

## **Defending Martin Irons~**

A response to Professor Theresa A. Case.

By Lauren Krohn Arnest

When a new book on the Great Southwest Strike came out in 2010, I could hardly wait to buy it. As the librettist of a forthcoming opera that features the major figures in that conflict—Martin Irons and Jay Gould—I am always eager for new insights into my subject.

The portrait of Martin Irons that emerges from *The Great Southwest Railroad Strike and Free Labor* by Theresa A. Case (Texas A&M University Press) is of a violent, abusive drunkard—exactly the persona that Irons’s detractors among the plutocratic classes of his own era constructed to discredit him and his cause.

To see the old calumnies resurrected after more than a century of circumspect reassessment by scholars and the popular press alike was unquieting. But, as this article will show, Dr. Case’s sources have either been long discredited or do not support her conclusions regarding Martin Irons.

Before conducting a review of Case’s evidence, it is important to note that she rejects as “inauthentic” one of the few known firsthand accounts of Irons’s life. This is a short autobiography by Irons himself published in *Lippincott’s Magazine* in June 1886 entitled “My Experience in the Labor Movement.” Because this source has always been important to Irons scholars, I have debunked Case’s arguments against its validity in a note at the end of this article.

But now, let us examine Case’s case against Martin Irons.

## **Did Martin Irons advocate violence during the strike?**

In Chapter 7 of her book, entitled “Blaming Martin Irons,” Professor Case instructs us that Martin Irons advocated violence during the strike. Her evidence for this assertion appears on pages 200-201. It is worth quoting extensively:

Presumably, Knights who denounced the use of force were sincere. In Irons’s case, at least, the evidence suggests otherwise. The *Sedalia Bazaar* reported on March 12, for example, that he had obliquely warned, “If persuasion will not be effective in gaining the strikers’ point, violence will not be used—at least not at present.”<sup>11</sup> That statement received a good deal of attention from Irons’s critics, who, like critics of labor historically, have tended to concentrate on union leaders’ equivocal statements, especially “incendiary predictions,” because such utterances were easily imagined to veil violent intent or the sanction of violence. We might dismiss the press’s concern as hysteria at best or deliberate exploitation of public fears at worst, but, at a public meeting of strikers in East St. Louis on April 17, Irons reportedly urged: “Talk to the scabs and go to the houses and talk to their wives and make them quit. Do everything you possibly can to make them go out. Make them stop work and go out, and if they won’t go out give them some pills . . . To hell with the Chinese; to hell with the scabs. We fought and won the Chinese fight, and we will win this fight.”<sup>12</sup> That Knights leaders would have spoken so brazenly at a public meeting is questionable but not impossible. The walkout’s widespread support in the city perhaps led Irons to let his guard down.

The source of the speech is A. F. Walsh, a paid railroad company spy. While it was in the railroad officials’ interest to employ spies to concoct or exaggerate labor movement violence, another, more credible source confirms the spy’s report. Colonel Smith gave essentially the same account of Irons’s speech. Smith was a businesslike man, firmly committed to imposing economic and social order on the city, but he was also a keen observer whose interpretation of the

strike allowed for nuance and complexity. His testimony regarding Irons's speech is nearly identical to Walsh's.<sup>3</sup>

Let's start with the March 12, 1886, quote from the *Sedalia Bazaar*. First, it seems odd to infer that someone is violent from his saying that if persuasion is not successful "violence will not be used." Of course, the operative phrase is "at least not at present," which suggests that at some time the speaker *might* condone violence. However, that time is not now and may never come. The evidence this statement provides for Irons's violent proclivities seems flimsy at best. What Professor Case did not tell us is that the *Sedalia Bazaar* was notoriously against the strike. Professor Ruth A. Allen, whose 1942 work *The Great Southwest Strike*<sup>4</sup> remains one of the most extensively researched sources on the eponymous event of its title, tells us:

Another paper, the *Sedalia Bazaar*, edited by one Wesley Goodwin, undertook to destroy Irons' influence and that of the Knights of Labor by bitter ravings. Mr. Behrens reports that three years after the strike a Mr. McClain who handled the pay rolls for the Gould shop in Sedalia stated that Mr. Goodwin received annually from Jay Gould a check for \$1,000.00, but when George Gould came into control, payments were stopped as an unnecessary expense.<sup>5</sup>

That most newspapers of the time were partisans on one side or the other of the Great Southwest Strike was noted by Allen. To be sure that she did not unfairly fall under their sway at a remove of nearly sixty years, she did not credit them as sources of information unless they were corroborated.<sup>6</sup> Allen frequently places newspapers of the period in one camp or the other so that the reader knows the papers' biases. Professor Case does us no such service.

Case goes on to tell us that "[Irons's] statement [from the *Bazaar*] received a good deal of attention from Irons's critics." Did it? Case does not document a single instance in which "Irons's critics" seized upon that statement.

But let us leave the *Bazoo* at this point and move on to the centerpiece of Case's evidence that Martin Irons was a violent man: the testimony of A. F. Walsh before the congressional committee investigating the strike. Walsh quotes Irons, allegedly at a "public" meeting, as saying:

"Talk to the scabs and go to the houses and talk to their wives and make them quit. Do everything you possibly can to make them go out. Make them stop work and go out, and if they won't go out give them some pills . . . To hell with the Chinese; to hell with the scabs. We fought and won the Chinese fight, and we will win this fight."<sup>7</sup>

Although the word "pills" is not defined, we are clearly meant to believe that it means "bullets." We are meant to believe that Martin Irons went before a public meeting and said that if workers would not go out on strike they should be shot. Really? Even Case recognizes that this is a bit too much to swallow. Perhaps Irons "let his guard down," she allows. But there is more afoot than this.

After Walsh reports on what Irons allegedly said at the meeting, he is asked about the nature of the meeting. Walsh is the witness here:

Mr. Stewart: Was it a public meeting?

A. I don't know whether it was public or not; they were Knights of Labor and all called each other brothers.

Q. It wasn't a secret meeting?

A. I think not.

Q. You could not have got in if it had been?

A. No; probably not.

Q. Did you have any difficulty about getting in?

A. No, sir; I worked along and talked with the men; went right along with them. I was evidently the only one there who had no other interest except my own. That is they were evidently workingmen; all of them.

Mr. Curtin. There was nothing significant in the fact that they called each other brothers, was there?

