago paper. The press did its best to whip up "public opinion" against the demonstrators. "The denizens of the lumber district," wrote the *Tribune,* "were thrown into a panic by the appearance of a mob of anarchistic strikers. They had broken loose from the Black Road and marched through the streets with an American flag turned upside down and two flaunting rags that had just been soaked in fresh blood." But in spite of this type of provocation, the day passed peacefully.

Spies wrote a rousing editorial for the occasion: "Bravely forward! The conflict has begun. An army of wage-laborers are idle. Capitalism conceals its tiger

claws behind the ramparts of order. Workmen, let your watchword be: No compromise! . . . The first of May, whose historical significance will be understood and appreciated only in later years, is here." He warned that the bosses would not grant the shorter work day without a battle.

He was right. They banded together and gave their answer without delay: lockouts, all through the city.

But it was not until Monday that the class struggle in Chicago moved toward a climax.

XVIII. THE MCCORMICK MASSACRE

On that afternoon Spies had to cover a meeting of the Central Labor Union for his paper. While he was there, he was asked to speak at an open air rally out on Black Road for the striking lumber-shovers. He didn't want to go. The last few weeks before May Day had pretty well finished him. In addition to his newspaper work, he had been speaking two or three times almost every day. But the committee begged, entreated. It was the same old story: good speakers were hard to get, it was a big meeting, thousands were there, it was a fine opportunity to reach new strata of the working class, there wouldn't be another chance like this for a long time, he just had to go along. He went.

When he reached the large open field near the black cinder road on the far west side of the city, the place was teeming with people. There must be ten thousand, he thought.

Several speeches had already been made. Pushing away his weariness for the moment, he climbed sprightly to the top of the freight car, which served as the speakers' stand. The chairman introduced him.

"He's a Socialist!" someone in front hollered. "We don't want any Socialistic speeches!"

But Spies had already started. His handsome, athletic build, his striking poise, added to his eloquence, routed all heckling at once. The crowd was quiet as he went on.

In spite of the huge audience, he found it hard to arouse his usual fire. He was dead tired. The best he could do was to speak very calmly, with unusual moderation, urging the workers to stick together if they wanted to beat the bosses, to stick together and not to retreat under any conditions.

He talked for a little while only. As he was winding up, he heard a factory bell, blocks away. He probably wouldn't have noticed it at all, but as soon as it rang there was a commotion in the rear of the crowd; voices cried out in some language he couldn't understand, a number of laborers detached themselves from the mob and began running up the road in the direction of the gong. Spies shouted to them not to go away, but they didn't listen. They kept running up the road, about two hundred of them.

Minutes later he heard pistol shots from the same direction. Someone in the crowd shouted, "It's from the McCormick works, they're fighting the scabs up there!"

Just as he was closing, a patrol wagon rattled up the road. It was filled with cops, their revolvers drawn. Soon a whole crew of police came running double quick; then more wagons.

The shots multiplied. Volley after volley rang down the road.

Spies ran up to see what was the matter. He recognized the place at once—the long line of freight cars standing on the railroad track in front of the high board fence around the harvester works. McCormick had locked his men out months ago. Parsons had spoken at the place a month or so before, protesting against the use of Pinkerton thugs.

When Spies reached the factory, rocks were sailing through the air. The factory windows were smashed. But

the battlefield was now on the prairie between the freight cars and the fence. The cops were chasing the strikers, firing right into the screaming, stampeding mass.

Spies collided with a young Irishman who seemed to recognize him (days later Spies found out he was an agent provocateur). "What the hell kind of union is that down there!" he shrieked, pointing down the road. "They must be nice fellows to stand by and have their brothers shot down like dogs. . . ."

"Have many been hurt?" Spies shouted, excited but sort of dazed.

"Many? . . . Nobody knows how many have been shot and killed. . . . For God's sake, why don't you bring those men up here to help!"

Spies ran back, frantic. He shouted to the lumber workers, begging them to return with him: the police were massacring their comrades, they couldn't stand by and do nothing, they must come and help. He sputtered, out of breath, the sentences unfinished, the current of indignation beating against the flow of feverish, pleading phrases.

But they wouldn't listen. They shook their heads and walked away. Many just looked at him, stolid, indifferent, uncomprehending.

Beside himself with resentment, he didn't know what to do. He dashed for a street car, rode into town and burst into his office. He was sure many of the strikers had been wounded, killed. He sat down to draft a leaflet. He was so jittery he couldn't write. He got up and dictated it. He read it and tore it up. At last he sat down again, wrote a bitter, slashing piece of agitation. . . .

It was after quitting time. He made the compositors stay, told them to set up the leaflet and have it run off at the print shop, and then distributed at various meetings to be held that night.

His head pounding, fatigue pressing down upon him,

he got home somehow, dragged himself up the steps, collapsed in bed.

When he awakened the next morning, he hurried down to the office to see what had happened. One of the first things he noticed was a printed copy of the circular he had drafted.—*Who had stuck the word REVENGE! right at the top?* It changed the whole meaning of the leaflet—made it appear as if he were advocating an attack upon the police! *Who had done it?* He stalked into the composing room, looking for Fischer.

"What is the meaning of this?" he ranted. "What is the meaning of this?" He shook his hand menacingly. "Who put in this word? What..."

"I don't know," Fischer shrugged his shoulders. "I don't know who did it.... Do you know there's a meeting at Haymarket square tonight to protest against these killings? All the unions are arranging it and they want you to speak. It's a big meeting. You..."

"I don't want to speak," Spies snapped. "Don't bother me with meetings...."

"But it's a big meeting," Fischer said, "they must have you for the German speaker...."

"All right, all right," Spies threw his hands down in resignation. "If they can't get anybody else, all right I'll speak."

He was still under the weather from weeks of campaigning. But it was his duty to speak, he knew it, especially since he had been at the McCormick factory.

A little later, a delegate from the carpenters' union came in the office to see him.

"You will be one of the speakers, Comrade Spies," he said. "Here is the notice for the meeting. We want you to publish it in the *Zeitung*, so people will come."

"All right," Spies said, taking the leaflet. His eye hit the line at the end—*"Arm yourselves and appear in full force!"* He smacked his hand to his head. He blew up.

"What is this, what is this," he moaned. "This is ridiculous. . . . Fischer, oh Fischer," he roared, "come here quick. . . ."

Fischer came running.

"What is the meaning of this?" Spies screamed. "This is ridiculous, who put in this? Why do you do things like this? Look, look," he shoved it into Fischer's face.

"So this is the meeting I have been invited to address," he went on, brandishing the circular. "I will not speak there, I absolutely will not speak with such a ridiculous notice." He walked up and down the room waving his hands.

"But, comrade Spies," the carpenter pleaded, "we have not distributed these notices yet, we can take this line out, and print it over again."

"Certainly," Fischer said, "we can take it out. . . ."

Spies cooled down. "All right," he said, "you take out the line and I will speak."

He ran a pencil through the line himself and handed the leaflet to Fischer.

XIX. HAYMARKET

Spies left the office early. He wanted to rest up before the meeting that night. After supper, his brother Henry called to see him. Spies persuaded him to come along.

"You had better change to your light suit," Henry said. "It is warm outside."

They walked down Milwaukee avenue. Spies' revolver, which he always carried for self-protection, was too big for the pocket of his suit; it kept rubbing against his side; it annoyed him. As they passed Frank Stauber's hardware store, Spies ran in and asked Stauber to hold the pistol until he got back.

It was about eight when they reached Desplaines street, a west-side thoroughfare, not far from the river.

The meeting was supposed to be held at the corner of Lake street, but when Spies and his brother got there, no meeting was under way. Groups were standing around, arguing, but it was only a small crowd. At the large open-air gatherings, Spies usually spoke in German after the English speeches were made.

