

that no favours be granted to those who are vastly more able than they to bear their full share of the civic burdens. If, for instance, they could bring some pressure to bear to put an end to the shameful evasions and undervaluations which are so common, and compel every capitalist, merchant and professional man to pay his honest dues, the taxation rate would be so reduced that the poor would scarcely feel it, and they would, at the same time, retain the manly consciousness that they were neither asking nor receiving favours.

THE Bill introduced in the Commons by Mr. Clarke Wallace, to restrict in the public interest the operations of combines, will, no doubt, give rise to one of the most interesting debates of the session. The subject is unquestionably a difficult one to legislate upon. Great skill and care will be required to steer safely between the Scylla of injurious interference with the rights of manufacturers and dealers and the Charybdis of handing over the public to the tender mercies of selfish and soulless combinations, sheltered from outside competition by high tariff walls. But the principle of the Bill has been already affirmed by every Legislature which has made the boycott illegal. We notice that a writer whose opinions usually carry weight has ridiculed the idea of hindering men by law from selling their goods, or refusing to sell them, to whom and under what conditions they please. But this admits of two ready answers. In the first place, if this is the right of one citizen, it is the right of another. If it is the right of the manufacturer, it is the right of the wholesale dealer; and if it is the right of the wholesale dealer, it is the right of the retailer. And if it is a right so sacred that Parliament may not curtail it, it surely is so sacred that Parliament should protect it. Now it is just this right in the case of the two last-named classes that is interfered with by the combines, and that Parliament is called on to protect. Again, it is clearly one thing to say that any individual manufacturer or dealer may refuse to sell his goods to certain individuals, and quite another to say that any number may combine to do so. The latter contains the essence of the boycott, inasmuch as it is an agreement having in view to work harm or ruin to the individuals placed under the ban.

WHATEVER may have been the virtues or the faults of Mr. Cleveland as a President, he certainly has the merit of having settled a most momentous question of national etiquette, and established a precedent for all future occupants of the White House. The great problem is, How shall an ex-President of the United States, who does not happen to have an independent fortune, deport himself so as to meet the claims of his family and of society, and at the same time preserve from taint of ordinary occupation the lingering odours of the lofty sphere from which he has descended? Mr. Cleveland is understood to have loosed the knot in true Alexandrian fashion, by simply resolving to leave the ex-Presidential dignity to take care of itself, and return to the practice of his profession, like a Cincinnatus, or a sensible nineteenth-century Democrat. This resolution, if unostentatiously carried out, will almost atone for half his political blunders. The future historian of his short reign will be tempted to descend to parody and, without disparagement to his Presidential career, put it on record that nothing in his official life became him like the leaving it.

THE collapse of the strike of the employees of the New York Street Railways, conveys a lesson on the futility of such rash movements which workmen everywhere will do well to ponder. We pronounce no opinion upon the reality or the opposite of the alleged grievances which led to this particular outbreak, not having the information necessary to enable us to form such an opinion. But the failure of the movement affords another illustration of a fact of which a little sober reflection should have beforehand satisfied the more intelligent of the strikers. That fact is that in the case of an employment like that of the street railways, which requires no special training, skill or intelligence, it is but folly for the employees to suppose they can compel the acceptance of their terms by a strike. In the present overstocked state of the labour market there are sure to be two or three men ready to step into every place as soon as it is vacated. When the striking employees see this being done the temptation to interfere forcibly often becomes, as in the case of some of the New York strikers, too strong to be resisted. Such resort to violence of course makes the matter worse, by alienating the sympathy of the public and compelling the interference of the civil authority. The right of the public contractor

to employ whom he pleases to do his work, and to have that employee protected from mob violence while doing the work, is one which every organized community is bound to maintain.

IT is but just, however, to remember that in all such cases as that above referred to there is another side to the question which even journals of the highest class in New York seem disposed to ignore. If it is clear that the right of the companies to employ whom they please to do their work must be maintained at any cost, it by no means follows that the public whom these companies serve, and from whom they derive their chartered privileges, has no duty to discharge to the employees of those companies. If it could be shown, for instance, that, taking advantage of the ruinous competition in the labour market and the consequent necessities of the labourers, the New York street railway companies were having their work performed on such terms as reduced the men in their employ to a condition little better than that of slaves, no one knowing the facts would think of pleading that the companies, in virtue of their contract, were alone responsible, and that the civic authorities, representing the public, must not interfere. All would agree that it would be a grievous shame and sin for the citizens to accept and enjoy the conveniences afforded by the tramways under such conditions. To determine just when and how the authorities shall interfere to prevent such abuses may be a very difficult and delicate matter, but that there is a point at which such intervention becomes not only permissible but a duty, will now scarcely be denied. It is becoming every day more clear that the time has come when the insufficiency of the old theories in respect to freedom of contract and the law of supply and demand must be conceded, and some means of supplementing or reforming the economical creed handed down from a past generation be found. Whether this reform is to come in the shape of new conditions in charters, civic or state Boards of Arbitration, or in some other form, remains to be determined.

