

Ontario Workman.

THE EQUALIZATION OF ALL ELEMENTS OF SOCIETY IN THE SOCIAL SCALE SHOULD BE THE TRUE AIM OF CIVILIZATION.

VOL. I.

TORONTO, THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 1873

NO 48

Labor Notes.

The Co-operative Lock Factory at Wolverhampton is again in full work.

The bricklayers of Manchester have given notice for an advance of wages from 8d. to 8½d. per hour.

The masons of London have petitioned the masters for an extra ¼d. an hour, to come into operation on the 19th July.

The Excelsior Co-operative Iron-workers Company is announced at Sheffield. All the leading managing men are operatives.

It appears that £23,000 loss was sustained by the East and West India Docks Company through the laborers' strike of last year.

The *M. & B. Journal* for March contains gratifying intelligence of the thorough work of organization that is going on among the Machinists and Blacksmiths. Quite a number of new unions have been organized.

The council of the South Yorkshire Miners' Association, representing 15,000 colliers, have passed a resolution expressing approval of the arbitration proposed for the settlement of the weavers' strike, the terms of which the operatives have rejected. The proposal was that the men should at once return to work at the old rate of wages, subject to any addition that might be decreed to them by the arbitrators.

Among the new trade societies which are springing up on all sides, we may note that the hair dressers of Paris have determined to form a corporation of their own. They desire to create a vast association composed both of employers and employed, with a mixed committee to decide all disputes, to register all demands for work and to appoint teachers in the art of decking the hair.

The *Peuple Souverain* has received four letters from different towns of France written by members of the local trade corporations which demanded details that might instruct them and enable them to start co-operative societies. These correspondents are all journeymen tailors, and they desire to emulate the example set by the tailors society of the Rue Turbigo which was started in 1853 on co-operative principles, and has since carried on a successful business.

The colliers, to the number of 600, employed at the Morewood's Collieries, Alfrington, have resumed work. They struck about a fortnight ago, in consequence of the owners refusing the eight-hours system. That has now been conceded, and the owners have agreed to advance the wages of the men 4s. per ton of 25 cwt., until the 1st of August, after which 21 cwt. shall be the maximum weight of a ton.

At a further interview recently between the managers of the Nantyglo, Beaufort, and Blaithwaite Works, and the colliers on strike in that district, it was suggested, as an alternate proposal to the double shift system, that the men should resume work at ten per cent. reduction. If, however, they turned but a certain amount of coal per month, and put an end to the restrictive policy which had hitherto guided them, the ten per cent. should be restored to them. The workmen are to consider this proposition.

THE POST OFFICE EMPLOYEES AND THEIR PAY.—Another "lecture" is announced to be delivered at the Albion Hall, London-wall, E. C., next Monday evening, the 17th inst., at eight p.m., under the auspices of the "United Kingdom G.P.O. and Telegraph Service Benefit Society," to explain the petition it is proposed to present to Parliament on behalf of all Post Office employees throughout the country, and to reject, amend, or adopt the same. Mr. Charles Reed, M.P., has kindly consented to present the same to the House of Commons, and a number of other influential M.P.'s have also promised their support.

At Bordeaux the working men cartwrights have received a liberal response to their attempt to create a professional union of their trade throughout France. Their purpose is to form not only local groups but to

unite these corporations into one vast association which would hold annual congresses, and create museums, professional schools, mutual benefit societies, &c. At Marseilles, Chalons, Lyons, and Paris, this project has been much applauded, and the society of Bordeaux proud of the initiative it has taken, is now engaged in active correspondence to carry the matter forward. The cabinet makers of Bordeaux have also resolved to follow this example.

This week we are able to report prospects of at least a partial settlement of the great South Wales strike; but large sections of the labor-market are still much disturbed in several districts, and the limitation of output is most seriously felt throughout the whole country. With several extensive establishments of industry almost suspended, prominence is being given to labor-saving machinery, and also to foreign supplies of raw material and fuel. Meanwhile further advances in wages are being asked in several districts, and as a natural consequence fresh and untried labor is making its way to the North and Midlands from the agricultural counties.—*Labor News.*

On Thursday evening a meeting of delegates from the London Trades Societies, convened by the London Trades' Council, was held at the Sussex Hotel, Bouverie street, Fleet street, for the purpose of considering the position of the colliers and iron-workers now on strike in the South Wales district. Mr. Whetstone, President of the Amalgamated Engineers' Society, occupied the chair, and Mr. John Kane, of Darlington, the Secretary of the Amalgamated Society of Ironworkers, was present as a deputy from that body. About 100 societies were represented. Mr. Allen moved the following resolution:—"That this representative meeting of the London Trades deeply regrets the continuance of the dispute between the Welsh ironworkers and miners and their employers, in consequence of the latter insisting upon a reduction of 10 per cent. in the wages of the workmen notwithstanding the fact that the prices are raising in the market, and which, we believe, renders the position of the employers untenable, and strengthens the claim of the men to public sympathy and pecuniary support until the employers are prepared to open their works at the old rate of wages; and this meeting of delegates fully endorses the resolution unanimously passed upon this subject by the recent Trades' Congress at Leeds."

