

from thoughtful minds than the wide-spread agitation and controversy on the labour question. The problem is certainly not a new one, nor is it in our day that demands for its solution have been first put forward. Neither is it in this generation that the labourers themselves have first appeared as the advocates of their own cause. The grievances of which they complain are as old as civilization, and even in the most repressive of those old despotisms under which the multitude was merely a beast of burden, there was always some bold spirit of the Mosaic type to stand up on behalf of his unhappy brethren. Sometimes he succeeded in rousing in their minds the longing for emancipation and in inspiring the courage and energy to fight for it. From China to Gaul history has kept the record of risings, even in remote ages, against the tyranny of the oppressor. With the establishment of Christianity began a new era for the industrial classes. Already the rudiments of organization were not unknown. Trade societies existed under the Empire both in the East and in the West. In the Middle Ages the guild became a recognized institution, and some of the greatest triumphs of architecture were achieved under the system. But the workman was not able to keep out the element of capital, which was not seldom associated with the aristocratic spirit. The character which the old guilds came eventually to assume is seen by the liveries of London city.

The trades-union, which has had its birth in our own day, marks a virtual, though happily a peaceful, revolution. The old repressive English laws that prevented workmen from combining even for the defence of their interests, were abolished in 1824. But there were still vexatious restrictions, which tended to make that a crime which was not and was not meant to be criminal. Not until the year 1871 was the co-operation of labour, in the protection of its rights and the urging of its just claims, made entirely legitimate. Since then the labour movement has made surprising progress, both in Europe and on this continent. Every department of industry and handicraft has for years had its special organization, while central unions and labour congresses serve as a bond of sympathy and make common action comparatively easy. In 1869 the society, now so wide-spread and so powerful, of the Knights of Labour, was organized in Philadelphia. More than any other body, it has given common life and solidarity to industry, and is to-day a power which neither statesmen nor capitalists can wisely ignore. That, in the endeavour to bring relief from one form of oppression, this great movement may, without the wisest guidance, subject the workmen to a new tyranny, its most enlightened leaders have frankly admitted. Nor will the victim be satisfied to be assured that these checks and hindrances are for his good. Yet, to gain for his class any advantage that is worth having, the individual must make some surrender of his personal freedom. Civilization itself is the result of such compromises.

In Canada the labour movement has, with a few regrettable exceptions, proceeded in harmony with the general interests of the community. Labour Day has been inaugurated with the sympathy of employers as well as of employed, and under the auspices of authority. Canadian labour has its representatives in Parliament, in the Legislatures, and in the magistracy of the country. It is sincerely to be hoped that its best aspirations may seek and find their fulfilment under the same influ-

ences of law and order which have hitherto directed its course. The true principle of labour organization is not merely that the interest of one trade is the interest of all trades; but also that the interest of labour, rightly understood, is the interest of capital as well, and that all useful work—industrial, commercial or professional—is entitled to the name of labour and to a share in its responsibilities, its prizes and its prestige. This principle has, indeed, already been recognized in recent assemblies of the Knights of Labour, at which delegates were present from the ranks of medicine, journalism and education, as well as from those of manufacture and business.

We have been much encouraged by the manner in which our "Brandon Number" was received, not only in the North-West, but in the Dominion generally. We have, we believe, always given satisfaction in the illustration of cities, towns, and their vicinity, and we purpose continuing, from time to time, to lay the most important business centres, both in Old and New Canada, before our readers in the same way, until the DOMINION ILLUSTRATED contains a panorama of what is most noteworthy in our national life. In an early issue we hope to present some fine views of Hamilton, one of the most beautiful of Canadian cities, and one of the most enterprising and prosperous. The recent successful carnival furnishes an excellent opportunity for the graphic illustration of that important centre, the engravings of which—a representative collection—are now in course of preparation.