THE report of the Committee appointed by the United States House of Representatives to investigate the charges brought against the Alaska Commercial Company by Governor Swineford and others indicates that the parties bringing the charges have signally failed to sustain them. These accusations, it will be remembered, were both numerous and grave. As summarized by the *New York Times*, the Governor himself charged that the Company had "reduced the native population wherever its operations are not supervised by Government agents, to a condition of helpless dependence, if not absolute slavery"; that it compels the natives at the risk of starvation to accept "such beggarly prices for the peltry that it keeps them in debt and at its mercy"; that it has marked and mutilated the coin of the United States for its purposes, and refuses to receive any other from the natives in payment for goods sold them; that it has violated the law relating to the sale of firearms by its agents; that "its every aim and effort is directed to the blocking of the wheels of progress." The private sealers on their part declare in addition that the Company has exterminated the seals on certain islands; that it destroys carcasses without extracting the oil, thus violating the conditions of its lease and defrauding the Government; that it has killed more seals than its lease allows; that it uses revenue cutters for private purposes; that it sells to the natives condemned tobacco in violation of the internal revenue laws; that it abets the Indians in killing from the shore classes of seals which cannot be lawfully killed. The House Committee reports that the lease with the Alaska Company was lawful, was made in the interest of the United States, and has been faithfully kept in all its covenants by the Company; that the Company "has contributed liberally to the welfare, comfort and prosperity" of the natives of St. Paul and St. George Islands, has built a comfortable house for each family without charge of rent, and at its own cost provides stoves, maintains two physicians for free medical attendance, and supports the widows and orphans of the natives. The native labourers receive 40 cents for removing each sealskin, or \$40,000 annually, besides \$1 a day each for other labour, and have on deposit in San Francisco \$64,732. The lease requires that dried salmon shall be furnished free to the inhabitants of the two islands, and goods are sold to them by the Company at one-fourth advance on San Francisco wholesale prices. This is a remarkable outcome. But more remarkable still is a special report of Governor Swineford, in which he emphatically declares that a visit to one of the

Pribilof Islands convinces him that the Company "is and has been all along faithful in complying with all the terms and conditions of its agreement with the Government; in fact, it is doing even more in the matter of providing for the wants and comforts of the natives than its contract requires." Such statements he reiterates through this report. A truly wonderful man must be this Governor Swineford. As for the rest one is naturally curious to know how the Committee conducted its investigation, where and from whom it got its evidence, what influences the Company brought to bear, and so forth. The report will help the Company materially to get a renewal of its monopoly, which expires next year.

UNLESS on the principle that the main object of the tariff is to discourage importation and so diminish revenue, it is not easy to see how the system under which the sum of \$41,348 was last year distributed amongst the Customs officers of the Dominion in addition to their regular salaries as their share of the fines, forfeitures and duties levied as a result of seizures, can be defended. That such a system should lead to abuses of various kinds is almost inevitable. The fact that in several instances, where the seizures made or the irregularities charged involved large amounts, the parties interested successfully resisted the charges of the officials, is very suggestive. The inference is easy that in all probability either the officers were lax where the amounts involved were comparatively small, or that many importers have suffered injustice rather than incur the trouble and annoyance involved in an appeal. Can it be that this extra and not morally elevating inducement is necessary to insure a faithful performance of duty by the collectors and their subordinates? It is to be hoped that the matter will be discussed in Parliament in order that the public may be put in possession of the Government's strong reasons for maintaining so questionable a policy.

BY what might almost be deemed a kind of poetic retribution the Indian opium traffic, which Great Britain forced upon China at the mouth of the cannon, is threatened with gradual extinction. In spite of legislative prohibition, which seems to have become almost a dead letter, the article is now being produced in China in such quantities that the revenue from the export duty on opium shipped from Central India and Bengal has fallen off from thirteen millions in 1872 to eight millions in 1887. This result seems due, however, not so much to a lessening in the Chinese demand for the Indian article, which is thought superior in quality to that of native growth, as to the reduction in price caused by competition. The enormous monopoly prices have become impossible. China is no longer compelled to resort to India for its opium, though, for the reason above indicated, the wealthier and more luxurious classes still do so. But the native cultivators are improving their methods of cultivation, and are now producing an article which is not only not considered much inferior to the Indian, but is actually coming to be preferred by many natives, while the price is only about half that of the imported. "With due regard to all the circumstances," says the *London Times*, "the Government of India might be well advised if it treated its opium revenue as a transitory windfall, upon which it would be foolish to count." The cool indifference with which the moral aspects of the traffic are ignored by such papers as the *Times*, and the financial alone considered, is wonderful. The increasing slavery of the population in some districts to the destructive habit is even spoken of as if it were matter for congratulation. One can find, or very easily fancy, an undertone of exultation in the manner in which such statements are made as the horrifying one that in Szechuen, for instance, which contains seventy millions of inhabitants, seven-tenths of the adult male population, it is computed, are now opium smokers. Can such things be without their Nemesis?

THE history of the growth of the wheat-producing and exporting industry in India, as described by Lord Cross in a recent speech in England, is remarkable. The first great impulse to the modern movement was the abolition in 1873 of the export duty of 7 per cent. Up to that date the amount of wheat grown in India was computed to be only 17,000 tons. During the next four years the average wheat growth of the country went up to just eight times that amount, while for the four years ending in 1888 the average has been, notwithstanding the bad crop of last year, no less than 936,000 tons. Of course this enormous development has not resulted wholly from