

It may be objected that these are not the most appropriate subjects for a Mechanics Institute. It is usual, I know, on these occasions to make the subject a scientific one, to take up some of the —isms or the —ologies, and expound them. If I am guilty of any innovation in meddling with the domestic affairs of this City, my apology is that having been honored with a request to address you, I am more anxious to benefit than to amuse you. We are a practical people, and we live in an eminently practical age, and what more edifying, what more profitable subject can the Mechanics of this City discuss, than the causes which favor or which threaten the prosperity of Montreal. The prosperity or adversity of a city is immediately felt by every interest in it. The capitalist may survive "hard times," but the first symptoms of depressions are felt by the working classes,—and by the working classes I mean all of us who labor for our subsistence. Wages go down—the brakes are at once put on—wives and children are denied former comforts and the limited enjoyment of the present is embittered by anxious forebodings for the future. If then the working classes, who form a decided majority of the body politic, are the most seriously inconvenienced by a stagnation or reaction in business—an inquiry into the causes which induce or avert the public adversity is surely most appropriate on their part, not only because they are the earliest and greatest sufferers, but because in their hands rests a remedy. We live in a country, thank God! where almost every man has some influence, and if he does not exercise it to his own advantage, it must be because he does not understand his own interest.

We too frequently wait to be led—perhaps in the end by the nose!—forgetting that if we only form a strong battalion politicians innumerable will volunteer to lead us on to victory and its spoils. Now those enterprises are always the most irresistible which spring up from the people—those the most doubtful which come down from the public bureaux. When, therefore, the mechanics in