He was angry at the whole business. Somebody had bungled the affair. No crowd, no speakers. Confound the arrangements committee, why didn't they do things right?

But it was old stuff to him. He knew it was his job to get the meeting started, as long as nobody else was around. He looked up the street but couldn't see anyone to help out.

The crowd was too small to meet in Haymarket square, which was situated at the widening of Randolph street between Desplaines and Halsted. They would be lost in it. He decided to hold the meeting right in the street, half a block away, around the corner from the square, between Lake and Randolph. He found an empty wagon on Desplaines street near Crane's alley. It would do for a platform. Jumping on the wagon and looking around, he called out, "Is Parsons here? Is Parsons here?" He was usually the first speaker.

"I saw him at the corner of Randolph and Halsted," someone close to the wagon said. "I think he's speaking there. Shall I look for him?"

"Never mind, I will go and find him myself," Spies said.

"Let's pull the wagon around on Randolph street and hold the meeting there," someone shouted.

"No, no," Spies said, "we may stop the street cars. Let it stay here."

He jumped off the wagon and hurried to the corner. He was accompanied by his brother, and by two others, Rudolph Schnaubelt and Ernest Legner. They looked down the street but there was no meeting at Halsted

street, and no Parsons. It was no use! Spies would have to start the meeting. They walked back to the alley.

"I think Parsons and Fielden are at a meeting in the *Alarm* office," someone volunteered.

"Run and see if you can find them," Spies said.

It was about half past eight. The crowd was gathering slowly.

"Gentlemen and fellow workmen," Spies began. "The speakers of the evening, Mr. Parsons and Mr. Fielden, will be here in a very short time to address you. Since they have not arrived, I shall entertain you for a few minutes....

"You have no doubt heard of the killing and wounding of a number of your brothers at McCormick's yesterday. Mr. McCormick told a *Times* reporter that Spies was responsible for that massacre committed by the noble Chicago police. I reply to this that McCormick is an infamous liar.... McCormick is the man who created the row Monday, and he must be held responsible for the murder of our brothers...."

"Hang him!" someone shouted from the crowd.

"No, no, make no idle threats," Spies said seriously. "There will be a time when monsters who destroy the lives and happiness of the citizens will be dealt with like wild beasts. But that time has not come...."

With emphasis: "When it has come you will no longer make threats—you will go and do it!"

The crowd roared.

For a few moments Spies had concentrated upon turning the cry from the crowd in the right direction. But as he continued, he wondered again with annoyance about the whole meeting. What was the matter with Parsons? Where was he? Why didn't he show up?

Early that morning Parsons returned from a trip to Cincinnati. He had spoken at a large parade and picnic there; it had been a stirring, invigorating affair, and he

AT THE HAYMARKET MEETING

was in good spirits. When he reached home, he took a little nap, and at ten o'clock his wife woke him. She told him about a meeting of sewing girls where she had spoken on Sunday.

"They are very anxious to organize," she told him, "and I think we ought to do something to help them join the eight-hour movement, because they work harder than anybody. . . ."

Parsons thought it was a fine idea and decided to call a meeting of the American section right away and make arrangements for organizing the garment workers into a union. He went over to the *Daily News* and inserted an ad calling for a meeting that same night—at the offices of the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* and *Alarm,* 107 Fifth avenue.

He worked at the newspaper office in the afternoon, with his wife and Mrs. Holmes, assistant editor. Later they went home (they lived on Indiana street) for supper, and then the three of them, together with Parsons' two children, Albert and Lulu, aged eight and seven, left the house and walked downtown.

Parsons was very cheerful. He walked along buoyantly, telling them stories of his trip and speaking with optimism of the future of their organization. For the benefit of the ladies, he did a take-off of a pompous trade union official he had met; he was a good mimic and they were laughing gaily as they reached the corner of Randolph and Halsted streets, where they were to take the street car.

"Hello, Parsons, what's the news?" someone said. Parsons turned around and recognized two reporters. He was on good terms with some of them; on one occasion he had helped them out of a tight spot, when angry strikers, who regarded all newspapermen as stool pigeons, had threatened to beat them up.

"I don't know," Parsons said. "I have just returned to town today."

"Going to be a meeting here tonight?" one of them asked.

"Yes, I guess so."

"Going to speak?"

"No, I have another meeting on hand tonight over to the south side."

"Here comes the car," Mrs. Parsons tugged at his sleeve.

"We hear there's going to be trouble tonight," one of the reporters said.

Parsons smiled. "Are you armed for the battle?" he joked.

"No, have you any dynamite on you?" the reporter kidded back.

They all laughed.

"He's a very dangerous looking man, isn't he?" Mrs. Parsons said, looking fondly at her husband.

They ran for the horse car, waved goodbye to the men.

The meeting at the *Alarm* office lasted until about nine. Just as it was breaking up, someone came running, breathing hard.

"There's a big meeting at Haymarket," he wheezed. "Nobody is over there except Spies. There's an awful big crowd, three or four thousand people.... For God's sake, send somebody over.... Come over, Parsons, and you too, Fielden...."

A whole group decided to go along. When they reached the meeting place, Parsons helped his wife and children and Mrs. Holmes into a nearby wagon, and then pushed his way through the crowd.

Some of the listeners recognized him and started clapping. As soon as Spies caught sight of him, he cut his speech short.

"I see Mr. Parsons has arrived," he said. "He is a much abler speaker in your tongue than I am, therefore I will conclude by introducing him."

He put his hand out and helped Parsons to the wagon. The street was now packed from sidewalk to sidewalk.

Parsons looked out over the audience. There must be about three thousand, he thought. Yes, he was sure of it: he was proud of his ability to estimate the size of crowds and by this time he was quite expert at it.

He was still in high spirits, and spoke pleasantly for a little less than an hour, dealing with conditions in the city, telling of experiences on his lecture tours. Only once or twice did he unleash his eloquence.

"Do you know that the military are under arms, and a gatling gun is ready to mow you down?" he said at one point. (A new gatling gun had arrived in the city the day before and the papers hinted it was going to be used against the strikers.) "Is this Germany or Russia or Spain?"

A voice in the crowd: "It looks like it!"

"Whenever you demand an increase in pay, the militia and the deputy sheriffs and the Pinkerton men are called out and you are shot and clubbed and murdered in the streets....

"I am not here for the purpose of inciting anybody, but to speak out, to tell the facts as they exist, even though it shall cost me my life before morning....

"In the light of the facts and of your inalienable right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness, it behooves you, as you love your wives and children, if you don't want to see them perish with hunger, killed or cut down like dogs in the street—Americans, in the interest and protection of your liberty and independence, to arm, to arm yourselves!"

Applause. Cries: "We will do it, we are ready now."

Parsons stopped short. He waved his hand back and forth. "No," he cried, "you are not...."

Later he cautioned the crowd about the same thing. He was talking about the infamous Jay Gould.

"Hang him!" someone snarled.

"No!" Parsons replied, "this is not a conflict between individuals, but for a change of system, and socialism desires to remove the causes which produced the pauper and the millionaire, but does not aim at the life of the individual: kill Jay Gould, and like a jack-in-the-box, another or a hundred others like him will come up in his place under the existing social conditions. . . . To kill an individual millionaire or capitalist would be like killing a flea upon a dog. The purpose of socialism is to destroy the dog—the existing system!" It was well turned.

While he was speaking he recognized Mayor Harrison in the thick of the crowd. What was he doing there? In the middle of his speech, he saw Harrison leave and move off in the direction of the police station. But when he had nearly finished, he saw Harrison leave again. Apparently he had returned to the meeting.

It was about ten o'clock when Parsons finished. Fielden was the next speaker. Parsons went back to the ladies. They were chatting, when all of a sudden a sharp wind swept through the wagon. Parsons looked out. Clouds were rolling from the north. It looked as if a thunderstorm was coming up.