LEONI LEVI ON WORKING CLASS TAXATION.

Lord Elcho said some time ago in the House of Commons that the working men were the most highly favored and most extravagantly petted class in the community; and if proof of this he asserted that if any other interest desired to get the favorable attention of Parliament, it had to make pretences that what was looked for would be favorable to working men.

This idea is confirmed by certain statistics recently furnished by Professor Leoni Levi, and published by Mr. Bass, M.P., for Derby, on the taxation of the working classes; and, certainly, if we are to read these figures by aid of the gloss our newspaper writers have furnished, we cannot help concluding that Lord Elcho's statement falls far within the limit of the truth.

The *Conservative*, a newspaper written especially for the instruction of operative Conservatives, is quite delighted with the statements of Leoni Levi, and writes with so gratified a sense of the happy condition of our working people, that we shall be disappointed if a few of the squires and nobles who have for some time now shown dissatisfaction at their treatment, do not desert their marble halls and gilded saloons that as working men in the cottage or the two pair back, they may enjoy these fiscal immunities at present confined to the working classes of the country.

We should be sorry to dispel a pleasing illusion. It is good to think the best we can of human nature, including Chancellors

of the Exchequer and tax gatherers. If, however, through love or pity they spare the pockets of working men it would be ingratitude not to openly acknowledge their great leniency. But have those who have called to rejoice and be thankful looked at the whole of the case with critical exactness? Taxation, we are told, during the last thirty years has increased from 52,000,000 to 74,000,000. As, however, the accumulated wealth of the country has had a much more rapid growth this trifling increase is not, we are asked to believe, a matter of much moment. Side by side with this, we are asked to bear the other fact in mind, that whereas in 1842, 38 per cent. of our taxation was imposed on the necessaries of life, now the necessaries of life only bear 12 per cent. of the same burden.

Assuming these figures to be correct, what, we ask, do they prove? The repeal of the corn laws, reduction of duty on tea, and several other changes have led to this; coupled with the imposition of an income tax, and, so far, the working man's condition has been improved by these changes. The revision of a system of taxation which operated injuriously in regard to the general interests of the nation, did incidentally improve the working man's position, and any thanks that may be due to our governing class for this, by the working people, should be freely and liberally rendered. If the new taxation, however, has been paid on incomes above a certain annual amount, and on realized property, and if the working people have escaped the tax collector only because their income was not large enough so tax, and because their realized property has been too small to bring them into the category of persons owning taxable property, what have they to be thankful for? The poor man who travelled amongst highway robbers with perfect security because he possessed nothing they could take from him, might as well have been grateful for their forbearance. As the working men of England to the Chancellor of the Exchequer, because he spares them, and thrusts his hand in where there is something to be got. Is it really a blessing to the working men of the country that they escape the taxation which is levied on property and income, or can those really consider themselves ill-used people who are fairly called on under the law to pay it? The *Conservative* thinks that the general income of the working classes has really increased: more than 66 per cent. it presumes this; but as Leoni Levi has not stated this, and as the assertion of the writer is not sufficient to convince us, it would be satisfactory if some reason was given for such an assertion. We have no hesitation whatever in saying that such a statement is ludicrously fantastical. We deny two-thirds of the assumption, and we defy the writer to attempt a detailed proof of his statement. There has, it is quite true, been an advance of wages generally within the last two or three years, but our pauper returns show that lightened taxation and increased wages up to this time did not tell very powerfully in keeping distress in check amongst our people. Of able-bodied paupers, taking our last Government returns, and looking at the fifteen years over which they were made, we find that in 1857 we had 134,000, whilst in 1870 we had of the same class 101,089, an increase in thirteen years of 50,000; whilst in 1872, in consequence of our exceptionally good trade, these had gone back to 153,753.

What we want to show from this is that during the presumed amelioration by an alteration of the incidence of taxation every evidence of a chronic poverty remained amongst the masses of our people; and that the explanation of this is to be found in the fact that wherever the advance in wages, the concurrent rise in the price of provisions and other necessaries have more than kept pace with it; that the taxable realized property has not come into the hands of the people, and that therefore on this supposition the payers of taxes, and not those who are exempt, are the people who ought to be congratulated. Taxation

is in fact, so far as it is levied on the profits of the business of the country, a mark which separates those who share in them from those who do not, and all sensible men, it is presumed, under such circumstances, would rather pay than not. Exemption, therefore, is an oppression rather than a privilege; and when clever statisticians and writers try to persuade us that we ought to be proud of such an exemption, we feel we ought to be some little angry rather at the poverty by which that exemption is secured.

In regard to that part of Professor Leoni Levi's calculation, where he divides the indirect taxes proportionally over the whole population, we have certain grave doubts as to his accuracy, and when he divides again the proportion paid by the working man on each article of consumption out of every pound of taxation falling on him as indirect tax, we refuse his figures altogether, simply because we can see no date upon which his calculations rest. They may be very correct, or they may be the reverse. It is, no doubt, quite true that our working men drink too much beer, and smoke too much tobacco. We wish they used a great deal less of both. But taking society as it exists, in all its classes full of shameless extravagances, we can hardly expect that men who labor for their living should, more than their neighbors, be models of self-denial, using nothing as food or drink but what the highest moral sumptuary authorities could sanction as fit to be indulged in by men whose chief aim in life it should be to labor, and keep out of the work-houses.

