

Communications.

TORONTO.

THE HAMILTON MASS MEETING AND LEGISLATION.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

DEAR SIR,—Though the progress of the working classes is being evidenced by the most undoubted signs, and in no sense so strikingly as in their coming together in intelligent counsel, to express their feelings on matters that directly concern them. Such demonstrations have not been without their effect in causing favorable legislation in the interest of the working classes; but notwithstanding this progress and its favorable results, the working classes have yet much to learn before their influence will be fully recognized and fruitful in promoting such reforms as all intelligent workingmen so much desire. Party differences have long been the bane of labor progress; and, as evinced at the meeting held in Hamilton, can only be productive of the most disastrous results. It is really surprising that at a meeting such as the one held in Hamilton, called by workingmen, and presided over by workingmen, to consider questions which belong to labor, and have become the property of workingmen by being placed before the country by those whom they have chosen to create and administer our laws, that unity could not be found to exist. Why in the name of common sense could not the workingmen of Hamilton meet calmly together to discuss those measures that are designed by the framers thereof to affect directly the labor of the country? And not go as Grits or Tories, which can only be productive of one result: that of dividing those whose interests are identical; thereby exposing the weak points in the unionism of labor. Workingmen should remember that neither of the existing parties are parties of labor, that neither will give the reforms we need except in compliance with the demands of a well-directed and united agitation; and this agitation can never assume the proportions that the true friends of labor reform would wish, or that would warrant action on the part of our law-makers, so long as the workers appear on the boards as Grits or Tories. It is reforms we need; and as supporters of such measures—measures acknowledged to be of a nature to promote the best interests of labor, that we should combine, and bring all our influence to bear on the powers that be, no matter of what party, and get those measures enacted in the very best possible shape to subserve the interests of the industry of our common country. I hope that workingmen in this country in future will not appear in public as Grits or Tories, but rather as rational beings, to approve or condemn measures that directly concern them as producers. True, our Local Legislature have handled more questions, during the term that is now drawing to a close,—questions that may be considered workingmen's questions, than any of their predecessors; and though they have been dealt with in a most superficial manner, we cannot shut our eyes to the fact that this is, to say the least, an acknowledgment of the need of legislation in the interest of labor, which must be amended by subsequent sessions of our Legislature, and brought more in accord with the views and wants of those for whom these questions were intended. Our Dominion or Federal Government is now in session, and it is in the power of that representative body to ameliorate the condition of labor. There is the Trade Union Act, good in itself, but freighted with an unnecessary encumbrance that kills its power for good to the Trades Unions, known as the Criminal Law Amendment Act. It is the unanimous wish of the workingmen to have this repealed, and many belonging to the party in power at Ottawa are true to their promises we will have such legislation; and if the expressed desire of the workingmen in this respect is neglected by the Ministerial party let the Opposition make the attempt, and though they should fail, they would establish a claim upon the suffrages of labor that would not be forgotten when the proper time came.

I cannot close this letter without referring to the proposed new election law now being introduced by Sir John A. Macdonald. I must record the fact of my disappointment at the nature of its proposed provisions. Such an unshapely mass of matter, seemingly embodying no defined principle that the Ministry will not waive, having no provision for the extension of the franchise or the introduction of the ballot, is unworthy of a party whose eyes ought to be open to the needs of this progressive age. In the remarks of Sir John A. Macdonald I was sorry to notice that the only defined principle for which provision was made was that old relic of

feudalism, property above man—a means by which the land grasper may cast fifty or a hundred votes simultaneously at a general election by certificate. He may never have seen the property that the hardy, struggling backwoodsman is making valuable by his labor on the adjacent lands; but still he must have a voice in controlling the destinies of those hardy sons of nature who have taken their lives in their hands, and gone boldly forth to redeem from the wilderness and make valuable that which was valueless without the labor of man. I must forever object to man's franchise being based on any other basis than honor and manhood. I notice also the covert opposition given by the hon. gentleman to the Ballot, considering that many of his supporters are pledged to their constituents, with his knowledge, to support it, comes with very bad grace. On the whole, however, the bill is so indefinite that comment is premature; for it is hard to say what shape it will assume before it becomes law. The Opposition have a fine opportunity to show to what extent they are Reformers. Mr. McKenzie's remarks on the Bill had something of the true ring about them. Manhood Suffrage is what we want and are prepared for in this country; and if the leader of the Opposition is willing to act as well as speak, he is in a position to force the shaping of this Bill to a very great extent upon the Government, and it will not be forgotten by those interested.