Parsons was still in something of a holiday mood. He wanted to get indoors, sit around and talk: it was no use staying there and getting wet.

He made his way back to the speakers' stand and cut into Fielden's address.

"Mr. Fielden," he said smoothly, "permit me to interrupt you a moment."

"Gentlemen," he continued, turning to the crowd, "it appears as though it would rain. It is getting late. We might as well adjourn anyway, but if you desire to continue the meeting longer we can adjourn to Zepf's hall on the corner nearby," pointing.

"No, we can't," someone hollered. "It is occupied by a meeting of the furniture workers."

Parsons looked down the street. The windows of the hall were lighted.

"Never mind," Fielden said, "I will close in a few minutes, and then we will all go home."

The wind grew stronger and it began to drizzle. Parsons and the ladies didn't wait for the meeting to end, but hurried over to Zepf's place.

A large part of the crowd also made for shelter. Only a few hundred stayed to listen. But Fielden was not to be hurried or disconcerted. He kept on.

"Is it not a fact that we have no choice as to our existence, for we can't dictate what our labor is worth? He that has to obey the will of another is a slave. . . ."

It was about twenty minutes before he was through. The crowd was rapidly scattering. "In conclusion," he said at last. . . .

"The police! Look out for the police!"

Fielden stopped, bewildered. A whole army of cops cut through the crowd, stopped a few yards from the wagon. The officer in command stepped out, raised his club and shouted:

"In the name of the people of the State of Illinois, I command this meeting immediately and peaceably to disperse. . . ."

"Why, captain," Fielden said, "this is a peaceable meeting."

The police captain turned around and gave the order to advance.

"All right, we will go," Fielden said, and together with Spies he started to get off the wagon.

There was a whirring sound, something sputtered, a dull red glare whizzed over the crowd, descended—a terrific, blinding explosion shook the street.

"What is that?" Henry Spies shrieked to his brother.

"They've got a gatling gun down there!" Spies answered, and started to run. Bullets sailed through the street: the cops were firing madly into the crowd. The

SPEAKERS' STAND AT HAYMARKET

spectators, stunned for a moment, now plunged for safety, trampling each other. The street lamps were shattered, everything was in blackness. Henry Spies turned to follow his brother, ran right into a pistol aimed at his brother's back; he lunged for the gun, struggled, felt a stabbing pain, toppled over. Fielden, running towards Randolph street, was knocked down by a bullet which hit him just above the knee.

In a few moments it was all over, the firing had stopped. Some of the wounded dragged themselves into doorways, while others lay in the streets, their moans breaking the stillness.

XX. RED SCARE

The bomb had fallen into the ranks of the police. One was killed instantly, many were wounded. The bullets of the police took the life of at least one spectator and wounded others.

Wild stories appeared in the papers on the morning after: the anarchists were going to dynamite the city—the Haymarket bomb was the signal for the beginning of an uprising. Mad rumors floated about. The city sizzled with fear, hysteria, hatred. A red scare was being whipped up.

Mobs stood on the street corners, reading the news. "Hang them first and try them afterwards," "Hanging is too good for them," they muttered. The militia was prepared for action, bands of vigilantes were formed. Decisive steps to crush the whole socialist movement were demanded.

The police immediately began a reign of terror against everyone suspected of being a radical; the bursting of the bomb became an excuse to exterminate the left-wing movement. The first job was to get the most militant leaders. Spies and Schwab and Fischer were immediately

arrested and held incommunicado. Fielden was also picked up. Parsons' home was raided—but he had disappeared! They took his wife to jail.

"You still wear the red ribbon, do you?" a detective said sarcastically as they took her to the police station. She had a bright red handkerchief around her throat.

"Yes," she said defiantly, "and I'll wear it until I die."

The police raided homes and halls, dragging in everybody they could get. The *Alarm* was suppressed. In two days fifty workers' gathering places were raided. The police stations were filled with "political prisoners." For weeks the arrests continued.

No time was lost in bringing the radicals to "justice." On the afternoon following the Haymarket "riot," the coroner's inquest was held: a number of the prisoners were blamed for the murder of Degan, the first of the cops to die; they were bound over to the grand jury.

In a few weeks the grand jury was impanelled and began its investigation of the case. Murder and conspiracy were charged.

By this time some kind of defense committee had been rigged up for the arrested members of the I.W.P.A. Salomon, a bustling young attorney who handled legal matters for the Central Labor Union, and his partner, Zeisler, were retained. Some of the more courageous socialists in the city, headed by Dr. Schmidt and George Schilling, came to their assistance. They tried to interest several prominent lawyers in the case, but without success.

Finally Schilling convinced Captain William Black, a man of liberal beliefs, widely respected for his honesty, to head the defense. Black was a successful corporation lawyer and sacrificed his entire practice by his association with the case. Since he had no criminal experience, he had to secure some competent help; he managed to

get William Foster, a quick-witted, level-headed young attorney from Iowa, as his chief aide.

As soon as the grand jury made its decision, Captain Black petitioned for a change of venue, arguing that Rogers, the presiding judge, was prejudiced. After deliberation, the case was turned over to Judge Gary, who was highly regarded in the city. Although the defense pleaded for postponement and although public hysteria was still at its height, the trial was set for June 21.

It was held in the plain, dirty courtroom of the Cook County criminal court. Below the judge's bench and parallel with it stretched the jury box; at right angles, on both sides, were tables for the counsel; adjoining the defense table was a row of chairs for the defendants. Besides Spies, Schwab, Fielden and Fischer, three others sat in the prisoners' dock: George Engel, an elderly German, with thinning brown hair, who looked like a chubby, good-natured bartender—together with Fischer, he had edited a paper called the *Anarchist,* organ of an extremist group opposed to the moderate leadership of the Chicago I.W.P.A.; Oscar Neebe, hefty, hustling organizer of the Brewers' Union, who usually handled arrangements for meetings and demonstrations and other Jimmie Higgins work of the Internationalists; and Louis Lingg (who had come to America about a year before), youngest of all the prisoners and unknown to the police, the public and even to Parsons: he had turned out to be a real find, having been arrested, after a terrific battle, in a room where he manufactured small dynamite bombs.

Two of the indicted prisoners were missing. One of them, Rudolph Schnaubelt, was Schwab's brother-in-law and had been with Spies at the Haymarket meeting. He was later accused of having thrown the bomb, although there was no proof of his having done so. He had left the country because, as he told Zeisler just before the trial started, "I don't see that I can do any good to my

friends here, and the way things are going I believe it would be better for me to get out of Chicago for a time."

The other missing "culprit" was Parsons. The country had been scoured for him, but he could not be found....

Together with his wife and Mrs. Holmes, Parsons had gone over to Zepf's saloon while Fielden was still speaking at the Haymarket meeting. Parsons was beginning to feel a little tired, the exhilaration wearing off. It was time to go home. He looked out of the window to see if the meeting was over. A blinding illumination, followed instantly by a deafening roar, almost knocked him off his feet. Before he could regain his balance, a volley rang out. Bullets hit the front of the store. Someone came running in, screaming. Parsons recovered quickly, ran towards the ladies.

"Don't be frightened," he shouted automatically.

"What is it?" Mrs. Holmes cried.

"I don't know. Maybe the Illinois regiment has brought up their new gatling gun!"

Some of the bullets came in through the window. Everybody scrambled for the back room. Parsons helped the ladies quickly to the same place. As they scrambled in, someone shut the door. For a while they stood there in total darkness, wondering what had happened.

The firing ceased.

They crept out. The street was quiet.

Parsons swiftly led the ladies toward the Desplaines street viaduct, on the way home.

"I don't know what happened," Mrs. Holmes said, "but we may be sure some kind of conflict has occurred. ...If any of our people are in danger, you are.... Whatever has happened, leave the city for a few days at least...until we see what is the matter."

