

competitors, such action is essentially unlawful, as freedom to buy and to sell at his discretion is a basal principle of civilized society. A remarkable phase of the present strikes is that they are not a movement to secure higher wages, for which the law has no penalty. But the strikes are avowedly a movement, first, to destroy the "right to labour," wherever a workman thinks proper, and second, to deprive labour buyers from the right to purchase labour in whatever market it is procurable. The strike movement goes further in its aims, as it is endeavouring to close up any industrial establishment where free contracts have been made between the employer and his men. Were the movement to achieve its avowed object, there would not be a single artisan free to work except under the direct control of the executive officers of a Union. These officials would be to the whole body of workmen what the war office is to the whole British army, or some section of it, when in the field, is to the General in command. Were a few men in any mill or factory to break loose from this tyranny, the entire establishment might, and almost certainly would be closed unless such rebels were discharged. This has been illustrated by a number of cases where, because an employer insisted on his right of free contract between himself and some of his men, all the others were compelled by the Union to cease working, and so the whole business was stopped. It seems not to have occurred to the strike leaders that their tactics could be adopted by masters. The Supreme Court has opened their eyes. A workman, one Gibbons, was discharged for belonging to a labour Union, as his employer regarded it as an enemy. The man sued him for unlawful dismissal, and won in a lower Court. On appeal to the Supreme Court the verdict was set aside. It was declared by the unanimous voice of the Supreme Court judges that:—

"The act on which the conviction of Gibbons' employer was based violated both the State and the Federal constitutions. Life, liberty and happiness are representative terms, the Court said, and intended to embrace every right to which a person may be entitled under the law. Among these rights is the right freely to buy and sell, the right to labor or refuse to labor, to terminate contracts and to contract. Labor is property. The laborer has the same right to sell his labor and contract with reference thereto as any other owner of property. On the other hand, the right to terminate the contract of labor is equally as well established. One man cannot be compelled to give employment to another man, nor can one man be compelled to labor against his will. Hence, it followed that the Legislature had no power by penal laws to prevent any person with or without cause from refusing to employ another, or from terminating a contract of employment with the laborer, subject only to respond in a civil suit for breach of contract. The act was also held un-

constitutional as attempting to grant special privileges to labor organizations, the employer being made primarily liable for discharging a Union man, while no penalty was provided for the discharge of a Non-Union man."

The judgment of the U. S. Supreme Court upholds the right of "free contract," which, in a previous article, THE CHRONICLE declared was vitally essential to every man's personal liberty.

PROMINENT TOPICS.

The offer of Mr. Andrew Carnegie to present \$150,000 to this city towards the establishment of a free library has brought out a variety of opinions thereon. The gift is conditional on the city undertaking to spend \$15,000 yearly on the maintenance of the library. Some doubt is expressed as to whether the \$150,000 is to be devoted to the acquisition of a library in the sense of a collection of books, or is to be spent on the erection of a building suitable to a free public library. As to the acceptance of such a gift from a stranger who has no direct personal interests in this city, there may be objections raised on the plea that it would be derogatory to the dignity of this wealthy city, this commercial metropolis of Canada, to receive money from an alien who is non-resident, who has no personal or business associations in Montreal. It seems, however, somewhat fanciful for pride of this nature to be attributed to a city as such. Some things could be done to justly wound the pride of our citizens, which as a community it would be necessary to resent, but it is straining pride beyond reason for any citizen to regard the gift of a city library by a stranger as a personal indignity to himself or any of his neighbours. If any person feels hurt by such a gift being accepted, it will be easy for him to ignore the institution so provided, leaving its enjoyment to those whose sensibilities are less morbid. The amount of \$150,000 is a good start for a city library. It would buy a site and erect a building worthy of Montreal, but after these were provided the balance would be trifling compared to the sum needed for books. One of the urgent needs of this city is a well-equipped reference library, such as the one attached to the Free Library, Toronto, which has a more complete collection of works of reference than any one in Canada, and a visit to that department of the library would show how extensively these works are utilized. There are a number of valuable reference books at the Fraser Institute and a few at the Mechanics', but there is no collection in this great city of government reports, municipal statements, Board of Trade reports, the statistical returns of the government of Great Britain and the United States, the reports of