

# Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

VOL. II.—NO. 3.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, JUNE 5, 1873.

NO. 60

## Labor Notes.

The master carpenters of Bristol have refused an advance, and the men remain on strike.

Eight hundred employers of the Great Western Railway in England went out on strike on Monday last.

The marble masons of Liverpool struck work on Monday for an advance of 3s. per week.

The journeymen house painters of North Shields have accepted the offer of the masters, namely, shorter hours, without advance of wages.

A dispute has taken place among the division of labor shoemakers in Glasgow, and 200 have been locked out. Most of the men have left for England and Ireland.

The sailors on board the Great Eastern have refused to accept the wages offered by the Telegraph Company, and it is feared that the laying of the Atlantic cable will be delayed in consequence.

The Gallatown hand-loom weavers have resolved on endeavoring to get their wages raised; the journeymen bakers in some districts are out on strike; and masons' laborers in St. Andrews have got an advance of 3d. per hour.

A meeting of the journeymen bakers of Dundee was held lately, to consider the present state of wages. It was resolved to request an increase of wages to the extent of 3s. per week, and that unless this demand was granted by the 17th May, the men would come out on strike.

Seven of the Associated Employers who issued some time ago a circular to the work-people in their factories agreeable with the threat locked out 250 men employed by them. The whole of the men thus thrown out of employment have, we understand, left the town for Ireland and England. The levies of the men working are considered more than adequate to maintain the wives and families of the men thus locked out.

The painters at Greenwich hospital, recently memorialised the Government contractor for an increase of one-halfpenny per hour, on account of the present high price of provisions. That functionary, however, has not seen his way to comply with their request, and has discharged them. This harsh proceeding has been met on the part of the men by a very temperate and fairly-reasoned remonstrance, and there can be little doubt it will have the desired effect.

A numerously attended meeting of the members belonging to the Glasgow, Cowcaddens, Partick, and suburban lodges of the Masons' Association was held on Thursday evening, May 15th, in the Trades' Hall, Glassford street—Mr. William Millar, Govan, in the chair. The joint committee's secretary, Mr. Taylor, submitted the correspondence which had passed between them and the employers, which showed that the compromise advanced by the committee had found favor with the employers. After Brothers Pasley, Ferguson, and others had addressed the meeting, it was resolved to ratify the decision of the committee. A vote of thanks to the various delegates and the chairman brought the proceedings to an end.

The tailors in Glasgow, who were locked-out held a meeting in the Good Templars' Hall, Blackfriars street—Mr. Peter Henrietta presiding. In the course of his remarks the chairman said that the masters had with their usual complacency locked the operatives out on the 26th March, just 13 days prior to the termination of the mutual engagement, they had all signed a written agreement which did not contain anything concerning a certain weekly wage, but which stipulated for the payment of a certain rate per job, and the engagement to terminate on either party giving three months' notice. It had been stated that the men were seeking an advance; this was incorrect, they simply asked that the agreement of last year be ratified. The employers had announced that they did intend to reduce the wages of the men,

but after having seen the printed synopsis he was prepared to re-assert that an absolute reduction on nearly all garments; notwithstanding that the masters gave an increase of 1d. per hour, the speaker enumerated cases, in which the reduction reached 1s. 4d. Mr. Henry Wright then reviewed the synopsis referred to by the chairman, showing to a demonstration that though in some cases there was a slight increase, in others there was a considerable reduction. The meeting afterwards unanimously adopted the following resolutions:—(1.) "To adhere to the 'log' at present in use and which was drawn up by a joint committee of masters and men, and not (as in the new 'log') by the masters alone." (2.) "That, seeing the employers have locked us out for the last six weeks, and have persistently refused to sign the agreement according to former practice, we therefore adhere to our former resolution not to return to work until said agreements is signed; and, further, that we repel with contempt the charge that our office-bearers have either any intention or power to mislead us." After the usual vote of thanks to the chairman, the proceedings terminated.

