

have one national line, but the Dominion is not rich enough to afford the luxury of two.

Progress is said to be making in the St. Catharine's and Niagara Central Railway, which has Toronto for one of its objective points. The right of way through Thorold and Stamford is reported as secured, and something has been done in the way of construction. The road is getting municipal assistance.

IMPORTANT BUILDING SOCIETY DECISION.

Judge Stuart has rendered a judgment in the Province of Quebec, which at one time would have had far-reaching consequences, and which may yet, if it be not reversed, lead to a great many law suits or a very general settlement with possible claimants, who were previous borrowers from these companies. Originally, it will be remembered, all the building societies stipulated for the repayment of loans by monthly instalments, which have now gone out of fashion, by force of competition rather than by the fiat of the legislature. Under the plan of monthly payments, Hon. M. G. Ouimet obtained two loans, one for \$1,000 and the other for \$400, from a Quebec building society. The term of the loan was ten years; during the first five of which the monthly payments were regularly made; at the end of this time, M. Ouimet, desiring to pay off the balance and get a discharge, tendered the company the amount of capital and interest which he regarded as due. The company disputed his method of computation, and refused his offer, insisting that he must go on with the monthly payments till the end of the ten years. This he did, under protest, and at the end of the time he brought an action to recover the amount which he alleged the company had exacted in excess of its just due.

The question appears to have turned on the point whether the company could charge interest on the portion of the capital which had already been repaid; and this point was decided against the company, which is ordered to repay \$810, illegally exacted, an amount more than equal to one-half of the entire loan. The company seems to have been convinced, even before trial, that it could not collect interest on the portion of the capital which had been repaid; for it alleged that the early payments were all properly chargeable to interest, and at the end of four years the capital had not been reduced. But this contention was set aside by the court.

The contention of M. Ouimet was that he could be obliged to pay, either capital or interest, only in respect of the portion of the capital which remained due. It was this point which the court decided in his favor, ordering the defendant to reimburse him the excessive payments, amounting to \$810, or more than one-half of the entire loan. Should this decision be maintained, it will, even at this late day, be fruitful of litigation, and will cause an alteration of figures in the balance sheets of several companies.

THE "DEMOCRACY OF INDUSTRY."

The Rev. Lyman Abbott has taken upon himself to preach the new gospel of the democracy of industry. Although a resident of New York, he has lately favored Canada with some specimens of his missionary efforts. Mr. Abbott professes a wholesome horror of the Anarchists of France, the Socialists of Germany, and the Nihilists of Russia; but he tells labor that it ought to rule in the workshop as well as at the polls; that labor is not a commodity, but capital is, and that labor ought to control capital. But how is this advice to be carried out? Apparently by co-operation. The advice "do not organize to strike but organize for industrial purposes" is wholesome, within reasonable limits. But how is organization for industrial purposes to make labor master of capital? An attempt to coerce capital would throw labor out of employment, and capital must prove more than a match for labor in a contest intended to change the relations of the combatants. Mr. Abbott wants man to be the hirer of capital and the master. Capital is hired now and no doubt will continue to be; but how is the hirer to become the master? He cannot, by merely organizing, command the loan of capital without some rational security that the capital will be returned. We do not see how the transformation, which Mr. Abbott preaches, is to be made, and he does not tell us; he admits his inability to tell. When we ask how the change is to be brought about, he replies: "I have no panacea to offer." He volunteers to capitalists the advice that "they take the leadership in the great revolution;" that they should suppress themselves, and give the control of their means to labor. On one condition, capitalists might be prepared to take the advice, and that condition is that they should get satisfactory security. Now labor, taken in the mass, cannot give security to capital; it cannot do so individually, and mere organization has no charm to invest it with the power. We fear that Mr. Abbott is raising hopes which cannot be realized, which he does not pretend to see the means of realizing. He is creating new discontents, inflaming existing discontents, and holding out hopes which can only lead to disappointment.

Myriads of workers, Mr. Abbott assumes, are suffering great injustice. "They feel the manacles on their wrists, although they know not how they got there nor how to knock them off." It is easy to speak in this general way, and tell a certain amount of truth; but if there be a great evil it must be capable of being specifically stated. Mr. Abbott proceeds to show the evils of the social organization of modern industry; but he does not show that the social organization can be changed or the evils got rid of. Industry has become organized under captains of industry; the individual who formerly worked in his home or his own workshop alone, is now a cog in the whole of the machinery of a great factory. He has no longer any control over his hours of labor; he must begin at a stated hour and leave off at a stated hour. His individual liberty is greatly abridged. This is equally

true and deplorable; but it is due to the progress of science, to a change in the processes of production which adds immensely to the well-being of society, and for which even the worker finds some if not complete compensation. If bakers and street-car drivers work exceptionally long hours, the inconvenience is due to the nature of their calling, and they may fairly complain if they are not correspondingly compensated. That they are is very doubtful. In this fact we have proof, in its least desirable form, that labor is still a purchasable commodity and that, whatever the amount of work done, the remuneration is apt to bear a close relation to the cost of living. In some occupations, ordinary hours of labor would require two sets of men to do the work now done by one; and certainly the longer hours, other things being equal, ought to be better compensated, than the average day. These are exceptional cases, and their significance consists in the degree of proof they afford that excessive hours of labor do not always bring a corresponding recompense.

Mr. Abbott has attempted to lay down some principles. Here is one: "When," he says, "distribution becomes more unequal than industry, then there is injustice." It is difficult to seize the idea which the comparison is meant to convey. But if it means that every worker of equal industry, whatever his skill or want of skill, is entitled to an equal remuneration, the world is not likely to agree with him. Even the labor combinations which have done much to bring varying capacities, in the same industry, to a common level of remuneration will hardly consent to go so far as this. The skilful workman commands higher wages than the unskilful, and disagreeable occupations from which men shrink are comparatively highly paid. A chimney sweeper will make more than one whose time is spent on fancy work. Equal industry does not receive equal reward, and there is no injustice in the discrimination; in other words, distribution is more unequal than industry, and the inequality is strictly in accordance with justice.

Another maxim for which Mr. Abbott asks acceptance is that "corruption comes from commerce into politics, not from politics, into commerce." Does this mean that the men who buy legislation, as they are said exceptionally sometimes to do at Albany or Washington, tempt the legislators; that the initiative of corruption begins, say with the railway magnate? Does Mr. Abbott mean that the influence of commercial men leads to the passing of laws which have corruption for their object? As he has not explained, it is impossible to know precisely what he means; but charges of this kind, flung about at random, are very unjust, and coming from a christian minister, who ought to give definite meaning to his words, they are doubly so.

Twenty or thirty years ago, walnut wood was cut up into fence rails or even sold as fuel to steamers in Western Ontario. Now, when our forests are denuded of it, and it is worth from \$80 to \$140 per thousand feet, dealers are glad to buy the walnut fence rails, seasoned by twenty years exposure, and to make them into legs, spindles or backs of chairs.