

The Labor Congress on Monday.

The first National Labor Congress ever held in this country, and which is to assemble at Baltimore to-morrow, may be of great benefit to the working classes of America or otherwise, just as its deliberations are conducted with wisdom and good temper, or the reverse. We have often endeavored to show that, while there are anomalies in the relative positions of labor and capital, they are really identical in interest, and dependant upon each other. Whatever is done to advance the welfare of the working man must, in fact, be done by one only process, that of accumulating capital in his hands, and this can chiefly be effected by the combinations known as coöperative societies. We are given to understand that wages, dwellings and strikes are to be topics of discussion. There is little new to be said about either. Wages are regulated by the abundance of labor, and it is impossible to subject them to any law which ignores that abundance. Dwellings for working men must be the result of individual or associated enterprise, and their foundations cannot be framed out of a set of resolutions. Strikes are but an imperfect weapon, and never yet have succeeded in cutting away a single obstacle in the workman's path.

But there is something more in this Congress which calls for notice. The Boston organ of the movement to be inaugurated on Monday assumes it to be of a political character, and indulges in the reflections upon the attitude of the laborer during the ensuing Fall campaign. If it be true that the Congress is thus a political device, there will be many who will be much grieved thereby. We can call to mind many previous occasions on which philanthropy and political economy have been made the hobby horses of candidates for office, and when the leaders of labor movements have been cast aside as soon as the necessity for their services had passed away. The Baltimore gathering has this danger ahead of it, that instead of an earnest investigation of the reasons why great masses of men are never able to rise from their hand-to-mouth, there may be only the effort to manipulate the members in behalf of some politician or set of principles. If the Congress take this turn it will do the workmen more harm than good, and will add to that mutual distrust among themselves which has up to this time prevented the success of so many efforts at advancement.

The problems which a Congress upon the relations and position of labor has to discuss are very complex, and require all the skill and philanthropy which it is possible to obtain. We trust that there will be a *bona fide* effort to throw light upon questions which affect deeply the prospects of the future laborers of this great nation.