

## COMMISSIONER OF PATENTS AND THE LABOR QUESTION.

Mr. M. D. Legget, United States Commissioner of Patents, delivered an address in Cincinnati, Ohio, on the evening of the 18th ult., on the "Relations of Employer and Employee in our Steam Engine and Machine Shops." From a careful perusal of his effusion, we are forced to the conclusion that his study of the Labor Question has been very limited, or else he has wilfully misrepresented the condition of affairs as they now exist between the employer and employee.

If we attached much importance to his remarks, we should give his speech entire; but we give him the benefit of a recognition only on account of his connection with the "Engine Builders Association," an association, which, if managed properly and if kept free from the influence of bad men, will do more to adjust the difficulties that exist between Capital and Labor than all the speeches Mr. Legget could make if he got to be as old as Methuselah, unless his tactics become materially changed.

Mr. Legget does not claim to be a demagogue, but a correct analysis of his remarks places him in the catalogue of men who are noted for calling every workman who dares have the manhood, pluck and independence to denounce fraud and corruption when practiced upon their fellow laborers, a "demagogue." A demagogue, because they dare raise their voices against the encroachments of capital upon the rights of labor!

The gentleman tells us that

"It is an interesting and somewhat startling fact, at first thought, that the lower the grade of congregated labor, and the less brains required to perform it, the more frequent and violent will be the disturbance between employers and employees. To shovel dirt on our railroads and dig coal in our mines call into existence but a low degree of intelligence.

"Among these classes we get our largest number of strikes and the most disturbances. But few departments of industry call for more brains than that of mechanics, and very few have less strikes and fewer difficulties between employer and employees.

"You may arrange nearly all the trades where large numbers of men are worked together, and between these two extremes, the discontent and disturbance will continually decrease as you go from the bottom of the scale upward. If this statement is true, and I believe it is, then the principal cause of the troubles is very evident, and needs little further elucidation. The demagogue's harvest is found in the field of ignorance, and a very large proportion of the misunderstandings between capitalists and laborers have been directly traceable to political place hunters, who would create and excite prejudice and bitterness in order to detach ignorance from the wholesome influence of intelligence, and thereby enable themselves to foist ambition and corruption into power."

For the sake of argument we will admit that portion of the foregoing remarks are true. But the gentleman who utters them fails to tell us why they are true. He would have us believe that the whole fault lay with the poor, ignorant laborer, as he attributes the cause of frequent and violent disturbances to the ignorance that prevails among the lower grade of laborers. He does not tell us that the principal reason for the frequent disturbance among the lower grade of laborers lays in the fact that greedy and unscrupulous employers too often take advantage of the limited education among workmen. And the true answer to the question, "Why are strikes more frequent among the lower grades of laborers than they are among the more enlightened?" is that unprincipled employers more frequently take advantage of men whose education is limited under the impression that they do not know right from wrong. We admit that the fault lays very often with the workmen, but not always, and upon proper investigation it will be found that in a majority of the disagreements that occur between the employer and his workman, the employer has not been altogether infallible.

We are willing that the workman should be censured when he deserves it, and we are as ready to censure him and point out the error of his ways as any one. But we are not willing that responsibilities that should rest upon the shoulders of the employers should be shifted on to the already overburdened shoulders of the poor, downtrodden toiler.

Mr. Legget speaks of political place hunters as being the cause of a very large proportion of the misunderstandings that occur between capitalists and laborers. He, no doubt, forgets that he himself for many years has been a political place hunter, and even now holds a political place under the Government, and as for creating disagreements, if his recent speech is a specimen of his efforts at reconciliation, we are sorry to say that the picture he has drawn of the "political place hunters" might be taken by many for the gentleman himself. "Per-

sons who live in glass houses should not throw stones."

We have no particular objections to political place hunters, but we think those who hunt political situations should at least be consistent when criticising their own class.

The gentleman goes on with a long and senseless lingo about the demands for an equal distribution of property, when this question has never been associated with the labor question in America, and we hope will never be mixed up with it.