A. No; nothing except it is the custom of members of some orders.

Q. But that is usual?

A. Yes; they talked favorable of the Knights of Labor and about winning the fights, etc.

Q. You have no proof that they were Knights of Labor other than what you heard that they said?

A. No; nothing only that and the fact that the speakers at least all had Knights of Labor badges on, or pins.<sup>8</sup>

Thus we glean that, though it was not exactly secret, the meeting was not “public.” While Walsh was able to gain admittance, this was a Knights of Labor meeting, and those in attendance were overwhelmingly Knights.

Case is so good as to tell us that Walsh was a paid railroad company spy, but insists (on page 200) that there was “another, more credible source” for Irons’s call to shoot strikebreakers whose “testimony regarding Irons’s speech is nearly identical to Walsh’s.” But why quote the known company spy when you could quote the more credible “keen observer” for virtually the same evidence? Is it possible that the testimony of the “more credible” witness reveals something that Walsh’s did not? Indeed, it does.

Case’s “more credible source” is Colonel R. M. Smith, who commanded a unit of state militia attempting to keep the peace in East St. Louis during the strike.<sup>9</sup> He was also at the meeting and also of the opinion that the attendees were primarily Knights. Colonel Smith testified as follows:

Q. Was that the same meeting that this young man mentioned that took the stenographic notes [indicating Walsh]?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. Did you hear Mr. Martin Irons discourse on that occasion?

A. I did, sir.

Q. What did he say?

A. He said some pretty pointed things about the matter.

Q. Well, repeat what he said as near as you remember it.

A. As near as I can recollect the matter he said he wished the committee to see these men. **I don’t think he meant scabs. I think he meant probably the men who had belonged to the order.** He said to wait upon these men and persuade

them to quit work, and if they were men of families to see their families, and if single men offer to pay their board or something of the kind, or some compensation to keep them from starving; and he said, if that don't persuade them to quit, if married men to wait on their families, and talk to them about it; **and he said if that don't persuade them to quit to give them pills; he said, "You know what kind of pills I mean."** (emphasis added)

Q. Did he use any vulgar language that you recollect?

A. Well, I forget whether he put any adjectives in the wind-up or not. It seems to my mind he did. Probably he might have been profane about the matter.

Q. How were these observations by Mr. Irons received by the audience?

A. They were received with a degree of applause that indicated to me the probabilities were that they would carry out the instructions.

Q. As far as you know they attempted to do it?

A. Yes; I know it was not safe for a man to get out beyond the jurisdiction of his home or the jurisdiction of the militia, and if he went up Broadway and opened his mouth in such a way as to indicate that he wasn't in sympathy with the Knights of Labor, or that he had gone to work contrary to their orders, the probability is that he would have got injured.

Q. Martin Irons was rendering what aid he could to preserve the peace in that way, was he?

A. Yes, sir.

Q. By advising them to acts of violence, if necessary, to carry out his purposes.<sup>10</sup>

Colonel Smith thought that Irons was telling Knights to visit fellow Knights—not scabs who did not belong to the order. So Case would have us believe that Irons told Knights to visit their fellow Knights at home, talk with their families, offer them assistance, and if they still resisted joining the strike, to **shoot** them! In addition, we are to believe that a good number of fellow Knights present when Irons said this indicated their approval by applauding! This interpretation is simply not plausible—especially because there is a far more reasonable explanation for what was meant by “pills,” and it is **not** “bullets.”

A quick look at the word “pill” in the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, (4th ed. 2000, Houghton Mifflin, updated in 2009) lists as its third meaning a transitive verb “to blackball.” It does not list “bullet” at all.

Of course, any student of history knows that the meanings of words change, so a look at earlier locutions is in order. Fortunately, such a resource is available on the Internet at horntip.com. There, from a book called *Slang and Its Analogs* (1890-1909), we find under “pill,”

Pill, *subs*, (common) 1. A black balloting ball: *see* blackball. Also as verb. – to reject by ballot.<sup>11</sup>

Martin Irons was not calling for nonstriking Knights to be shot. He was calling for them to be expelled from the order by means of “blackballing” them. This is what he meant by “give them pills,” which was further underscored by his comment, “You know what kind of pills I mean.” Another hint that this was his meaning is to be found in a part of A. F. Walsh’s quote that Case chose to omit. This is the full quote:

“Talk to the scabs and go to the houses and talk to their wives and make them quit. Do everything you possibly can to make them go out. Make them stop work



and go out, and if they won't go out give them some pills **and shit them out**" —is the words that he used. "To hell with the Chinese; to hell with the scabs. We fought and won the Chinese fight, and we will win this fight."<sup>12</sup> (emphasis added)

Vulgar as the language "shit them out" may be, it refers to excreting or expelling something from the body—here the expulsion of nonstrikers from the body of Knights.

Colonel Smith testifies that Irons's remarks were met with applause such as to indicate that his instructions would be carried out. Yet there is no evidence in any source that any nonstriking Knights were shot by fellow Knights, or by anyone at all. Persons shot in the conflict were in encounters between strikers or their sympathizers and police, militia, or deputies hired to protect company property, escort trains, and generally keep the peace.<sup>13</sup> This is further evidence that Knights in attendance at the meeting in question understood that Irons was not calling for anyone to be shot.

To be fair, it seems that the word "pill" also could mean "bullet" in 1886,<sup>14</sup> and this is clearly what the interrogator of Colonel Smith implies when he tries to lead Smith to describe Irons as advocating violence. Note that it is the questioning congressman who suggests that Irons was "advising them to acts of violence."

As to what Irons meant by saying "give them some pills," the weight of the evidence is that he meant "blackball them." Thus, we see that Case's allegation that Martin Irons advocated violence during the Southwest Strike simply does not withstand scrutiny.

### **Was Martin Irons a man of private violence with an "alcohol problem"?**

Case believes she has proved that Martin Irons was a man of public violence and now sets out to prove that he was also a man of private violence, whose abuse was fueled by alcohol.<sup>15</sup> Exhibit A is a letter from one of Irons's grandsons that was sent to Ruth Allen in 1937:

There is no doubt in my mind that Martin Irons did much good for the advancement of labor conditions. While he must have been sincere in that respect, he caused his own family much anxiety and grief by his neglect and abuse of them . . . I remember hearing my Father say one time that when his Father was sober a finer man never lived but when drinking he was selfish and unbearable. No doubt that was the chief cause for breaking up the family . . . I understand from my mother that my grandmother Mary Irons asked all her children that none of them ever name any offspring after Martin Irons. I have never heard any thing to indicate the contrary.<sup>16</sup>

So, when he was sober, “a finer man never lived” than Martin Irons. But when drinking, Martin Irons was “selfish and unbearable.” Irons is not described as “violent.” The word “abuse” is used, but abuse can mean many things.

