

THE NINE HOURS' MOVEMENT.

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IT is not our purpose to argue this question from any particular point of view, or to speak of it with any object other than that of obtaining as much light on the question as possible, and aiding society, as far as in us lies, in its proper solution.

It is a question—next to that of war or peace, of life or death—of paramount importance to all classes, and affects all in a greater or less degree. It is a question, moreover, of so complicated and intricate a nature, that it requires not only the most careful study, but facilities for examining it in all its bearings, in order to form anything like a just idea of its operation and results. We therefore propose to consider it by the light of whatever data and sagacity we can bring to bear upon it, from these two points:

From what it springs.

To what it tends.

That there is a great social revolution going on in the world, is a fact patent to the most casual observer. Nor is this to be considered in itself as new or strange. At no period in the history of the world, we believe, has its social condition been entirely at rest—at least among civilized nations. The nature of civilization is revolutionary and progressive. Among savage and barbarous nations—such as the negroes of South Africa or the natives of the South Sea Isles—the social status is necessarily always the same. It is true they acknowledge a chief or king, as the case may be; but besides these, distinctions of class—of high and low, of rich and poor, of educated and illiterate, of employer and working-man—are unknown.

And as it is these which constitute what

we call social condition, the status must ever remain the same, the elements of change being wanting. But in civilized life these elements are as numerous as the sands on the sea shore, and subject to almost as many changes. Those which are uppermost to-day, airing themselves in all the sunshine of prosperity, are to-morrow borne down by the waves of an ever-changing existence and buried fathoms deep in obscurity. In like manner others, who for long years have remained unseen, unknown, unheard of, are continually being brought to the surface by the same influences. The more modern and advanced the civilization, the more rapid and varied these changes become—the more numerous the elements and the more indistinguishable the shades of difference between them. When civilization was in its crude and early stages the distinctions between class and class were more marked and striking and the mutations less rapid. Whole centuries were required to effect as great a revolution in the social arrangements of a people then as can now be accomplished in a single year. The action was more like the encroachments of the ocean on its banks, than the shifting of the sands which composed them.

These lines of separation, however, instead of being worn away and obliterated by the process, have, on the contrary, been parcelled out and divided up into innumerable smaller ones; so that in a division of society, where one line could be drawn before, there may now be drawn twenty. The working-man commenced as a serf and the employer as a lord. It was so in old Rome,