

inconsistency with the agreement entered into by its own delegates at the Berlin Conference, opposed—affords a good illustration of the direction and strength of the various influences which are at work on behalf of reform in labour legislation. To the indirect teachings of the working men themselves it is mainly due that such matters, involving life-long interests of thousands of women and children, are no longer left to the merciless operation of the laws of supply and demand. The cruel fetiches, so long worshipped as beneficent agencies, according to the gospel of the old political-economists, are being displaced by other forces which have at least some admixture of a morality and mercy not begotten of pure selfishness in their composition, and in whose operations there is, consequently, some room for the play of the sense of fairness and the sympathy which are the outcome of a practical recognition of the claims of human brotherhood. Under such new influences it is that a majority of the members of the British Parliament have decreed that the children of the poorest factory operatives shall have at least one year more than hitherto in which to grow, and free schools in which to make the most of the brief respite for themselves and for the community.

COMING nearer home, no reasonable person will, we think, deny that the Trades and Labour Council of this city has for some years past exercised a considerable and in many respects a salutary influence upon commercial and industrial legislation, both in Ontario and at Ottawa. Cheerfully granting so much, we can but express our regret that this Council, and, indeed, the Industrial Societies generally, should have taken a position of determined hostility to every arrangement for the employment of convicts in the prisons and penitentiaries. Making all due allowance for the case of those who may find their own occupations interfered with by the products of prison-labour, we yet must think that the policy, one of whose logical results could not fail to be the moral deterioration of every convicted criminal while in the jail, instead of his moral improvement, is a short-sighted and mistaken one even for the artisans, to say nothing of society in general. We grant that the work and training of convicts should be so directed that the products of their labour may interfere as little as possible with those of honest industry. Still, as was pointed out during the discussion the other day at Ottawa, it is impossible to give prisoners any employment whatever that will at all serve the great moral ends in view, without bringing them more or less into competition with honest industry. But surely the intelligent men who lead the deliberations of the Trades and Labour Council cannot wish to see men who have been found guilty of crimes of greater or less magnitude, kept in perpetual idleness and supported by the taxes to which every honest labourer is a contributor. The labour unions argue, not without plausibility, that it is unfair that the criminal should be taught a trade at the expense of the State, while the honest labourer is compelled to pay for his own instruction and for that of his children. But would it not be a still greater hardship to enact that the criminal shall be supported at the public expense in idleness, while the honest man is obliged to toil or starve. The same principle on which the compulsory self-support of the convict while in prison is condemned, might be applied with equal force to prove that it is an advantage to the labouring men that the largest possible number of their competitors should become criminals and jail-birds. It is demonstrable that every workingman in the country, with the exception of the few who may suffer from the prison-labour competition, is the gainer by the productive industry of the prison inmates. The question as to the best mode of utilizing the products of convict labour, so as to produce the least possible disturbance in the outer world of honest industry, is a very difficult one. It is probable, though we doubt if it is quite certain, that the jails and penitentiaries should not be permitted to undersell the output of the factories. It is quite possible that the method now used in connection with the Dorchester Penitentiary, of turning over all the woodenware manufactured in the prison to a company, thus perfecting its monopoly, is indefensible. It would not do for the prisons themselves to be given a monopoly of any particular branch of manufacture, for that would mean no employment for the convict when his term has expired, in the line of work for which he has been fitted. The trade he has been taught would thus be rendered useless, and he thrown back helpless upon society. This would almost certainly pave the way for his return in a

majority of cases to prison, after few or many days, a confirmed, double-dyed criminal. These considerations serve but to make clearer the difficulties which beset the question. The point upon which all thoughtful men must, it seems to us, agree, is that those who, by their crimes, compel society to deprive them of their liberty, must, in their turn, be compelled to work for their own support, and with a view to their own reformation. There is much to be said, especially in view of the tendency to abandon the farm and country life in these days for other pursuits, in favour of some system being adopted by means of which many convicts shall be set at work both in improving and tilling the soil, and in the construction of great public works. But these are all questions of detail, in regard to which, it seems to us, such organizations as the Trades and Labour Council should be of great service to the Government and Parliament, instead of a mere obstructive force.

THERE seems no reason to doubt that the Zollverein or commercial-union project is making headway in Europe, and that a free-trade arrangement is likely to be consummated at an early day between Germany, Austria and at least two of the smaller neighbouring nations. Taken in connection with the similar movement inaugurated by Mr. Blaine as between the United States and the smaller American Republics, this commercial phenomenon is worthy of study. May it not fairly be taken to indicate that there is, after all, a general tendency to reaction against the high-tariff system, when some of the nations on both continents which have been most noted for their protectionist proclivities are thus returning to free trade by roundabout routes? There is, it is true, a radical difference in the postulates with which they set out from those of the genuine British free trader. The commercial-union idea is based upon the theory that the trade of a people is a national perquisite of value, and is to be surrendered only for an equivalent. The genuine free trader, on the other hand, regards the right to buy in the cheapest and sell in the dearest market as an inherent right of the citizen of a free country. He further holds that the privilege of buying to the best advantage is just as valuable as the privilege of selling to the best advantage, and that the fact that a neighbouring country fines its citizens for buying his goods is no reason why he or his fellow citizens should be denied the right of buying what those neighbours have to sell, if it is to their advantage to do so. In other words, a penny saved by buying cheaply is just as good as a penny earned by increasing the products of one's own toil. Which is the sounder theory we will not stay to enquire. Extremes meet. It is evident that the commercial-union idea has only to be extended far enough to become identical in its effects with the free-trade idea. Even in its most restricted form it is an indirect tribute to the merits of that idea. And there is every reason to hope that once the restrictionist nations begin to realize the advantage they derive from trading freely with their next door neighbours, they will not fail to draw the logical inference and extend the sphere of their commercial freedom. As a matter of fact, in the last analysis, all are alike free traders. The only difference is in the area of the spheres within which the freedom is exercised.

