

NOTICE.

We shall be pleased to receive items of interest pertaining to Trade Societies from all parts of the Dominion for publication. Officers of Trades Unions, Secretaries of Leagues, etc., are invited to send us news relating to their organizations, condition of trade, etc.

Our columns are open for the discussion of all questions affecting the working classes. All communications must be accompanied by the names of the writers, not necessarily for publication, but as a guarantee of good faith.

TERMS OF SUBSCRIPTIONS.

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The Ontario Workman.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, APRIL 25, 1872.

THE PROPOSED BILL.

On Thursday, of last week, Sir John A. Macdonald gave notice of his intention to introduce a Bill, assimilating the law of Canada to that of England in the matter of strikes and Trade Unions. Speaking of this intention the MAIL of Friday says:—

"The modifications to which the harsh old English law has been submitted at home, are even more necessary and suitable to the circumstances of Canada, where labor and capital are not separated by impassable lines, old traditions and the relics of feudalism. It is our delight to call ourselves a free country, and no country can be really free where a man is not at liberty to do the best he can with his labor where and when he likes. There is an element of bondage in the law as it stands here, and as soon as it attracted the notice of our Minister of Justice, with the promptness that characterizes all his efforts in the way of remedial legislation, he instantly set about abating the evil."

We are pleased also to note the promptness with which the Minister of Justice has moved in this matter; and hope that whatever action may be taken will be well considered, and that the result may be the passing of a Bill that will be devoid of the many defects that mark the English Bill.

We notice that already petitions are prepared for signature by the public generally in favor of the proposed Bill. Perhaps in some respects these petitions may be regarded as being somewhat premature, for until the country is made acquainted with the details of the proposed Bill, it would be unwise to commit those who are interested in the success of such a measure to its support. If it be the intention of Sir John—as the heading to the petition would warrant us in believing—to assimilate the law of Canada, in respect to Trade Unions, to that now in force in England, we believe it will fail to satisfy the needs of the industrial classes of this country. Recognizing the absolute necessity for prompt legislation on this important matter, we feel it would be a fatal mistake to adopt a *fac simile* of the English Bill—a Bill which, in very many respects, has proved unsatisfactory to the operative classes of the mother country, and will undoubtedly be materially changed by amendments ere long.

We hope, therefore, that the forthcoming Bill may be well considered, and that our law-makers will show their wisdom and forethought by legislating not only for the present, but for futurity in this respect.

We would therefore urge upon "the powers that be" the passing of a retrospective Act, repealing the present conspiracy law as it relates to workmen's combinations, and that the Bill to replace it will avoid the erudities and inconsistencies of the English Bill.

In our next issue we may take occasion to refer more fully to the English Bill, and point out its defects.

Another French political duel is anticipated, but there difficulties in the way of carrying it out. General Douay has made disparaging allusion to a recent affair of honour in which Prince de Beaufront was engaged. The Prince sent him a challenge, which the General would not accept unless on condition of fighting with pistols. There is, consequently, a hitch in the preliminaries.

JUSTICE.

Very early in human history do we see justice required and meted out, in fact one of the first incidents recorded of our race was an act of transgression, and law steps in and metes out justice to the offenders; and so it has continued to be with human nature down to the present. The individual selfishness of man has always led him to conspire at the liberties, the daily bread, the happiness, and even the life of his weaker or less wary fellowman; and it has been, therefore, absolutely necessary that justice should be administered in the purest and most impartial manner possible. If there is any position in human economy above another that requires purity, firmness and impartial dealing, it is the position of magistrate.

Now the manner of choosing those officials has been very varied in the different eras that have marked the progress of our race down to the present. We have had the Patriarchal judgeships with all the phases of impartial, parental care in its dealings with the children of a common family and the same parentage. But as population increased with the progress of time, and competition became sharper, and society began to merge into classes, and individuals began to usurp supreme power, the mode of appointing magistrates underwent a material change; for instead of the officers of justice being chosen from among the people on account of their superior wisdom, morality, and love of justice, they were almost invariably chosen on account of family distinctions, or for services rendered to the O King! In a word, because they were good and reliable tools in the hands of the human supreme to make the masses subserve the interests of the individuals who compose the classes.