### **The “alcohol problem”**

Let us deal with the charge that Martin Irons had an “alcohol problem,” since this was the trigger for the supposed abuse of his family. The grandson, James R. Irons, remembers his father say **one time** that when his grandfather, Martin Irons, was drinking he was “selfish and unbearable.” Apparently Martin’s drunkenness was not so severe as to become the stuff of family legend.

More persuasive that the alleged “alcohol problem” is trumped up is the dog that didn’t bark: Mary Brown Irons. During the strike, Mary Brown Irons, Martin’s estranged wife, gave an interview to the *New York Times* that appeared in that paper on May 10, 1886. Professor Case sets great store by this interview, using it frequently as a source when discussing Martin Irons.<sup>17</sup> I include the text of the complete interview from within the text of the longer article here.<sup>18</sup>

The *New York Times* was one of the papers that joined in the vilification of Martin Irons.<sup>19</sup> The tenor of the May 10, 1886, interview article is typical. Here is a paragraph that appears before the Mary Brown Irons interview. This is the **author of the article** speaking:

He [Irons] seldom looks a questioner in the eye, and his face generally wears a dull, lowering expression. He has very little gray matter in his skull and he requires a deal of time in which to answer the simplest question.

No bias there! The questions posed to Mary Brown Irons later in the article are of the sort to elicit “dirt” about her estranged husband. And Mary seems eager to supply it. If Martin Irons had even a hint of a problem with alcohol, one would think that Mary Brown Irons would mention it here. Among all Mary’s complaints about Irons—including that he once invited a woman of low character into their home—she says not one word about alcohol.

Case tells us that Martin Irons joined the Knights of Labor in 1885 in the wake of the organization’s successful strike on the Wabash Railroad. She reports that “[s]everal months later, he was elected master workman and recording secretary of one of the local assemblies.” By the spring of 1886, Irons had been elevated to master workman and chair of District Assembly 101 comprising thirty local assemblies and representing between three thousand and five thousand employees.<sup>20</sup> Case then asks, “How do we account for Irons’s rapid rise to leadership?” The good professor doesn’t have the answer, but one thing is clear: Irons didn’t win the trust of thousands of employees and perform the daunting administrative duties and strategic guidance for this large organization by being a habitual drunkard.

Ruth Allen addresses the charges that Irons had a drinking problem (which incidentally arose only after the failure of the strike):

Men who knew him through the years of his connection with District Assembly 101 state that they never saw him drunk. That he drank liquor we may take for granted. That he went on occasional sprees is confirmed by reports from his grandson and others. But that he was so confirmed a drunkard that his actions were irresponsible is quite another thing. Mr. Powderly's well known almost psychopathic antipathy toward the use of liquor would seem to make valid the assumption that if Mr. Irons had been seen drunk many times he would have been summarily dealt with. At about the time of the strike the master workman of District Assembly 78 with headquarters in Fort Worth was expelled for drunkenness.<sup>21</sup>

Terence Powderly was the Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor at the time of the Southwest Strike. His disapproval of alcohol consumption is confirmed in other works, including his own autobiography.<sup>22</sup> It is true that Powderly met Martin Irons only once, when he conferred with him in Kansas City, Missouri, during the strike, so he would have no firsthand knowledge of Irons's drinking habits. However, decades later when Powderly was writing his autobiography (begun in 1907) and Martin Irons was already many years dead (d. 1900), it would have been easy for him to blame alcohol for Irons's failures and thus explain away the disaster of the Southwest Strike and enhance his own reputation at the same time. Yet he did nothing of the kind. Powderly had nothing but praise for Martin Irons.<sup>23</sup> Apparently Powderly did not believe charges that Irons drank to excess.

Thus, Case's conclusion that Martin Irons had a drinking problem rests on the speculation of a grandson who never knew him, writing more than sixty years after the Ironses had split up in 1876, and the rabid invective flung at Martin Irons after the failure of the strike.<sup>24</sup> There is no firm evidence that Martin Irons frequently drank to excess, and much to suggest that he did not.

### **The allegations of domestic violence**

That Martin Irons's first marriage was troubled to the point of failure is not in any doubt. That Mary Brown Irons hated and despised her husband is probable. But marriages fail and spouses loath each other for reasons other than domestic violence.

By all accounts Martin Irons was not a good husband or father. Even Ruth Allen assesses him a failure in that department.<sup>25</sup> But the charge in Allen's history is neglect rather than violence.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, it seems that Irons would hardly have had time to engage in family interaction of any sort. He was an activist and agitator, but he did not earn his living that way. Although he tried many avenues to make money, his most steady vocation was machinist and boilermaker.<sup>27</sup> As this was before the eight-hour day and weekends, Irons would have had to pursue his activism in the very few hours he had between work and sleep. Allen quotes E. T. Behrens, a Missouri labor activist who actually knew Irons, as stating that in 1884 Irons and other men met night after night in a local shoemaker's shop (not a bar!) to discuss the labor situation.<sup>28</sup> Irons must have spent long hours at such meetings away from his family. It's hard to believe he had time to get drunk and physically abuse his wife and children before heading to a labor meeting at which he was a major contributor.

Nevertheless, it cannot be ruled out that Martin Irons occasionally drank and may have beaten his wife. Case again draws from the May 10, 1886, *New York Times* interview with Mary Brown Irons<sup>29</sup> for her evidence. In response to a leading question, Mary says that her son brought charges against Martin for spousal abuse:

“Was there any complaint made against your husband for assaulting you?”

“Yes; Robert, my son, made a complaint against him charging him with assault to kill. A warrant was issued and served by John Brown, who was then Sheriff of Ray County.”

This evidence exists and cannot be denied. But here Case makes an inference that is completely unsupported by the text of the interview. On page 209 of her book, Case tells us this:

In a *Times* interview in May [10th] 1886, Mary Irons explained why when Irons left Richmond, Missouri, she and their five children did not go with him. Their son, Robert, had sought his arrest in Richmond, “charging him with assault to kill.”

In the actual interview (reproduced at endnote 18) there is no causal connection between the alleged assault and Mary Brown Irons’s decision to remain in Richmond, Missouri, rather than accompany her husband to some other locale. The discussion of Mary’s abandonment of her husband occurs some five unrelated exchanges removed from the information about the alleged assault. There is no indication that the two events were even close in time. The interviewer did not ask why Mary left her husband and she did not volunteer it.

