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# Federation Inaugurated

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A new era has dawned. Federation is an accomplished fact. The *Firemen's Magazine*, animated by a fraternal spirit, sends cheerful greetings to all railroad employees. The *Firemen's Magazine*, long ago, placed itself on record in favor of the federation of the various organizations of railway employees. Since the first article appeared in its columns, the subject has been widely and searchingly discussed. The proposition did not escape criticism, nor was exemption from the severest analysis desired. The friends of federation had nothing to fear from honest opposition, nothing to fear from the logic of history, of events, of facts, conditions or worthy ambitions. The grand old maxim, "In unity there is strength," embodying a truth that develops vitality as time speeds on, blooming and fruiting as centuries come and go, is the central truth of all federations. To make headway against federation, as a principle of action, finds its parallel in antagonizing an axiom in mathematics, in science and philosophy. Federation is "E pluribus unum," one composed of many. Without federation, the great American Republic would not exist to day. Its foundations were laid in federation. Federation, whatever it has done for others, is preeminently American; and the motto, "United we stand, divided we fall," hackneyed though it be, embodies the principles and the truth which holds all the states, like stars of a constellation, in their rightful places, and when Sumpter's gun obscured the skies by its smoke, and its roar awakened a nation from a lethargy born of fancied security, the one terrible truth confronted millions of patriots, that division would produce a downfall, compared with which the fall of Rome is but an idle tale. As a result, the "more perfect union," born of federation, stands today; and more than ever before, the "land of the free and the home of the brave" — and what is more, new states are constantly entering the confederacy adding to its strength and glory, and wherever its coins are seen, and wherever its flag waves,

they speak more eloquently than words, of the strength and influence of federation.

Federation, wherever found, means an effort to increase in power. True, it may be said for the purpose of doing wrong, or, of perpetuating the wrong, bad men federate. We make no estimate of the wickedness of men. We need not be told of schemes concocted by bad men to multiply and intensify human ills. Nor are we required to read history, ancient or modern, sacred or profane, to arrive at rational conclusions upon such matters. The present is prolific of schemes productive of woe to men, women and children, for which the past furnishes no parallels, and it is such facts that have prompted workingmen to organize and to federate in the holy hope that to some extent, at least, artificial wrongs may be reduced in number and virulence. And here let it be said — here it must be said — if organization and federation on the part of workingmen cannot mitigate the wrongs under which they suffer — cannot ameliorate conditions, which, like the mills of the gods, grind exceedingly small, then within the entire realm of vagary, no such colossal sham as our “boasted civilization” ever lured men on to destruction. No such Dead Sea fruit ever tempted the eye, to turn to ashes on the lip.<sup>1</sup>

But we do not take such a view of the subject. If there are bad men in the world, there are also good men in the world, and we believe the good are in the majority — and in that majority we believe are included the great body of workingmen — and included in the body of workingmen are the organizations, known as the Brotherhood of Locomotive Firemen, the Brotherhood of Railroad Brakemen and the Switchmen’s Mutual Aid Association. We believe there are other organizations of railroad employees included in the majority, but we name those which on the 6th day of June, AD 1889, federated in the city of Chicago for the high and honorable purpose of “Mutual Justice.”

What of these federated orders? How do they stand in the full glare of the noon-day sun of the centuries? What do they demand? What is the measure of their federated ambition? These are pertinent questions and demand answers. They are workingmen, whose extreme demands are fair pay for honest work, and fair treatment at the hands of their employers. With fair pay they can rear their families in respectability, to lives of usefulness and honor. With fair treatment

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<sup>1</sup> Allusion to lines from the epic poem *Lalla Rookh* (1817) by **Thomas Moore** (1779-1852).

they can maintain their independence and maintain the dignity of American citizenship. If such rights are denied, they believe, and have a right to believe, that federation will help them to secure their rights. Not necessarily, by resorting to strikes, but because united for mutual justice, they will be more potent than by acting singly. But, should arbitration be denied, and concession and compromise set aside, and a strike result from a stubborn resistance to all reasonable demands, in that case it is held — and the logic is invulnerable — that a strike by all the federated orders would introduce a convincing logic well calculated to secure victory.

We believe that federation is based upon an immutable principle, and in the case under consideration only good can result, because only good is intended; and no law enacted by virtue of which a wrong can be perpetrated, can escape detection. The federation consummated at Chicago, by the three orders we have named, contemplates, ultimately the federation of all orders of railway employees. The laws of the federated body are framed with a view to that desirable end. No overestimates of the consequence of the federated body are made. Nor are misgivings to result from underestimates of its power and influence. It is not an organization of Utopians. No idle dreaming forms the basis of action. It deals with practical problems in a practical manner, and the good anticipated in its utmost reach, is embodied in “fair dealing.” We bespeak for the new departure a fair trial. Attacks may come, but we are not apprehensive of danger. That defects may be found, we do not doubt, but we do not believe they will be pronounced fatal. At any rate, there is no exclusiveness. The door for admission is broad, and the invitation to other organizations of railroad employees is generous and manly. To them the latch string is within reach, and when they come they will be received with a true brotherhood welcome, and should they come, then as certain, as that:

Truth crushed to earth shall rise again,<sup>2</sup>

the era of strikes will have disappeared. We believe that reason will in due time triumph over prejudice, and that fortified by the practical workings of federation as inaugurated at Chicago, the victory will come at a much earlier day, than the most sanguine now anticipate.

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<sup>2</sup> Line from “The Battlefield” (1839) by **William Cullen Bryant** (1794-1878).