

a crime. Let a politician lay down a proposition; does his opponent try to prove that it is fallacious? By no means. He directs his energies to prove that ten or twelve years before, the infamous propounder of a new idea held different views. For the mastery of this convincing rhetoric *Hansard* is an invaluable mine. Not only will he confront and, as he thinks, confound you with your views of a remote period: ten to one you will be triumphantly asked whether some dead man with whom you never had anything in common except belonging to the same party did not, thirty years ago, say something very different from the peccant utterance for which you are now arraigned. In the newspapers this sort of stuff is considered the highest effort of dialectics, and is always distinguished by italics, small capitals, or black letters. The least pretence of having independent views is a deadly sin, and the rank and file of a party, only too glad to have their thinking done for them by others, are ever ready to "kill" the man who is presumptuous enough to show impatience of political servitude. The ideal statesmanship among Canadians, old and young, is mere manipulation of men, and the highest political character seems to be the masking with lofty pretensions hypocritical manœuvring for sectional support. The whole thing is rotten. How can we expect the people to develop under such conditions a taste for what is wholesome and pure in political thought and action? They are at the mercy of a vile system in which the dead and half-putrid hog beats the living cow every time. Where is it to end? Can we expect anything better than such scandals as that which made the last days of the late session of the Ontario Parliament inodorous? How can we look to see anything superior to gutter-slingers in newspapers, and pensioners, nepotists, and corruptionists in politics?

Is there any hope? There is hope. The awakening referred to above was not the expiring glow of what had once grown and matured and culminated. It may have been like the anticipations of the distant spring which we see in soft winters, when the chestnuts bud, and the sparrows, deceived, think the time has come to build. Shall we behold a spring-time for Canadian thought? In human things let philosophers say what they will, there can be no new life-giving impulse without will and effort. Now, the worst feature of Romanism has been introduced into politics by party—the suppression of private judgment. Let the people of Canada do what their fathers did at the time of the Reformation, namely, assert the dignity of their manhood, the supremacy of the individual conscience in matters political, as Luther and John Knox did in matters religious; let them determine to honour mental greatness wherever found, to give their allegiance to high thought and noble and consistent action, not deify the cunning and deceptions of the wire-puller, and we may yet see in the parliament of Canada men of large views, with adequate knowledge—statesmen in a word—and, what is of not less importance, our leading newspapers redeemed from provincialism and restored to decency. DOUGLAS ROWAN.

FIFTY YEARS' PROGRESS AMONG THE ENGLISH WORKING-CLASSES.

THE recent inaugural address delivered by Mr. Robert Giffen on the above subject before the Royal Statistical Society, which has just been published in pamphlet form, has not received the attention which its importance demands, and a brief synopsis of it may therefore be of some use to Canadian readers. Mr. Giffen shows conclusively that in every department of living the English workman of to-day is far better off than his compeer of fifty years ago.

During that time wages have risen from 33 to 85 per cent., while the hours of labour have diminished nearly 20 per cent., the total gain to the labourer from both sources being from 50 to 100 per cent. On the other hand, with two or three exceptions, the prices of commodities have either decreased or are much the same to-day as they were then. Many new things also can now be had at a low price which could not then be obtained at all. During the decennium 1872-82 the average price of wheat was ten shillings a quarter less than during that of 1837-46. The price is also far more steady now than it was in the old Corn-Law days. In 1812 it was 126s. 6d. per quarter; in 1836 it was only 36s.; while in 1847 it had risen again to 102s. 5d., a fluctuation which implied semi-starvation in the dear years. During the last twenty years, on the other hand, wheat has never been as high as 70s. a quarter. In the period 1863-73, the highest yearly average was 64s. 5d., in 1867; while during the period 1873-83, the highest was only 58s. 8d., in 1873. Among important items of labourers' consumption, sugar and clothing have both greatly declined in price. The only important article of diet which has become dearer is meat. Fifty years ago, however, meat was not an article of consumption with workmen, as it is now. In house-rent also there has been an increase—