In taking this retrospect of the means by which justice was administered in the past, and then glancing at the mode of choosing its administrators in the present, we must say that the change underwent has not been radical; and at this day, in Canada, the administration of justice is anything but representative. We hold that the spirit, the very soul, of Reform is knowledge. The spread of education among the masses has made the king surrender absolutism, and be satisfied with limited power, subject to the dictation of the people's representatives. Now it has not been a menial spirit, nor the ignorance of serfdom, that has wrought this change, but education, moral and elevating. And as this grand principle takes deeper root among the masses of our people, Reform shall become more radical and general. And one of the Reforms, not in the distant future, that the progressive people of this country shall demand, if we mistake not, is that those to whom is intrusted the lives and liberties of the people shall become more directly responsible to the people.

IS IT CONSPIRACY?

On Thursday night of last week a "private and confidential" meeting of the "masters" was held in the Agricultural Hall to discuss "matters and things" in connection with the movement now going on in our midst. Of course, in regard to the entire proceedings "mum" was to have been the word; but, like many transactions of a similar nature, that which was intended to have been done in secret has been proclaimed upon the house-top. Certainly, no wonder can be felt that those who took part in the meeting should have wished it to be "private and confidential" when we read the utterances of the different speakers. Foremost amongst these was the Hon. Geo. Brown, and the sentiments to which he gave expression are quite worthy of the man and the occasion. "Crush out the aspirations of employees!"—"Stamp out the movement!"—"Ostracise Union men!"—"Drive them out of Canada!"—was the mild counsel of this prince of Reformers (!)—and the wild chorus of "We will! We will!" from the "fifty" out of "one hundred and sixty masters" who signed the manifesto, must have been extremely gratifying to the "leader" of the masters.

The speakers who followed applauded those sentiments to the echo, one of them asserting that when "the men (the bookbinders) now on strike returned to work, each would HAVE to go back to his old employer; and if they refused to do this they would have to leave the city." How kind! what consideration! Truly the paternal interest taken by these "masters" in the welfare of their men is affecting, very, almost to laughter!

Towards the close of the meeting it was suggested by one of the speakers that a "public" meeting should be held by them, but was violently opposed by others. We think the suggestion worthy of being entertained, that the views of the employers might be publicly expressed, as have those of the men. Should better counsels pre-

vail, and a public meeting held, "may we be there!"

STRIKE OF AGRICULTURALISTS.

The British Parliament is said to be watching the strike of agricultural laborers with astonishment and the greatest interest; and the public journals are discussing the movement with the greatest fulness and freedom—the rising being regarded as one of the most remarkable within modern experience. Writing on this subject, the WEEKLY BUDGET says:—"The relations between capital and labor have been freely investigated in towns, and with striking results in the way of union and the regulation of wages and hours of labour; but who could have anticipated that the great free-labor wave would have swept over the agricultural districts, and broken there in the form of an absolute strike? That the position of the agricultural laborer was low, degraded, and wretched enough—as low, as degraded, and as wretched as that of the French peasantry on the eve of the great Revolution—every one indeed knew; but it had been supposed that all spirit and independence had been fairly crushed out of him. That, with his clouded brain and empty inside, he should ever have realized the idea of combination, and acted upon it, is matter of sheer amazement. History gives us nothing more startling than the agricultural laborers' strike."

The movement may be said to have begun in Herefordshire, whence it has spread gradually over the West of England, and has reached its culmination in Warwickshire. Throughout the West the same grievance prevails, namely: that wages remain unchanged, while all the necessities of life have doubled in price—hence starvation, debt, and universal misery. Wages would appear to be lowest in Gloucestershire, where the money payment was only 9s a week, from which rent was deducted, and even these wages were not "for wet or dry." A laborer, speaking of the condition of his class has said, "It ain't quite slavery we're under just now; but it's second kin to it."

The same paper continues:—"Would it not, in some respects, be preferable if Hodge were just as much his master's property as his horse or dog? They are fed—the owners recognizing the necessity of keeping their chattels in condition both for health and for the work to be got out of them. Hodge's position has been that of semi-starvation, combined with the slave's degradation in not daring to call his soul his own. Into the details of this patiently endured misery we cannot here enter. Suffice it that Hodge has at last plucked up a spirit, or had it plucked up for him, and has in some parts got what he has asked, while in others he is on strike and busy organizing agricultural unions similar in character to the trades' unions, for the redress of his wrongs and the assertion of his independence. These Unions are absolutely necessary to any permanent amelioration of his condition; and we cannot blame those who, feeling this, are taking steps to help him to insist now—now, while his thin blood is "up"—on such an organization as will prevent his sinking again into the slough of despond and starvation. This is the time for action; what has been done has been bravely done, but it would be foolish to expect sustained heroism on the part of those from whom this one effort has been wrung only by the sharp pangs of hunger and desperation."

