

TRADE UNIONS IN POLITICS.

Some time ago we called attention to the power which a certain combination of trades unions in England was able to bring to bear upon the means of transportation, upon which depend not only the whole industries of the country, but the very food of those by whom they are carried on. A condition of things was imminent which one can hardly bear to contemplate; fortunately the danger was for the moment averted, but the power for mischief still exists, and may at any time be brought into play for causes as trivial as those which actuated it on the occasion referred to.

Only the other day an engine driver on the Great Northern Railway was suspended for not coming to his work at the proper time. Possibly his delay may have had serious consequences, but that is immaterial so far as he was concerned. He had been guilty of a breach of discipline, for which he was properly punished. But the authorities of the union, having it in their power to suspend the whole operation of the railway and all that depended on it, demanded his reinstatement, and the company yielded. Comment is needless.

In the strike which has been going on in Belgium we have seen such a combination dealing—not with questions of wages, or hours of labour—but with the very foundations of constitutional government. Yielding to the threat of the stoppage of all industry, we have seen a Government throwing down a carefully constructed, and wisely balanced system of representation, and substituting for it, at the bidding of the trades unions, universal suffrage pure and simple, based upon absolute equality of the voters. It may be that universal suffrage is the proper basis on which to rest a system of constitutional government, but that it should be adopted, not as the result of careful consideration by those qualified by education, training and experience to deal with such subjects, but simply at the dictation of a body deficient in all those qualifications, strong only in numbers, and led by men who can only hold their leadership by being ready to carry