The Nation.

The Nation and the New Slavery.

The assertion of the national authority during the past week to repress disorder and lawlessness which were last becoming a national peril, has many analogies with its assertion in 1861. Now, as then, an evil which has been long tolerated or impatiently endured, and left to local authorities to dispose of as they saw fit, has at last become so defiant and menacing, so evidently destructive of all law and government, that the instinct of self-preservation is aroused to grapple with it. There can be but one supreme power in this country. It is either the nation or a band of boycotters, just as, in 1861, it was the nation or a band of slaveholders. When that issue becomes clear and sharp, it is time for the Government to summon its last man and spend its last dollar in a fight for its own life, or else commit suicide in despair.

The boycott's blow at the life of the nation has not been struck with such dramatic effect as slavery's blow, but it is just as deadly in its aim. The contention that the entire industry of the land can be wielded as a club to compel any man or corporation to surrender a single right or a single dollar, means the setting up of a new government All the raging of all the demagogues cannot obscure that. If an individual employer has been unjust or a corporation tyrannous, that is an evil for which its legal remedy must be sought. To take the whole country by the throat, to defy municipal and State officers, is simply the levying of public war to redress a private grievance. It has taken the nation a long time to wake up to this, but it has waked at last, and the determination of the Washington authorities to enforce their control before giving up the attempt to enforce the laws is as truly patriotic a resolution, and as truly essential to the continued life of the Government, as was the call of Lincoln for volunteers when Sumter fell.

The insidious attack of labor-unions on the power of the Government, with the boycott, and a universal sympathetic strike as weapons, also has its instructive analogies with the assault of slavery upon the national life. This reckless and militant trades-unionism deserves, in fact, to be called the slavery of our day. It holds men in a bondage as absolute and humiliating as any system of slavery ever known. Their judgment and rights are, for the autocrat who gives them their orders, non-existent. Some of them beg him to be allowed to go back to work, to earn bread for their wives and children, but he lashes them back into idleness and hunger with the true insolence of a slave-driver. The cruelty of this new slavery is likewise characteristic. Its dupes it wantonly leaves to suffering, and against its victims it rages with the heartlessness of a savage. While crying to heaven against the oppression of employers, it subjects delicate women and helpless and innocent children to discomforts and dangers in a way to bring a blush to the cheek of the Zulu.

For many years this evil has been strengthening itself and growing more offensive and threatening, and for years, just as in the case of slavery, it has had its advocates, its apologists; many have been lured at its growth, some have been ensnared into it, but nearly all have acquiesced in the view that it would have to be dealt with by local authorities. But now what has all along been latent in the new slavery has become evident to all. It stands unmasked as an avowed constant, and the swift return stroke from the national authority marks the consciousness, on both sides, of the true nature of the struggle.

All this is fairly comparable to that other attack on the Government which it took four years of bloody war to crush.

The course of events during the past fortnight explains how writers like M. de Tocqueville and others, have characterized the life of the nation as something distinct from its institutions. There do seem to be something like a vital process in "the way the nation becomes conscious of a peril to its life and redresses itself to meet it. It is not simply that the great strike against society is accompanied with violence. As we write, the disorder has not been nearly so great as that evoked by the coal strike a few weeks ago. Nor is it alone the fact that there is a national humiliation in such disregard of law. There was a deep national humiliation in the New Orleans massacre of Italians in the United States in Oregon. But none of these occurrences stung the Government into an assertion of its authority conterminous with the territory and the property and lives under its jurisdiction. That it has now made it is because it sees that an ignis fatuus in America, or rather imperium contra imperium, such as the boycotters are trying to set up, means its own dissolution.

GOV. ALTGELD AND THE PRESIDENT.

It should surprise nobody that Governor Altgeld of Illinois came to the rescue of Debs and his fellow law-breakers by protesting against the efforts of the federal authorities to restore order in Chicago. He is the executive who pardoned the anarchists out of prison, and it is only natural that he should sympathize with anarchists who have not yet been sent to prison.

The long despatch which Altgeld sent the President is chiefly devoted to a defense of the strikers, and an exposition of their attitude as defined by Debs. His misrepresentation of the facts is so obvious and clear that it needs no attention. The only argument advanced by the Governor which deserves any examination is his plea that the President is disregardings local self-government in sending federal troops without being required to do so by the Constitution of the State. Upon this point he says:

"I submit that local self-government is a fundamental principle of our Constitution. Each community shall govern itself as it sees fit, and is guided in its dealings with the State and the Union by what its spirit of law and order; and it is in harmony with this fundamental principle that the statute authorizing the President to send troops into States must be construed. Especially is this so in matters of local internal police power and the preservation of law and order.

"The question of federal supremacy is in no way involved. No call for federal action, but under our Constitution federal authority and local self-government go hand in hand, and to ignore the latter is to do violence to the Constitution."

The President's reply is brief, but comprehensive. It meets the Governor's arguments, and covers the whole ground in two sentences, as follows:

"When ever insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combinations, or conspiracies in any State shall obstruct or hinder the execution of the laws thereof, and of the United States, as to any portion of any State of the United States, by persons resident therein, or from any cause, civil or military, the President is hereby authorized to call forth the militia of any or all the States, to suppress such rebellion, in whatsoever State or Territory thereof the laws of the United States may be forcibly opposed, or the execution thereof forcibly obstructed." Section 5393 is as follows:

"Whenever insurrection, domestic violence, unlawful combinations, or conspiracies in any State shall obstruct or hinder the execution of the laws thereof, and of the United States, as to any portion of any State of the United States, by persons resident therein, or from any cause, civil or military, the President is hereby authorized to call forth the militia of any or all the States, to suppress such rebellion, in whatsoever State or Territory thereof the laws of the United States may be forcibly opposed, or the execution thereof forcibly obstructed."