Thus it is evident that the down-trodden agricultural laborers of England have caught the spirit of the times—a spirit going forth "conquering and to conquer." Discovering secrets long hidden from their view, unsuppressible aspirations arise in their breasts; and they begin to ruminate upon the principles by which they are governed, socially and politically.

The uprisings and agitations amongst the producing classes are unquestionably significant of the spread of intelligence. At a time when workmen had but faint ideas of political economy, and were to a great extent, ignorant of the laws by which society is governed, they labored unremittently, simply pocketing their weekly wages, without hardly questioning the arrangements of their "masters," however much they might operate to their disadvantage. But this state of things is changed now. The artisan has assumed the right and privilege of self-assertion. He takes a far higher place than was his wont in the social scale, and as he advances in intelligence, and exercises his political powers properly—which constitute the source of his strength—he will take a still higher position.

Labor has of late, in doing battle with capital, been valiant, and come off triumphantly—gaining bloodless, but none the less glorious, victories; simply because its cause was based on humanity and justice, and the moral sentiment of the nation readily espoused the same.

PROGRESS OF THE MOVEMENT.

But a few days since, the gratifying intelligence was received in this city that Mr. Muir, Superintendent of the Great Western Railway Company, had generously yielded to the movement on foot among the operative classes towards shortening the hours of labor, and that on and after the first of May the Nine Hour System was to obtain among the employees of that Company. On Wednesday last, it was announced through the columns of the LEADER that Mr. C. J. Brydges, Managing Director of the Grand Trunk Railway, exceeding even the generosity of Mr. Muir, has conceded the Nine Hour System to employees of that road, from one end to the other, THE SYSTEM COMING INTO OPERATION ON THE MORNING FOLLOWING.

Let the fact that a number of private firms have also adopted the new rule, and others are about to follow, be taken into consideration with the above, and we think the friends of the movement have every reason to feel gratified at the success which has so far attended their efforts.

PERTH ON THE MOVE.

The journeymen shoemakers of Perth are agitating the Nine Hour Movement. Enthusiastic public meetings have been held, largely attended by the mechanics of that place, and it is proposed to form a Labor League as soon as possible. A scale of prices has been offered by the "Master" Shoemakers, which the men have refused to recognize; and they are determined to stand to their own. So the ball rolls,—let it be kept in motion.

THE WORKINGMEN'S NEWS DEPOT.

It will be remembered that "our friend Scott," at the request of a number of well-wishers, has established a News Depot for the purpose of supplying the workingmen of Toronto with such literary pabulum as they may require. Mr. S. has secured suitable premises, and his business is now in "full blast." At his store also may be found fancy articles, useful and ornamental. Mr. Scott will supply THE ONTARIO WORKMAN both to annual subscribers and also to those who may prefer to take it weekly. We trust our fellow laborers generally will turn all the patronage they possibly can into the Workingmen's News Depot.

CAPITAL, LABOUR AND LABORERS.

By reference to our advertising columns it will be seen that a Lecture on the above subject will be delivered in the Agricultural Hall on this (Thursday) evening, by Matthew Ryan, Esq., Advocate, of Montreal. Mr. Ryan is well known as an able and talented speaker, and his lecture on the subject of Capital and Labor has been highly spoken of by the press and people wherever it has been delivered. The workingmen of this city should allow no opportunity of gaining information on this important subject to pass away unimproved, and we therefore trust that a large audience will greet Mr. Ryan to-night.

PRESENTATION.

At a meeting of the Iron Moulders' Union, held Thursday evening at the Trades Assembly Hall, the members presented their late financial secretary, Mr. G. R. Brown, with an elaborate illuminated address expressing their appreciation of his valuable services to the Union. The address was accompanied with a valuable and handsome gold ring. The following is a copy of the address:—"To Mr. George R. Brown, late financial secretary of the Iron Moulders' Union, No. 28: Sir,—We cannot allow the occasion of your retiring from the office of financial secretary to pass without in some degree recognizing your zealous and valuable services, and the marked ability which you have shown while discharging the duties of that office during the past three years. In thus conveying to you our appreciation of your worth, we feel that something more than words are necessary, and therefore ask your acceptance of the accompanying token of our esteem and regard, which will, we trust, in time to come, remind you of your many friends in Union No. 28. In conclusion, we trust that you may be long spared to wear our gift and associate amongst us, continuing always to merit, as now, the reward of duty and ability, in the just appreciation and kindly feeling of your fellow-men. Signed on behalf of Iron Moulders' Union No. 28.

