

corollary of our existence ; but, while admitting its absoluteness, we cannot but admit, in contemplating the design and governance of the Almighty-Ruler of the Universe, how imperative it is that the capitalist who possesses power and means should concede all that can be conceded to the comfort and amelioration of the condition of the working-man, consistently with the general welfare of the state and of society. Placing the two classes—employer and employed—on an equal footing as far as civil rights are concerned, it may be and has been argued, that perfect justice is done. It has been said that the employee, if he do not like one situation or locality, can go to another, and that no employer can force a man to work against his will. But it has been proved that this is a very poor sort of justice indeed. It has been found not only that he was entitled to perfect freedom in this respect, but that legislation was actually necessary, as far as it dared to interpose between him and the exactions of his taskmaster.

But legislation could not go far enough in the matter. It could not raise the standard of wages or dictate the terms of the agreement between employer and employee in any respect. But of late years a remedy has been found. The philosopher's stone of the working-classes has been discovered—"Union is Strength."

By this they have done what legislation could not do, and which, carried to its ultimate consequences, must create a revolution of no mean magnitude in the social world. It has already emancipated them from a state of servile dependence, and raised them to a position of something like equality with their employers. It was but a few weeks ago that the foreman of a manufacturing establishment in this country, on being requested by the proprietors to discharge one of the hands, refused to do so ; and when the employer did so himself, the whole establishment struck work, and the unfortunate proprietor was allowed to help himself

in the best way he could. What the upshot of the strike was we cannot say, but the incident is a very fair indication of the power of which workingmen are beginning to feel themselves possessed ; and it is this consciousness of power that has led to the present agitation for a lessening of the hours of labour.

What are the natural tendencies of that agitation, and what its probable results, we have yet to consider.

As we write, the news comes that the operatives in the flax mills of Leeds have struck for a reduction of their time of labour to nine hours a day. "The number of persons on strike," says the telegram, "is estimated at between 10,000 and 11,000." Ten thousand people—an army—in one town ! What a power to work with, a power which gives to every request the force of a determinate demand, and one which cannot be lightly disregarded. The nine-hours' movement is the latest development of that restless progressive spirit of civilization of which we have been speaking. It is now about four years old, and is the offspring of the labouring classes in the United States. Several times the matter was brought up in Congress, and urged with more or less energy and force of argument, by those who had undertaken to champion it.

It was thrown out on two different occasions, but was at last carried, and is now in operation in the public works of the different States.

There is, however, one important difference to be noted, and that is, that there it is eight hours instead of nine, but only eight are paid for. And, moreover, so far as these concessions are concerned, no branch of trade is affected thereby, as no branch of trade is dependent on them. What the effect on the men themselves is we are unable to say ; but we presume they enjoy their extra time for recreation as best they can, without being either much wiser, richer or happier for the change. The movement next made its ap-