Case does not follow up on the disposition of the complaint. But the interviewer does, asking Mary: “What was done in the matter?” And she answers: “It was compromised.” Whatever this may mean—perhaps the word would be “settled” today—it is clear that there was no conviction.

Now, here is what Mary said about leaving Martin:

“I separated from my husband in 1876. We were then living at a place known as Lime John Brown’s which joins the place where I now live.”

“Did you leave Mr. Irons or did he leave you?”

“I left him. I haven’t seen him since we separated.”

Note that there is no mention of five children in the interview. Where Case got this information is left undocumented. Yet Case seems to want to leave the impression that Mary Brown Irons was a young woman with little children when the assault occurred and was forced to protect her brood and herself by failing to accompany her husband.

However, other information in the interview suggests a different situation. Mary tells us in the interview that she was born in 1832, married in 1852, and left her husband in 1876. This means that she was forty-four years old and had been married for twenty-four years when the split occurred. It is unlikely there were many, if any, minor children left to support.

Martin sent Mary money after they parted, which Mary informs us in the interview “was not enough to support me and my family.”<sup>30</sup> Although Case would have us focus on the insufficiency of the amount, the fact that he sent any suggests that Martin was making an attempt to do the right thing. We simply don’t know how much disposable income he had during the ten years after Mary left him and her interview in 1886.

Case tells us that Martin and Mary never received a formal divorce.<sup>31</sup> However, she does not tell us that Martin offered not to contest Mary’s petition for a divorce if she wanted one. From the May 10, 1886, interview:

“Have you ever been divorced from Irons?”

“No. I received a letter from him stating that if I wanted a divorce he would not appear against me. Since then I have learned that he has married again. I do not know the woman he married.”

Although divorce was uncommon in the mid-nineteenth century, it was not unheard of. At that time it was necessary for a party to prove the “fault” of his or her spouse for a

decree of divorce to ensue. “Cruelty” was commonly recognized as a valid grounds for divorce.<sup>32</sup> Thus, if allegations of Martin’s cruelty were true, Mary could likely have had a divorce whether or not Martin contested it. Yet Martin specifically offered to make no defense if Mary wanted a divorce—perhaps because he knew that she would not be able to prove grounds otherwise.

The fact is that Mary remained with Martin for more than two decades. While it is common for abused women to stay with their abusers, it is frequently because the abuser has taken steps to isolate the victim from friends and family.<sup>33</sup> But according to Mary’s account, for at least part of their long marriage, Martin worked for Mary’s father Robert. It appears that one of her brothers, John, was also working in the same factory. Case tells us that Martin and this brother-in-law went into business together in Cincinnati.<sup>34</sup> Thus, far from being isolated, Mary Brown Irons had a support network of family. If Martin was an abuser, it is likely that Mary’s family would have stepped in to defend her. Indeed, this may be exactly what happened on the occasion of the alleged abuse: Son Robert, probably already an adult, sought the arrest, and a man named John Brown (possibly also a relative) served the warrant. Note that only the one incident of alleged abuse is mentioned by Mary. Since her family was not reluctant to bring the force of law down to defend her person, if there had been other incidents of physical violence in the Irons family, one would expect they would have been recorded and duly reported on by the papers seeking to blacken Martin Irons’s reputation.<sup>35</sup>

It is true that there were many itinerant years during which the record does not show Mary and her family living near any Brown or Irons family members. But in 1876, Mary left Martin. Again, it is unusual for an abuse victim to be able simply to leave her abuser, because the classic abuser has an almost fanatical addiction to control over his partner.<sup>36</sup> Yet Mary was apparently able simply to refuse to go with Martin when he sought other opportunities elsewhere.



Thus we see that allegations that Martin Irons engaged in domestic violence are considerably less substantial than Professor Case makes them out to be.

### **The depiction of Martin Irons's life after the strike**

Martin Irons spent the last fourteen years of his life wandering from place to place and attempting numerous trades to make a living. In some ways this style of life was always in his nature. Nevertheless, there was a difference. Allen informs us:

When the strike was over Mr. Irons faced not only the deadly blacklist which prevented his ever again finding a job at his work of machinist and boilermaker, but an almost incredible barrage of slander and vilification.<sup>37</sup>

Case never mentions the blacklist in connection with Martin Irons's fate either before or after the strike. She infers that his poverty and ill repute were somehow justified, informing us: “[Irons's] frequent attempts at other occupations indicate that he rarely felt secure in his work as a machinist.”<sup>38</sup> Nowhere does she suggest that his insecurity might have been related to orchestrated efforts to keep him unemployed.

Although Case mentions the “long and infamous history of Pinkerton agents in labor disputes,”<sup>39</sup> she fails to connect them or other operatives to Martin Irons. Allen tells us that after the strike no sooner did Martin Irons locate in a community—always under an assumed name—than his true identity would be revealed, his little enterprises vandalized, or lawsuits would be filed against him on trumped-up charges.<sup>40</sup> Always he was forced to move on. Eugene Debs in a tribute to Irons after his death explained:

The press united in fiercest denunciation. Every lie that malignity could conceive was circulated. In the popular mind, Martin Irons was the blackest hearted villain that ever went unhung. Pinkerton bloodhounds tracked him night and day.<sup>41</sup>

Allen cautions that Debs was known to exaggerate, but he surely knew what persecution labor agitators faced in the early days from both capital and its lackeys in government. Case affords neither Debs nor Mother Jones any deference in their assessments of Martin Irons.<sup>42</sup>

Allen spent a good deal of time pursuing the truth of rumors about Martin Irons in the aftermath of the strike. She concludes:

After writing numerous letters to individuals who participated in the strike and to many who knew Mr. Irons personally, after talking to some who knew him and after investigating newspaper stories and verifying them by comparison with court records the writer has come to the conclusion that Martin Irons was the victim of persistent, shrewd and cruel persecution aimed at destroying his influence and permanently discrediting him.<sup>43</sup>

Because Allen was able to interview people who actually knew Irons, her assessment that he had been persecuted should command some special authority. Any contemporary scholar wishing to show otherwise should introduce some new evidence or interpretation to suggest that Allen's assessment was wrong. While Case cannot be faulted for the fact that personal witnesses are no longer available, she seems content to parrot without question the charges of the same sources that Allen took pains to discredit. Ruth Allen warned us that the *Sedalia Bazoo* was one paper bent on destroying Irons,<sup>44</sup> yet Case quotes the *Bazoo* frequently as a source without comment.<sup>45</sup> At one point Case allows that "the viciousness of the post-strike press reports makes it impossible for the historian to separate fact from fiction."