Parsons did not want to leave, but at last he consented. He took a train to nearby Geneva and stopped at the Holmes' residence. He stayed there until he learned

that Mrs. Holmes was among the arrested—and that meant the police would soon be searching her home. He decided to disguise himself and go farther west, where he had a number of friends.

He shaved off his moustache, removed his collar and neck-scarf, tucked his pants into his boots and traveled to Waukesha, Wisconsin, hiding out at the home of Daniel Hoan. The latter gave Parsons some old clothes, a big coat and a wide-brimmed hat. His disguise was now perfect. Ever since his hair had turned prematurely gray over ten years before, Parsons had always dyed his hair and moustache a jet-black. Now, with his moustache gone, his hair and his new beard snow-white, and with his ill-fitting clothes—nobody could tell it was Parsons in a thousand years.

Waukesha was a beautiful village, surrounded by green, rolling hills, health springs and winding paths. Parsons' favorite spot was Spence's hill, where he could see the whole town against the background of low, misty elevations. Every morning he made for the place, and toward evening he would return to this lookout-point. It was his first vacation in years and he enjoyed it.

He was perfectly safe—but not from his thoughts. Corresponding with his wife, he finally made up his mind to surrender himself to the authorities. Captain Black, who was very conscientious and upright and believed in the nobility of mankind, thought it was an excellent idea; he pictured to his staff what a sensation it would cause if Parsons should walk into court on the first day of the trial: such a fine, magnanimous act would immediately turn public opinion in favor of the accused, he argued. Foster, who had none of Black's idealism, argued against it, but it was decided that Parsons should return and stand trial with the others.

After several rather narrow escapes, he reached Chicago, went to a comrade's house on Morgan street, changed back into his neat clothes, dyed his hair,

trimmed his new moustache. He sent word to his wife and later she joined him. Putting a handkerchief over his face, he walked to a cab, drew the curtains and, with his wife and another comrade, drove to the courthouse.

Meanwhile the trial had started. Foster pointed out that certain evidence which might apply to some of the defendants didn't apply to others, and moved for a separate trial for Spies, Schwab, Fielden and Neebe. As he finished, Foster smoothed back his red hair, looked up at the judge.

"While the defense sincerely believes that the court ought to grant this motion in the interest of justice," he said, "I hardly expect that it will."

"Well, I shall not disappoint you, Mr. Foster," Judge Gary replied in his most cutting manner.

Foster shot a stream of tobacco juice straight at the cuspidor: his aim was unfailing.

The courtroom tittered. Spies looked glum. He jotted something on a slip of paper, passed it to Zeisler:

"What in hell does Foster mean? I thought the motion was meant seriously. What was the sense of making it appear perfunctory? A. S."

It was a bad start.

The day was taken up trying to select a jury. Foster for the defense and states-attorney Grinnell were snarling back and forth about two-thirty, when Captain Black quietly left the courtroom. He paced up and down the sunny street in front of the courthouse. In a few minutes a hack arrived, and a group of people came up the steps. Captain Black shook hands silently but intensely with one of them and proceeded into the building. A group of newspaper men and detectives were standing on the stairway. As the short, wiry fellow, thoroughly tanned, with black hair and moustache and piercing black eyes, briskly passed, one of the reporters said:

"I'll bet a dollar to a nickel that little man is Parsons!"

"Nonsense," a detective said, "not in a thousand years. Why, don't you suppose I know Parsons when I see him? He isn't within five hundred miles of Chicago. Say, we detectives have been looking for him and . . ."

But the reporters were already running into the courtroom.

Black walked toward the bench. He was about to address Judge Gary, when Grinnell's assistant whispered in the states-attorney's ear.

Grinnell spun around, his loud tones cutting through the assembly:

"Your Honor, I see Albert Parsons in the courtroom! I move that he be placed in the custody of the sheriff!"

The whole act was ruined. Quivering with anger, Black faced him: "Your motion, Mr. Grinnell, is not only most ungracious and cruel, it is also gratuitous. This man is in my charge and your demand is an insult to me. You see that Mr. Parsons is here to surrender himself."

"I present myself for trial with my comrades, your honor," Parsons broke in.

"Mr. Parsons will take his seat with the other prisoners," Judge Gary ordered. Parsons rushed to the dock to shake hands with Spies, Schwab and the others.

The court was in an uproar. The judge pounded his gavel. The reporters dashed out of the place. The evening papers appeared with headlines, the newsboys shouting them along the avenues, "Parsons walks calmly into Judge Gary's courtroom!"

XXI. FRAMEUP

As the trial got under way and the jury was being picked, it became clear that the cards were stacked against Parsons and his comrades. A special bailiff was appointed to

summon possible jurors. "I am managing this case," he boasted in private, "and I know what I am about. These fellows are going to be hanged as certain as death. I am calling such men as the defendants will have to challenge peremptorily and waste their time and challenges. Then they will have to take such men as the prosecution wants."

According to the state law, every person charged with murder was given the right to challenge twenty talesmen without giving any cause. Judge Gary constantly overruled the defense, approving of many candidates, so that scores had to be challenged peremptorily by Black and his aides.

Parsons sat in the prisoners' dock through the first weeks of the trial, deep in introspection, re-thinking all his experiences and trying to plan his next act. Usually, as soon as he got to the courtroom in the morning, his two little children, fair and daintily dressed, would run shyly to him, he would kiss and hug them closely, then hold them on his knees and talk until the jury hearing was resumed. The candidates for the jury filed by interminably. Sitting in the oppressive, crowded courtroom, occupied with his thoughts, at first he caught only snatches of the questioning, like bits of scenery through the window of a speeding train. Repeatedly the hard face and rasping, incisive voice of Judge Gary stabbed into his consciousness as the court overruled challenge after challenge of the defense for *cause*. Soon Parsons began making lengthy notes of the proceedings.

"It would take pretty strong evidence to remove the impression that I now have," a prospective juror admitted. Immediately the defense challenged for cause. It was overruled by the court. So the candidate had to be challenged peremptorily.

"Your mind is pretty well made up now as to their guilt or innocence?" another was asked. "Yes, sir." Challenged. Overruled.

"Am prejudiced and have formed and expressed an opinion"—another. Challenged. Overruled.

"I believe what I have read in the paper; believe that the parties are guilty." Challenged. Overruled.

"You think you would be prejudiced?" "I think I would be, because my feelings are very bitter." Challenged. Overruled.

"You have made up your mind as to whether these men are guilty or innocent?" "Yes, sir." "It would be difficult to change that conviction, or impossible, perhaps?" "Yes, sir." Challenged. Overruled.

Judge Gary even qualified a venireman who said he was related to one of the cops who had been fatally wounded.

After several days of this, Parsons slipped a note to one of the defense attorneys:

"In taking a change of venue from Judge Rogers to 'Lord Jeffries,' did not the defendants jump from the frying pan into the fire? Parsons."

He received a despondent nod.

It was not until the middle of July that the jury was finally chosen and sworn. Some of its members admitted their prejudices even on the witness stand:

"I have read and talked about the Haymarket tragedy, and have formed and expressed an opinion.... I still believe what I have read and heard, and still entertain that opinion."

"It is evident that the defendants are connected with the Haymarket affair from their being there."

"Have you an opinion as to the guilt or innocence of the defendants... ?" "I have."

In private the jurors were more emphatic. "If I was on the jury I would hang all the damned buggars," one of them was reported to have said before he was picked. "Spies and the whole damn crowd ought to be hung," said another.

As soon as the jury was selected, a large map of the

section of the city around Haymarket was propped up in front of them, and at once prosecuting attorney Grinnell sprang to the attack. His opening remarks made the issue clear. "Gentlemen," he said, with all of the appropriate theatrics. "For the first time in the history of our country people are on trial for endeavoring to make anarchy the rule. . . ."

