

Encouraging Litigation.

The extension of the Workmen's Compensation Act to agricultural labourers, doubtless intended as another piece of popular and paternal parliamentary work, is already being made the occasion for a shower of criticism from those who claim that the Act has encouraged litigation, and been more beneficial to the lawyers than to the labourers. A writer in the London "Daily News" of August 9th says: "It is now the law of the land. Barristers have an eye on it. The other branch of the legal profession, who do not disdain costs, scent it from afar. It promises to multiply fourfold the rich crop of litigation so kindly sown by the authors of the original Act. A farmer, for instance, who only employs 'casual' labour is exempt, and it can always be argued that labour is casual. Even the question, what is agriculture, and whether it includes grazing or dairy-keeping, affords pleasant vistas of possible disagreement among the judges, with appeals and their attendant consequences."

It is not in Canada alone that the makers of laws turn out work for the lawyers.

Workmen's Compensation Act.

The Act framed for the protection of the British workmen is still regarded by many as a bit of loose and mischievous legislation. Experience of the operation of the Workman's Compensation Act has produced results which its framers never could have foreseen, and the Bill is still the subject of discussion, and all sorts of amendments thereto are being drafted. It would seem to have been designed for the purpose of increasing the business of the legal profession, and also for worrying the judges, upon whom falls the task of trying to explain or unfold the true intent and meaning of what is unintelligible in the Act. Some months ago we referred to the natural desire of a manufacturer to know to what extent he would be liable for injury to a workman subject to epileptic fits should said workman during one of the fits get mixed up with a rotary saw or roll into a vat of boiling oil. The manufacturer was surprised to learn that, failing a special arrangement between master and man, the employer would be liable to the extent of full compensation under the Act, since, while epilepsy might be the cause of the workman's mix-up with the saw or falling into the oil, it would be the rotary saw or the oil which would cause the injury or death. Since the legal enquiry referred to, dozens and dozens of equally perplexing cases have been carried to the law-courts for settlement.

But the Act has had another effect even more serious than expensive litigation; it is said to be curtailing the working life of the artisan and mechanic.

Aged men, still able to do good work, find it difficult to obtain employment because of the preference exhibited by certain employers for the services of unmarried and young men. Since the operation of the Act, the young unmarried workmen are considered less liable to accident, and, if they are injured or killed, the employer has less liability thrust upon him by a paternal government than in the case of married men.

The social problem presented by this argument against marriage will probably be brought to the notice of the government by some alarmed reformers when the next discussion of amendments to this troublesome and paternal measure occupies the attention of the British parliament.

Politics and Business.

While our Republican neighbours are wrestling with the question of how far economic conditions are ascribable to political policies, we also have some troubles of our own looming up. We trust our readers will read, mark, learn and inwardly digest all the conflicting statements made by the optimists and pessimists of both parties during the approaching campaign. We will have to listen to much talk about the trade prospects of the country, and it is likely that we may have to endure the usual tirades against political opponents on the part of those who are always invoking high heaven in eloquent indignation to fall upon their country's foes and crush them.

During such a season of political excitement, it is refreshing to peruse the following sensible remarks of a leading New York paper upon the comparative inability of political parties to shape the business of a country:

Amid all the chatter of politicians about what their parties have done or will do for the prosperity of the country, rational men understand perfectly well that there is little that the political parties have done to make a country prosperous or the reverse. Business prosperity depends very slightly upon the form of government; it depends a good deal upon the honest administration of the laws and the equal protection of person and property, and yet a considerable degree of prosperity has co-existed with serious defects in the form and administration of governments. Taxation may be light or heavy; it may fall where it is most easily or least easily borne; the condition of business will be affected by these things, but there has been prosperity under bad administrations and depression under good ones. A community can adjust itself to almost any conditions.

However, no wide-awake business man can afford to regard the possibility of a victory for the cheap money party in the United States with equanimity.