

pend more or less on material prosperity; and in so far as they do so depend, the promotion of the one is the promotion of the others. But it is dangerous to teach that the legislature can make the fortunes of the workman whatever the legislators choose to command.

Whether arbitration and conciliation can profitably be resorted to in the settlement of labor disputes is a fair subject of enquiry. But there is nothing now in the laws to prevent a resort to arbitration. Conciliation depends on the frame of mind; what are called conciliation courts have been tried in some countries. Their processes are more or less arbitrary. Twenty-five years ago, individual legislators, in Canada, suggested the creation of these courts; but they wasted their breath on the air. The fact that the government is now about to enquire into the desirability of establishing them, marks a new stage of the labor question.

A bureau of labor statistics which should undertake to deal with labor disputes would be very likely to get the ill-will of all concerned. Whether it could do any substantial good is by no means certain. Labor statistics, if skilfully prepared, and accompanied with the changes in the cost of living, would be of undoubted value; but they would require more skill in the preparation than is generally bestowed on similar work. Errors of system, which have been pointed out in neighboring States, would require to be avoided. The work of collecting the proposed statistics, if well done, would dispel many a delusion; they would bring the past and the present side by side, for comparison, and enable any careful enquirer to inform himself as to the true measure of the amelioration which has of late taken place in the condition of wage-earners.

FARMERS AS SPECULATORS.

It might well be thought that the Canadian farmer has had lessons enough in the way of money lost, to teach him the danger of holding his grain or other produce for higher prices. But he continues to speculate for a rise, doing himself no good thereby, but doing in the aggregate a deal of harm to shopkeepers who are his creditors by keeping them out of the money to which they are entitled at once after harvest. The following is a sample of numerous letters we have received within the last two weeks, some complaining of non-payment of bills, others of a lack of the usual volume of farmers' purchases, occasioned by the refusal of agriculturists to accept the current prices for grain. This letter is from a dealer in Peterboro' County:

"There is one thing which is a great drawback to the storekeeper in these parts, and that is our farmers holding on to their cattle and produce when they are offered the market price—saying that they must have bigger prices, and all this time telling the storekeeper it is impossible to pay 'until they sell something,' when in fact they are not trying to sell.

"Yet if the storekeeper buys anything from the farmers the latter must have their pay at once. We storekeepers have to sell our goods at the market price, no matter if it is high or low, and I cannot see why the farmer should not have to do the same. I have sold goods freely, finding the demand good, but I have never taken in so little money in proportion to sales."

This correspondent hits the nail on the head when he contrasts the farmer's arbitrary demand for his money whenever he makes a sale, with his usual procrastination about paying for the merchandize he buys. The country dealer of these modern days should no longer be expected, as was the case in the old times before railways, to advance goods to farmers and others and wait a twelvemonth for his pay. Grain, cattle and produce markets in Canada are now too near to every farmer's door to leave him the excuse of his progenitors for delay. And what is more, the storekeeper's profits now-a-days, will not permit him to give the length of credit that was common a quarter century ago.

It is high time that merchants in town and country who sell largely to farmers should put down a firm foot upon the antiquated custom of twelve months' credit. The farmers who have money on deposit at interest in private banks or loan companies—and there are plenty of them—should not exact long credit for their groceries, shoes or clothing. The merchants who make these advances are foolish to permit such customers to make a convenience of them.

STATISTICS OF CANADIAN COMMERCE.

The commercial bodies of Montreal have long been distinguished for their annual compilations of figures relating to the inward and outward trade of the Dominion. The latest of these pamphlets,* that for the three years last past, has just reached us. Its title page contains the familiar view of the noble harbor of Montreal, as also the well-known name of W. J. Patterson, the late secretary, who, in his life-time, did much statistical work of lasting value to the country and to the city he loved so well. Begun, as this report was, some months before Mr. Patterson's death, it has been pushed to completion by Mr. George Hadrill, his assistant and successor in the arduous post of secretary to these representative bodies. Important in itself, the present work possesses, besides, a melancholy interest in containing the last touches of Mr. Patterson's pen.

It is explained in the introduction that the detailed statements of exports relate exclusively to articles the growth or produce of the Dominion. The summaries of imports and exports for ten or fifteen years past are of decided value, as are the recapitulations of exports to various countries of cereals, dairy produce, minerals, fish, animals and woods. We could have wished the tabulation of manufactures exported had been more minute; but where everything else is so fully treated it is well to recollect that Canadian manufactures, though of growing importance, are as yet in relative extent inferior to the other departments, noticed more in detail.

The comparison of the grain trade of Montreal for fifteen years, with that of New York and other Atlantic ports, on pages 143 and 144, is of much interest. It is

*The Home and Foreign trade of Canada; also Annual Report of the Commerce of Montreal, 1883-85. Eighteenth Publication, by the Secretary of the Board of Trade and of the Corn Exchange Association. Printed by D. Bentley & Co., Montreal, 1886.

more full than any similar statement we have seen. "In the light of the controversy as to the probability of railways superseding canals in the carrying trade," says Mr. Hadrill, "the comparison is specially interesting; and also as showing that while the system of tolls prevailed on both the Erie and St. Lawrence routes, the proportionate volume of yearly traffic carried by each did not greatly vary. But so soon as the Erie Canal remained free while the St. Lawrence route remained taxed, the share of the latter was largely reduced."

Tables of exported articles for a series of years, together with the countries to which they were sent, pages 10 to 79, and summaries of imports, pages 80 to 84, will prove of service to manufacturers as well as to publicists. They represent an immense amount of labor to the compilers and their perusal may well make Canadians proud of the growth of their country. Owing to the late date at which the report was received we are unable to make extracts from the tables in the present issue. But we shall doubtless have occasion to refer hereafter to this concise presentation of facts and figures relating to Canadian trade.

BRITISH SHIPPING.

It is shown by official returns of British and colonial shipping that a net decrease of 60,000 tons took place during last year. A statement of tonnage for the first nine months of the present year has recently been officially reported by the Registrar-General of Shipping of all steamers and ships of 500 tons and upwards added to and removed from the register. It is as under:

TONNAGE ADDED TO AND REMOVED FROM THE REGISTER IN 1886—FIRST NINE MONTHS.			
STEAMERS.			
Registered.	No.	Tons.	
Built { Steel	40	60,178	
Iron	22	28,805	
Purchased, iron	6	7,024	
	68	96,007	
Removed.			
Lost { Steel	1	1,153	
Iron	68	72,088	
Sold, iron	13	17,097	
	82	90,336	

There is here a decrease of fourteen in number but an increase of 5,669 tons in capacity. As to sailing ships, however, the increase in them is this year marked, both in number and tonnage, viz., thirty are sailers of 65,789 tons:

SAILING SHIPS.			
Registered.	No.	Tons.	
Built { Steel	10	18,028	
Iron	42	72,315	
	52	90,343	
Removed.			
Lost, iron	19	22,441	
Sold, iron	2	2,163	
	21	24,604	

It is evident from these figures that steel is gradually taking the place of iron in the construction of steamers, while the inferior metal appears to be still the favorite among sailing shipowners. Wood ship-building has disappeared from the yards of Great Britain, and is now only to a very small extent carried on in Nova Scotia and Canada. It seems remarkable that there should be so large an increase in the sailing