Yours, etc.,

JOHN HEWITT.

CONVICT LABOR.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

SIR,—For the sake of abbreviation I adopt the above caption, though my remarks will be principally on the hiring of prison labor to contractors. And at this time it perhaps would be as well to fore-shadow my intention of dealing with this question by argument, evidence and comment. My time being principally engrossed in attending to my private affairs, any *lapis lingua*, or slip of the tongue, will perhaps be excused in one who is a genuine workingman, and who now, as for the last twenty-four years, has toiled in a workshop from morning till night, and like the majority of his class, has little chance for recreation or pursuit of knowledge. I therefore ask indulgence for any seeming ambiguity or grammatical mistake.

Every person's mind is peculiar, therefore I cannot expect all will agree with me in my remarks on this question. I shall be amply satisfied if I can convince some of those who now hold a different view, that reformation should be the first duty of those having charge over prisoners.

Confinement is by some looked upon as a means of punishment, while others view it as a means of hindering criminals from committing offences against the law; yet I cannot see the reason for the acceptance of either of these alone, but take it that they should be supplementary to the one grand object that should animate the breast of every one, namely, reformation. To be consistent, those holding the confinement view should urge the eternal confinement of all persons leaving the moral path; and those holding the punishment idea entirely neglect one of the grand laws of Christianity. We pray that we may be forgiven our sins, as we forgive the sins of others; yet this is practically put aside, and vengeance is carried to the utmost.

Both these views are eminently shortsighted and selfish, and will not for one moment compare with reformation. Punishment debases, kindness improves its recipient. Punishment hardens the criminal's heart, and incites him to thoughts of retaliation on his oppressors, as he considers them; and brooding over thoughts of future vengeance is evidently anything but a step towards amendment. It does not require anything like a vivid imagination to imagine a prisoner, (or, if you like it better, a hardened criminal,) "uttering curses loud though deep" at what he may think an unnecessary punishment. Curses are in no case a means towards improving the morals of a man, and will not make a thief honest. I think a better way would be to show him that his incarceration is just long enough to give him time, under proper instruction, to learn that he has acted unjustly towards his fellow man, and that a wrong done can never bring happiness to the wrong-doer; to impress earnestly, though kindly, that

"He never knew a knave
Who went happy to the grave,
Or reached the mountain top he meant to climb;
Or a heart, however hard,
From all sympathy debarred,
That kindness could not touch and enter in."

I can fancy some reader saying: "Do you think I shall quietly submit to pay taxes for this sort of thing, and keep pris-

oners in idleness?" Not so fast, my friend. No one ever expected you would quietly submit to any such thing. Work is a necessity towards the reformation of a criminal, and I do not see why that work should not be of a remunerative kind. It is very likely a prisoner would willingly do any useful labor. Personally, I abominate all kinds of prison cranks and tread-mills. This is not a joke; I am in earnest in the matter. At the same time I would devote a portion of time each day to the inculcation of moral lessons, put in an interesting and attractive form. If a prisoner is taught to take a pleasure in work and morality, the natural consequence will be a return to an honest mode of living after his term of imprisonment is completed. Work should be remunerative for two reasons. Firstly, no man can take pleasure in labor that is of no service. If a man was to pull a crank from morning till night he would soon get disgusted with it, and instead of industry, laziness would become the ruling power of his mind. Secondly, it is but just that each prisoner should pay his share of expense in the administration of justice and the incidental expenses of his confinement. Yet this is no reason he should be sold as a slave to the highest bidder, and every mode of whipping him to labor resorted to, except the direct application of the lash.

By experience we can judge of the degradation of the slaves of any nationality. "Disguise thyself as thou wilt, still, Slavery, thou art a bitter, bitter draught," wrote Lawrence Stern; and slavery, disguised under the cloak of a contract, will still be bitter to the slave. No hope of an improvement in industry can be entertained under the feeling of being driven to toil for the benefit of speculative and avaricious contractors. A prisoner must be made to feel that he is confined for his own benefit principally; and if once he understands that he is worked solely for the benefit of individuals who have no further interest in him, there is an end to any correct industrial ideas being planted within him. It evidently follows that good, honest, earnest and competent men must be appointed as officers in a prison, if the best results are to be attained. My opinion is that they should be appointed according to ability, tested by competitive examinations, and irrespective of political opinions.