He called them everything in his vocabulary—assassins, enemies of the state, traitors, conspirators, monsters, vermin. The prosecution had ransacked the files of the *Alarm* and *Arbeiter-Zeitung* for inflammatory passages that could be used as evidence. Grinnell charged Spies with deliberately fomenting the riot at McCormick's, with premeditated intent to incite the workers to revolt. Spies, he said, had run away from McCormick's "like a cowardly dog to avoid meeting the police who would have killed him on sight." He sketched a dark picture of a dastardly plot hatched to wipe out the whole city—the whole state—the whole country. "These defendants were picked out and indicted by the grand jury," he said. "They are no more guilty than the thousands who follow them. They are picked out because they are the leaders. Convict them, and our society is safe."

Parsons listened carefully, toying with a large, crimson handkerchief, wrapping it around one hand and then around the other. Schwab who sat beside him, leaned forward with his elbows on his knees like a student attending a lecture. Later they were put on the witness stand. Since they refused to take the regular oath, the clerk of the court substituted the words "under the pains and penalties of a perjurer" for "so help me God." Schwab stood with his right hand on his heart and bowed assent, in the customary manner, but Parsons introduced a new gesture, holding his clenched fist before the court as the clerk read the oath.

Weeks were spent presenting voluminous evidence, ex-

amination and cross-examination flying to and fro until well into August. The hot, stifling courtroom was always packed. Many of the women spectators brought their lunches and stayed all day from 9:30 to 5. Toward the end, Judge Gary opened the galleries of the court for the first time and more spectators jammed into the courtroom. Among the constant onlookers was a beautiful young woman who had fallen in love with Spies during the trial; she was always in the courtroom, appearing in exquisite gowns, wearing a stunning new outfit for each session of the trial.

Even some of Gary's stiff-necked colleagues were shocked by his behavior during the trial. Every day he brought fashionably dressed ladies, including the prosecuting attorney's wife, to sit on the bench with him. Almost touching elbows with him, they came as to a play, whispering to each other, giggling and eating candy. Gary treated the affair as a Roman holiday, laughing out loud, showing them puzzles in the midst of the proceedings and keeping them amused. He took no action as the crowd repeatedly applauded accusations of the prosecuting attorney.

Gary openly flaunted his bias against the defendants. "It has been decided that for a man to say that he is prejudiced against horse thieves is no ground for imputing to him any misconduct as a juror," he lectured to the jury. "Now you must assume that I know either that anarchists, socialists and communists are a worthy, a praiseworthy class of people, having worthy objects, or else I cannot say that a prejudice against them is wrong."

During the closing arguments he gave Grinnell an utterly free hand, letting him go as far as he liked with his ferocious, howling accusations, overruling all objections.

"Don't try, gentlemen, to shirk the issue," Grinnell

said. "Anarchy is on trial; the defendants are on trial for treason and murder."

Captain Black objected: "The indictment does not charge treason, does it, Mr. Grinnell?"

Gary, cynically, waving his hand: "Save the point upon it."

Again: "We stand here, gentlemen," the D.A. roared, "already with the verdict in our favor...."

Black: "There has been no verdict in favor of the prosecution...."

Gary: "Save the point upon it."

Foster, in his summation, tried to separate the whole matter of a general conspiracy, as alleged by the prosecution, from the Haymarket case itself; he insisted that the only question was whether or not the defendants had planned the murder of Officer Degan and the others. His blunt and caustic remarks were in sharp contrast to the passionate eloquence of Captain Black, who appealed, pleaded, entreated; his tall, dignified, military-like figure dominated the courtroom, and his tone of deep righteousness and conscientiousness would have impressed almost any audience. But it was wasted on a jury whose avowed prejudices against the defendants had been encouraged by the judge himself.

Even Mayor Harrison testified that the Haymarket meeting had been peaceable. Just after the bombing had occurred, he told a friend: "I have attended all the meetings of those fellows. I have read all their papers and I know that, while some of them talk like damn fools, they are not plotters . . . they are not a bad lot really."

On Thursday, August 19, the jurors were instructed to arrive at a verdict.

Early the next morning the sidewalk of the Criminal Court building swarmed with spectators. Heavy guards patrolled the entrance. The police had been notified of

the verdict the night before, and reserves were on hand for any emergency.

Only a small number of people were admitted to the courtroom. Carefully guarded, the defendants were brought in. Before Parsons sat down, he looked out of the window and waved his red handkerchief to the crowd on Michigan street. Solemnly the jurors took their places.

"Have you agreed on your verdict, gentlemen?" the court asked.

"We have."

"Have you your verdict ready?"

The foreman handed two papers to the clerk:

"We the jury find the defendants August Spies, Michael Schwab, Samuel Fielden, Albert R. Parsons, Adolph Fischer, George Engel and Louis Lingg guilty of murder in manner and form as charged in the indictment and fix the penalty at death."

Parsons whistled softly.

The clerk continued: "We find the defendant Oscar E. Neebe guilty of murder in manner and form as charged in the indictment, and fix the penalty at imprisonment in the penitentiary for fifteen years."

As the clerk's voice died down, Mrs. Schwab, a tall, graceful, delicate young woman, fell screaming into the arms of Mrs. Parsons and Spies' mother.

Only three hours had been spent by the jury in deciding a case which had taken over a month to present—and a large part of the time was spent in playing cards and singing songs. In fact, it was later admitted that the jury had reached its decision before the closing arguments were made.

Parsons and Lingg seemed to bear up best under the verdict. They walked back to their cells, firm, defiant. Schwab clutched Parsons' hand, almost collapsed. Fielden could hardly walk. Neebe seemed in a trance.

The decision met with tremendous acclaim. Merchants

and bankers were jubilant. The Chicago *Tribune* was out early, the headlines of its feature story shrieking: "THE SCAFFOLD WAITS—Seven Dangling Nooses for the Dynamite Fiends!"

XXII. ACCUSING THE ACCUSERS

WHEN the verdict of the jury was given, Captain Black was horrified. Controlling his emotion with difficulty, he immediately moved for a new hearing. It was not until October that Judge Gary listened to the argument of the defense and, of course, denied the motion for another trial.

On October 7 he ascended the bench. "Are there any reasons," he said with weary finality, "why sentence should not be passed upon you?"

He thought it was all over: but he had to listen for three days to the last words of the condemned. Exercising their legal right, they spoke at great length in the courtroom, sifting the evidence, pointing to obvious flaws in the testimony and explaining their ideas and ideals to a hostile audience.

Spies was first. He stepped smartly forward. Trim and self-possessed, wearing a navy-blue suit, finger ring and gold scarf pin, he wasted no time with preliminaries. "Your Honor," he began, his scornful tone at once commanding attention. "In addressing this court I speak as the representative of one class to the representative of another. . . ."

He spoke for hours, rebutting the charges of murder and conspiracy. In the traditional manner of revolutionaries, he used the court as a forum to expound his doctrine. He charged the state with deliberate intent to use the Haymarket episode as a pretext to assassinate the leaders of the working class. "But, if you think that by hanging us you can stamp out the labor movement,"

he said; "if this is your opinion, then hang us! Here you will tread upon a spark, but here, and there, and behind you, and in front of you, and everywhere, flames will blaze up."

Speaking for hours, he concluded at last:

"Now these are my ideas. They constitute a part of myself. I cannot divest myself of them, nor would I, if I could. And if you think that you can crush out these ideas that are gaining ground more and more every day ...if you would once more have people suffer the penalty of death because they have dared to tell the truth ...I say, if death is the penalty for proclaiming the truth, then I will proudly and defiantly pay the costly price! Call your hangman! Truth crucified in Socrates, in Christ, in Giordano Bruno, in Huss, in Galileo, still lives—they and others whose number is legion have preceded us on this path. We are ready to follow!"