After making the fur fly in the direction of equal distribution, he branched off blindfolded into the subject of reducing the hours of labor, a subject he seems to know very little about, either practically or theoretically. He starts out by saying, "When I was a boy the rule was from sun to sun; long pay in the summer, short pay in winter." He failed however, to inform his hearers that he practiced this rule but very little; that he was educated for the bar, and that his tender hands have seen very little manual labor. He therefore can not speak from experience when he says, "No one pretends, I believe, that a healthy man will not work in any of our departments of healthy industry ten hours a day, with one hour's rest intervening, with scarcely a consciousness of fatigue." The following is a continuation of his very sensible (?) argument:

"And when your drinking saloons, your beer gardens, your gambling halls, and other worse places of resort, are sensibly diminished, and schools of art and science, of moral and religious culture are in the same proportion increased, then will be full time to consider whether the intellectual and moral well-being of society demand less hours of business and labor. As the hours of business in our offices and stores and labor in our shops have diminished, the places of dissipation and demoralization have steadily increased; our churches are being more thinly attended, and no perceptible increase has appeared in the demand for adult instruction."

"Jes so!" "Remove the necessity for a reduction in the hours of labor, then come to 'us' capitalists with a demand for a reduction, and we will give your demands a respectful hearing." We are a little inclined to think that Mr. Legget's audience must have seen some very long ears when he delivered himself of the above course of reasoning. And when he tells us that our places of demoralizations and dissipation have increased, and attributes the cause for this condition of affairs to a reduction in the hours of labor, we simply say, in legal terms, "the allegation is false." But, on the contrary, as the hours of labor have been decreased, working men and women have become more intelligent, and consequently less subjected to dissipation and demoralization. If, as the gentleman says, that "our churches are being more thinly attended," how does it come that so many thousand immense buildings for worship are being erected all over the land? It can hardly be attributed entirely to the increase in our population. It must be, then, that our people are becoming more moral, and this can undoubtedly be attributed to the little spare time that workmen have been given through a reduction in the hours of labor, and, if the hours of labor were reduced to eight per day, not only those who toil for their daily bread would be benefited, but employers, capitalists, mankind, the world would be far better for it, and all the sophistry and false teaching of the so called friends of the workmen can not force a different conclusion upon the intelligent mechanics of America.

The Commissioner would fain have us believe that a reduction of time for labor would be prejudicial to workmen in a financial point of view. He thinks the employers would not be the losers, but that the laborer would be worse off for it. In this he seems very considerate, and his pretended love for workmen and his anxiety to protect their interests, will no doubt be fully appreciated by every man who heard him or who read his speech. He says, "I believe the universal experience has been that they, (the employers,) actually get less work by the hour in eight hours than in ten."

We simply say that a gentleman can not substantiate the assertion by facts. But if he will take the trouble to investigate the matter, he will find that just the contrary is true. We contend, and we are prepared to back up our assertion by solid, stubborn, indisputable, and incontrovertible facts, that wherever the experiment has had a fair trial, more work has been performed by the hour when working eight hours per day than when working ten.

As a further argument against a reduction in the hours of labor, (and of course all for the benefit (?) of the workman,) the gentleman said:

"The change of clothing, the adjustment and oiling of machinery, the distribution of work, preparing to close work at the end of the day, &c., necessarily consumes considerable time, which when distributed

over eight hours, makes a larger percentage of waste than when distributed over ten. Again, the interest on capital, the wear and tear of machinery, contingent expenses, such as clerk hire, agencies, commissions, advertising, insurance, &c., are the same for eight hours as for ten, and as the production will be twenty per cent. less, the cost of production must be nearly twenty per cent. more, especially in departments of industry like machine building, where labor is the principle element of cost. This increase of cost would be considerably more than the profits that any of our machine manufacturers make upon the labor of their operatives. The result would be then, that the manufacturing must stop, or the prices of products of labor must be advanced about twenty per cent. in price. The latter alternative would, of course, be adopted and the prices of manufactured articles be increased.

