

Communications.

CONVICT LABOR.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

SIR,—The evidence taken by the Commissioners enquiring into the effect of the contract system in the State of New York, was of such a nature that it was an impossibility for them honestly to return a report otherwise than that contained in their first proposition, viz.:—"The contract system of prison labor is bad, and should be abolished."

Allen Ross, Agent and Warden of the State prison at Auburn, testified that the contract system gave occasion to punishment, and affected discipline injuriously. He believed a large proportion of the punishments were due to the contract system.

It was also obstructive to reformation. Rev. D. A. Shepard, Chaplain of the same prison, stated that the contract system had an injurious effect on the morals of the prisoners, and should be abrogated. There was an irritation on the part of the prisoners produced by the system which could be avoided if the management was in proper hands. Many things were introduced into the prison, such as alcoholic drinks, immoral pamphlets, letters, etc., contrary to rules, and having a corrupting influence.

Dr. Theo. Dimon, physician, had given some thought to the contract system, and considered it unfavorable to the interests of the State and the Institution, and giving rise to more than half the punishments. The feeling of the contractor and his foreman, that the only point to be considered, was the amount of money to be made, was another cause of bad feeling. The fact that a convict works not for the State, nor for himself, but only for an outside party, who was nothing to him, was the most prolific cause of punishment.

"The labor of the prisons should be conducted in reference to the welfare of the convict and of the community in connection with him, rather than on any other considerations. And if, by the management of prison labor, you return a convict to society with industrious habits, and so with the means of support, you have conferred a greater benefit on outside labor than by abolishing industrial pursuits in prisons. He most certainly thought the interests of the community could be best attained by a multiplication of industries, so that a variety of trades might be taught."

Here is the language of a man who has spent a considerable amount of his time inside the prison walls, agreeing in every particular with the arguments of the objectors to the contract system in this Province. The foregoing evidence is emphatic in its condemnation of the noxious contract system, and fully supporting the position I assumed at the commencement of these letters.

Yet I do not propose to rest here, so shall proceed to the production of more evidence of the blessings resulting from this system. James S. Graham, member of the Board of Managers of the Rochester House of Refuge, and member of the State Legislature, with whom I am personally acquainted, testified to the evils of the system as follows:—

"I believe the contract system to be injurious, because it enables a certain portion of the community to enter into unfair competition with the rest. It is injurious because under it no man is taught a trade perfectly. The great cry among master mechanics to-day is the gradual lessening of the number of thorough, first-class mechanics, and this want is increased by the contract system of teaching trades. Again, it places a premium upon crime. It forces honest men into idleness, and idleness begets crime. Again, it enables a certain class of capitalists to control a quantity of labor for which they do not pay a living price. To illustrate:—

"Mr. Brown (let us say), a contractor, can make his lowest grade of boots cheaper than any one not having a contract. He can, therefore, sell a larger bill of goods than any other man, because able to make a reduction in the whole bill, on account of getting his lowest grade of work done so cheaply. The effect is that his competitor forces his workmen to labor at a price that will enable him to sell his work at the same price as the contractor. It is like the case of a burglar who drives fifteen wedges into the crack of a door where one would not do, and by a series of light taps, drives each wedge a little, until the door is forced open.

"So in the case of wages. A little is taken off here, and a little there, until they fall below a living price. We have practical illustrations, notorious in this community. It is said when they started a cooper shop in Monroe County Penitentiary, coopers brought before a Justice got a specially long sentence, because the contractors needed men.

"Again, the contract system is opposed to free labor in this way: As a working-man, I object to working by the side of a convict, because I believe that it is almost impossible to reform a man worked by the contract system, and that men come out of prison as bad as they went in. Hence, though I would be willing to work with a reformed man, I feel degraded by working with a discharged unreformed convict.

"The contract system in the House of Refuge had an injurious effect on the boys' morals. It places the boys under the control of persons wholly irresponsible to the officers of the Institution. On the representation of these persons they are liable to be punished. It is well known that boys disposed to reform, but good workers, have, through the reports of the contractors, been kept in lower grades, and thus their discharge hindered. The contractors also hire men, as overseers, who have not, and cannot get, recommendations, morally or socially. Boys were mixed up indiscriminately with men who sold them tobacco, and perhaps something worse, and encouraged them to steal. Men have been discharged for this. Discipline, with many of the contractors, meant knocking down, or other corporal punishment. They believed the boys all bad. I most decidedly think the contract system is bad. As a substitute, I think the officers should be made permanent, removable only for cause.

"Again, I think the prisoners should be made to feel they are men, that they should learn full trades. I would have a multiplicity of trades, and have each learn the trade for which he has a choice. This would pay in the end, whatever the first cost might be; for if prisoners are discharged without being reformed, the expense attendant upon their subsequent arrest and conviction will be equal to what it would have cost to make them good men."