GEORGE H. WIGGINS,
WILLIAM GIBSON,
JOHN DOHERTY,
Committee.

We refer our readers to the advertisement in another column of Mr. Bell Belmont, of the White Hart Saloon, Yonge street. Those favouring Mr. B. with a call will find him both courteous and attentive to his customers. He keeps what may be termed the "Prince of Bares" in the city of Toronto.

ORGANIZING.

The Lathers of this city hold a meeting in the Temperance Hall to-morrow evening, for the purpose of organizing a Union. We hope to hear of such Union becoming a fixed fact, for in the present movement it is highly necessary that our organizations should be most complete.

THE NINE HOUR FACTORY MOVEMENT.

A letter having been addressed to Mr. Baxter, M.P., by the Nine Hours' Factory League in Arbroath, Scotland, in regard to Mr. Mundella's bill for the reduction of the working hours in mills and factories from sixty to fifty-four a week, Mr. Baxter has written in reply:—"My feeling has always been in favour of short hours of labour, and many years ago, I put a stop to overtime in the small finishing work belonging to the firm of which I was a partner. It is a system injurious to the operatives and not remunerative to the masters. As a member of the Government, I am not at liberty to take any course which I please regarding private bills, but I shall always be glad to learn the views of those whom you represent in matters of this kind, and to give them my earnest consideration."

THE SHORT HOUR MOVEMENT.

We have been permitted to publish the following extracts from a private letter, giving an interesting account of the Labor Reform movement in Scotland. The writer, after speaking of the strike of the London Building Trades, goes on to say:—

"The Edinburgh masons were the next to try, and the first to be successful, after a strike of 13 weeks; and they suffered the loss of six hours wages, along with the reduction from 57 to 51 hours. The same applies to the Joiners when the reduction took place; and indeed, up till the Glasgow Joiners strike, and the Newcastle Engineers strike, the reduction of hours, with a corresponding reduction of wages, was never fully recognised. This spring it would appear that not only is the same wages paid after the reduction from 57 to 51 hours, but in some cases that have come under my notice, about 2s. more is paid for the 51 hours than was paid for the 57 hours; in other words, the demands have been for the reduction of hours and an advance of one penny per hour in wages. You can now have no idea of the extent of the short time movement in this country. Had anyone told me six months ago that the nine hour day would be so general by this time, I would have used my small influence to get him confined in Morningside. In places where the subject was never mooted until this spring, the nine hour day now is the established rule; indeed, we have got a taste of the 8 hours, as that system is now adopted by the North British Railway in the Abbeyhill and some other important signal boxes. The same system has also been adopted in Tod's Mills, Leith. The mills, like the signal boxes, are wrought night and day, and in both cases they have now three shifts of men, instead of two as formerly, and no reduction in pay. Bakers, gardeners, millers, saw millers, jewellers, bookbinders, and I understand many other trades I had looked upon as not likely to move for many years, have all moved and effected what you are now trying to win. We are also promised a nine hours' factory bill. Of course, it will not deal with adults, merely regulating the hours of juveniles. It is to be brought in by Mr. Mundella, and my opinion is that the Government will find means to shelve it, as it is an ugly question. They cannot afford to loose or offend so many of their supporters as are peculiarly interested in factories, neither can they oppose a measure benefitting the class that put in the Government, and may be said to keep them in."

"There is a general scarcity of hands, and my opinion is that the demand will yet be greater, as the nine hours is more generally adopted. I believe that men will work more heartily when working the nine than they do when working the ten hours system; but I have no faith in the theory that a man will produce as much in nine hours as he will in ten, but believe thoroughly that in proportion to the reduction of hours is the increase in the number of hands employed."

"All the engineering shops have begun the 51 hours, unless St. Margarets, it is 54, being regulated by Glasgow. You will have seen that the Clyde ship hands are to begin the 54 hours now, and the 51 in September. This is more than ever I hoped to see during the term of my natural life."

"I hope it will not be necessary for you to resort to a strike to secure your freedom and right, viz., to say whether or not you are to work, and if so, how long per diem. The employers must see that they are trying to restrict your liberty, and making your desires, convictions and health of no moment."