## LIFE AND LABORS OF MR. BRASSEY.

We extract the following sketch of the life of the late Mr. Brassey, the celebrated English railway contractor, from Pitman's *Shorthand Magazine*, feeling sure it will prove of interest to our readers:—

Mr. Brassey began life early and circumstances helped him, for railway enterprises began to develop just as he was fairly launched. At the age of sixteen he was articled to a land surveyor, and his first work was on the Great Holyhead Road. He always took the fancy of those he worked under, as his capability recommended him to their intelligence, and this surveyor took the young man into partnership and sent him to Birkenhead as soon as he had attained his majority. His occupations there were of a nature to accustom him to responsibility, and to develop a fertility of resource, which did him such good service later. After eight years of progress and prosperity, he was fortunate in making the acquaintance which decided his future career. He accompanied George Stephenson to a visit to a stone quarry, and the "canny" Northumbrian was so struck with his companion, that he urged him to engage in the new enterprise of railway making.

Brassey took the advice and sent in his first tender. We should fancy rejection was the usual fate of tenders made by over-cautious inexperience. You have inadequate grounds to base your calculations on, and are likely to err on the safe side. At all events, Brassey did so; his offer was £5,000 higher than the one actually expected. Once launched in that way, however, he tried again, and the next time he was successful. He obtained ten miles of the Stafford and Wolverhampton line, including the construction of an important viaduct. The thorough manner in which he performed the work gained him the confidence of the engineer, and henceforth his fortune seemed assured in the new calling he had turned to. Stephenson, his early patron, had resigned, but Stephenson's successor, Mr. Lock, thought equally well of the contractor, and carried him with him wherever he could on the works he was employed upon in future. We ought not to omit to notice the influence exerted by Mrs. Brassey at the critical time when her husband was hastening over the very turn of his fortunes. Railways were being ridiculed as extravagant playthings of impractical science, and the hard-headed views of men like Stephenson were scouted as the wild dreams of enthusiasts. Mrs. Brassey boldly adopted the ideas of ten years later, and urged her husband not to miss the opening that offered itself to his energy. She still survives, and we shall say no more than that in the most important choice of his life, Mr. Brassey seems to have exercised

his usual judgment with more than his accustomed good fortune.

In 1841, Mr. Brassey undertook the first foreign contract. It was the Paris and Rouen Railway. It is obvious that a novel work of the kind must call into play all the contractor's special qualities. Mr. Brassey had to form his estimates where data were new to him, or wanting altogether. To be sure he could permit himself a safe margin, for the terms of his French competitors were so preposterous as to ensure their rejection, and he had come to an understanding of partnership with the only English rival who was really formidable. But then followed all the difficulties of recruiting, organizing, exporting, billeting, and rationing an army of English laborers.

Later in life he had collected round him a permanent staff of tried and capable men whose services he could always command. In these earlier days he was thrown comparatively upon his own resources, and assuredly he could not spare himself. He had assembled a cosmopolitan force, some ten thousand to twenty thousand in number. Of these, several thousands were English, the rest chiefly natives, although few European peoples were not unrepresented. The grand difficulty, of course, was confusion of speech, especially as illiterate English navvies were to be the technical instructors at this Babel of tongues. They had to teach the Frenchmen to work not merely by example, but by precept. At first the gangers were generally accompanied by a smart lad, who acted as interpreter; later, however, necessity, the mother of invention, taught the navvies a bastard language, which, with dramatical emphasis by oath and gesture, was found to convey their meaning sufficiently. The Englishmen earned considerably more than double wages, while performing about twice as much work as the Frenchmen. We may remark here in relation to this subject of cosmopolitan labor, that, while the Englishman ranks first, Piedmontese is placed next to him, being in some respects actually his superior. The Piedmontese is sober, and consequently more reliable; he is hardy and vigorous, and excessively industrious, as he looks to saving. With other Italians, it is different. The Neopolitans object to heavy work altogether, while the men of Centre Italy must be placed between Piedmontese and Neopolitans. Danes and Swedes take a high place, the former being pronounced almost equal to Englishmen. But to those familiar with the respective *physique* of the nations, it may seem strange that the more phlegmatic and massive German is said to yield in endurance to the nervous though wiry Frenchman. It is confirmed, however, to a certain extent, by the hospital experiences of the late war, where we have heard even German doctors and nurses say very much the same thing.