The above is the evidence of a man far above ordinary men in the matter of judgment and intelligence. One who, by industry and business tact, has raised himself from the position of a paid machinist to an employer of labor. And by his moral and social rectitude, combined with intellect, so far won the good-will of the people, that without regard to party politics, he was sent to the Legislature in 1869. Such men are rare, and their opinion is worth consideration.

The evidence I have here adduced is emphatic in its denunciation of the contract system as being decidedly opposed to the reformation of criminals, and I am sorely tempted to comment upon the various statements made, but knowing I have already encroached on your good nature, and not wishing to also encroach on your columns too far, I will defer my remarks to a future letter.

Yours, &c.,

J. W. LEVESLEY.

Toronto, March 15th, 1873.

ACADEMY OF MUSIC.

The new stars have proved a decided success. Reveni and Zoe Zeonetti, in their wonderful trapeze performances, and Dan Guilfoil, in his songs and dances, elicit rounds of applause. John H. Clarke, the popular comedian, has assumed the position of Director of Amusements. Mr. Clarke will have a benefit on Friday night, on which occasion a host of volunteers will appear.

MURDER IN EVANSVILLE.

We here give a plain, unvarnished account of as cold-blooded a murder as has ever occurred in this country, and commend it to the reading of that class of our people who delight to denounce Trade Unions and their members as belonging to the "dangerous classes."

It is well known to our members that for some time past the moulders employed by J. H. Roelker & Co., in Evansville, have been locked out, because they dared to protest against an infringement on a well-understood law of the Union, one which Roelker & Co. in the past have always agreed to. When the men were ordered out of the shop, orders were given by the firm, to certain of the other employees, to shoot any Union man who would come around the place. This was, of course, regarded as an idle threat, but the sequel too well proves the contrary.

On Monday, March 17, very few moulders were at work in Evansville; and a few of them gathered in a saloon known as the "Orchestra." While they were sitting at one of the tables, a member named Conrad Hartman came in, and said that Roelker's scabs were following him. He sat down with his friends, when in came J. H. Roelker and two of his scabs. Hartman got up and asked them why they were following him, when a scab named Buzan drew a revolver and shot Hartman,

the ball entering the right eye, passing through the brain, causing instant death. Then Buzan turned to another Union man named Jordan, and saying, "D—n you, I will give it to you as well," fired, striking Jordan in the temple, inflicting a dangerous wound. After Jordan dropped he fired twice at C. Muth, a Union man, slightly wounding him. The other scab got in working order by this time, and he shot at and slightly wounded a cigar-maker named Zehnle. Having accomplished their mission, they retreated to Roelker's foundry, where they were arrested and placed in jail. As soon as the shooting commenced, Roelker left the saloon and went to his store, and the balance of his scabs ran to the saloon, as if they what was going on. The parties under arrest for the shooting are Buzan from Louisville, Owen from Dayton, and Kast from Louisville. Roelker has not as yet been arrested. We cannot comment on this premeditated butchery, as we feel unable to do it justice, and each member can form his own conclusions. As law-abiding citizens we can only hope that justice will be meted out to those who have either been principals or accessories in rendering two homes desolate.—I. M. I. Journal.

OPERATIVE HOUSE PAINTERS.

The annual meeting of the General Alliance of Operative House Painters of England has been held this week at the Crown Hotel, Liverpool, commencing its sittings on Monday morning. The president (of Liverpool) occupied the chair. The general secretary, Mr. Sharples (of Manchester), and all the officers of the Alliance, were present. The number of delegates was 41, with the officers, making in all 50 members; 30 societies being represented.

The general secretary, in his report, said that, financially speaking, the Alliance was in a prosperous condition. The new entrance fees had greatly improved the reserve fund, and during the past year sixteen new branches had been formed. The increase of wages or incomes of the members during that period—on the basis of eight months' employment in the year, as the average of working months—amounted to the sum of £5,000. The secretary referred to the activity of the Birmingham district, in spreading the principles of the Alliance with such skill and success.

In the course of the proceedings, it was proposed and carried unanimously—

That no working man should give his vote for a Parliamentary candidate, unless he pledges himself to an entire repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act.

