

LABOR AND WAGES

Gleanings From the Industrial Field of the World.

The Elkhorn Coal and Coke Company of Elkhorn, West Virginia, will soon begin the erection of fifty new coke ovens.

The report of State Mine Inspector John T. Stewart, of Kansas, shows that there are in the State 200 mines proper and 247 strip mines, 447 in all, and that 7,639 people are employed in the industry.

Carlisle, Pennsylvania, has succeeded in securing the fourth new industry in the shape of a silk mill. The company starts with a capital of \$25,000, and will employ from 50 to 120 hands.

The puddlers employed in the rolling mill of the E. and G. Brooke Iron Company, Birdsboro, Pennsylvania, have resumed work after three weeks' idleness, accepting the reduction of from \$3.75 to \$3.50 per ton.

All the Packer collieries, operated by the Philadelphia Coal Company, in the vicinity of Shenandoah, Pennsylvania, employing three or four thousand men and boys, resumed work March 2 after an extended idleness.

The Seattle Typographical Union, Seattle, Washington, has decided to abolish piece work on all the daily newspapers and establish the eight hour working day, with the minimum scale of \$4 per day. Hereafter work will begin on the morning papers at 7.30 p.m. The new system has been adopted by the proprietors.

The weavers in the ribbon department at the Adelaide Silk Mill at Allentown, Pennsylvania, have been notified of a reduction of ten per cent on all heavy grades. The management declares that it is due to the unsteadiness of the market on these silks. The weavers held a meeting and appointed a committee to call on the management with a view to arbitrate.

Division District Assembly No. 1 of National Leatherworkers' Assembly 24, K. of L., were in secret session in Boston last week. Delegates from every town and city in the State were present. By a unanimous vote it was decided to continue the fight in Lynn, and to render the locked out morocco workers every possible assistance.

The threatened strike between the local unions of the International Bricklayers and Masons' Union and Bricklayers' Union No. 7, of New York City, has been averted through a conference held last week. Thos. O. Dea, Secretary of the International Bricklayers and Masons' Union, was present, empowered to approve of such action as might be taken. The proceedings were conducted with the utmost secrecy, and at their conclusion those present were positively instructed to communicate nothing except what was contained in the statement.

Two important bills passed the Ohio State Assembly last week on the recommendation of the trades organizations. One prohibits the employment of Pinkerton agents, and the other makes it unlawful to employ any minor under 14 years of age in any mine, factory, workshop, or establishment where the manufacture of goods is carried on. If passed by the Senate it will go into effect on the 1st of next September. The general agitation is thus making practical progress in spite of occasional interruptions and disappointments.

The market reports indicate a considerable shrinkage in consumption of iron, but prices remain firm, and the settlement of coal and coke troubles will doubtless soon restore general activity. There is much talk of the growing pressure of southern competition amongst the great iron mills, and those conditions are liable to prove a disturbing factor for some time in this great industry until the systems of production and schedules of prices, wages and conditions of employment shall have been to a greater extent equalized.

A much needed lesson was taught last week which is calculated to show the law-evading labor contractors that they are engaged in a perilous and unprofitable enterprise, and be a warning to their victims in Europe not to mortgage themselves to those cheap labor traffickers for the privilege of coming to this country. About three weeks ago a gang of 28 Italian contract-laborers were landed at New York on their way to work in Pennsylvania. They were detained pending investigation. Acting under instructions from the Secretary of the Treasury, they were put aboard the revenue cutter and put on board the steamship to be returned to their native country.

The largest manufacturing concern in the world is being organized in Chicago and will be engaged in the production of agricultural machinery under the name of the American Harvester Company. It is said the company represents a capital of \$35,000,000. When the great enterprise has been in operation it is expected that it will employ an army of about 50,000 men, besides several thousand agents, and will turn out about 150,000 machines of various kinds a year. The enterprise is not a new and independent establishment, however, but represents rather a combination of several of the leading manufacturers of mowers and

reapers, and it will probably control the agricultural machinery industry of the country until the monopoly shall be broken by new competitors.

The trouble in the Clarks' thread mills seems as far from settlement as ever, and both sides show determination to decide the question by a test of endurance, which seems a very primitive and injudicious way, to say the least. One of the principal mills has been shut down, and the company threaten to close down all their works in Kearney, N. J., indefinitely, and transfer their entire operations to their establishment in Scotland unless their operatives submit to their terms. On the contrary, they have carried their case to the American Federation of Labor, which has championed their cause and has issued a circular to the working people of the whole country and to their families advising them to teach the company a lesson in fair treatment of their employees by declining to purchase their thread so long as they are carrying on a war of injustice against those who have been in their employ.

The price of cotton is quoted low and speculation in the raw material dull. The factories, however, are generally running full handed, and we do not hear of those reductions of wages and rumors of impending strikes, which are so often heard of at this season of the year. The woolen industry is quoted in a much more encouraging condition, the relative situation being practically reversed from what it has been for a couple of years previous to the passage of the new tariff law. The production of knit and dress goods, worsteds, and the medium and lower grades of men's cloth are reported larger than at any time during the past five years.

The eight hour question has been making some progress with the management of the Columbian Fair, and it is now believed that the threatened strike will be averted and that operations will be carried on with comparative smoothness in the future. At a conference held recently between the managers and a committee representing the organized trades of Chicago the labor committee were practically assured that the two principal demands would be recognized. Those are the eight hour law and arbitration. In regard to the minimum rate of day wages for ordinary labor which the workmen desired should be fixed at \$1.50 per day with the preference to be given to home labor, the committee did not feel justified in making any specific promises. It is generally believed that an amicable understanding will be arrived at without much further trouble.

A decision has been rendered by the court in Haverhill, Massachusetts, sustaining and enforcing the provisions of the laws regulating the labor of women and children. The foreman of a manufacturing establishment, was fined fifty dollars for allowing women and children to work more than ten hours a day. It had been claimed that such laws were an infringement of the right of freedom of contract, and were unconstitutional and could not be enforced. On this theory those laws have been constantly evaded in every State in which they have been enacted. Women and children in indigent circumstances have easily been found eager to work under conditions forbidden by law for the sake of retaining the favor of the employers and their chances of steady employment, and in this way the laws designed for the benefit of all have been undermined and their intent defeated. The complaint in this instance was made a test case, and its being decided in favor of sustaining the validity of the law it is believed that numerous other similar actions will be brought against manufacturers throughout the State who have been accused of evading the law in the same way.

Short Hours.

When the cry goes out for shorter hours of labor, the argument is hurled back that it would be restricting the output of commodities, but when a mining or other corporation orders work discontinued for the purpose of raising the price of their product, these howlers have nothing to say. It makes a difference whose ox is gored.

The facts of the case are, that by the shortening of the hours of labor there would be no restriction in the output of products; or the other hand there would actually be an increased output, by reason of calling into service a large army, who had previously been idle. Why there should be hostility, or argument, by any class of men against a shorter work day, we are wholly in the dark.

We can conceive of no class of men, however wealthy they may be, that would not be equally benefited by such a move. We are aware that selfishness lurks in the hearts of of nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand, yet if a semblance of anything detrimental to the interests of anybody existed in a movement for a shorter working day, we would cheerfully forgive them for arguing against it; but knowing as we do that ignorance is the cause of all opposition, we cannot help feeling a degree of disgust.

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