I have yet to learn that the care of our prisoners can be justly entrusted to a man because he has been an active politician, and probably active in view of some such berth, where he can get a large salary and dodge the work. It is more criminal to be guilty of such "jobs" than any crime short of human life. The thought of our criminals—criminal, often through poverty unavoidable—being driven, hounded and tortured by political partisans, without one thought for improving the moral condition of their charge, is one that no philanthropist can endure without grief. It will be useless to appeal to those who for "filthy lucre" can so lose sight of all decency and justice as to traffic in the sweat of our criminal population, and trade upon immorality and crime, and at their periodical banquet gloat over the large dividends resulting from profits on crime.

Yours, &c.,
J. W. LEVESLEY.

HAMILTON.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

SIR,—My conscience never accused me of having done anything wrong at the mass meeting held in this city. It was your editorial which called forth my letter. I was not so troubled in mind or conscience as to attack an editor of a paper on Sunday for publishing the proceedings of that evening; neither did I hold any meeting trying to explain away facts that cannot be denied. I am sorry Mr. Parker has got into such a dilemma. I heard the meeting called an "indignation" one by a Tory. Had the Managing Committee of said meeting invited me as J. Mowat, I would have been there; but the invitation was given as a member of an Association which I have no power to represent, unless authorized to do so. If Mr. Parker had been engaged as I was, the interests of workingmen and their families, would be better advanced, being at home after six o'clock. If he was ever-dropping on Locomotive street, he required to have his ears sharpened, for all that ever I spoke against was the amendment brought in by the leader of the Opposition to the Lien Law Bill which he disapproved of. Consistency! Such leaders! Such followers! I claim no relationship to that animal which is noted for the length of its ears and its stupidity. Mr. Parker must be in a very confused state, as he in the first place says these measures vitally affect the working classes; secondly, they are *still born*; thirdly, they are not worth the paper they are printed

on. Now which of these statements does he wish us to believe? What a splendid record of acts does he refer me to for the short time the Tories have been in power! The Act of 1872, of which Mr. Parker speaks, is as defective as any act that ever emanated from any Government, and has more need of being amended than any other on the statutes of the Dominion; for in reality, as it passed, it does not give us any more protection than we enjoyed formerly. Perhaps the next act will be to send us to the Bay of Gaspé, and be counted no better than codfish; or handcuffed as the five gas stokers of London were, and who are now serving their term of imprisonment under an act of which the one introduced by the arch-deceiver of the workingmen of this fair Dominion, is a *fac simile*. In act the second—"labor sold." Does Mr. Parker or any other man count himself a slave by selling his labor? The case is different with the criminal who has forfeited his freedom by breaking the laws of his country. The comparison is inconsistent. How is the member for Kingston said to be kept in power by the profits of the labor of the convicts in the Kingston Penitentiary? In conclusion, one more question: Will Mr. Parker show to the public in what way I have been used as a tool, or deserted any good cause that I engaged in? and I shall feel greatly obliged.

Yours, respectfully,

JOHN MOWAT.

Hamilton, March 24, 1873.

COMPLIMENTARY SUPPER.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

SIR,—On the 18th inst., the molders of this city met in good numbers at the Victoria Hall, at a supper held in honor of their International President. After ample justice had been done the "good things" provided by the proprietor of the house, toasts and songs were the order of the day. The first toast was, "The Iron Molders' International Union." Mr. Saffron, President I. M. I. U., and Mr. Walters, of this city, responded to the toast. Mr. Saffron gave an interesting historical sketch of the rise and progress of the International Union, which was organized in Philadelphia some thirteen years ago.

He spoke of the great apparent change in the molders of America since that time. Had the men of Philadelphia thought only of themselves, the trade would now be far lower than what it even was then; but they had ennobled themselves by assisting to elevate their fellow craftsmen. He said that the Iron Molders' International Union was one of the best organizations in America; and with the assistance of No. 26 and all other subordinate unions, it would rank the best in the world in 1874. They were banded together with the Iron Founders' Society of England and Scotland, in the exchanging of members and also by sympathy, a contract to that effect having been signed, sealed, and delivered on the 1st day of January, 1873.