Nor was it his own dependants, or gentlemen brought into business relations with him, by whom he was held in the highest regard. Favour recognized a kindred spirit in the energetic contractor; personal interviews had acquainted him with Mr. Brassey's business talents, and in the course of their dealings he had occasion to learn something of his large-minded liberality.

One of the first ideas of a contractor's career is the space and the barrow multiplied by thousands, the dry prose of existence, and a dull monotony of drudgery. In reality, few callings have more romance in them, especially when the scenes of labor are laid abroad. We do not allude merely to the struggles with nature, when skill and science are tasked to the utmost to triumph over obstacles she interposes. These come rather within the province of the engineer, although there is sensation enough to the contractor when he hears of the costly labor of months succumbing to accident, while he is bound under heavy penalties to finish his contract to time. But in the first place, come the conflicts of diplomacy, when, setting wit against wit, you have to negotiate the preliminaries of some great enterprise, which may open a semi-barbarous country to all the blessings

of civilization. There are the risks and accidents, the adventures and hair-breadth escapes, when you are working in wild districts, or forcing forward your labors in the middle of a great war.

We can hardly give a better idea of the variety of Mr. Brassey's undertakings, than by slightly touching on some of the difficulties he and his employees had to face. In 1858, the Bilbao and Tudela Railway was in course of construction. It was slow work teaching the conservative Basques the use of paper money, and in the meantime coin had to be provided. Hard cash was hard to come by, and when you did procure it, after sustained effort, the debased currency was enormously bulky. The secretary employed on the line was in the habit of accumulating a ton and a-half of money per month. The country was mountainous, and the roads were bad and dangerous. When the pay week came round, the pay used to be sent in a coach under charge of one of the clerks, and escorted by civil guards.

On one occasion, the rickety conveyance broke down under the weight, and a couple of omnibusses had to be despatched to the salvage of the treasure. On another, warning was received of an intended attack by brigands, and the convoy travelled by a different road. One of the sub-contractors was a notorious Carlist chief, who was sufficiently feared to enable him to defy the authorities. This man "struck" on one occasion, and occupied the village where the agent resided, and bivouacked with his men around the office. The Carlist threatened to kill every soul in the house unless his demands were complied with. Nor was the threat likely to be an idle one, as he had despoiled of fourteen men already. Fortunately, the agents found means of communicating with the military governor of Bilbao, and a formidable detachment of troops raised the siege.

While the Cracow and Lemberg line was in progress, the contractors had a difficulty about bringing money from Vienna to Lemberg. The obstruction arose from the presence in the intervening country of the hostile hosts of Austria and Prussia, for the campaign of 1866 was then at its height, and the fate of the Austrian Empire was in the balance. Mr. Ofenheim, Mr. Brassey's Austrian adviser, volunteered for the task. The engines had been "required" for the war, but he found an old one. The engine driver, however, declined to go, remonstrating naturally against the danger. "If you will come," said Mr. Ofenheim, "I will give you so many hundred florins; if you are killed, I will provide for your wife and family." The man yielded; they started, and reached their journey's end in safety, passing at the rate of forty or fifty miles an hour between the sentinels of the opposing armies, the men being too much surprised to shoot. Mr. Ofenheim was chiefly uneasy lest a rail might have been removed somewhere.