largely due, however, to the fact that the houses of workmen are far better now than they used to be, the increased rent being merely a higher price for a correspondingly better article which the workman can afford. In 1834, house-duty was levied on all houses rented at £10 or upwards; now, all houses below £20 are exempt, the benefit going almost wholly to the working-classes. The increase in rent and the cost of meat does not, however, counterbalance the decrease in the prices of other articles, so that the increase in wages and the decrease in working hours represent so much clear gain. The superior style of living among the masses is shown by the immense increase in the imports per head of such articles as bacon and hams, butter, cheese, eggs, rice, tea, cocoa, sugar, and raisins. The consumption per head of tea and sugar, for instance, is about four times as great, and that of rice eighteen times as great as it was forty years ago.

Savings' banks deposits are an especially reliable criterion of the diffusion of wealth among the masses. Between 1831 and 1851, the number of depositors in these Banks increased from 429,000 to 4,140,000, and the deposits from £13,719,000 to £80,334,000, the amount of the deposits per head decreasing in the same time from £34 to £20. The great increase in the number of depositors, and the decrease in the deposits per head, afford conclusive proof of a greater tendency towards saving on the part of the poorer classes. There has been a correspondingly great increase in the business done by the industrial co-operative societies. Between 1862 and 1881 the number of members increased from 90,000 to 525,000; the capital from £483,000 to £7,142,000; the sales from £2,333,000 to £20,901,000; and the net profits from £165,000 to £1,617,000.

The workman's position has improved in other ways. The cost of government per head is considerably less, and the workman's share of government expenditure is greater now than they were in 1832. Nearly £15,000,000 of expenditure under such heads as education, post-office, inspection of factories, is entirely new as compared with fifty years ago, the workman consequently getting something now which he did not get before at all. The same is true of local taxes, which are now £60,000,000 as against £15,000,000 in 1832. The latter sum was mainly for poor-relief and other old burdens, from which working-men got little benefit. Now, while poor-relief expenditure is about the same, there is a vast expenditure besides for sanitary, educational, and similar purposes, of which the masses get the chief benefit. The expenditure in these directions, says Mr. Giffen, has helped to make life sweeter and better, and to open careers to the poorest. The benefit of such an institution, for instance, as a free library, is, he says, incalculable.

A natural result of better food, better lodging, better clothing, and better sanitary precautions is a considerable decrease in the death-rate. For the years 1876-80 the average annual death-rate for males between the ages of five and twenty-five was from twenty-eight to thirty-two per cent. less than in 1841-5; and for females between the same ages, from twenty-four to thirty-five per cent. less. The mean duration of life of males has thus been raised from 39.9 years, in 1841-5, to 41.9 years in 1876-80, a gain of two years, or equal, taking the whole population of Great Britain, to a total gain of sixty million years of life for every generation. The larger proportion of this increase, moreover, has been at the useful ages, not at the dependent ages of childhood and old age. The increase of vitality has been accompanied by a corresponding decrease in sickness, the average number of days lost in the year by the workman in consequence of illness being now considerably less than formerly. The improvement in health, moreover, has been mainly among the masses, and not among the well-to-do. Many sanitary improvements, it may be added, are comparatively recent, and their benefits are only beginning to be felt, and only the younger lives will be affected by them. We may therefore expect that the improvement in the public health will be even greater in the future than it has been in the past. As it is, the gain has been enormous.

As the country has prospered in health and wealth, so it has declined in pauperism. In 1830, with only half the population, the expenditure under this head was nearly as great as it is now. Between 1849 and 1881, notwithstanding the great increase in the population, the number of paupers in the United Kingdom decreased from 1,676,000 to 1,014,000.

The material progress has been accompanied by a corresponding advance in the intellectual and moral spheres. Fifty years ago the children of the masses got either a miserably poor education or none at all. Now they are getting a fairly good all-round training. Between 1851 and 1881 the number of pupils attending the public schools increased from 782,239 to 4,356,000. On the other hand, in spite of the steady increase of population, there has been a great diminution in serious crime. In England the number of persons committed for trial decreased from 24,000 in 1839, to 15,000 in 1882. For the United Kingdom the corresponding decrease was from 54,000 to 22,000. At the present time there is probably not one—