The *Sedalia Bazoo*, for example, described him [Irons] as a "repulsive-looking, slab-sided, lantern jawed, blear eyed figure in whose diminutive carcass there is concentrated so much low, cunning and unadulterated cussedness."<sup>46</sup>

Is it really so hard to determine on which side of the fact-fiction divide this gem falls?

Many of the stories about Irons that circulated after the strike involved charges of sexual improprieties. Allen cannily remarks: “The simplest way among a provincial people to blacken an individual’s character is to charge the person with sex offenses. Such charges cannot be effectively proved, nor can they be satisfactorily refuted.”<sup>47</sup>

Case includes two such incidents in her account of Martin Irons’s later life. One of them is also discussed at length in Ruth Allen’s book. The differences in the treatment of this incident by the two authors is telling. Case recounts:

Three years later Irons was again before the court, this time accused of assault with intent to rape a neighbor’s seven-year-old daughter in Fort Worth, where he had opened a grocery store. The case was dismissed, as was Irons’s suit for libel in which he held that the charges had been “concocted” by his “enemies.”<sup>48</sup>

Ruth Allen took the time to examine the court records of the case and informs us why it was dismissed: The complaining witness (who in Allen’s account was twelve, not seven) and her family had disappeared and later recanted.

[T]he case was dismissed at the request of the county attorney because “the evidence procured was insufficient to support a conviction and because the prosecuting witness who it is alleged was assaulted by defendant has become reconciled with defendant and has left the county to prevent appearing against defendant and State cannot find out her whereabouts, and besides said witness has stated to a number of reputable citizens since said assault that the defendant did not rape or attempt to rape her.”<sup>49</sup>

Why did Case not inform us of the reason for the dismissal?

Ruth Allen also looked into the circumstances of Irons's suit against the publishers of the *St. Louis Republic* newspaper, which was not only for libel for publicizing the charges but also for abuse of process in causing the charges to be brought in the first place. Allen tells us the reason for the dismissal of Irons's case: Transfer to federal court rendered the defendants beyond service of process.<sup>50</sup> Case's omission to tell us this gives the impression that Irons's libel and abuse-of-process suit was dropped because of lack of evidence. She insinuates that Irons's charge that the rape allegations were "concocted" by his "enemies" was paranoid or cowardly. Considering all the evidence, it is clear that Irons actually did have enemies. As the old saw goes, sometimes paranoia is justified.

### **The "smoking gun": The coerced strike order story**

Finally, Professor Case's interpretation of the "coerced strike order" legend—one of the strangest tales to emerge from the Southwest Strike—is disappointingly at odds with her source material.

After the order to strike was issued in early March 1886, rumors circulated that the votes of local assemblies in favor had been dishonestly reported. Irons called a meeting of his board to discuss the possibility. It was held in St. Louis at the Hurst Hotel. However, before he could bring the matter up, Irons was lured into a back room by one of his board members, beyond earshot of other guests, and made to reissue the strike order at the point of a gun—so the story goes. The implication was that the gun was held by someone well known in the Knights' district hierarchy and that this person and others at his direction shadowed Irons for four days to keep him from sounding the alarm and scuttling the strike.

Irons told this story to Terence Powderly, the Grand Master Workman of the Knights of Labor, when the two men met later in March 1886 in Kansas City, Missouri, to discuss the ongoing strike. The story was recounted for the first time in detail by Powderly in his autobiography, published posthumously in 1940.

To be sure, the story strains credulity, but so many things in history are stranger than fiction! Powderly may have disagreed with Irons's course of action in the incident, but he does not express doubt that it happened.<sup>51</sup>

Case, on the other hand, is quite sure that the gun-point story was a fabrication by Irons to deflect the blame from himself for the coming disaster of the strike's failure.

The story makes more sense as an attempt by Irons to diminish his role in what had become by March 20 a much more desperate effort.<sup>52</sup>

To put it crudely, Case believes that Martin Irons made up the story to "cover his ass." She has just quoted Terence Powderly's autobiography at page 123 for evidence that Irons thought the strike was lost, so it's a pity she apparently did not read just two pages farther in the same source. Had she done so, on page 125 she would have found a letter from Irons to Powderly, dated March 21, 1886, just after the pair's fateful meeting in Kansas City:

"Men are being starved, others assaulted, lives are in jeopardy and property is being destroyed. Wires have been tapped and we are charged with it. I told you enough to convince you that we can't win, but neither of us can make that statement public. **I am willing to accept the censure and abuse which must come when this strike ends so let it come before additional suffering is entailed on our struggling members. We must not think of ourselves or what may be said of us.** For God's sake Powderly get to Jay Gould and try to convince him that he should give ear to the call of humanity. Do this and may God bless you."<sup>53</sup> (emphasis added)

Here we have the actual words of Martin Irons regarding his motives that are the very subject of Case's conjecture. But these are not the words of someone trying to "diminish

his role.” Instead, they show a humane and empathetic man willing to sacrifice his reputation to alleviate the suffering of others.

## **Conclusion**

As a dramatist, I often claim artistic license to alter facts if it will improve a story. However, I do not think the past is just so much modelling clay that we can press into any shape that serves our purposes. I believe we have an obligation to the living to show them a past broadly faithful to the truth. But more romantically—and perhaps superstitiously—I believe we owe something to the dead. If time is but an illusion and all things past, present, and future exist in some static whole that we can only intuit, then Martin Irons is with us still.

Case’s book is the first major work on the Southwest Strike in more than seventy years. I am concerned that with Ruth Allen’s book out of print and the record of the congressional investigation beyond the technical ability or patience of most people to access, Case’s flawed conclusions will become the new “truth” about Martin Irons. It saddens me that over a century in the grave he still cannot break free of the slander. More than a century after his death, he remains apparently a “dangerous” man.

### **\*A Note on the *Lippincott’s Magazine* Article**

Theresa Case says on page 152 of her book, “Little is known about Martin Irons beyond a few suggestive details.” But on page 154, she dismisses one of the few extant troves of information about his life as unreliable. This is an article ostensibly written by Irons himself entitled “My Experience in the Labor Movement” published in June 1886 by *Lippincott’s Magazine*.

[T]he major factual errors in the piece [the *Lippincott's* article], in regard to [Irons's] birth date and the basic chronology of his life, raise serious questions about its authenticity.