"The same arguments that would prevail in reducing the hours of labor in this business would be equally strong in all other vocations; hence there would be a universal advance in prices. Wheat, corn, potatoes and all other farm and garden products, boots, shoes and all other articles of clothing, stoves, cooking utensils and household furniture, lumber, bricks, mortar, builders' hardware, buildings and rents would all be increased in cost, in very nearly the same proportion as the hours of labor are decreased. It would cost twenty per cent. more to shear a pound of wool, twenty per cent. more to card it, twenty per cent. more to weave it, twenty per cent. more to full and market it, twenty per cent. more to cut and make it into clothing, and the coat, when done, must have a corresponding increase in price. Hence the tax necessarily comes back upon the laborer. His expense of living has been increased in substantially the same ratio that his hours of labor have been decreased. The effect upon the laborer is substantially the same as if his per diem pay was reduced the same as his time; and no amount of sophistry or demagoguery can make it otherwise. The simple question then is; Can our laboring population, at the present cost of living, afford to receive twenty per cent. less for a day's labor than they now get? I don't believe they can. Yet it is to this simple form that the question reduces itself when stripped of its sophistry. The capitalist can afford the change but the laborer can not. The capitalist's profits would be substantially the same, but the laborer's expenses of living would be increased twenty per cent. with no increase of pay."

We shall give the gentleman's argument but a brief analysis, as we think that the very argument itself can not help but convince any intelligent man who will read it of its utter inconsistency. If the employers should be paid for making preparations necessary to build or repair machinery, should not the workman receive some remuneration for preparation that he is compelled to make in order to perform ten hours' labor in the shop? Let us see. We are told that ten hours constitute a common day's work throughout the land. All men can not live near the shop in which they are employed. Some, yes, a great many, are compelled to live a long distance from their work, and in order to put in ten hours work in the shop, must commence preparations at 5.30 a.m. They work until 12 m; they have an hour for noon, but this hour is of no use to the workman, as he requires the whole of it to make preparations to perform the afternoon's work. He quits the shop at 6.15 p.m., and by the time he has had his supper and gets cleaned up, the hand on the clock will indicate 7.30 p.m. Now, then, to sum it all up. The mechanic who gets paid for only ten hours work has actually worked fourteen hours! So Mr. Legget will please take notice that the workmen of America are simply asking for a reduction in the hours of labor from fourteen to twelve per day.

As to the financial result of a reduction in the hours of labor, we can not agree with Mr. Legget, for if his argument be true that the prices of the necessities of life, etc., will be increased twenty per cent., how does it come that since 1860 the price of labor has increased on an average only sixty-five per cent., while the prices of the necessities of life, etc., have increased over one hundred and twenty-five per cent.? The hours of labor have not been reduced during this time. Workingmen do as much work per hour or per man and even more as there have been valuable improvements in machinery. Then why the discrepancy between the advance in the prices of the necessities of life and the prices of labor?

Workingmen have come to the conclusion, and not without good sound reasons, that some men who do not labor for a livelihood are making immense profits out of the bone and muscle of the laborers of the country. Therefore, judging from the numerous princely palaces that we encounter everywhere, capitalists can very well afford to acquiesce in a reduction in the hours of labor, and pay even more for eight hours work than they now pay for ten, and still make a fair profit. At any rate we think the poor fellows can get along very well without the United States Commissioner of Patents championing their cause, and we might as well inform the gentleman that what the workmen of America want is a

fair proportion of the profits of their labor, "and no amount of sophistry or demagoguery" from the hirelings of capital can satisfy their demands.

The following man of straw is put up and knocked down by the Commissioner:

Another question to which I ask attention is the persistent effort being made to establish the tyranny of caste in our trades and industries. Voluntary associations for mutual instruction and improvement are commendable everywhere; but when used to abridge personal liberty, to forbid the free choice of occupations according to one's capacity and tastes, to compel suspensions of business, and the turning out of employment of those equally or more dependent than themselves, then they become un-American; they violate the enlightened spirit and civilization of the age, and are subversive of the personal independence which is the pride and glory of our American institutions. Many of our Trades Unions have exercised, and to-day exercise a tyranny more revolting (because surrounded with more light) than disgraced the worst forms of aristocracy in the darkest days of the world. I can but think that the men composing these organizations are standing broadly in their own light, and are doing all in their power to compel capital to organize against them, when the results will be disastrous in the extreme to all parties; but of course must fall heaviest upon those who rely upon their daily labors for their daily bread. Separate organizations of capitalists and laborers with a view to watching each other, must of necessity create jealousies and misunderstandings, and sooner or later bring on damaging conflicts."