By contrast, Schwab, who followed Spies on the rostrum, was dull and plodding. He had spoken at a public meeting five miles away from Haymarket on the night the bomb was thrown. Lacking the eloquence and finish of Spies, he impressed the listeners by his sincerity and earnestness. He was like a professor reading a paper, not a prisoner pleading for his life. Oscar Neebe, who was next, had no training as a public speaker; yet his simple, halting, extemporaneous remarks would, under ordinary conditions, have stirred the feelings of most auditors. He had been at home during the bombing.

The two extremists, Fischer and Engel, did not rise to the occasion; they spoke only briefly to an uninterested audience. The former had been in Zepf's saloon at the moment the explosion occurred; while Engel, who owned a small toy shop on the west side, had been home drinking beer and playing cards with his wife and some friends. The two of them had officiated at a closed meeting the night before the bomb-throwing—when, the

SCHWAB, FIELDEN AND NEEBE

prosecution charged but was unable to prove, the Haymarket "conspiracy" had been hatched.

Lingg had also been miles away from the scene. Although only twenty-two, and addressing the court in German, his powerful personality held everyone's attention. During most of the trial he totally ignored the proceedings, spending his time reading. He spoke briefly, at a white heat, pacing up and down, displaying the utmost defiance and contempt for his listeners, smacking his hand on the table with every sentence. "I despise your order, your laws, your force-propped authority," he ended. "Hang me for it!"

Like Spies, Fielden—spitting out the plug of tobacco he had been chewing—spoke for hours, not in a theoretical vein of course, but in his typical, homely manner. "Your Honor," he began, "since I was eight years of age I have gained my daily bread by the hard labor of my hands."

It was late in the afternoon of the eighth when Parsons, the last speaker, stepped forward. Carrying an enormous roll of papers with him, he laid it on the desk, smoothed out the sheets, then straightened his short figure, sniffed the flower in his buttonhole, surveyed the audience, turned and looked straight at Judge Gary.

"Your Honor," he said, and began to recite:

Toil and pray! Thy world cries cold;
Speed thy prayer, for time is gold.
At thy door Need's subtle tread;
Pray in haste! for time is bread....

His clear, tenor voice penetrated the courtroom. The spectators looked on in wonder. He continued reciting, one stanza after another:

Break thy slavery's want and dread;
Bread is freedom, freedom bread.

"That poem," he said, "epitomizes the aspirations, the

hope, the need, of the working classes, not alone of America, but of the civilized world."

With statistics as well as passion he sketched the whole background of the trial, showing its class basis. He transformed the court into a classroom. He lectured to the judge and the spectators—defining the class struggle, analyzing capital, dealing with phases of the labor question and with the meaning of socialism.

As evening approached, he stopped, addressed the court: "Your Honor, if you will permit it, I would like to stop now and resume tomorrow morning."

At ten the next day he continued his address. After briefly outlining his work as a labor organizer, he took up in minute detail the charge of advocating violence. "Well, possibly, I have said some foolish things," he admitted. "Who has not? As a public speaker probably I have uttered some wild and perhaps incoherent assertions. . . . Now consider for a moment. . . . I see the streets of Chicago, as was the case last winter, filled with thirty thousand men in compulsory idleness. . . . I see this thing. Then on the other hand . . . I am told by the editor of the capitalistic newspaper that the First Regiment is out practicing a street-riot drill for the purpose of mowing down these wretches when they come out of their holes. . . . Overwhelmed as it were with indignation and pity, my heart speaks. May I not say some things that I would not in cooler moments? Are not such outrageous things calculated to arouse the bitterest denunciations?"

He dealt with events since 1877, showing how the capitalists and their agents had provoked attacks upon peaceful assemblies. He presented a mass of evidence taken from the bourgeois press which advocated the use of hand grenades against workers, which called for the extermination of labor leaders. Instead of the defendants being conspirators, he showed that they had been conspired against. He described the activities of Pinkerton's

army of thugs, used systematically to murder striking workers. Later he said:

"Now, then, I want to call your attention to what I regard as the origin of the bomb at Haymarket. I believe it was instigated by eastern monopolists to produce public sentiment against popular movements, especially the eight-hour movement then pending, and that some of the Pinkertons were their tools to execute the plan."

He continued to re-examine all the evidence used against him. It was almost one o'clock when he paused. "Your Honor," he said, "if you please, I would like to take a short recess...."

But Gary refused. "I would very much prefer to finish up the matter," he said impatiently. "I shall not restrict you as to time.... Go on, say all that you wish to say."

Although he was hardly able to continue, Parsons struggled through, denouncing the jury, charging that it was packed. "The jury has been wined, and dined and banqueted, and costly gifts have been bestowed upon them with a lavish hand by the enemies of human rights and human equality."

Once more he expounded his principles to a restless, fidgeting audience.

"The charge is made that we are 'foreigners,'" he said, "as though it were a crime to be born in some other country.... My ancestors had a hand in drawing up and maintaining the Declaration of Independence. My great great grand-uncle lost a hand at the Battle of Bunker Hill. I had a great great grand-uncle with Washington at Brandywine, Monmouth and Valley Forge. I have been here long enough, I think, to have rights guaranteed, at least in the Constitution of the country....

"I am also an Internationalist. My patriotism covers more than the boundary lines of a single state: the world is my country, all mankind my countrymen.... The

workers are without a country. In all the land they are disinherited, and America is no exception. . . ."

Parsons was almost completely spent, but he had to say all he had planned. "Your Honor," he pleaded, "I have got what would take me an hour and a half, possibly two hours, at least to say. I am used to an active, outdoor life, and until my incarceration here I have never been deprived of personal activity, and the close confinement in a gloomy cell . . . and of course it has deteriorated my physical system somewhat; and then, the long mental strain of this trial in addition. I thought if Your Honor could possibly give me a little rest for lunch. . . ."

Gary, brusquely: "I do not think I am under any obligation to have repeated adjournments of the court for the purpose of listening to the readings of newspapers or disquisitions upon political economy, the question only being in this case, whether the defendants killed Mathias Degan. That is the only question in the case."

Parsons, pointedly: "Yes sir, of course."

Gary, catching himself: ". . . Not whether they did it with their own hands, but whether they set causes at work which did end in his death."

Parsons stumbled on, boiling down the rest of his argument. "I have nothing, not even now, to regret," he finished, and collapsed.

Gary lost no time in pronouncing sentence: ". . . that the defendant Neebe be imprisoned in the state penitentiary at Joliet at hard labor for the term of fifteen years. And that each of the other defendants between the hours of ten o'clock in the forenoon and two o'clock in the afternoon of the third day of December next, in the manner provided by the statute of this state, be hung by the neck until he is dead."

To the bailiffs: "Remove the prisoners."

XXIII. LEGAL DEFENSE

The committee for the defense of Parsons and the others did not give up the battle. Using every legal device, they carried an appeal to the state court, securing a stay of execution.

But long, weary months of legal maneuvering brought no results. It was not until more than a year after the trial that the final decision was made—the verdict of the lower court was sustained. The execution was fixed for November 11, 1887.

Anticipating this decision, the defense counsel carried the fight to the Supreme Court itself. By this time several notable attorneys—including Leonard Swett, who had been a law associate of Lincoln's, and Roger A. Pryor, prominent New York lawyer who had been a general in the Confederate army—had joined the legal staff of the condemned men.

The hearing before the Supreme Court began one morning late in October. On the second of November, Chief Justice Waite gave the decision:

"...Being of the opinion...that the Federal questions presented by the counsel for the petitioners, and which they say they desire to argue, are not involved in the determination of the case as it appears on the face of the record, we deny the writ of error."

"If there was a plot in existence, do you suppose that they would have had their wives and children there?" General Pryor told the reporters in an interview immediately after the Supreme Court decision.