This is interesting because just a few pages earlier, on page 149, in footnote 65, Case cites to this very article as authority for a quote by Martin Irons! You can't have it both ways, Dr. Case. The article is either authentic or it is not.<sup>54</sup>

Case points to the discrepancy between Irons's year of birth in the *Lippincott's* article and in parish records unearthed in Dundee, Scotland (where Irons was born) as an indication that the article is spurious. The parish records cite the year of his birth as 1830, while the *Lippincott's* article says 1832.<sup>55</sup>

But it is odd that the erroneous date of 1832 in *Lippincott's Magazine* spells inauthenticity to Case, while the same mistaken date of 1832 does not discredit a source she apparently considers of impeccable accuracy: This would be the May 10, 1886, *New York Times* interview with Mary Brown Irons, that Case cites with approval on pages 152-153 of her book.<sup>56</sup>

At the very end of that interview, Mary Brown Irons is quoted as saying: "Martin Irons was born at Dundee, Scotland, **in 1832.**" (emphasis added). So even Irons's own wife was of the impression that he was born in 1832! This means that Irons had held himself out as born in that year for a considerable period of time, and it is not at all strange that he would continue to do so in articles he penned about his life.

So why does Case accept the Mary Brown Irons interview as credible when the same mistaken year in the *Lippincott's* article spells unreliability? Case herself offers a clue: On page 154 she notes that the *Lippincott's* article "offers a **sympathetic** portrait of Irons" (emphasis added). Once again, Case seems intent on expunging any positive views of Irons from the historical record.

Let's revisit Case's objections to the *Lippincott's* article:

[T]he major factual errors in the piece, in regard to his birth date and **the basic chronology of his life**, raise serious questions about its authenticity. (emphasis added)

So, not only is the date of Irons's birth wrong, but there are "major factual errors" in the "basic chronology of his life." Against what impeccable source is Case comparing the *Lippincott's* article to arrive at the conclusion that the latter is flawed? Let's look at the footnote supplied at the end of this sentence, Footnote 10:

10. *Lippincott's Magazine*, June 1886; *Investigation of Labor Troubles II*, 435, 467

The *Lippincott's* article is the very one Case claims is unreliable, so the true chronology of Irons's life must appear in the congressional *Investigation of Labor Troubles*.

On page 435 of the *Investigation of Labor Troubles* is the swearing in of Martin Irons as a witness. Thus, we see that Professor Case is using Martin Irons himself to impeach the author of the *Lippincott's* article—whether Martin Irons or someone else. On page 467, the members of the congressional committee quiz Irons about the various domiciles he had over the course of his life. So how does his testimony jibe with the particulars in the *Lippincott's* article? To a remarkable degree they coincide, as the following chart illustrates.

<b>Mary Brown Irons</b> <i>New York Times</i>	<b>Martin Irons Testimony</b>	<b>Martin Irons</b> <i>Lippincott's</i>
Lexington, Ky. (brief)		
(Cincinnati)		
New Orleans	New Orleans	New Orleans and Carrollton



Lexington, Ky.	Lexington, Ky.	Lexington, Ky.
Cincinnati	Cincinnati (few months)	
Newport, Ky. (brief)		
Jamestown, Ky.		
Lexington, Ky.		Lexington, Ky.
Hannibal, Mo.	Hannibal, Mo.	St. Louis, Mo.
St. Louis	St. Louis, Mo.	Hannibal, Mo.
Lexington, Mo.	Lexington, Mo.	Lexington, Mo.
Liberty, Mo. “I lived at Liberty, Mo. during the war.” (not “we”) Near Lexington, Mo.		
Lexington, Mo.		
Knoxville, Mo.	Knoxville, Tn. (?)	
Richmond, Mo.	Richmond, Mo.	
	Kansas City, Mo.	Kansas City, Mo.
	Joplin, Mo. (southwest Missouri)	“Southwest Missouri”
	Kansas City, also Rosedale	Kansas City, also Rosedale
	Sedalia, Mo.	Sedalia, Mo.

57 58

So, if the testimony of Irons in the congressional investigative report does not significantly contradict Irons’s life story in the *Lippincott’s* article, then what source material is Case relying on to establish the true “chronology” of Irons’s life—the one that is so at odds with the *Lippincott’s* article as to make the latter unreliable? Would it be the *New York Times* interview with Mary Brown Irons? Here, also, the accounts are substantially similar, as the chart above shows. But even if they were not, why credit the *New York Times* (a paper rabidly hostile to Martin Irons<sup>59</sup>) with the true facts?

Keeping in mind that Irons necessarily would include only the domiciles he considered most important in his autobiography and that Mary Brown Irons would have no knowledge of Martin's movements after they separated in 1876, it is clear that the *Lippincott's* chronology raises no "serious questions" about its authorship.

The fact is, Professor Case provides no persuasive evidence that the *Lippincott's Magazine* autobiography of Martin Irons is inauthentic.

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<sup>1</sup> Here is Case's footnote 44 which reads: "*Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, 536-37; quoted in Cassidy, *Defending a Way of Life*, 142." The first reference is from volume I of the congressional report investigating the strike. The full citation is U.S. Congress. House. Select Committee on Existing Labor Troubles. *Investigation of Labor Troubles in Missouri, Arkansas, Kansas, Texas, and Illinois*. 2 pts. 49th Congress, 2nd Session, Report No. 4174. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1887. I also use this reference extensively in this article and so will adopt Case's nomenclature. Hereafter I refer to "*Investigation of Labor Troubles*," volume I or II. Case's next reference in her footnote 44 is to Cassidy, Michael. *Defending a Way of Life: An American Community in the Nineteenth Century*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1989, pg. 142.

<sup>2</sup> Here is Case's footnote 45, which reads: "Rhodri Jeffreys-Jones, *Violence and Reform in American History* (Franklin Watts, 1978), 45: *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, 538-40."

<sup>3</sup> For this statement Case references *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, 540, in her footnote 46.

<sup>4</sup> Allen, Ruth A. 1942. *The Great Southwest Strike*. Austin: University of Texas, Bureau of Research in the Social Sciences. Hereinafter "Allen."

<sup>5</sup> Allen, pg. 141. Allen's source here, marked footnote 7, reads: "Personal statement of Mr. Behrens." E. T. Behrens was a personal friend of Martin Irons in Sedalia, Missouri. He became a labor leader in his own right and late in life provided Allen with material for her book. His career is discussed in her book at pp. 35-36.

<sup>6</sup> Allen, pg. 6.

