

probably mineral wealth. The lakes themselves abound with fine fish. The region surrounding these lakes is yet almost entirely undeveloped, but in time the lakes will bear on their bosom a fleet of boats. The first thing that is wanted to develop this region is a railway to Lake Manitoba, followed by some improvements necessary to the navigation of the waters to the best advantage. If these are provided the Lake Manitoba and Winnipegosis region will soon furnish considerable traffic for the new road. It is also pretty certain that the Portage branch will be extended in a westerly direction from Portage la Prairie, through the fine grain and stock country which stretches away 1,000 miles and more in the direction indicated. Indeed, the road may in time become a great trunk line between the far northwest and eastern points which are now misnamed "northwestern" points.

The recent opening to traffic of the new railway to Portage la Prairie recalls to the mind the time of strife which surrounded the earlier history of the road, and which even exceeded in intensity the agitation which led to and continued during the construction of the famous Red River Valley line. It was in connection with this road to Portage la Prairie that the power of the C. P. Railway Co. was exerted to prevent the rival company from crossing its lines. For a time it looked as though something serious might grow out of the strife over these crossing difficulties, but happily the trouble passed away without grave consequences though the opening of the new road was delayed about a year thereby.

The new Northern Pacific and Manitoba branch to Portage la Prairie, runs through a level prairie country for the greater portion of the distance. The soil is very rich, and of the deep, black mould peculiar to the Red River Valley. The country along the road is very sparsely settled as yet, as the land, like other portions of the Winnipeg district, was originally reserved for grants to half-breeds, and soon passed from the latter into the hands of speculators. Many farms can be purchased at reasonable prices, and with the railway accommodation now provided, no doubt settlers will soon begin to occupy the land and cultivate the soil more extensively. The road passes through an excellent stock and agricultural country for almost the entire distance, and there are some fine hay meadows in proximity to the road. Toward Portage la Prairie the road enters a wood district, where large quantities of cordwood have been taken out, and will supply the road with considerable traffic. This timber district along the Assiniboine river south of Portage la Prairie, is one of the best in Manitoba, and some large trees, as much as three to four feet in diameter, are met with, of the cottonwood, or black poplar variety. The other principal varieties of timber are white poplar, elm, oak, ash, basswood, soft maple, birch, tamarac, etc. This timber country will become valuable, now that the wood can be shipped out by the railway. As the new road runs so near to the south of the Assiniboine river from Winnipeg to within about three miles of Portage, it opens up a new district along its entire length, not previously supplied with railway communication. The

road therefore not only secures competition between two principal points on the line, but it opens up a large district of practically unoccupied country. Thus the new Portage branch becomes an important factor in the development of the country.

HOURS OF LABOR.

The recognized hours of labor in regular industrial work have been steadily growing less, but it does not appear that a final basis for a day's work has yet been reached. On the contrary, both in Europe and America, there is a continual and more or less active movement to still further reduce the hours of labor. What is called the eight hour movement has many advocates outside as well as within the ranks of labor, on both sides of the Atlantic. Labor, of course, would be unanimous for a further shortening up of the length of a day's work, providing the wages should be the same per day for the reduced time as are now current for the longer day. On the other hand, employers of labor may be classed in a body as opposed to any scheme for the reduction of hours of labor which will not imply a corresponding reduction in daily wages.

Notwithstanding the position which employers would presumably occupy on this question, it is tolerably certain that any general reduction in the hours of labor would not carry with it a corresponding reduction in rates of wages by the day. This is fairly assured from a comparison of wages with hours of labor in the past. As already stated a tendency to decrease the hours of labor has long been going on, and the shortening of a recognized day's work from fourteen to nine or ten hours per day, has been accomplished without a corresponding decrease in the average day's pay. On the contrary, while the portion of time constituting a working day has been growing less, the average amount of compensation for a day's work has increased. In Great Britain, for instance, the upward tendency of wages has been quite marked for a number of years. This furnishes fairly good reason to believe that wages will not be reduced in proportion to any reductions in the hours of labor; and further, it seems reasonable to believe, that hours of labor constituting a day will be very materially reduced, at some time in the future, more or less distant.

The time may be distant when eight hours will make a recognized day's work on this continent, and yet it may be closer at hand than many imagine. Changes and movements of this nature come into prominence sometimes very quickly, and it is impossible to say what public opinion may be on this question a few years hence. At any rate, considerable thought is already being concentrated upon the eight-hour movement, and it may lead to an actual agitation to attain this end at almost any time. The fewer hours of employment in the civil service, banks, etc., is an incentive to the movement for a shorter day in industrial work, though the conditions are not exactly similar. Still, those in favor of the movement use these features as an argument in favor of their contentions. The American Federation of Labor at a convention held recently at St. Louis, adopted a series of resolutions with the object of directing attention to the eight-hour move-

ment, and reference was made to the hours of employment in the civil service. It is proposed to hold conferences between representatives of labor and employers, with a view to endeavoring to make a friendly arrangement for the introduction of the eight hours' system by May 1, 1890. This date is altogether too near to make it at all probable that the eight hour system can be successfully introduced by the time mentioned.

The effect upon the country of a sudden and general reduction of the hours of labor to eight per day, is a question difficult to answer. The reduction of wages in proportion to the proposed shortening of the day, would be a serious injury to a large portion of the community. It would curtail the earning power of the working people, and consequently curtail consumption of commodities probably in proportion to the decrease in production, owing to the shortening of the working day. But it is not likely that the adoption of the eight-hours movement would bring with it a proportionate reduction, if any, in wages. If wages remained the same, the purchasing power of the people would not be decreased. But production would be curtailed, and the cost of production increased, so that the purchasing power of money would be reduced, and thus indirectly the working people would be affected in a manner equivalent to a reduction in wages. A sudden change to the eight hour system would therefore cause considerable disturbance in the commercial situation. This would be reduced in time to a normal condition, by the increased facilities of production in the establishment of new factories and improvements in machinery and modes of production. The increased production by improved methods, would in time cheapen the cost of goods, thus increasing the purchasing power of wages, so that labor would eventually be as well paid for the shorter day as it now is for the day of nine or ten hours. Wage-earners are sometimes inclined to look upon the advent of improved machinery as an unfair competitor, but studying the question out upon these lines, it will appear that improved modes of manufacture have benefitted labor, by increasing the purchasing power of wages. At any rate, improved modes of manufacture have made possible a steady reduction in the hours of labor per day, and at the same time rates of wages have increased. The same thing may be expected to continue in the future, until a gradual reduction to the eight-hour day may be rendered possible without producing any economic disturbance. To enforce the system suddenly and prematurely cannot be accomplished without some such disturbance.

In Australia eight hours constitute a recognized day's work, and the system appears to work well. The Australians are understood to be a progressive and prosperous people, and in general advancement and national wealth will compare very favorably with any other people in the world. Still this does not prove that the eight hour system would at once work advantageously here. Some writers in the United States claim that the adoption of the eight hour system would render necessary an increase in the protective tariff in order to protect manufacturers from outside competition, owing to the increased cost of manufacturing at home.