Only one recourse was left—the governor's pardon. Members of the defense committee threw themselves into this last campaign, gathering thousands of petitions begging for clemency.

By this time a good deal of the hysteria prevailing at the time of the trial had worn off, and prominent intellectuals of liberal beliefs began to rally to the aid of the

class-war prisoners. America's leading man of letters, William Dean Howells, was deeply stirred by the case and, although he feared his reputation and livelihood would be jeopardized, he interceded in their behalf.

"I am glad you have taken the case . . ." he wrote to General Pryor, "for I have never believed them guilty of murder, or of anything but their opinions, and I do not think they were justly convicted." After the decision of the Supreme Court, he addressed a letter to the press urging that their sentence be mitigated.

Soon he was joined by Robert Ingersoll, king of iconoclasts; by Henry Demarest Lloyd, distinguished social thinker; by General Trumbull, veteran of the Mexican and Civil Wars; by John Brown, son of the great emancipator. In England, William Morris took up the fight, trying to win the support of other British authors. "I venture to write and ask you to sign the enclosed appeal for mercy," he wrote to Robert Browning, "and so to do what you can to save the lives of seven men who had been condemned to death for a deed of which they were not guilty. . . ."

Together with young George Bernard Shaw, Morris was one of the speakers at a mass meeting held in London for the defense of the Haymarket victims. In France, the left-wing of the Chamber of Deputies petitioned Governor Oglesby to spare the lives of the men.

American labor also awakened to the meaning of the case. Two prominent labor journalists, John Swinton of New York, and Joe Buchanan of Denver, had denounced the trial from the beginning; they were instrumental in organizing mass protests by the trade unions against the hanging. During October '87 a huge meeting was held in Cooper Union, with Peter McGuire, Samuel Gompers and Daniel De Leon—then a lecturer at Columbia University—among the speakers.

From Europe two outstanding Socialists, William

Liebknecht and Edward Aveling, Marx's son-in-law, came to visit the prisoners.

Gaining admittance to the city jail, they found the men on the first corridor, in murderers' row, caged in iron grating with wire mesh just large enough to pass their fingers through. Aveling recognized Schwab, greeting him by touching his fingers through the steel netting. They talked of the old country, Schwab leaning against the grate, with his long, hairy arms raised above his narrow head.

A little to the right stood Spies, coatless but looking trim, with his loose, soft-collared shirt laced up in front. His cell was carpeted and adorned with flowers; they had been sent to him by Nina Van Zandt, the young society girl who had fallen in love with him, and had married him, by proxy, after his sentence had been pronounced. Spies talked for a while to the visitors, in English, and then they passed on to greet Neebe, who could hardly get a finger of his large hand through the mesh; he was deep in sorrow, for his wife had not survived the anguish and anxiety of the trial.

Fielden was overjoyed to meet a comrade from England, and as they talked Aveling caught a glimpse of young Fischer, playing with his little child, the little girl laughing as she ran with her father.

And finally there was Parsons, who was soon amusing the visitors with an appropriate anecdote from American history.

During the long months in prison, Parsons had been fairly busy, writing a short autobiography and assembling some of his papers. On the very first day he entered his cell, he seemed to realize that he was doomed. If he had any doubts, they were soon dispelled by Spies, who said, in his dry, cynical way: "You know you have run your neck right into the noose, don't you?"

To a friend who came to visit him even before the verdict, Parsons said, in his august manner, "I know

what I have done. They will kill me, but I couldn't bear to be at liberty, knowing that my comrades were here and were to suffer for a crime of which they were as innocent as I."

And in the same grand but sincere manner he had issued a statement to the press after Judge Gary had pronounced sentence: "I am sure our dear friends on the outside are more shocked by this decision than we are, and my heart bleeds for them and for the insulted principles and traditions of my country. . . ."

His temper during the last months he spent in prison is shown by a letter addressed to a friend in New York. "My Dear Comrade," he wrote, ". . . I send you a hangman's noose which is emblematic of our capitalistic, Christian civilization. The rope is official—the kind which it is proposed to strangle myself and comrades with. The knot was tied by myself, and is the regulation style. I give it to you as a memento of our time."

Parsons was greatly touched by a visit from one of his colleagues in the Texas legislature. "The sentence will be executed," he told his friend, "and I will die upon the scaffold an innocent man. Future generations will not judge me and my comrades as murderers." The Texan gave Parsons several silk badges as souvenirs; one read, "Texas and Liberty." "What cheering words to a man in my position," Parsons said.

As the day of execution approached, members of the defense committee tried desperately to get the condemned men to sign a statement of penitence, with the hope that Governor Oglesby would commute the death sentence. The three extremists, Lingg, Fischer and Engel, refused pointblank. And Parsons stood with them. "If guilty," he wrote to the governor, "then I prefer death rather than to go 'like the quarry slave at night scourged to his dungeon.' If innocent, then I am entitled to and will accept nothing less than liberty. . . . I know not what

course others may pursue, but for myself I reject the petition for my imprisonment, for I am innocent.... In the name of the American people I demand my ... inalienable right to liberty."

But Fielden and Schwab, broken by the long imprisonment, did agree to sign a plea for mercy, in which they recanted their beliefs. And after considerable hesitation, Spies also signed the petition.

Letters, resolutions, demands and entreaties now deluged the governor's office. "Almost a mile of signatures" were received, according to a Chicago paper. Among the petitioners were judges, a district attorney and members of the Illinois legislature.

As public sentiment in favor of the prisoners mounted, the hopes of the defense committee rose. But on the Sunday before execution day, the police suddenly announced that they had discovered four bombs, about the size of giant firecrackers, in Lingg's cell!

"It's a mare's nest, a canard," Parsons declared indignantly, "a put-up job to create a sensation and manufacture public prejudice. How in the world could bombs get into Lingg's cell unknown to those whose sole business it is to see that no such things get there?" But the episode put a damper on the efforts of the defense committee.

Nevertheless the committee continued the struggle, traveling en masse to the capital on Wednesday, November 9, the date which the governor had designated for a public hearing on the case.

Before he left for Springfield, Captain Black called to see Parsons, hoping to persuade him to sign the petition for mercy, at least for the sake of his wife and children. But Parsons firmly refused.

When they gathered in the state capitol to make their last pleas to the governor, George Schilling acted as a sort of master of ceremonies, introducing first Captain Black, who began with a lengthy petition. He was fol-

lowed by General Trumbull who directed his words to the governor as an "old soldier, who has fought with you on the battlefields of the Republic."

During the noon recess, Captain Black ran into McConnell, a prominent Chicago citizen, who had also come to Springfield in behalf of the prisoners. "I want to talk to you, McConnell," Black said; he was obviously under a great strain. "I have heard that you are to have an interview with the governor this afternoon."

McConnell nodded.

"Won't you do what you can for Parsons?" Black entreated, running his fingers through his long, gray hair. "If he is hanged, I shall be responsible for his death. He was safely away and I advised him to come back and enter his appearance. I thought that it would save him, I thought it would help the others. It was a great blunder, McConnell, I have blundered clear through." Sobbing, he gripped McConnell's shoulders. "Those men, all of them were innocent and I failed to save them. None of them ever dreamed of murder...."

After the recess, the hearing was resumed. Enormous petition lists came pouring in. Even Gompers came to plead for the prisoners.

At the private sessions that afternoon, Joe Buchanan brought with him a long letter by Spies which the latter had entrusted to him. Buchanan read it to the governor:

"...During our trial the desire of the prosecution to slaughter me and to let off my co-defendants with slighter punishment was quite apparent and manifest. It seemed to me then, and to a great many others, that the prosecution would be satisfied with one life—namely mine.... Take this then; take my life.... If legal murder there must be, let one, let mine suffice."