<sup>7</sup> This excerpt is from page 200 in Case's book and cited in footnote 45 as *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, 538-40. However, the correct page for the quote in the *Investigation of Labor Troubles* is 536.

<sup>8</sup> *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, pg. 537.

<sup>9</sup> Case, pg. 199.

<sup>10</sup> *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, pg. 541.

<sup>11</sup> Available at <[www.horntip.com/html/books\\_%26\\_MSS/1890s/1890-1909\\_slang\\_and\\_its\\_analogues\\_\(HCs\)/index.htm](http://www.horntip.com/html/books_%26_MSS/1890s/1890-1909_slang_and_its_analogues_(HCs)/index.htm)> (accessed Feb. 27, 2013). Click on volume 5, 1902, and go to the entry for “pill.”

<sup>12</sup> *Investigation of Labor Troubles*, I, pg. 536.

<sup>13</sup> Case, pp. 187, 198; Allen, pp. 79, 81, 83.

<sup>14</sup> See endnote 11, supra. The entry at “pill” shows the first meaning to be “a black balloting ball.” The fourth meaning is “bullet.” The entry there specifies that it is an “American” usage. Recall that Martin Irons was an immigrant from Scotland.

<sup>15</sup> On page 213, Case informs us that “Irons had a problem with alcohol” and “visited such terrible violence on his family that they ended all ties with him. . .”.

<sup>16</sup> Case, pg. 210. Footnote 77 is here citing the source of this quote as a private letter to Ruth Allen dated 1937, from James R. Irons, one of Martin Irons’s grandsons.

<sup>17</sup> Case, pp. 152-153, 209-210.

<sup>18</sup> Interview with Mary Brown Irons of May 10, 1886, in the *New York Times*. (The entire article may also be retrieved online directly from the *New York Times* archives at <[select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30B13F73D5C10738DDDA90994DD405B8684F0D3](http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F30B13F73D5C10738DDDA90994DD405B8684F0D3)> Accessed Feb. 2, 2013):

## CAREER OF MARTIN IRONS

The Leader of the Great Southwestern Strike

Story of his brutal life as told by his wife—the characteristics of a professional agitator

St. Louis, May 9 [1886]—

[. . .]

The person who is best qualified to speak of Irons is his wife. She lives about five miles southwest of Richmond, Mo., and is a decent body. The following interview was held with her a few days ago. She said:

“I was born in Kelkeith, Scotland, June 21, 1832. My maiden name was Mary Brown. My father was Robert Brown. My mother’s maiden name was Jeanette Jeffries. I was Married to Martin Irons in Lexington, Ky., by J. K. Lyle, D. D., in the presence of Amelia Brown, on July 28, 1852. The name of Martin Irons’s father was Martin Irons. His mother’s Christian name was Beanie. Martin had two brothers—one named William, who died at sea, and James, now living. He also had two sisters—Jennie and Beanie. Beanie married John Brown, who is in the lime business at Richmond, Mo. Amelia Brown is my stepmother. I had five brothers—Robert, born in Dalkeith, June 10, 1821; John, born at

Tevet Mill, parish of Teres, Fife, Jan. 22, 1823; Heredith, born at same place, Oct. 10, 1825; William, born at same place, Nov. 15, 1827, and Scotland, who was born at Kerklow Mill, parish of Maines, Feb. 22, 1828.

“After I married Martin Irons we resided in Lexington, Ky., about three weeks and then we started for New-Orleans, stopping at Cincinnati, where my brother and Mr. Irons went into the saloon and restaurant business. We returned to Lexington in three months. Irons went to work for Mr. Heminway in the hemp factory, looking after machinery under Robert Brown, my father, who was foreman. In the factory he lost the second finger of his left hand. In the Spring of 1853 we removed to Cincinnati, where my husband worked for Robert and John Brown as a machinist. Shortly afterward he went to work in a sewing machine shop. From there we went to Newport, Ky., where we remained several weeks, Mr. Irons still working in the sewing machine shops. We went from there to Jamestown, Ky., where he worked in the hemp factory. We remained there till the Fall of 1854, when we returned to Lexington, Ky., and my husband worked in the machine shops. In 1856 we went to Hannibal, Mo. Irons could not get any work there, so he went to St. Louis, where I think he worked as a machinist. In the same year he went to work for McGrew & Morrison in the foundry at Lexington, Mo. We left Lexington for Liberty in 1859. I lived at Liberty, Mo., during the war. In the Fall of 1865 we returned to Lexington, Mo. In 1867 we went to Knoxville, Mo., where Mr. Irons went to work in a saw mill. In 1870 we removed to where I now live, five miles southwest of Richmond, Mo.

“I separated from my husband in 1876. We were then living at a place known as Lime John Brown’s which joins the place where I now live.”

“Did you leave Mr. Irons or did he leave you?”

“I left him. I haven’t seen him since we separated. He has sent me some money since we separated, but not enough to support me and my family.”

“Have you ever been divorced from Irons?”

“No. I received a letter from him stating that if I wanted a divorce he would not appear against me. Since then I have learned that he has married again. I do not know the woman he married.”

“Was he a kind parent and husband?”

“No; he was very cruel.”

“Is there anything in the report that he once brought an improper character to his house before your separation?”

“I do not know who the woman was. I took my children and we went into another room, leaving Mr. Irons and the woman to themselves. I learned the next day that the woman was one of bad character.”

“Have you your marriage certificate?”

“Yes, here it is: ‘This is to certify that Martin Irons and Mary Brown were, with their own consent, this date lawfully joined together in holy bonds of matrimony, which was solemnized by me, a minister of the Gospel, licensed to solemnize marriage, in the presence of a creditable witness. Given under my hand this 28th day of July in the year of our Lord eighteen hundred and fifty-two. J. K. Lyle, D.D.’”

“Was there any complaint made against your husband for assaulting you?”

“Yes; Robert, my son, made a complaint against him charging him with assault to kill. A warrant was issued and served by John Brown, who was then Sheriff of Ray County.”

“What was done in the matter?”

“It was compromised. Since our separation I have known very little of Mr. Irons except through the newspaper reports. Martin Irons was born at Dundee, Scotland, in 1832.”

<sup>19</sup> Allen, pg. 143. Another legitimate question is whether Mary Brown Irons was paid for her interview. The *New York Times*'s practice of paying for interviews was apparently alive and well as late as 1912 when the paper paid \$1,000 to the surviving telegrapher from the *Titanic* disaster for his exclusive story. Peters, Jeremy W. “Paying For News? It’s Nothing New,” *New York Times*, Sunday Review, Aug. 6, 2011. Available at <[www.mytimes.com/2011/08/07/sunday-review/paying-for-news-its-nothing-new.html?pagewanted=all&\\_r=0](http://www.mytimes.com/2011/08/07/sunday-review/paying-for-news-its-nothing-new.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0)>.

