

should have been proclaimed a public holiday and Canadians should have had an opportunity to invite the world's representative people to make merry with them.

On the 15th of this month the Short Line via Smith's Falls to Montreal was opened, this being one of the first parts of the great Short Line to the seaboard, which is now being rapidly constructed. This road is said to be one of the finest on the American continent, its construction being as nearly faultless as skill and money could make it. With easy curves and gradients and every possible saving in the maintenance of way, this road will enter the competition for the through business to tide water at Montreal with every advantage, and, with temporary arrangements to the coast, it will hold its own for all through business, pending the construction of eastern links still needed, which will save distance and make smoother working. A part of the new through line is the great bridge across the St. Lawrence at Lachine, an enterprise in itself of the first magnitude, a triumph of modern constructive art and engineering skill. The road has been opened with a simple announcement of the fact, but the public has had its eye for a long time on the progress of the work and will not be slow to take advantage of the conveniences offered as a means of communication, especially between the two great cities of the Dominion.

#### TALK IS CHEAP.

THAT portion of the press which caters to suit the palates of capitalists, or those who hope to become capitalists under existing conditions, continues to give good advice to the working classes. These great reflectors of a section of public opinion try to be fully convinced that the present social system is the best that can be devised. At any rate they do not examine with care, but condemn out of hand, any proposal looking to a radical change; and not only do they condemn all such schemes, but they denounce the proposers of them as though they were convicted criminals. These papers effusively advise the people for their own good to beware of these schemes for levelling the conditions of men, and express horror and detestation of the dynamiters, socialists, anarchists and pestilent labor

agitators, including them all under one common head as essentially the same and equally inimical to the "well-being of society." And everybody who does not join in this senseless panic-stricken hue and cry is included in the common denunciation as being at heart allied with every one of these outrageous factions.

It is only at considerable risk to his character, therefore, that a man can even ask a question of this mob who run and howl "stop thief" at they know not what. But still some questions have to be asked, and the time will come when they must be answered. In the first place, does any sane man believe that our present system of production gives the best results? Does man with eyes in his head believe that our present system of wealth-distribution is absolutely perfect? Can any man who knows anything of the meaning of the words deny that our system of government has in it anarchistic, communistic and socialistic features? Does any man presume to say that to extend any one of these principles further would certainly result in "shattering the fabric of society?" If no man can be found to father these views, would it not be much more creditable to the press, as an institution run by supposedly rational men, to propose real steps in advance than to attempt to prevent progress by a "wolf, wolf!" cry, which people will soon find to be absolutely hollow?

Our great boast is that in this country men are absolutely equal in the eye of the law. And when a man makes that boast, the chances are he figures law as a big-wig judge sitting on a bench hearing the cases of criminals brought before him. The vast majority of men go through life and never find themselves justly or unjustly in the felon's dock, and yet these men are affected by law in a hundred experiences every day. Land laws, customs laws, municipal regulations, laws to protect buyer from fraud by the seller and *vice versa*, laws regulating public corporations, such as railway companies, these and many others directly affect every man every day, to say nothing of the indirect effects of succession laws, enactments as to public debts and a thousand others. These are the more important laws—not those which decide whether a burglar shall be sent down for a year or for ten, or whether a "drunk" shall be discharged

or fined or imprisoned. Can we say that in these thousand and one relations men are placed on an equality before the law? Whatever the opinion of others may be, we say no distinctly, No.

Take an instance. A man with a heavy fist, or a talent for revolver shooting, or a *penchant* for three card monte, is not allowed to use his particular ability to take from his neighbor a part of that neighbor's wealth. But if a man should happen to have a talent for land speculation, or for manipulating stocks, he may pocket millions of dollars earned by other people, and the law says nothing against it. On what principle does the law work? Does it seek simply to prevent force and fraud? Evidently not, for highway robbery and lottery schemes are alike prohibited and there is not necessarily anything fraudulent in a lottery, as the word "fraud" is commonly applied. If there is any principle in the law, or if there is one on which a law can be based, it must be this: Every man shall be protected in the possession of what he has. Does any man pretend that that principle is fully carried out in our law?

Under our present system, statisticians tell us, only three per cent. of men in business succeed. We do not say failures are the result of the system. But, surely, if our system was based on anything like a reasonable principle it would make success for the many more. As a matter of fact, the chances of a new man in the ranks succeeding grow less every day. Under our present system the vast majority of the people earn little more than a fair living and many of them not that. The comment of the lofty-minded editors upon this state of affairs is that this is a case of "the survival of the fittest," and it is better for the race that those who cannot stand the struggle should go under. And yet these men and the great men for whom they speak are protected on every hand against violence and fraud, except that kind of fraud which they best understand and from which, mayhap, they benefit. Why should the principle of natural selection be thus circumstanced by artificial laws which benefit the few. Moreover, it must not be forgotten that this protection given by the law derives its effectiveness from the people. Why should the masses be supposed to give their strength to the maintenance of protective ordinances of various kinds