We have been connected with Trades Unions for over ten years and this is the first we have heard of their making an effort to establish caste in our trades. They contend that every person who wishes to learn a trade should serve a regular apprenticeship of at least three years, in order that they might reach at least a degree of proficiency, and thus reduce the grand army of both or inferior workmen that to-day curse our land. And as for boys from learning trades, if the gentleman had defined or qualified his assertion, we might answer him; but, so far as the Machinists and Blacksmiths' International Union is concerned, no boy is prohibited from learning any trade he sees fit. And when the gentleman makes the sweeping assertion, placing all Trades' Unions in the same catalogue, we can do no better than to answer him in his own language, that he is simply chasing a will-o'-the-wisp. The ghost of Banquet must be haunting him. It is evident that the gentlemen is not in favor of Trades' Unions, as he says that they "have exercised and to-day exercise a tyranny more revolting than disgraced the worst forms of aristocracy in the darkest days of the world." Wherein, Mr. Legget, and where do you leave the combination of capital that have shaken the prosperity of the entire nation? Where do you leave the combination of employing coal miners of Tioga county, Pa., who in the winter of 1863 drove the miners into a strike and by process of law, threw innocent women and children out into the streets to die like dogs, and locked the doors of their houses, and United States troops paraded the streets to keep the miners and their families from re-occupying them, and all this happened in this, our boasted free America? You care not to mention the wicked and damnable deeds of capital, but you must heap your abuse upon the poor laborer who was driven through the tyranny and oppression of capital to organize for mutual protection, and yet you would deny him this right, at the same time claiming to be his friend. We could give you a list of combinations of capitalists whose only aim is to accumulate wealth, who respect the laws of the land no more than the savage who roams through the wilderness. These combinations can practice and carry out their hell-begotten schemes for the enslavement of America's workmen and women, and not a word of condemnation falls from your sanctimonious and consecrated lips. Your measure is pretty well taken, and the workmen of the country will have made up their minds that you are much better at expounding the patent laws of the United States than you are at expounding the great question of the "Relations between Labor and Capital," and we also think that since the government pays you a very handsome salary for a certain specified purpose, you are getting beyond the scope of your authority when you pick up the cudgels of capital in opposition to labor. We have opposition enough now, we do not want men who we help to feed and keep in idleness to take the stump against us. In conclusion, Mr. Legget, permit us to remark that you know nothing about the "labor question;" and the less you have to say upon the subject, the less of your ignorance in that direction will you expose. When we say you know nothing about the "labor question," we are prepared to undertake to prove our assertion, either through the columns of the press or on the stump. You are at liberty to make your choice. Adieu.

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GRAND TRUNK RAILWAY.			
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Express—11.07 a.m.		Express—6.30 p.m.	
Mixed—6.57 p.m.		Mail—1.16 p.m.	
Express—11.07 p.m.			
GOING WEST.			
Express—5.37 a.m.	Express—7.30 a.m.	Express—11.45 a.m.	
Mixed—12.03 a.m.		Mail—3.46 p.m.	
Belleville Train—6.37 p.m.	Mixed—5.30 p.m.	Express—12.05 a.m.	
Express—7.07 p.m.			
GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY.			
GOING WEST.		FROM THE WEST.	
Express—7.00 a.m.	Accommodation—11.00 a.m.	Express—1.16 p.m.	
Do—11.50 a.m.	Mail—5.30 p.m.	Accommodation—9.30 p.m.	
Accommodation—4.00 p.m.			
Express—8.00 p.m.			
TORONTO AND NIPISSING RAILWAY.			
GOING NORTH.		FROM THE NORTH.	
Mail 8.00 a.m.	Mail—10.45 a.m.	Mail—6.35 p.m.	
Mail—3.50 p.m.			
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TORONTO, GREY & BRUCE RAILWAY.			
GOING WEST.		FROM THE WEST.	
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