The following propositions were unanimously adopted:—

1. A repeal of the Criminal Law Amendment Act with a view to the reconsideration by Parliament of the penal laws affecting trade combinations.
2. No imprisonment for breach of contract, as enacted by the Masters and Servants' Act.
3. Repeal of the Small Penalties Act, with a view to the passing of a more just law, for enforcing penalties against the poor.
4. No conviction for conspiracy to commit an act for which a maximum penalty is already imposed, to subject any person to a greater or other penalty than that which is so imposed.
5. That a Royal Commission be issued with full powers to enquire into the mode in which the summary jurisdiction of the magistrates has been exercised.
- 6.—That Parliament shall be required to consider and solve the important constitutional question if the law for summary jurisdiction is to take away the right of trial by jury.—See *Ills* of 14th ult.

"INJUSTICE TO WORKINGMEN."

Such is the caption of an editorial article which appeared in the late issue of the *Scientific American*, in commenting on an alleged contract which the Joliet Iron and Steel Company—one of the largest establishments of its class in Illinois—recently required its employees to sign, and which reads as follows:—

RECEIPT AND CONTRACT.

JOLIET, Ill., Feb.—, 1873.

Received of Joliet Iron and Steel Company, the full amount due me as per pay roll for service rendered said company during the month of January, 1873.

And for the consideration above mentioned, I do hereby agree that said company shall not be liable to me (nor my heirs, executors, or other persons who may be dependent upon me for support in case of my death) for any damage or accident resulting or occurring to me while in its employ, whether caused by the negligence or carelessness of any of the officers or employees of said company, or from any cause whatsoever. And that said company shall have the right, at any time, to discharge me from its employ without notice.

Further, that I will continue in the employ of said company from month to month at the current rate paid by said company

for the class or kind of work done by me, and not leave the employ of said company or refuse to perform my daily duties without fourteen (14) days notice in writing of such intention to the superintendent, foreman, or the person under whose orders I am employed, previous to the time of my leaving or failing to perform my daily duties.

And in consideration as aforesaid, I do further agree that in case I fail to comply with the conditions last aforesaid, that I will forfeit all moneys earned by me and remaining unpaid at the time of such failure on my part to comply with the terms of this contract.

Witness _____ Signed _____

In commenting on the injustice of the above requirements, the *American* justly observes:—

Although it is possible that this contract may be legally valid under the statutes of Illinois, we doubt whether its terms would receive a rigid interpretation from any court or be enforced through any jury. It is plainly inequitable, inasmuch as it gives to the employer rights which it denies to the employee, and places the latter in a position in which his means of support may be at any moment taken from him without warning, and without leaving him any mode of redress. That this power may be so used as to cause great hardship is clearly obvious, while the system of requiring men not only to give their time and labor, but to bind themselves by such oppressive obligations, for the simple and single consideration of their already faithfully earned wages, seems to us wrongful and highly unjust. "The laborer is worthy of his hire," and although employers have a perfect right to regulate the quantity, quality and manner of performing his work, they should not take advantage of the necessity which impels a man to toil for the existence of himself and his family, to impose upon him extreme conditions, which, were he less dependent, he would unhesitatingly refuse.

To all of which we would heartily say, Amen. But it gives us unalloyed pleasure to add that, on the authority and request of Mr. Torrens, the new Superintendent of the Joliet Iron and Steel Company Mills, and Mr. Hugh McLaughlin, President of the Puddlers and Boiler Makers' National Union, we announce that no such contracts are now required to be signed; that the former gentleman distinctly disowns any sympathy with the provisions of such a requirement, and that the employees of the establishment have too much manhood to subscribe to them even if they were presented. This is just as it should be, and we trust those who have given publicity to the foregoing contract, will now make the *amende honorable* by making the desired correction.—*Workingman's Advocate*.

Labor Notes.

The Wood Turners of Chicago have recently organized a Trades Union.

A Labor League will shortly be formed in Carlinville, Ill.

Mr. Henry Taylor, Secretary of the National Agricultural Laborer's Union reports the number of members as over 50,000.

The Labor Statistics Bureau of Massachusetts, shows that there are 5,414 male tailors in the State.

A Cigar Makers' Union has been organized in Hudson, Columbia county, New York.

The third annual Convention of the American Labor Reform League will be held in New York city, Sunday and Monday, May 4th and 5th.

It appears that the English National Association of operative plasterers has now 90 branches, with a membership of 2,500, and a capital of £3,000.

There are quite a number of Union Cigar Makers at Chicago on a strike. The reasons we have not learned, but they no doubt are sufficient to cause them to quit work.

The Journeymen Wood-Carvers' Union, of New York, consisting of about 300 members, held a general meeting last week for the purpose of strengthening their organization, with a view to being prepared for an emergency, which might occur in case of a general strike.

Wages in Chicago seem to rate about as last season, good bricklayers and stone masons \$3 50 to \$4 per day; tenders, \$2. Carpenters and joiners seem to have no fixed price; they range from \$2 up to \$3 25. Ship-carpenters hold fast at \$3, some a little in advance of those figures.