#### WHAT ALASKA MEANS.

The excitement concerning the seizure of British vessels by American revenue cutters in the Northern Pacific has naturally directed the thoughts of those most interested in these outrages to the policy of the late Secretary Seward in the purchase of Alaska. It is worthy of note that some years before the Civil War Mr. Seward had (for reasons suggested by the rivalry that ended in the great struggle between North and South) earnestly striven to divert the thoughts of his compatriots from the old Spanish possessions to the vast stretch of British territory lying beyond the northern boundary. The motives that prompted him to advise the Government and people of the United States to conciliate the Canadians rather than to coax or force the Mexicans to part with their outlying provinces were obvious. He knew that every accession from the Mexican side added to the strength of the Southern or slave interest, while, if Canada's good-will could be secured in favour of annexation, the balance of power would dip to the advantage of the North. That he had formed a high estimate of the resources of the then unpeopled North-West he has left ample record to show. The jealousy of the long preponderating South and the loyalty of Canada to the Crown of England prevented his counsel being accepted, and it was not till after a sanguinary conflict that the Union was established on a safe footing and the power of the slave-holders broken. After the war the feeling towards England was unfriendly, and Canada suffered a good deal of annoyance. How far the acquisition of Alaska was in due sequel of the policy of which the Fenian raids were an unpleasant feature, we need not now ask. Mr. Seward found little support from Congress when he first broached the subject—the late Senator Sumner being the strongest defender of his proposal. Eventually he carried the day, though in the face

of vigorous opposition, and the negotiations ended by the transfer of all Russian America to the United States for \$7,200,000.

Neither in the United States nor in Great Britain was the bargain deemed a good one for the purchaser. It was not until Mr. Dall and other observant scientists had made a fairly careful survey of the more accessible portions of the vast region that its real value began to be recognized. The furs and fisheries were deemed to be the chief sources of wealth, and little else was looked for. In sheer extent of territory Mr. Seward's purchase might well, indeed, be considered a bargain. From north to south it has a breadth of some 1,400 miles, while from the Canadian border on the east to the most westerly of the Aleutian Islands, it has a length of 2,200 miles. Its coast line is greater than that of the Pacific and Atlantic Coast lines of the rest of the United States combined. Its most westerly point passes the most easterly point of the Asiatic continent by about 1,000 miles. Such an area of country must be poor in natural products if it did not compensate in some measure for the outlay which it had occasioned. The climate is much less arctic than the situation might seem to imply—the Kuro Siwo, or Pacific "Gulf Stream," tending to modify both the rigours of winter and the heats of summer. It seems hardly credible that (as one authority confidently states) the temperature at Sitka should have fallen to zero only four times in forty-five years, and that only seven summers in the same period gave a higher temperature than 80 degrees Fahrenheit.

As to Alaska's main and, in popular estimation, only source of wealth, a Russian firm obtained in 1799 an exclusive grant of the chase and trade in seal furs; and these privileges were renewed from time to time down to the date of transfer. On this point it is noteworthy that Mr. Ivan Petroff, who is an authority on Alaskan affairs, thus refers to the effects of the American purchase: "The Russian American Company derived large profits in exchanging the most valuable furs (sea-otter, fur-seal and land-otter) for tea on the Chinese frontier and importing that article into Russia; but with the transfer of Alaska its resources became accessible to everybody, and a fierce rivalry in trade was the result." He then goes on to speak of the purchase by a San Francisco firm of the company's vessels, buildings and other improvements, and adds that, of course, that firm was unable to secure the company's privileges. The next step was the lease to the same firm of the Pribyloff Islands, the only resort of the fur-seal in Alaskan waters. The value of this franchise is shewn by the fact that the annual rent and royalty derived from it by the Washington Government has already gone far towards paying up the purchase from Russia. Mr. Petroff, who, though of Russian origin, is an American citizen, never dreamed evidently of such a claim as that which the United States Government has been putting forward of late. The value of the total annual yield of furs of all kind in Alaska ranges from \$2,000,000 to \$2,250,000. The salmon, cod and whale fisheries of Alaska are of considerable value. There is also an extensive herring fishery, which has its centre of operations on Admiralty Island. The timber of Alaska is by no means worthless—the southeastern part of the "district" being covered to a large extent with spruce, hemlock and yellow cedar—this last highly prized for cabinet making and shipbuilding. Mr. Dall, of the Smithsonian Institution, found the country to be