THOUGH the present visit is the third made by the Emperor of Germany to England, since his accession, all the circumstances seem to indicate that it has a political significance which was almost wholly wanting on the former occasions. The pageant is unique for the British Government, and the fact that the people have so far caught the enthusiasm of the Government is a pretty clear indication that they, at least, believe that there is something in the event of greater moment than mere international courtesy, or a friendly reception of relatives of the Royal Family. The cabled extract from the *Standard* is ambiguous, though it is probable that its statement that it can be only of advantage to the peace of the world that it should be known that any conspiracy against the stability of the existing European system would be met by the union of England's naval and Germany's military strength will be found to be hypothetical. It may, however, be none the less inspired, with a view to add definiteness to the test of British popular feeling which the Emperor's visit as "the guest of the nation" may be designed to furnish. As a guarantee of peace—if, indeed, such guarantee must be sought in a display of overwhelming strength for war—nothing could be more effective than the addition of the tremendous naval force, represented by the magnificent

array of sea-monsters which greeted the Kaiser's arrival the other day, to the armaments, military and naval, already included in the Dreibund. Nothing is more natural than that Germany and England should be friends and allies, especially since France does not seem in a mood to be friendly with anyone, except possibly the Czar. A good understanding with Germany would render the British Empire secure both against Russia on the Indian frontier and against France in Egypt, so long as that understanding lasted. On the other hand, if the French still contemplate the supreme folly of another attack upon Germany, the knowledge that Great Britain would come to the aid of that mighty nation would change the attempt from folly to a madness so transparent that even the brave but impetuous Frenchman could not fail to see it. On the whole it seems altogether likely that the near future will find not three but four of the great nations of Europe bound together in an alliance to preserve the peace of Europe—an alliance so overwhelmingly powerful that not even the Northern Bear and France combined would dare to attempt resistance. An offensive and defensive alliance of four great nations armed to the teeth seems a strange and terribly costly arrangement for the preservation of peace, but is vastly better than a great European war. It might eventually, too, lead to a general reduction of armaments. One can hardly contemplate such an event without a thrill of sympathy for unhappy France, whose last hope of revenge would thus be utterly quenched, so long as the alliance lasted.

ONE of the wisest of modern philanthropic societies of which we have any knowledge was formed in this city the other day when the Children's Aid Society was organized. From whatever point of view it may be regarded there is no work better worth doing than that which the gentlemen and ladies forming this society are about to undertake. As Mr. W. H. Howland, the Chairman, explained, the object is to have a strong society to counteract, as far as it may be able, the evils arising out of the indifference of parents and all other causes which lead to the presence in the city of large numbers of neglected children, growing up without proper care or training in any respect. There is manifestly a large and noble work for such a society to do, without competition or interference with the work of any existing society. To see that adequate school accommodation is provided for the children of the poorest classes, to establish mission schools in which the waifs may be gathered and brought under the training and influence of women specially qualified for such a work, to open houses of refuge where children who have fallen into the hands of the police may be taken in and at least temporarily cared for, to provide industrial homes where every homeless or abandoned child may be trained for future good citizenship—these and kindred works for the rescue of the little ones should be, as we have often taken occasion to argue, among the first fruits of sound political economy, as well as of Christian benevolence. Every poor waif thus saved from worthlessness, not to say from vice or crime, and marshalled in the ranks of the honest and industrious, represents not only a fellow-being rescued from misery and degradation, but, in very many cases, a direct saving to the State of many times the whole sum expended, and a distinct addition to the economical and moral forces of the country. Those who are taking the lead in this good work deserve sympathy and practical help in abundance from all classes of their fellow-citizens. If a similar society were formed and efficiently managed in every city and town in the Dominion, the result would be, in a generation, an improvement in the average social and moral status of the masses of which only those who have given thought to the subject and grasped the full meaning of this simple but far-reaching agency can adequately conceive.

IF it is true that a great book, as is said, is a great evil, it should be true that a great out-put of books is equally an evil. If so we are certainly fallen on evil days. Knowledge, which was once confined in academies and conventual reservoirs, or flowed only in narrow channels, now spreads over the face of the land, and naturally it becomes shallower as it spreads. It is astonishing what little wisdom in their teachers will satisfy those eager to learn. And the way these try to learn is more astonishing still. The rudiments of a system it does not occur to them to be necessary to master. Technological cyclopedias and trade recipes take the place of apprenticeship, the handbook and the manual replace the primer and the grammar, and histories are now stories. Such a diet could hardly pro-