The Ship-carpenters and Caulkers of Chicago have voluntarily reduced their wages from \$4 50 to \$3 per day. By this action they claim, and justly so, that Chicago can successfully compete with the other lake ports.

The Trades Protection Society of Saddlers and Harness Makers of England have recently sent in to the masters an application for an increase of wages—20 per cent on weekly wages of 24s and under; 15 per cent on wages between 24s and 28s per week; and 10 per cent on wages of 28s and upwards. The application has been granted.

ed by some of the leading firms of the trade.

At a meeting of the United Masons in New York recently, resolutions were passed denouncing the attempt of Vanderbilt to deprive men at work on the Harlem Road of their right to the eight-hour system. A committee was appointed to wait on the Mayor and demand the enforcement of the eight-hour law.

The Chicago Typographical Union at a regular session, passed resolution condemning the State Legislature for introducing and enacting a law aimed at, and evidently intended to injure, trade combinations, under the provisions of which it would be unlawful for the members of any Union to converse with or persuade their fellow-craftsmen with intent to induce them to abstain from unmanly opposition to the best interests of their trade, and which interferes with their constitutional privileges and freemen.

On Tuesday settlements took place between Mr. Crawshaw, of Cyfarthien, and his workmen, and between Mr. Fothergill's manager at Plymouth ironworks and his workmen, colliers and miners. In both cases deputations waited upon the employers, and offered to resume work immediately on the Dowlais terms, which offer was accepted. The men afterwards held a mass meeting, at which resolutions in favor of immediate work were passed, and work was accordingly resumed by from 10,000 to 15,000 workmen in Merthyr the following day. There were great rejoicings; bands paraded the town and cannons were fired. The strike is now virtually ended, as only one or two small works remain to be settled with.

We would direct attention to the advertisement of Dr. Wood, the proprietor of the Ottawa Cancer Cure. The process of cure is a speedy and painless one, and as in the case of those who are afflicted with this dreadful disease, "delays are dangerous," should any of our readers, or their friends, be unfortunately so afflicted, we would advise a prompt communication with Dr. Wood.

REMITTANCES.

Ottawa—G. H., \$2; A. H., \$2; H. C. W., \$2; E. G., \$1; J. A. L., \$2; D. J. O'D., \$2; S. K., \$1; D. T., \$2; G. C., \$1; W. H., \$2; G. D., \$2; T. A., \$1; T. S., \$1; J. K., \$1.

Oshawa—G. J., \$1; T. D., \$1.

Toronto—S. S., \$1; J. F., \$1; J. C., \$1; W. S., \$1; J. P., \$1; J. K., \$1; W. P., \$1; J. F., \$1; T. R., \$1; J. R., \$1; J. McC., \$1; Dr. R., \$2; C. R., \$2; G. J., \$1.

DR. WOOD,

PROPRIETOR OF THE

OTTAWA CANCER CURE,

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Cancers Cured by a New, but Certain, Speedy, and nearly Painless Process, and without the Use of the Knife.

The Cure will be guaranteed, and, as a proof of this, no pay is required until the Cure is complete. The moment a Cancer is discovered, it should be cured, as it will cost less and is more speedily cured than when of longer standing, and there is nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by delay. What now seems a harmless lump in the breast, neck, eyelid or elsewhere, or small wart or sore on the lip, may, in a few short months, become a hideous, disgusting, destroying mass of disease. If required, references can be given to parties who have been cured many years since, and who are now sound and healthy. All communications promptly answered. No money required in advance, and none until the Cure is complete. 52-oh

TO THE MECHANICS OF THE DOMINION.

NOTICE IS HEREBY GIVEN,

That in consequence of the men who were employed on the erection of the Presbyterian Church, not having been yet paid, the members of all Trades' Unions and others are requested not to engage at all with the Contractor who now has it, or any Contractor who may hereafter have said Church, until all arrears are paid.

By Order,

R. H. GRAHAM, Secretary.

Ottawa, March 1, 1873.

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THE JOURNEMEN FREE STONE

CUTTERS' ASSOCIATION, of Ottawa City, and immediate vicinity, hold their meetings in the St. Lawrence Hotel, corner of Rideau and Nicholas streets, on the first and third Monday in each month. The officers elected for the present quarter, commencing Monday March 4, 1873, are as follows:—President, Robert Thomson; Vice-President, Joseph Hugg; Financial Secretary, William Gould; Recording and Corresponding Secretary, George Bisset; Treasurer, Robert Poutie, Tyler, James Walker; Trades Council, Donald Robertson, James Kelly, James Walker, Joseph Hugg; Trustees, Donald Robertson, John Casey, William Clark.

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