It was Spies' atonement for having signed the earlier petition for clemency.

Buchanan had still another letter for the governor. It

was only a brief note from Parsons, but as he read it the blood of the listeners turned cold.

"If I am guilty," Parsons had written, "and must be hanged because of my presence at the Haymarket meeting, then I hope a reprieve will be granted in my case until my wife and two children, who were also at the meeting, can be convicted and hanged with me."

"My God, this is terrible," Governor Oglesby exclaimed, hiding his face in his hands.

XXIV. "LET THE VOICE OF THE PEOPLE BE HEARD!"

As the day before execution dawned, there was an explosion in Lingg's cell. He was found slumped on his couch, blood streaming from his mouth. His lower jaw and tongue were blown away, the upper lip and nose torn to shreds, the cheeks badly lacerated. According to the released story, he had lighted a small dynamite cartridge held between his teeth. Frightfully mangled, bleeding steadily for hours, he showed no sign of pain, remaining conscious until his death in the afternoon. Whether it was suicide or murder no one will ever know.

That evening the governor announced his decision: only the sentences of Fielden and Schwab were changed to life imprisonment. (They escaped the gallows; six years later they were pardoned, together with Neebe, by Illinois' progressive governor, John P. Altgeld.)

Late that night the four condemned men still retained their calm composure. Parsons seemed almost happy, singing in his rich, tenor voice an anarchist song called "Marching to Liberty," to the tune of the "Marseillaise." Later he entertained with a fine rendition of "Annie Laurie," the other prisoners raised on their elbows listening as his voice echoed through the corridors. When the bailiff urged him to get some sleep, Parsons said jok-

SPIES, FISCHER, ENGEL AND PARSONS

ingly, "How can a fellow go to sleep with that music," pointing in the direction of the north corridor where subdued hammer-blows attested that the gallows were being put up.

He woke at eight the next morning, greeted his comrades cheerfully, washed his face, drank some coffee and ate fried oysters for breakfast, read the morning papers, then wrote some letters. "Cæsar kept me awake till late at night," he wrote to a friend, "with the noise (music) of hammer and saw, erecting his throne, my scaffold! Refinement! Civilization! . . . Alas, goodbye! Hail the social revolution! Salutations to all."

Later he recited some of his favorite poems from his splendid memory. Conversing with his guard, shortly after, he said: "I am a Mason, and have always tried to help my fellowmen all my life. I am going out of the world with a clear conscience. I die that others may live," and he gave the Masonic grip and pass-word.

Soon he was visited by Reverend Doctor Bolton. After listening patiently to the minister, Parsons replied without anger: "Preachers are all Pharisees, and you know what Jesus Christ's opinion of the Pharisees was. He called them a generation of vipers and likened them to whited sepulchres. I don't desire to have anything to do with either."

The reverend was shocked, but Parsons took his hand. "Thank you, anyway," he said, as he ushered him to the door of the cell. "Don't forget, though, I didn't send for you."

He spoke for a while to the turnkey about his wife and two children, then sang the "Marseillaise" once more. He refused a glass of wine, but drank some coffee and nibbled at a few crackers. "Now I feel all right," he said. "Let's finish the business."

At half-past eight that morning Mrs. Parsons and her two children, accompanied by Mrs. Holmes, tried to get

to the jail for a last farewell. But the police would not let them through. Ropes were stretched across the streets, traffic was suspended, and cordons of police armed with Winchesters barred the way. The jail itself was surrounded by cops, and from the windows and on the roof scores of them stood ready for action. For days reserve squads of police had been drilling at an armory in preparation for the hanging. Wild rumors ran through the city: the anarchists were marching to forcibly liberate the prisoners, they had planted enormous loads of dynamite beneath the jail, they were going to blow up the whole city....

Mrs. Parsons moved from corner to corner trying to get through. The temperature had fallen, and the two children shivered with cold, and fear. Mrs. Parsons begged the officers to at least take the children in to see their father. Finally the cops hustled them into a patrol wagon, had them dragged into a cell and even the crying children stripped to see if they had any dynamite concealed on them.

At eleven-thirty, Sheriff Matson and his assistants marched to murderers' row. Spies listened with his arms folded, his face emotionless, his head bowed slightly, as Matson, his voice trembling, read the death warrant. Then Spies stepped into the corridor, and a thick, leather belt was placed around his chest and his arms pinioned just above the elbows. His hands were then handcuffed behind his back, and his body encased in the white muslin shroud. Fischer and Engel were treated in the same fashion, and then they got to Parsons, who toyed carelessly with his moustache. As his arms were being fastened, he looked up to Fielden in the tier of cells above. "Goodbye, Sam," he said. Some members of the press crowded forward as he was prepared for the gallows. "Won't you come inside?" Parsons said to them with some anger.

They formed a procession and moved somberly along

the corridor. The hardboiled reporters and others, assembled in the execution room since six that morning, stopped their jabbering as they heard the sound of feet on the iron stairway. One after another the prisoners appeared, each guarded by a deputy. They reached their positions on the trap and turned toward the spectators. Just above them the sun streamed in through the grated window, the rays falling like a spotlight directly upon the gallows.

Their feet were tied and the dangling nooses taken from the hooks. As the rope was slipped over Spies' neck, the noose tightened; the deputy quickly loosened it a bit, and Spies smiled his thanks. Fischer who was taller than his deputy bent his head to help out. Engel accepted the noose as if it were a wreath of honor. Parsons stood there silent, his eyes turned upward, the shroud accentuating his martyr-like appearance.

White caps were put over their heads and faces, and there was a tense quiet.

Suddenly the silence was shattered; the audience looked up startled.

"You may strangle this voice," they heard the clear but subdued tones of Spies from beneath the hood, "but there will be a time when our silence will be more powerful than the voices you strangle today!"

The moment his voice dropped, Fischer shouted:

"Hoch die Anarchie!"

Engel caught it up and roared in his powerful voice:

"Hurrah for anarchy!"

"This is the happiest moment of my life!" Fischer ended.

"Will I be allowed to speak, O men of America?" Parsons shouted; then lowering his voice: "Let me speak, Sheriff Matson!" The deputy behind Parsons stepped back, leaving the trap clear. As though beginning a speech, Parsons' voice rose:

HAYMARKET TODAY

"O men of America, let the voice of the people be heard! O. . . ."

But the man in the sentry box, hidden to the spectators, had already slashed the rope, and the four bodies shot down, twisted and contorted, the chests heaving, the legs kicking convulsively, the necks blue-white. . . .

Parsons had remained an agitator to the last.

O men of America, let the voice of the people be heard!

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

A good deal of the material used in this booklet has been taken from first-hand documents included in the *Life of Albert R. Parsons,* compiled by Mrs. Parsons. Mr. Henry David's thorough *History of the Haymarket Affair*—as well as a large number of primary references given in his bibliography—has served in the main as a guide to the last part of the study. In addition, files of the Socialist and daily press of the period—the *Labor Standard, National Socialist, Socialist, Alarm,* Chicago *Tribune,* Chicago *Inter-Ocean,* etc.—have been examined for source material; also standard biographical and historical works, particularly Commons' *History of Labour in the United States.*

Although this booklet is an attempt at *popularization,* very few of the prerogatives of modern biography have been used. Liberties of the sort which have been taken consist chiefly of turning a few indirect quotations into dialogue.

Paper 35c.

LABOR AGITATOR

The Story of Albert R. Parsons

By ALAN CALMER

On November 11, 1887, the Haymarket martyrs were sent to the gallows. In spite of the protest of the entire labor movement, and also of liberals and intellectuals on two continents, they were hanged for a crime they did not commit.

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Mrs. Parsons, surviving widow of Albert R. Parsons, contributes a foreword to the present volume, which also includes Haymarket drawings by the Chicago artist, Mitchell Siporin.

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