

The Commercial

WINNIPEG, OCTOBER 26, 1886.

THE EIGHT HOUR MOVEMENT.

The great strike inaugurated by the Knights of Labor, which took place in May last, with the object of securing a reduction in the hours of labor, has at last been admitted an almost complete failure. Indeed, so far as accomplishing the desired end, the result of the strike may, in some of its aspects, be regarded as worse than a failure. That the strike was brought on hurriedly and without due preparation is now admitted by all those interested in the success of the movement. Had the Knights taken the advice of their general master, Mr. Powderly, and more thoroughly perfected their organization before entering upon the struggle, in the meantime using their efforts to educate public opinion up to their view of the labor problem, their movement might not have met with such rapid decline and ultimate utter collapse.

But even under the most favorable circumstances, it is not at all probable that so radical a change as that demanded by the Knights of Labor could have been secured. Knocking off two hours from the standard day's work of ten hours, without allowing some reduction in the usual pay for the ten hours, was demanding rather too much at a time. It could hardly have been expected that capital would grant to labor such a sweeping concession, without a hardly-fought and prolonged contest. If the Knights had listened to the more cautious among their membership, and asked first for ten hours' pay for nine hours' work, the attainment of this might have paved the way for a further reduction of the recognized day's work to eight hours. But now that the strike for the eight hours' system has proved a failure, it will prevent, for some time at least, a hopeful effort to obtain less exacting concessions. The unanimous agreement of the striking operators in the Chicago packing houses, to return to the ten hours' system, after several months' trial of the eight hours' plan, has practically terminated for the present the movement to obtain a reduction in the hours of labor. These Chicago operators were among the few who were successful in the great strike of last spring, the employers having agreed to allow them ten hours' pay for eight hours' work. The

last movement, however, was commenced by the employers, who refused to adhere to the agreement longer, and they have been entirely successful, after a few days' lockout, in enforcing a return to the old ten hours' system. It is likely that other employers who granted concessions at the time of the general strike, will follow the example of the late successful movement in Chicago, and in a short time it is probable that the few men still holding any points gained will be forced to abandon them.

At the convention of the Knights of Labor, in session at Richmond last week, General Master Powderly attributed the failure of the strike to the lack of some definite plan by which the short hours' system could be inaugurated. Even the discussion of the question previous to the strike, injured business to such an extent that many men were thrown out of employment and others but on half time, greatly to the detriment of the movement. Mr. Powderly sees clearly that the eight hours' system can only be brought about gradually and in such a manner that injury will not be inflicted upon either capital or labor. This is undoubtedly the one point at issue; but it is also a question the solution of which is almost beyond reasonable hope of success. It implies on the one hand that labor must be paid full present wages for fewer hours of work; for would not labor consider it an injustice to have the hours of work forcibly reduced and the pay lessened in proportion? and would not the majority of workmen prefer to labor the full ten hours in preference to having their pay reduced? On the other hand employers would be compelled to run their establishments as at present, sell their goods at the same price, compete with the manufactures of cheap labor in other countries, pay the same wages for one-fifth less work, and make the same profits that they were formerly doing under the ten hours' system. If all this could be accomplished, undoubtedly the short hours' system would be welcomed by employers as well as employed. But until these antagonistic principles can be reconciled, there can be little hope of a successful issue for the short hours' system, and its enforcement under other conditions could not but prove an injury to commerce, which would rebound upon the heads of those upholding the movement. Without, therefore, discussing the merits or demerits of short hours of labor versus the ten hours' sys-

tem, it must be apparent that some time must elapse, and present conditions must be very materially changed, before a general movement in the direction of a marked reduction of the hours of labor can prove at all successful.

CONSUL TAYLOR'S REPORT.

The annual report of United States Consul Taylor, lately published, is a very interesting document, and one worthy of more than passing notice, coming as it does from one who would be most likely to take an unpejudiced and impartial view of the situation. The Winnipeg district, over which Consul Taylor has charge, includes the whole stretch of country extending from Port Arthur to the British Columbia boundary, and from the international boundary northwest to the unexplored regions.

With the geography, history and resources of this vast region there are perhaps few people in the country better acquainted and possessing a greater fund of ready information than Consul Taylor. Any statements coming from him may therefore be considered authentic. The report deals with features regarding this whole region, and contains a very complete statistical review of trade for the year 1885, with special reference to the inter-trade relations between the Canadian Northwest and the United States.

Although those acquainted with the commercial situation here will be familiar with the figures given in the report, yet a brief reference to some of them may not be inappropriate. The importations of goods at the various ports of entry in the Winnipeg district, from foreign countries for the year ending June 30th, are given as follows:

	Dutiable.	Free.	Total.
Winnipeg	\$1,956,619	\$311,659	\$2,268,278
Emerson	284,284	169,801	454,085
Port Arthur...	522,542	416,909	939,451

Total..... 2,763,445 898,369 3,661,814

In regard to the trade with the United States the following comparison is made:

Imports from the United States....	\$2,606,446
“ “ Great Britain.....	979,490
“ “ Other Countries	75,878

The Consul refers to the subject of duties as follows:

“The revenue to the Canadian treasury from the foregoing dutiable importation was \$680,151, or about 25 per cent. The duties of 33 per cent upon agricultural implements, canned meats, and fruits, and other articles indispensable in new settlements yet continue, with very depressing influence upon immigration.”