Leoni Levi has his figures, the Chancellor of the Exchequer has his Budget, and our newspaper writers have their argument, whilst the masses of our people have their incessant toil, their chronic poverty, and happily it may be the poor rates to fall back upon—there the matter ends. Still, upon the whole, if we are to trust our teachers, the upper classes are very kind and highly virtuous, and the poorer sort very unprovoked and ungrateful, but might be, if they thought proper, as happy as the day is long, especially if they drank less beer and abstained from a too great indulgence in tobacco. Or, if, by diminished wages, they were unable to buy these, it is clear they would be still further relieved from taxation.—*See His.*

LONDON TRADES.

There is no question that the astounding rise of the price of coal is fast telling upon London trades, and that in almost every industry a rise is taking place in the trade list prices. That this increase of London prices will shortly fall back to the hurt of trade is unquestionable, and the labor-market will suffer to an unheard of extent.

The rebound will then visit the artisan and laborer, and work will not only be scarce, but wages must come down to meet the foreign markets.

The south side of the Thames, famed for its staple "red potteries," pan-tiles, drainage, and other sanitary appliances, has plenty of work to hand to fulfil contracts, but the firms are losing money by their jobs and do not care to fill up any as with a contract stamp impressed.

Gunpowder—this, an article of commerce, I believe no fire insurance office cares to approach, but our London trades call it their own. Business at the Gunpowder Works is very heavy, and labor here is exceptional. The owners, not being insured themselves by fire offices, insure their property and workpeople, even to their wives and children, and, despite the danger, labor is always to hand. At present, extensive orders for export are on the order books.

The Ink-trade.—This trade reigns supreme in the Metropolis, and it may surprise the readers of the *Labor News* to learn that ink in penny bottles, glass and stone is exported to the East Indies, United States, Persia, Germany, South America, Africa, and all our colonies. I have before me, with regard to this London trade, some

important statistics, and I learn that the trade is here standing still for the glass trade and the stoneware trade. The rise in the price of fuel has stepped in here, and wholesale orders are now subject to a rise of 25 per cent.

The Blacking-trade—another Metropolitan industry—is very busy, and the various hands are well employed.

The Match-trade was never more active, but the chemicals here employed kill off the hands more rapidly than the supply.

Vitriol-makers are working night and day, but this is a work that no life insurance office will handle.

The Cigar-trade is not very active, and the over-apprenticeship here causes a great number of hands, as soon as their apprenticeship has expired, to fall back on other industries for employment. I have looked into this well, and I will here, with the permission of the Editor, remark that the whole question of apprenticeship requires a thorough reformation and enquiry.

The Floor-cloth Factories, another London trade, is declining, but other trades are taking its place. The trade may be called "slow," as it takes two or three years to properly dry the cloth, and about the same time to make it.

The Bessemer Steel-works are full of orders, and there is no knowing to what extent these works at Greenwich will trade this session; the managers anticipate more work than their factory can turn out night and day. Our large engineering firms are equally as sanguine.

The Coachmaking trade, in all its branches, is doing well, and as spring approaches the trade anticipates a prosperous season both for export and home orders.

The Furniture trade is very busy, and the like may be reported of gilders and carvers; and of the two latter branches I learn that the immense development of the Fine Arts will keep the trade well employed. Foreign workmen are, however, arriving in shoals to pick up some of the crumbs, and round about Satford-hill and Soho—the London hives of Continental workmen—"Dutch leaf" is swarming.

The silversmith, goldsmith, and engraving trades and getting very busy, and Clerkewell reports trade looking up better than this time last year.

The copper and brass smiths were never so busy at this time of the year.

Pewterers are very busy, but it is probable this trade are hand-and-glove with the plumbers, who have more work than they can well undertake to carry out.

The zinc-workers are equally as busy. Tinsmiths, wire-workers, and other branches arising out of these industries, are fairly on for work.

The shoemaking trade, both West-end (which comprises the best work), and the City and East-end, are alike well employed.

Our saddlery and harness workers are fairly engaged.

Tailors are as busy as need be in all parts of the Metropolis.

The hat-trade in Southwark is well on; whilst in the City and West-end business is not to be complained against.

The glass trades do not know which way to escape orders, and the canal floods have afforded a fine harvest for Metropolitan rough descriptions to compete with.

In the East-end the shipbuilding yards are fairly on for work.

Sugar bakers are better off than last year.

Boiler-makers are very active, and steam-engine makers have few hands out.

Boat and barge builders keep on their old, steady style.

The other multifarious trades are doing well, and London, despite the mischievous attack on its industries from the "coal crushers," is able to hold up its head and compete with the whole world.—*Labor News.*

For Cards, Bill-heads, or Posters, go to the WORKMAN Office, 124 Bay street.

Book and Job Printing neatly, cheaply, and expeditiously executed at the WORKMAN Office.