

NOTINGS FROM HALIFAX.

Though this is written during the Easter holidays when the members of the House have all betaken themselves to their homes, there to recuperate after four weeks of doing next to nothing. (Do not criticise the word recuperate. If there is any one who needs a bracer surely it is he who either by choice or compulsion is dawdling the time away.) I am willing to predict that the bill asking for a plebiscite to determine which of the two societies, the P. W. A. or U. M. W. of N. S., the miners of Nova Scotia love best, will not emerge from committees, but will be consigned to that future time, "three months hence," where no one is about to rescue it from partial if not total oblivion; and that is the fate it deserves, for if ever there was a bill more foolish than another this plebiscite bill easily takes the cake. When I last wrote I spoke of two delegations, one from the P. W. A. and the other from the Barrett-Baxter-McLaughlin combination. Their business, as they believed, being done, the P. W. A. delegation took their way back home. The B.-B.-McL. delegation, which consisted of six, were not to be so easily weaned away from the capital. They had something up their sleeve, the something being the ridiculous bill, introduced by Mr. Cameron and fathered by the combination. They had sprung a mine and chuckled. The foolish fellows. It was not a mine, but a dug-out into which not their opponent but they themselves fell, and were swallowed up. The bill was unworthy of consideration, for it suggested the doing of a thing which would be wholly unjust to the P. W. A. The bill called for a plebiscite of the miners over the province. In Cumberland county the preference is for a national union of miners, and in Pictou county it is for the American Federation of Labor. In the event of a plebiscite—the A. F. L. left out—the probability is that the A. F. L. members would cast their votes for their second cousins, the U. M. W., and so also would the miners of Cumberland, and for no other reason than to vent their spleen against certain officials of the P. W. A. who they falsely believe to have played into the hands of the employers.

When the bill came before committee on law amendments there were present Messrs. Moss and Bonnyman, a delegation supposedly from Springhill. Mr. Moss, wholly unintentionally, let fall a sentence which went to show how futile the passage of such a bill would be. He said that the Springhill men neither favored the P. W. A. nor the U. M. W., but were aiming at a national union. But all initiated know how Moss and Bonnyman would act if the ballot papers contained the names of two societies only.

There were some funny episodes during the hearing. For instance, harking back to the U. M. W. strike of 1909, Mr. Butts asked if Mr. Moffatt did not carry a .38 calibre revolver. Mr. Moffatt did not deny the soft impeachment and said, "I did for self-protection and I have it still." One of the U. M. W. delegates took up the hint, and in defence said some young lads on their side had revolvers, but they were not loaded with ball, only small pellets, which, at

twenty yards, would leave only a small impression on the skin. On hearing this some members of the committee looked grave while others could not repress an ironical smile. The presentation of their case by the U. M. W. won little sympathy. They were dissatisfied, but no tangible reasons were given for this dissatisfaction. It was in truth another case of Dr. Fell:

"I do not like thee Dr. Fell
The reason why I cannot tell."

And neither could the committee tell, judging by their looks.

As it may be well that a record be kept of part of the proceedings, the following is clipped from the Morning Chronicle's account of the evidence, a very fair resume indeed:

"Mr. Baxter, one of the U. M. W. delegates, said that the U. M. W. would be glad to assist in devising some way by which the two rival labor organizations could be brought together. He thought the bill before the committee would help the situation. It would enable the U. M. W. to prove that that organization comprised the majority of the coal workers of the province and then they would be in a position to demand that the operators should collect their dues.

"Mr. Bartlett, another U. M. W. delegate, said he had been discriminated against by Mr. MacLean, a Dominion Coal company manager, and was told that the P. W. A. men had the first preference for positions in the mine—that non-union men had the second preference and the U. M. W. members the last.

"Mr. MacLean, the manager of No. 9 colliery, asked to be permitted to explain Mr. Bartlett's statement that he had been discriminated against. He said that Mr. Bartlett had not stated all the facts. One side of No. 9 colliery had been shut down for repairs and Mr. Bartlett was put in a narrow place, which was the only one vacant, on the other side. Mr. Bartlett had refused to work on night shift, and Mr. MacLean said that he had done the best he could for him. As a matter of fact, Mr. Bartlett had been working nearly every day when other men were working. Mr. MacLean said he told the underground manager to do all he could do for Mr. Bartlett.

In reply, Mr. Bartlett said that Mr. MacLean had treated him fairly, but that there had been new men hired in No. 9 colliery while he was left idle. "There was many a fortnight," said Mr. Bartlett, "when I had to feed seven of a family on \$22."

Mr. MacLean said he had not discriminated against Mr. Bartlett—that he was as fair to him as to any P. W. A. men who worked for him. "One day," said Mr. MacLean, "Mr. Bartlett said he wouldn't work night work, and went home, causing a loss of forty tons of output. If I had followed the usual course of discipline, I might have refused to hire Mr. Bartlett again, but I didn't do that. I told the underground manager to see that Bartlett didn't go home without work."

"Mr. MacLean said that Bartlett's average daily wage from October 1, 1916, to March 1, 1917, was \$4.05 per day."

At this stage of the proceedings Mr. Butts, a member of the committee made close enquiry as to Mr.