<sup>20</sup> Case, pg. 154.

<sup>21</sup> Allen, pg. 143.

<sup>22</sup> Phelan, Craig. 2000. *Grand Master Workman: Terence Powderly and the Knights of Labor*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, pp. 15, 120, 275; Powderly, Terence Vincent. 1940. *The Path I Trod*. New York: Columbia University Press, pp. 73, 189, 292, 344.

<sup>23</sup> Powderly, Terence Vincent. 1940. *The Path I Trod*. New York: Columbia University Press, chapters 10 and 11.

<sup>24</sup> In particular, Case quotes the *Sedalia Bazoo* for charges that Martin Irons was “drunken” (pg. 209). We have seen from Ruth Allen that the *Bazoo* was particularly partisan. See text at endnote 5, *supra*.

<sup>25</sup> Allen, pp. 42, 148.

<sup>26</sup> *Id.*

<sup>27</sup> Allen, pp. 35, 39, 41, 137, 141; Case, pp. 153, 154.

<sup>28</sup> Allen, pg. 35; Case, pg. 154.

<sup>29</sup> See, endnote 18, *supra*, for the full text of this interview.

<sup>30</sup> Case, pp. 209-210.

<sup>31</sup> Case, pg. 209.

<sup>32</sup> See endnote 18, *supra*, the interview with Mary Brown Irons, in which she calls Martin Irons “cruel.” In her book *Divorce: An American Tradition* (1991), historian Glenda Riley expands on the plea of cruelty as grounds for divorce in the nineteenth century in the United States: “In particular, the charge of cruelty was rapidly becoming the ground of choice in mid-nineteenth-century America. . . . By 1886, only six states refused to accept

cruelty as a ground for divorce.” Riley, Glenda. 1991. New York: Oxford University Press, pg. 81.

<sup>33</sup> This fact is—thankfully!—almost so universally known as to need no documentation. Type “warning signs domestic abuser” into any Internet search engine and pages of public service sites will list this as one of many common characteristics of an abuser. Some examples are the Center for Relationship Abuse Awareness at <[stoprelationshipabuse.org](http://stoprelationshipabuse.org)> (Accessed Feb. 28, 2013); New Hope for Women at <[www.newhopeforwomen.org/abuser-tricks](http://www.newhopeforwomen.org/abuser-tricks)> (Accessed Feb. 28, 2013); or Helpguide.org at <[www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic\\_violence\\_abuse\\_help\\_treatment\\_prevention.htm](http://www.helpguide.org/mental/domestic_violence_abuse_help_treatment_prevention.htm)> (Accessed Feb. 28, 2013).

<sup>34</sup> Case, pg. 153, footnote 5. Also, in her May 10, 1886, interview (reproduced supra at endnote 18), Mary Brown Irons tells us that Martin’s sister Beanie married a John Brown of Richmond, Missouri, who was possibly this same brother, but quite likely at least a relative of Mary’s. Thus, any abuse by Martin would also come to the attention of his own sister, who could have moved to mitigate it.

<sup>35</sup> In footnote 77 on page 259 of her book, Case says that another arrest of Martin for “getting rough” with one of his children was mentioned in a letter from Irons’s grandson to Ruth Allen. However, the text of that letter is not provided, making it difficult to evaluate.

<sup>36</sup> See endnote 33, supra.

<sup>37</sup> Allen, pg. 141.

<sup>38</sup> Case, pg. 213.

<sup>39</sup> Case, pg. 211.

<sup>40</sup> Allen, pp. 137-140.

<sup>41</sup> Allen, pg. 142, quoting Eugene Debs.

<sup>42</sup> Case, pg. 185.

<sup>43</sup> Allen, pg. 142.

<sup>44</sup> See text at endnote 5, supra.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., Case, pg. 209.

<sup>46</sup> Case, pg. 213, quoting the *Sedalia Bazaar*, April 21, 1886. More nuanced views of Martin Irons began appearing in the press some years after the strike, after tempers had cooled. For example, here is one assessment that Ruth Allen included in her book:

He [Irons] was about fifty years of age, well-dressed and spoke with a strong Scotch accent. It was quite evident that he was well posted and had seen a good deal of the world. . . . Close observers soon made up their minds that the little stoop-shouldered man was somewhat out of the usual line of homesteaders. His head and face showed superior mental force, and his manner plainly indicated that he had some history more than the common bread and meat routine. His conduct was that of a gentleman, making him many friends soon. [Allen, pg. 144, quoting the *Daily Tribune* (Jefferson City, Mo.), December 17, 1891]

Why did Professor Case not feel the need to quote some of these sources?

<sup>47</sup> Allen, pg. 138.

<sup>48</sup> Case, pg., 213

<sup>49</sup> Allen, pg. 139, quoting the official court record of the case.

<sup>50</sup> Allen, pp. 140-141.

<sup>51</sup> See Powderly, *supra* note 22, at 121-123.

<sup>52</sup> Case, pg. 174.

<sup>53</sup> Letter from Martin Irons to Terence Powderly, quoted in Powderly, at page 125.

<sup>54</sup> Interestingly, Case is not the first to allege that the *Lippincott's* article was not written by Irons. Ruth Allen recounts that the charge was made by the *New York Times* contemporaneously with the appearance of the article (Allen, pp. 143-144). However, she demolishes the *Times's* premise that Irons was too illiterate to have written it by citing reports of those who knew him and other articles he wrote that appeared in the *Journal of United Labor* and reveal Irons to be well-spoken and articulate.

<sup>55</sup> Much confusion attends the date of Irons's birth. Ruth Allen says he was born on March 1, 1833 (pg. 38). But she remarks in a footnote on the same page: "There is a conflict of information as to the date of Irons' birth. The date of October 7, 1827, given on his tombstone is not found in any other source of information."

<sup>56</sup> This interview is reproduced in its entirety at endnote 18.

<sup>57</sup> Here Mary Brown says that she and Martin stayed only a few months, while Martin in *Lippincott's* says that it was several years.

<sup>58</sup> This discrepancy in the state where "Knoxville" is located is most likely a clerical error by either the *New York Times* reporter or the congressional reporter.

<sup>59</sup> See endnote 19, *supra*.