Mr. Walters, in responding to the toast, referred to the high esteem in which the President is held by the whole organization, and the unbounded confidence placed in him. He rejoiced at this, because it was a sure sign of prosperity. To be successful, we must have faith in our leaders; we must believe that he is not only the right man, but that he is the right man in the right place. He alluded to the satisfaction it must afford the President to feel himself relied upon to such an extent, by the men he is seeking to benefit and elevate. Mr. Walters spoke of the pleasure every member must feel in occupying the position of a member of this organization. Times come when men are compelled to take a retrospect of their lives. What a poor satisfaction would a man derive from that, who saw he had been laboring against his own interest and that of his fellow-craftsmen. On the other hand it is worthy of the best feelings of our nature to know that we lived for something; that we lived to do good in our calling. We were benefiting our children and society at large.

No. 26 was toasted, Mr. McGregor responding. Being an old member of the union, he spoke of the deep interest he felt in her welfare, and spoke of the difficulties that No. 26 has had to contend against, and the prosperous position she now holds.

Mr. Burt followed, giving a brief history of the organization of No. 26: its marvelous growth, and the present prosperity of the union.

Mr. Roy also responded. Speaking of the rapid strikes that trades Unions had made in Canada during the last year, he said that every trade and department of manufacture seemed awakened to the fact that the way to success for the workingmen was organization. He thought this feeling had been called forth by the nine hours' movement.

No. 29, I. M. U., of Brantford was next toasted.

Mr. Donovan replied in its behalf by a short sketch of the great obstacles they had met with in holding the meetings of their union, and spoke of this firm manner in which the few members had stuck together.

The next toast was the ONTARIO WORKMAN, responded to by Mr. Saffron and Mr. Pryke. Mr. Saffron said the ONTARIO WORKMAN was the only true workingman's advocate on the Continent of America. He held it in the highest esteem. He thought we should remember our friends; and remarked that the ONTARIO WORKMAN had put new life and vigor into four labor papers on the other side of the lines, which were dying out before the WORKMAN was started.

Mr. Pryke offered a few practical observations regarding the WORKMAN's advocacy on the part of labor.

The health of the Host and Hostess were next drunk.

A number of songs were interspersed with the speeches of the evening; and altogether, a social treat and a thorough good time was enjoyed by all, cementing together the bonds of unity.

Yours, truly,

MOLDER.

Hamilton, March 18, 1873.

O S H A W A.

(To the Editor of the Ontario Workman.)

SIR,—In a former letter I mentioned the fact of the man who forwarded the petition for the nine hours to the Joseph Hall Works having been discharged; but until lately was not aware that the President of the Works had sent circulars to the bosses of like works throughout the country, requesting them not to give the man employment. One can scarcely credit that such ultra vindictiveness exists amongst Christian men in a civilized country, more especially in one who professes to discharge the duties of Superintendent of a Sunday School.

"Alas for the rarity
Of Christian Charity,
Under the sun!"

My reason for referring to the subject again is that the President of the above Works is in the field as a candidate to represent West Durham in the Commons; and so confident is he of election that he has prepared and now stown away one thousand torches in the attic of the Works; at least, such is one of the conjectures as to their use. In the event of his being elected, it would be well if the House would kindly allow him to omit the words, "as I am a man and a Christian" from the oath which I believe he would be required to take, and so save him from committing perjury; as it appears to me that bosses who can be guilty of such despicable actions go far to prove the correctness of the Darwinian theory, and therefore can not lay claim to the title of being a MAN.

I have lately seen a letter from the Secretary of the Cabinet Makers' Association, London, Eng., in which he states that he can scarcely credit, that in this year of grace, the workingmen of Canada have to work 60 hours per week, and thinks Canada must be a "miserable hole" on that account. He also states the wages for cabinet makers in the Old Country to be £2 ster. (\$10) per week of 56½ hours; and that there are only two cities in the States where there are any inducements for the London cabinet makers to go to better themselves; and finally he offers to send money to the party to whom the letter is written, to take him him back to London, if he required it. Rather hard on Canada!

Yours, etc.,

HEATHER JOCK.

THE JOURNEYMEN 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 3, 1873, are as follows:—President, Robert Thompson; Vice-President, Joseph Hugg; Financial Secretary, William Gould; Recording and Corresponding Secretary, George Bischoff; Treasurer, Robert Foster; Tyler, James Walker; Trades Council, Donald Robertson, James Kelly, James Walker, Joseph Hugg; Trustees, Donald Robertson, John Casey, William Clark.

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