

IMPRACTICABLE!

LIVELY agitation continues to be carried on in several States of the Union in favour of decreasing the hours of labour. In some of them measures have already passed the State Legislatures to that effect. The principal provisions of these bills are to the effect that where a bargain is not entered into, eight hours shall be considered a day's labour, farm labourers, or persons serving by the year or month, are exceptions, and if a special agreement is entered into by any individual to work ten or more hours, such arrangement is just as binding as if no eight hours' law existed. The effect of these provisions will not be so great as many might suppose at the first glance. The exceptions referred to above, will exclude a considerable portion of labour from the operation of the law, and there is very little doubt that hereafter in such States, employers will take care to make special agreements, and that there will be a variation in the wages paid to eight and ten hours' men.

In Illinois the eight hours' bill was adopted some time ago and in New York State the Governor has recently given his assent to a similar measure. The working men of Chicago attempted to put the law in force on the 1st of May, and having banded together, went about the city endeavouring to force those who were willing to continue to work ten hours from doing so. The disturbance assumed the dimensions of a riot, but turned out a failure. The law, up to the present time, remains comparatively a dead letter, employers generally refusing to agree to the eight hours system, or, at least, objecting to pay as much for the short as for the long hours. We cannot see how any reasonable person can find fault with the position of employers in this matter. Under present circumstances in the States, they can ill afford to increase the wages paid for labour, and the eight hours system really amounts to that. If the demands made were acceded to, thousands would be willing and anxious to work ten hours and get two hours extra pay. That length of time is not excessive, and no legal enactment can long force up the price of labour beyond its real value.

Never was the United States in a worse position to shorten the hours of labour than at the present time. The loss of two hours' work per diem of each labourer throughout the Union, would amount to a large sum in the course of the year. As labour is the foundation of wealth, we may fairly assume that the proposed shortening of the day's work—if generally adopted—would decrease the aggregate wealth made during the twelve months in the same ratio as the time for working is reduced, which is twenty per cent. The Republic is not in a position to make such a sacrifice at present, and if effects to the State would undoubtedly result if the new system came into general use.

That the working classes across the lines will look at the matter in this light, we do not expect. They will not consider with the mind of the Statesman or political economist; all they will see is a shortening of their daily toil. If this could be done without injury to their country, or without decreasing their wages, it would be desirable. But it cannot. Both must suffer to some extent, as a short experience must soon demonstrate. The working men of the Republic, however, have the ballot boxes under control, and we do not doubt that other Legislators besides those of New York and Illinois will soon be forced to place the eight hours' law on the statute book. But we are strongly of opinion that, as regards the great mass of labourers, such laws will either remain a dead letter, or they will have to be contented with lower wages.

SMUGGLING INTO THE UNITED STATES.

THE New York Shipping List and Prices Current of May 11th says:—"The Commissioner of Customs reports that during the year ending 31st Dec. 1866, the officers of Customs for the prevention of smuggling seized contraband goods to the amount of four hundred thousand dollars, and that the expense of the whole preventive system for the same time has not been over two hundred thousand dollars, while the revenue service cost from one and a quarter to one and a half millions annually, and the value of smuggled goods seized by the revenue cutters during the year does not exceed one hundred thousand dollars. "Canadian Customs officers aid smugglers to send goods to this country, just as American Customs officers would aid smugglers on this side were the case reversed. It was so in former times between England and France, until both countries modified their absurd revenue laws. The smuggler always beats the law, and

smugglers never can exist unless the law is so bad, that men desire it should be beaten.

"Since the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty there has been a large increase in the trade between Nova Scotia and Canada. There are now two lines of steamers between Quebec and Halifax, and a line is to be put on between Quebec and Pictou. Formerly Nova Scotia received about 300,000 barrels Flour from the United States and 6,000 to 7,000 from Canada. Now the receipts are reversed, and about 7,000 barrels are taken from the United States and 300,000 from Canada."

This is, at all events, a candid statement, and we think it is one, too, which will excite very grave doubts regarding the wisdom of the financial policy of the United States towards these Provinces. We should like much to know what proportion the four or five hundred thousand dollars worth of seized goods bears to the whole amount *not seized*. One thing we may be quite sure of that the United States will form no exception to the rule that "where there are high duties there will be extensive smuggling." We know nothing of the charge of complicity against the Canadian Customs officers; it may be true, but we are inclined to think it is not. At all events, that is only a side issue, and is confessed to be as likely to be exercised on one side as the other. If England and France found it impossible to prevent smuggling until "both countries modified their absurd revenue laws," we may be quite sure that the thousands of miles of frontier between Canada and the United States afford no better opportunity.

The fact is, intelligent Americans are beginning to see that the abrogation of the Reciprocity Treaty has lost them a good customer, without producing them any corresponding benefit in other ways. They are beginning to find, too, that the imposition of heavy taxes upon the necessities of life, (for such to a large extent must the lumber, fish and breadstuffs of these Provinces be considered,) is not the best way of enabling them to bear the burden of their vast indebtedness, while as a means of forcing us into annexation it is worse than useless. Frankly, we would like to see better and kinder views prevail, and that the two nations should be content to dwell side by side, each respecting the other's rights and institutions, and knit together by that bond of peace which perfect freedom of trade is so well calculated to perpetuate.

NEW BRUNSWICK RAILWAYS.