We have seen the almost absolute confidence Mr. Brassey reposed in his subordinates. His conduct of financial matters amounted almost to carelessness, and yet, owing to the peculiar nature of his business, it is difficult to see how he could have managed differently. He decentralized to an extreme. The account of each separate undertaking was kept separately. He established no recognized check on the local cashiers, who were supposed to be always in a position to give him any information he might desire. He portioned out his work to sub-contractors, furnishing them with the materials and plant. It was his peculiar custom to name his terms on these occasions, and it is a high compliment to his qualities that the men he dealt with were so ready to close with him. They knew that no man was more competent to make an estimate, and that he held invincibly by the maxim "Live and let live." He would never suffer a man to lose in his dealings with him: If the sub-contractor found rock instead of clay, he was sure his generous employer would consider it.

His liberality was systematic; he would always have his work well done and equally

done. Doubtless he often spent freely, as when by way of assuring a supply of labor in Australia, he shipped two thousand navvies at £17 pounds a-head; while conscious that his wages would be higher than those given by any one else, he bound the men to his service by no stipulations whatever. But the man who could act in that way must have been naturally large-hearted and free indeed. Akin to this liberality was another feature already alluded to—the fortunate equanimity with which he supported misfortunes. He never stopped to make his moan to his employees; he set at once to work to retrieve his disasters.

He could always count upon his presence of mind, and a crises found him in the calm possession of his faculties. By nature and training he was excellently fitted for the work the shrewd intelligence of Stephenson suggested to him. He had an iron constitution, which enabled him to indulge with impunity in great bodily and mental exertion. He had a winning courtesy of manner, which assured him the goodwill of men of all stations. He had the generous confidence of a gentleman—confidence which almost constrained faithful service when it was coupled with considerable sense, and a judgment that was seldom at fault. Above all, he acted in all matters with punctilious integrity, and the results of his life were a magnificent vindication of the proverb that "Honesty is the best policy." He has left a colossal fortune for his masses to wonder at, and a memory for his friends to cherish fondly. And as the good that such a man does lives after him, we may hope his noble example may prove as beneficial to mankind as his stupendous works.

## DEPLORABLE STATE OF PERSIA.

The telegram, says an exchange, announcing the arrival of the Shah of Persia at St. Petersburg, calls to mind a series of Teheran letters, which have recently attracted much attention, in the Berlin *Kreuz Zeitung*. The descriptions given by the correspondent of the condition of that unhappy country are not only sad, but really terrible. Confusion, decay, misery, treachery, corruption, and crime reign everywhere. The Shah rules like a tyrant; his ministers are but valets. The most important offices—for instance, the governorships of the provinces—are sold to the highest bidder. Any of these governors may impose what fines he likes, and has arbitrary authority over life and death. "There are provinces," says the correspondent, "where the taxes amount to 80 per cent." Under these circumstances the agriculturist will not work; he tries only to produce what is absolutely necessary for his support, for the surplus is taken from him. Sometimes the whole harvest is consumed, and nothing remains over for the next year's planting. Those who reserve seed keep only enough to sow a small piece of ground. If the rain fails to set in at the right season the harvest never suffices for the wants of the people, and then follow those fearful famines when mothers have been known to devour their own children. In Teheran, the capital of Persia, there were found daily over five hundred corpses on the streets during the last famine.

## THE EDUCATED EYE.

Earth is never wearisome to those who can view its beauties intelligently. To them all nature speaks of beauty, of hope, of life. It is for them the glorious sun is shining, and dewdrops glitter in his rays; yes, even in the crowded city a little patch of grass or climbing vine will make a picture for their eyes. They see and appreciate true beauty wherever it is found, and know the life of every created thing. Animals, to them, are not mere brute beasts, but a strange and wonderful race of creatures which, indeed, cannot speak like man, but who possess domestic and social affections, and are capable of emotions of education and progression. Not only do men and women of educated eyes add world upon world to the one sphere that contains the unobserving, but by interesting themselves in the mode of life, the duties and enjoyments of all living creatures, they fully use every moment of existence and multiply a thousand fold that little span of seventy years which the multitude find too long.