THE ninth Annual Report of the Railway Commissioners of the Province of New Brunswick, has just been published—from it we gather the following statement of facts:—

	1866.	1865.
Passengers	\$65,931 32	\$61,730 83
Freight	72,485 64	64,349 96
Mails, &c	9,713 71	7,337 88
Total	\$148,330 67	\$133,408 67

The total expenditure in 1866 was \$96,570 21, and in 1865, \$94,906 96. The net revenue for 1866 was \$61,760 46, against \$38,501 71 in 1865, showing an increase of \$13,258 75. The quantity of sawn lumber largely exceeded that transported in any previous year—the increase over 1865 being 76 per cent. Of "mineral products," the increase in coal was 780 tons, in Mangano 346 tons, in iron 471 tons. The number of barrels of flour and meal carried also exceeded that of any previous year, and was greater than the number carried in 1865 by 13,178 bbls. or nearly 60 per cent. The Report remarks that "the establishment of an efficient line of steamers between the ports of Lake Ontario, Montreal, and the Gulf ports of the Lower Provinces would largely promote the traffic, as there is no doubt that flour and meal can be delivered in St. John as cheaply and expeditiously by this as by "any other route."

The quantity of Agricultural products conveyed was largely increased, while the products of the fisheries sent over the road were below the average. The number of passengers carried was 4,558 greater than in 1865. The expenses of locomotive power were \$1,483 82 less than in 1865.

LETTER FROM ENGLAND.
COMMERCIAL REVIEW.

(Special Correspondence of the Trade Review.)

THE hopes of a peaceful settlement of the Luxembourg question have been almost confirmed, and in the beginning of the week a very favourable effect was produced in trade. Yesterday however the overwhelming majority against the Government on an important clause of the Reform bill the previous evening, had its effect upon business; and as Friday is the

most important day in the week, this was the more to be regretted, for the Government accepted the situation very frankly on Friday evening.

The two chief features in trade this week have been the comparatively large business done in cotton, (the sales in Liverpool amounting to 29,000 bales, of which the trade took 69,000), and the increased stringency in the money market. In the open market the rates are now fully up to the bank minimum of 3 per cent. There has been a further fall in the price of railway securities, and nothing could be gloomier than the tone of the market.

The Board of Trade returns have been published, and present a striking picture of the extent of our trade, and the energy with which it has been prosecuted in spite of the great panic of last year. The money value although somewhat less than 1866, is much greater than in 1865, whilst the quantity of the principal items, notably cotton has increased. In fact the falling off in value as compared with 1866, is more than accounted for by the lower and more healthy prices now prevailing.

The following is the declared value of the exports in the three first months of the years undernoted:

	1867.	1866.	1865.
Cotton yarn and Cotton manufactures	16,774,000	19,010,000	12,655,000
All other articles	25,068,000	27,381,000	22,981,000
Total	42,842,000	46,391,000	35,636,000

The following is the computed real value of the imports in the three first months of the years undernoted:—

	1867.	1866.	1865.
Raw cotton	6,265,000	10,055,000	7,657,000
Breadstuffs	4,068,000	4,310,000	1,669,000
All other articles	13,345,000	12,043,000	10,688,000
Total	24,281,000	26,458,000	19,964,000

The following are the returns from the Bank of England, compared with those of the preceding week, and same time last year:

	May 1, 1867.	April 24, 1867.	May 2, 1866.
Public Deposits	7,453,000	6,346,000	4,923,000
Private Deposits	17,794,000	17,884,000	13,588,000
Government Securities	12,886,000	12,774,000	10,691,000
Other Securities	19,169,000	18,250,000	20,380,000
Notes in Circulation	23,300,000	23,12,000	22,873,000
Bullion	19,249,000	19,337,000	13,549,000
Reserve	10,919,000	11,212,000	6,636,000

There is an increase in the amount of the other securities, and a slight decrease in the bullion, showing a more active demand for accommodation.

Returns from the Bank of France at same periods:

	May 2, 1867.	April 25, 1867.	May 3, 1866.
Treas' Balance	90,189,000	100,535,000	91,855,000
Private Accts.	305,631,000	301,631,000	230,323,000
Commercial Bills	642,853,000	632,863,000	623,388,000
Advances	186,352,000	186,352,000	150,000,000
Notes in Circulation	1,035,296,000	1,014,600,000	904,184,000
Cash	793,557,000	780,557,000	626,890,000

The present return is rather favourable in the sense that money is likely to continue cheap. This is of course chiefly caused by the stagnation of trade.

May 4, 1867.

POSTAGE ON NEWSPAPERS.

THE St. John Telegraph, after quoting from a 1st article published in the Trade Review on "Postal Reform," and the abolition of postage on newspapers in particular, thus continues:

"If, under Union, with restrictions on trade abandoned and a wider field opened for the labors of the manufacturer, the merchant, the farmer, the politician, and other classes of the community, the efforts of our Provincial press are to be shackled and their position made worse than at present; if four-fifths of newspaper subscribers in the country are to be mulcted in an addition of fifty per cent. to the price of their papers, or the circulating of newspapers seriously diminished by the imposition of the hated tax—the consequences to the Party in New Brunswick who will propose or support such a measure will be very serious. The same remark will apply to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island. Our Canadian contemporaries can not do better than agitate this question, and endeavour to secure for the whole of the Dominion the advantage now enjoyed by the smaller Provinces. The privilege is one worth contending for, and will be highly prized by the people. Besides, it will probably happen that in making changes in internal affairs in the Union, the Lower Provinces may have to conform in many things to the usage in Canada; it will be well, then, that there should be a show of reciprocity in the business; and we can not offer to the larger Provinces anything more worthy of imitation than a Postal system which provides free transportation for the newspaper Press of the country."

The press of the Lower Provinces are unanimous on this subject, and it is one too on which their representations will be certain to act together, so that it will be the fault of the Canadian press if this drawback to its influence and usefulness be not soon removed.